A Countercultural Movement:
Examining Carolee Schneemann's Kinetic Theatre
Between 1963 and 1970

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April 2013

A thesis submitted to McGill University in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse porte sur le théâtre cinétique de Carolee Schneemann (née en 1939) produit durant la période 1963-1970. Attestant du rôle primordial de l'artiste en tant que figure de proue de la communauté avant-gardiste d'après-guerre, cette étude offre une des premières interprétations archivistiques de ses œuvres. Ma recherche offre une perspective critique dans le champ de l'histoire de l'art en examinant comment le théâtre cinétique de Schneemann aborde la guerre du Vietnam et les développements militaires propres à la Guerre froide à travers l'exploration esthétique de procédures développées au sein des débats psychiatriques et antipsychiatriques. L'une des questions fondamentales auxquelles cette thèse tente de répondre consiste à savoir pourquoi il n'y a pas eu d'études approfondies sur le théâtre cinétique en histoire de l'art. Il est vrai que l'histoire de l'art féministe a fourni les premières études concernant le travail de Schneemann. Ces dernières se sont principalement penchées sur la présence du corps de l'artiste comme matériau d'expression de façon à révéler les sophismes asexués ayant pris racine dans l'art moderne et postmoderne. Mais en se centrant uniquement sur le rôle joué par le corps de Schneemann, ces analyses ont omis de sonder tout un pan du travail de l'artiste lié à la portée politique de ses chorégraphies de groupe. En d'autres mots, les théories existantes n'examinent pas comment les performances de l'artiste ont aussi contribué à nourrir les débats critiques sur la représentation de la guerre du Vietnam et à démystifier les violences et le militarisme grandissant à l'intérieur de la nouvelle gauche. L'utilisation des chorégraphies de groupe au sein du théâtre cinétique a mis en lumière comment l'intériorisation du genre et la différence sexuelle participaient à une forme de « violence aveugle » recouvrant les notions de soi et de collectivité, issues des années soixante. Le théâtre cinétique a ainsi fait transparaître le « corps », capturé dans un processus dialectique de visualisation qui empruntait momentanément une structure identitaire, faisant ainsi écho aux désirs de l'époque associés aux promesses de libération, de collectivité, et de changement, tout en prenant soin de maintenir ces mythes hors d'atteinte. Le fait de performer ces désirs, à partir d'une distance critique, fait en sorte que la libération n'est jamais vraiment assimilée par le corps, le groupe et ses performances. Dans cette veine, ce projet examine ultimement les parallèles entre la violence militante au sein de la communauté antiguerre et la dissolution graduelle, le désenchantement, du théâtre cinétique en 1970.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines Carolee Schneemann's kinetic theatre performances (1963-1970) within the specific context of the art of the 1960s and the counterculture. In 1962, Schneemann coined the term "kinetic theatre" to describe her particular form of happenings and performance art. Although this definition was recognized in the initial art criticism of the 1960s, this is a genre of art that has been lost within current forms of feminist art history, performance studies and postwar art. Indeed, there has been no critical study of kinetic theatre within art history. My research examines the emergence of Schneemann's kinetic theatre, establishes its relationship to the counterculture and provides an explanation for its disappearance in 1970.

Feminist art historians and critics have almost exclusively focused on the agency and the role of Schneemann's body within her performances. However, these interpretations have failed to address the political and aesthetic use of her group choreography within her kinetic theatre. This research charts a new direction of scholarship on Schneemann and more broadly it addresses the discourse on mid-twentieth performance art and feminist art history. I demonstrate that Schneemann was working in collaboration with male artists such as Stan Brakhage and that her kinetic theatre was politically situated within the antiwar movement, the politics of antipsychiatry and the New Left. By examining Schneemann's intricate network and collaborative associations in the 1960s this research provides a more expansive and less mythic understanding of the counterculture and the particular kinds of feminist and artistic interventions that she made within the antiwar movement.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people warned me that a dissertation would be a lonely, hard slog. Fortunately, I was never alone through this process and I was lucky enough to have a wealth of intellectual, and emotional support. Indeed, I was pushed to my limits and in this rather difficult time, I renewed my passion to art history. However, my enthusiasm could not have sustained without a team of individuals, who have provided a great deal of care and support on a day- to- day level. It gives me great pleasure to finish not only for myself, but first and foremost for those friends, peers, colleagues, students and family members would have patiently remained at my side throughout this rather lengthy endeavor.

I would like to thank my advisor Christine Ross. Her compassion and guidance has played a crucial role in nurturing my voice as a young scholar. Most of all her commitment and excitement has sustained throughout my dissertation, for which I am so grateful.

Griselda Pollock has also played a critical role. Her encouragement and mentorship has taught me to see and appreciate my own differences as a scholar, and to have the courage to refine my ideas and to bring them into this world.

I would also like to thank Amelia Jones and Jane Blocker; both of their insights and criticisms have made the presentation of this dissertation infinitely better, and I am most grateful for this. Lastly, many thanks to Angela Vanhaelen, her insights were not only timely but also full of wisdom and they have not gone unnoticed.

This dissertation was assisted by grants from: McGill Arts Insight Dissertation Completion Award, Provost Award, Principle Graduate Fellowship, Bram Garber Fellowship in Art History, McGill Recruitment Fellowship, Arts Travel Award and a library grant from the Getty Foundation. I would like to the library staff at the: Getty Research Institute, R.D. Laing archive in Glasgow, Electronic Arts Index and the British Library reading room in Boston, Spa, UK. Carolee Schneemann was kind enough to let me meet and interview her for this dissertation. Her warmth, enthusiasm and “wild” memories of the 1960s have been a constant source of intrigue and inspiration. Without her I would have not been introduced to Joseph Berke, Peter David and Jane Wodening. Each offered a dynamic and historical insight into the 1960s, which has shaped much of this research.

The graduate students at McGill University facilitated a warm and intellectually challenging environment: Dana Broadbent, Samantha Burton, Anu Gobin, Lailai Manjikan, Matthew Noble-Olson, Christina Smylitopoulous, Jessica Santone, Tamar Tembeck and Trevor Start. I would also like to thank the graduate students at the

University of Leeds: Isabelle de la Court, Jon Cronshaw, Benjamin Hanavay-Cousins and Mathew John.

A special thanks to faculty members at the University of York: Jo Applin, James Boaden and Michael White, each have provided, gracious supportive and encouragement.

There are friends who I cannot even begin to thank enough: Ariane de Bois, Amanda Boeztkes, Leah Clark, Lara Eggelton, Ruth Kitchen, Justina Spencer and Agnes Wolley, their constant support, humor and encouragement has carried me through some very exasperating and dark times. These women are my peers, friends and a beautiful source of inspiration.

My environment at Leeds has been greatly enhanced by my dear friends: Giorgia Aiello, Layla Bloom, Jayne Rodgers and Zoe Howe. I would also like to thank Tina Takemoto, Damon Willick, Kathy Harper and Father Fulco whose undergraduate teaching sparked my interest in art history.

To all of my family who has constantly supported me: Sandra Simonds, Joe Simonds, Caroline Simonds, Lailah Simonds, Josephine Simonds and Tina Courtier. Lastly, to my mother Colette Simonds she has taught me to work hard and follow my dreams even if they seemed, beyond my reach.

Lastly, this dissertation is dedicated to Alexander Hannay: my loving partner and true companion. He is a precious listener and is the reason why my fears have not turned into reality and my “voice” can be heard in art history.

Introduction

> Allan Kaprow sent me a message that the Whitney was preparing an exhibit which would examine visual transitions from the 1950s to 60s, transitions of form and methods. He did not say if you were organizing the show but suggested I remind you-among the welter of works and events- that my performance event "Eye Body" in 1963 initiated the evolution of body art. And that my development of the Happening- Kinetic Theatre (began in 1963) was seen as the bridge between dance and theatre/ happenings as it enlarged the interaction of environment and movement and introduced materials which predicated many aspects of current performance art.[1]

Carolee Schneemann's reminder of her important contribution to the evolution of body art in the 1950s and 1960s was written to the exhibition's curator, Barbara Haskell on March 1, 1984. In it she asked if she could participate in the Whitney exhibition which was entitled: *Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism and Performance 1958-1964*. The show intended to focus on artistic transformations in painting that took place during the New York avant-garde period between the years 1958-1964. To coincide with the opening of the exhibition at the Whitney, a number of avant-garde films were also screened by artists such as Stan Brakhage and Kenneth Anger, which highlight the particular kinds of exchange that occurred among performance art, environments, happenings, painting and film during the early 1960s.

In Schneemann's letter she reminds Haskell about her "kinetic theatre"[2] performances from the 1960s and draws attention to the particular contribution made by her 1962-1963 performance, *Eye/Body: 36 Transformative Actions*. Ultimately, it was

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1. Letter from Carolee Schneemann to Barbara Haskell (March 1, 1984), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 9500001, box 70, folder, 3.

2. The spelling of Schneemann's kinetic theatre changes from British to American and this is evident in many of the primary sources that I cite. For clarity, I am going to stick with the British spelling throughout this thesis. The reason for this is that many of the 1960s sources on performance art and new media environments such as La Monte Yonge's Theatre of Eternal Music, refer to theatre in the British spelling.

Schneemann's three-dimensional painting construction *Fur Wheel* (1962) that was displayed in the Whitney exhibition.[3] Schneemann used this mixed media object to pose with in her kinetic theatre performance *Eye/Body*. However, *Fur Wheel* was presented in the Whitney exhibition without any photographic documentation to support the aesthetic or political context for the work and, what is more, Schneemann's name was not included in the catalogue nor was there any listing to indicate this piece was included in the exhibition. The exhibition focused primarily on the patriarchal legacy of Jackson Pollock, Allan Kaprow, Claes Oldenburg and Roy Lichtenstien. Although efforts were made to display the connections between filmmakers and artists involved in the New York avant-garde movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the nature of the relationship between Schneemann and avant-garde filmmakers like Brakhage remained unclear and unexplored. Moreover, while the catalogue explained Kaprow's definition of happenings and various movements such as Fluxus and Jim Dine's "junk aesthetics", there were no efforts made to interpret, explain or historically contextualize Schneemann's kinetic theatre. In 1962 Schneemann coined the term "kinetic theatre" to describe her particular form of happenings and performance art.[4] Although the objective of this thesis is to define kinetic theatre, which I do in subsequent chapters, it is useful to point out how it was initially defined. In the 1960s prominent art critics recognized Schneemann's kinetic performances as being part of a new wave of innovative multimedia and performance art. For example, works such as *Meat Joy* (1964), *Snows*, (1967), *Roundhouse*, (1967), and *Illinois Central* (1968) incorporated the use of group choreography, technology and multimedia.[5] The original definition and critical reception of Schneemann's kinetic

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3. See exhibition catalogue for *Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism and Performance, 1968-1964* (New York: Whitney Museum of Modern Art, 1984).

4. I recognize that "kinetic art" is also a genre of art that had relevance in the 1960s. However, in the literature on Schneemann I found that her kinetic theatre had more in common with happenings and performance art than the category of kinetic art.

5. Michael Kirby, "The New Theatre," *The Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 2 (1965): 22-43; Grace Glueck, "Multimedia: Massaging Senses for the Message," *New York Times* (Sept, 16, 1967), 35; Alfred Hansen, *A Primer of Happenings & Time/Space Art* (New York: Something Else Press, 1965), 26-27 and Lee Baxandall, and Suvin, Darko, "Happenings: An Exchange," *The Drama Review: TDR* 15, no. 1 (1970): 147-50.

theatre in the 1960s is critical to my study; yet at the same time it does not address the fundamental questions that this thesis seeks to address.

This thesis examines the development of Schneemann's kinetic theatre, its aesthetic and political relationship to the counterculture and the reasons for its disappearance in the 1970s. This omission of a serious consideration of Schneemann's kinetic theatre in relation to the cultural context of the time highlights a key problem that this thesis sets out to explore: why there has been no comprehensive study of kinetic theatre within art history. What is kinetic theatre? How did it emerge? What relationship did it bear to the counterculture? And, lastly, why did it disappear in 1970s?

These questions will be explored with specific reference to a series of performances that were defined by Schneemann as kinetic theatre, which she produced between 1963 and 1970. These performances functioned as a countercultural practice that expanded her original medium of painting into happenings, environments and performance art. Thus far, there has been no comprehensive study of kinetic theatre and previous scholarship has overlooked the political and social context in which these types of performances took place. My research analyses how and why Schneemann turned to this medium in 1963 by giving crucial consideration to a number of three-dimensional objects, including her painted constructions, which were used within the performance *Eye/Body*. As I will explore at length in Chapter One, whereas previous feminist explorations of Schneemann's work have focused on the goddess trope and related symbolism within her performances, this study is aimed at recovering the material and archival evidence that suggests a significantly more complex narrative of artistic collaboration and multimedia experimentation. Images of Schneemann's body in still photographs continue to evoke her iconic feminist art of the late 1970s, associations which tend to take precedence over the political and collaborative aspects of her work. In correcting this imbalance, this thesis considers the formal use of Schneemann's painting constructions and her use of group choreography in the 1960s. In making a case for Schneemann's centrality within the American postwar avant-garde community, this dissertation builds a greater understanding of the manner in which kinetic theatre sheds

light on the American and British counterculture and the unique relationship it bears to postwar art and culture.

Examining the Counterculture

This dissertation offers a critical analysis of Schneemann's performances and archival documents in order to locate her work as a unique countercultural aesthetic practice. Her performances not only provide insights into, and critiques of, the particular conditions of the counterculture, but also rather explicitly address how and why issues of gender and sexuality were ignored and not considered as a critique of violence within the New Left, anti-psychiatry and the anti-war movement. Paradoxically, however, Schneemann's contributions can only now be retrospectively considered as "feminist" interventions. Thus, the nature of her aesthetic practice demands redress albeit in light of the critical gender differences that Schneemann experienced in the 1960s.

My use of the term "counterculture" in the title of this thesis points to a key aim of the study of kinetic theatre within art history. In my view, we can only understand the political nature and aesthetic significance of Schneemann's kinetic theatre by addressing the extensive influence that the counterculture had on the development of her aesthetic practice in the 1960s. In order to understand the political dimension of Schneemann's performances and to theorize why her kinetic theatre disappeared, or was deemed no longer relevant by the artist, it is important to call attention to the various ways in which Schneemann's practice challenged and pointed to the limitations of the 1960s counterculture movement. I define the counterculture through examples such as the New Left and anti-war activism that took place within organizations such as the American movement called the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Moreover, I also examine the British anti-psychiatry movement, which expanded beyond its academic setting and largely influenced the American and British countercultural movement. I aim to locate and examine the impact that Schneemann's performances had on specific practices within

the counterculture such as the New Left, anti-psychiatry, and anti-war activism.[6] This emphasis is given in recognition of the terms critical history, especially when the counterculture is defined in terms of a movement as I do here.[7] An analysis and definition of Schneemann's kinetic theatre problematizes the very nature of the counterculture because it reveals a more complex understanding of its characteristics. Indeed, Schneemann's performances shed light on how feminist debates were often neglected and unaccounted for within the dominant narratives of the New Left, anti-psychiatry and anti-war debates. As will be shown, it is important to position Schneemann's kinetic theatre within the counterculture of the time precisely because this is a neglected area within art history. Secondly, by placing these performances within a historical context, it becomes possible to see how Schneemann's work provided an important feminist critique of the counterculture.

The origin of the term counterculture can be linked to the 1960s sociologist Milton Yinger, whose research primarily focused on adolescent delinquency and social deviance. In his 1960 article, "Contraculture and Subculture," Yinger uses the term "contraculture" to describe group behavior when its defining values were at odds with the culture's dominant values. He also makes an important distinction between a 'subculture' and a 'contraculture.' Yinger notes that although a subculture has its own norms and values, the norms of the group are not in direct opposition to the dominant, religious, professional and cultural values. A contraculture by contrast has a distinct set of norms

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6. For more on the relationships between anti-psychiatry and the counterculture movement see Nick Crossley's chapter "Anti-psychiatry and the Sixties," in *Contesting Psychiatry Social Movements in Mental Health* (London: Routlege, 2006), 99-125; Theodore Roszak, *The Making of A Counter Culture : Reflections On The Technocratic Society And Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Doubleday book, 1969); Andrew Wilson, "Spontaneous Underground : An Introduction To *London Psychedelic Scenes, 1965-68," in Summer of love : psychedelic art, social crisis and counterculture in the 1960s*, ed. Christoph Grunenberg and Jonathan Harris, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 64-97.

7. A number of scholars from the 1960s point to the problematic nature of using the term counterculture. For example, Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle argue that the term falsely unifies a movement that was never cohesive to begin with. However, while they encourage scholars to be critical of the term, they do not see the point of throwing it away altogether. See, *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*, edited by Michael William Doyle and Peter Braunstein (New York: Routledge, 2002), 10.

and values that are generated out of its conflict with and direct opposition to the dominant society. Above all, Yinger observes that a contraculture, unlike a subculture, seeks to *transform* the norms and values of dominant society.[8]

Theodore Rosak's 1969 bestselling text *The Making of a Counterculture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* is best known for popularizing the term counterculture.[9] Indeed, Peter Braunstein and William Doyle explain that "by the 1970s, the 'counterculture' - a term popularized in 1968 by Theodore Rosak - was well on its way to becoming a term referring to all 1960s political, social, or cultural dissent [...]." Rosak regards the counterculture as being "radically disafilliated from the mainstream norms and values of society."[10] While Rosak and Yinger share similar views on the definition of the counterculture, unlike Yinger, Rosak does not use the term "contraculture" when he writes about the counterculture. Rosak sheds light on the generation gap which he perceives to be one of the strongest characteristics that defined and separated the adults of the World War II period from their children who were born in the postwar era. He writes: "what makes the youthful disaffiliation of our time a cultural phenomenon, rather than merely a political movement, is the fact that it strokes beyond ideology to the level of the consciousness, seeking to transform our deepest sense of self, the other, the environment."[11] Rosak gives specific and important examples of countercultural practices, which will be referred to at various points through this thesis, such as The Congress at the Dialectics of Liberation, the anti-university, happenings, total environments and trips festivals. He regards these practices as an attempt to implement a form of social consciousness, which is directed at both the individual and the collective level: "[t]he Congress on the Dialectics of Liberation held in London during the summer of 1967 was pretty much that kind of affair: an effort to work out the

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8. Milton Yinger, "Contraculture and Subculture" *American Sociological Review* 25: 5 (October, 1960): 625-35.

9. Braunstein and William Micahel Doyle, *Imagine Nation*, 5.

10. Ibid, 8.

11. Rosak, *The Making of a Counterculture*, 49.

priorities of psychic and social liberation within a group of participants that included New Left revolutionaries and existential psychiatrists [...]."[12] Rosak's definition of a countercultural practice relates to many of the central objectives that were inherent within Schneemann's kinetic theatre. Indeed, Schneemann's performances focused on producing environments that not only challenged contemporary taboos and repression, but also led to direct, personal, social and collective transformations. Schneemann explains:

> Kinetic theatre is my particular development of the "happenings"-- which had mainly evolved in New York over the past ten years as a form which admitted literal dimensionality and varied media in radial juxtaposition. I work with untrained people and various waste materials of technology to realize images which range from the banal to the fantastic--images which dislocate, compound and engage our senses, expanding them into unknown and unpredictable relationships. My pieces are characterized by physical contact between a core of performers and en expanding physical relationship to the environment and audience. The total environment is activated by the performers, lights, sounds, slides, film and audience involvement. Each kinetic theatre work is created or adapted for a specific performance location; each piece is structured on a basic visual metaphor which acts as a shifting plane on which tactile, plastic kinetic encounters are realized- immediate and sensuous. The nature of those encounters, while personal to me, exposes and confronts a social range of current cultural taboos and repressive conventions.[13]

Schneemann's description of her kinetic theatre relates to Rosak and Yinger's analysis of the countercultural movement. As we have seen, according to both Rosak and Yinger, a counterculture can be defined as a set of perceptions and attitudes, which are in direct opposition to the culture's dominant values and belief systems. However, what is unique to Schneemann's kinetic theatre is how she uses it to examine issues of gender and power within political notions of collectivity. These issues and debates were often absent and neglected within the countercultural movement.[14] Indeed, as the quotation

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12. Rosak, *The Making of a Counterculture*, 64.

13. Carolee Schneemann quoted in "Image as Process," Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, accession no, 9500001, box 75.

14. Robin Morgan, a poet and leading feminist, claimed that the Student for a Democratic Society

above demonstrates, Schneemann believes that each of her performances could be adapted for a variety of political contexts. Thus, her feminist concerns were often at odds with, and not limited to, the counterculture's dominant political objectives.

Although Schneemann presented a performance at the Congress of the Dialectics of Liberation in London on July 29, 1967, Rosak does not mention her performance or participation in the Congress. In a 1968 interview, Schneemann explains that all of her kinetic theatre works, including *Round House* (1967) which was performed at The Congress of the Dialectics of Liberation, produced environments that enabled both her performers and her audience to critique existing power structures. She writes:

> I used the *Round House* as a total environment, as a sensory arena in which to fuse/focus certain sensory relationships centred on a particular group of people (performers by consent for this undertaking) whose relationship would be exposed, intense, concentrated and whose physical and imagistic action as they developed, would concretise many of the conditions explored verbally by the Congress.[15]

Her performance of *Round House* provided a means to deconstruct and challenge some of the masculine notions of liberation that underpinned theories of liberation in the New Left and anti-psychiatry. This performance in particular incorporated the use of what Schneemann termed "sensory awakening exercises" in order to examine the repressive taboos that were also at play during the conference. Her performative critique

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(SDS) and the values within the New Left were incredibly militaristic and chauvinist. She argued that this type of sexist attitude pitted women against each other and perpetuated an aggressiveness that led to terrorism in the 1970s and women's subordination. See Robin Morgan, "Good-bye to All That," in, *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movemen*t, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Vintage Books, 1970). See also *The Demon Lover* (New York: Norton, 1988), 219 and Todd Gitlin's chapter "Women Revolution: in the Revolution" in, *The Sixties: Years of hope, Days of Rage* (New York, Bantem, 1987), 371. David Barber also holds a similar view to Morgan and Gitlin and writes about the ways in which the SDS ignored feminist debates in his chapter "The New Left and Feminism, 1965-1969." In his book he analyzes the rise of militancy within the New Left and concludes that, ignoring feminist debates in addition to race were the fundamental reasons why the SDS subsequently fell apart in 1969. David Barber*, A Hard Rain Fell: SDS and why it failed* (Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press, 2008), 115.

15. Carolee Schneemann quoted in *IKON* num. 5 (March, 1968), 97. Carolee Schneemann Papers 1959-1994, Getty Research Institute, California, 950001, series I, box 7, folder 8,

reveals just how neglected feminist debates and concerns were within the New Left, including Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and within anti-psychiatry.

Elisa Auther and Adam Lerner's introduction to *West of Center Art and the Counterculture in America*, *1967-1977* considers why art historians have not examined the significant influence that the counterculture had on various forms of artistic practice and its marginalization within the discipline of art history. They note that not only has there not been a single survey text on the counterculture, but also that the major texts on 1960s art view the impact of the counterculture as secondary to the art of the period:

> The counterculture was defined as beyond the history of art because there was never a category within the narrative of contemporary art history that could contain it. It is not surprising that when the counterculture is discussed in art history, it is considered as an element of other histories, such as protest art, identity politics, or video art.[16]

For Auther and Lerner there can be no distinction between "the art of the counterculture and the movement of the counterculture [...]."[17] They see them as virtually the same thing. This parallel presents a challenge to art history because it opposes traditional methodologies of visual analysis. One of the reasons why the aesthetics of the counterculture has not been given adequate attention within art history, according to Lerner and Auther, is because it was considered a "regional movement" that took place in the west coast in America. By situating the west as an important center for artistic production, they reposition the New York avant-garde and call its "central" status into question. Their methodological approach reassesses the ways in which artistic exchanges took place between, across and among the west and east coasts of the US: "Contemporary art history is dominated by the avant-garde, and, for most scholars, if the avant-garde is one thing, it is international. Its locus in New York City serves only to

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16. Elisa Auther and Adam Lerner, "The Counterculture Experiment: Consciousness and Encounters At the Edge of Art" in *West of Center Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America,* 1965-1970, edited by Elisa Auther and Adam Lerner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), xxiv.

17. Lerner and Auther, *West of Center*, xxiv.

reinforce this connection with other cities."[18] For Auther and Lerner, the counterculture did not blend well with the dominant narratives of the New York avant-garde or the political histories of the 1960s. This was largely due to the fact that many of the counterculture's methods of social transformation were perceived to be divorced from the histories of the avant-garde.[19]

Auther and Lerner position the origins and roots of the counterculture as a regionally specific and ultimately "west-coast" contribution. This shift of focus from the New York avant-garde allows them to reconsider the political impact that the counterculture had on various modes of artistic production. However, their definition of the New York avant-garde and references to New York happenings and Fluxus is limiting. Moreover, Schneemann is not recognized as being part of the New York avant-garde and her affiliation with the Judson Dance Theater is also not mentioned. As I have indicated, Rosak's text, which Auther and Lerner largely rely on as a reference to counterculture, does not mention Schneemann's contribution to The Dialectics of Liberation. Moreover, her performances cannot be regionally defined by Auther and Lerner's definition. For example, *Meat Joy* (1964) was performed in three different locations: Paris, London and New York. So, where are we to place Schneemann's kinetic theatre within art history or indeed the countercultural movement?

My research demonstrates that Schneemann's kinetic theatre cannot be framed by or neatly recovered within a history of the counterculture in a straightforward way. Rather, my analysis of her performances and position as a female artist within the avant-garde reveal a far more complicated narrative than that which Auther and Lerner present.[20]Schneemann's kinetic theatre bears a complex relationship to the

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18. Ibid, xxiv.

19. Ibid, xxiv. For example, building and living in radical communes often alienated individuals from the political agenda of 1960s radicalism.

20. I am referring to her important position as a female artist within the New York and international avant-garde. This point been made by Sally Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); Carolee Schneemann quoted in "Interior Squirrel and the Vicissitudes of History" in *Perform, Repeat, Record* ed. by Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 443; James Harding, *Cutting Performances Collage*

countercultural movement. If her artistic and political interventions are not understood within 1960s history then it becomes difficult to see how her artistic practice exposed gender divisions within the countercultural movement.

Historicizing Kinetic Theatre

In order to place Schneemann's kinetic theatre within the aesthetic and political context of the countercultural movement, it is essential to examine the origins of the term, which are rooted in the 1960s. Art critics such as Lee Baxandall, Michael Kirby, Alfred Hansen, Grace Glueck and Richard Kostelantez, specifically refer to Schneemann's term and recognize its emergence alongside aesthetic developments within multimedia performances, happenings and environments. In Michael Kirby's 1965 article on "New Theatre" he observes that a non-traditional form of theatre was beginning to emerge as a hybridization of painting and sculpture. Schneemann's concept of kinetic theatre is listed among artists such as Allan Kaprow, Anne Halprin, Jim Dine, and Ray Gun. The Happening is an artistic concept that was initially developed by Kaprow. Kinetic theatre was part of a number of artistic innovations occurring at the time including Kaprow's happenings and La Monte Young's Theatre of Eternal Music. Schneemann and Kaprow both began their artistic lives as painters and were interested in using happenings, environments and performance art as a critical means to expand the traditional and formalist categories, which defined painting purely in term of an autonomous art object. In Kaprow's 1958 article "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock" he described the critical impact that Jackson Pollock left behind within visual culture. Kaprow attributed his legacy to opening up new possibilities of what had previously and traditionally defined the art object: [21]

Events, Feminist Artists and the American Avant-Garde (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), 21; Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 33.

21. Amelia Jones also explores the influence that Allan Kaprow's text had on 1960s artistic forms of practice. See her book *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 56-57.

> Young artists need no longer say, "I am a painter" or "a poet" or "a dancer." They are simply "artists." All of life will be open to them. They will discover out of the ordinary things the meaning of ordinariness. They will not try to make them extraordinary but will only state their real meaning. But out of nothing they will devise the extraordinary and then maybe nothingness as well. People will be delighted and horrified, critics will be confused or amused, but these, I am certain will be the alchemies of the 1960s.[22]

For Kaprow and many others, including Schneemann, the incorporation of everyday experience into art was necessary in order to challenge the formalist and modernist definition of art. In this way art did not have to be legitimized through its medium or the object. Schneemann also saw the early developments of her kinetic theatre as an extension of her painting practice. She writes:

> Painters' visions were the origin of a theatre of images. Happenings made the bridge from painting to multi-media by a unique fusion (and confusion) of script, score, notation, rehearsals, anti-rehearsals, and free spontaneous interactions. For most of us certain formal parameters were to be thrown open, and the risk of unpredictability and incorporation of random factors presaged burgeoning forms of social protest in our volatile culture.[23]

In the late 1950s and early 1960s Schneemann created three-dimensional painting constructions. These mixed media objects challenged the frame and the two-dimensional boundaries that had traditionally defined the medium of painting. This is the subject of Chapter One. The incorporation of her body as a medium in her early and very first kinetic theatre performance *Eye/Body* (1962-1963) must be examined in relation to her painting constructions which she used as a necessary and vital component of her performance. Schneemann's decision to move into performance art emerged simultaneously alongside the development of her kinetic theatre. This intervention grew from a dissatisfaction with painting because it was restricted to the frame, and its two-

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22. Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," 1958, in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, check date, 7.

23. Carolee Schneemann quoted in "American Experimental Theatre: Then and Now", *Performing Arts Journal*, vol. 2. No. 2 (Autumn, 1970), 21-22.

dimensionality. Schneemann also explains that one of the reasons why she included her body in *Eye/Body* was because she was interested in dimensionality and using technology to animate and expand her painting constructions. Like so many artists of the period, Schneemann's kinetic theatre emerged from a desire to interrogate and deconstruct painting. Her painting constructions challenged the two-dimensionality of the medium and expanded the frame. For example in Richard Kostelantez's seminal book *The Theatre of Mixed Means* (1968), he observes how new forms of art in the 1960s and 1970s were developing and expanding beyond the traditional and formal principles of theatre, painting and sculpture. He saw these developments crucially taking place within: "happenings," "the new theatre," "events," "activities," "painter's theatre," "kinetic theatre," or "action theatre."[24] He uses the term "Theatre of Mixed Means" to distinguish traditional forms of theatre from what he sees as innovative aesthetic practices such as Schneemann's kinetic theatre and happenings. For Kostelantez, La Monte Young's "Theatre of Eternal Music" and Schneemann's kinetic theatre provided a form of sensory excess and bombardment. Kostelantez explained, "that 'The Theatre of Mixed Means' is an art for the age of informational overload, as well as the era of polymorphously libidinal leisure that is superseding the era of phallic concentration, whether at orgasmic pleasure or productive work."[25] The importance of intimate and physical contact within Schneemann's group choreography was a critical aspect of her kinetic theatre and it did not go unnoticed by critics.

The aesthetic qualities that Kostelantez refers to have taken precedence over an analysis of Schneemann's kinetic theatre which takes into account its fundamental relationship to the political and aesthetic aims of 1960s, anti-war ands countercultural movements, such as the New Left and the Students for a Democratic Society. As art historian Carrie Lambert-Beatty explains, many of the aesthetic principles which defined artistic groups like the Judson Dance Theatre, happenings, Fluxus and the The Living

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24. Kostelantez, "The Theatre of Mixed Means," 40.

25. Ibid, 40.

Theatre, also related to participatory forms of democracy that were exhibited within the SDS. She writes:

> Certainly, Judson Dance Theatre emerged at a cultural moment when ideas about direct communication and unmediated interaction were brought into focus and invested with significance in a new way across a range of disciplines and contexts - as in 1963's *Behavior in Public Places*, in which sociologist Erving Goffman had to delineate as a special object of study the phenomenon of situated, embodied communication, in which people were "copresent" in time and space. Likewise, what Goffman called copresence was, at the same moment, undergirding the social vision of the emerging New Left, whose emphasis on participatory democracy as an antidote to the "remote control economy" and the "structural separation of people from power" animated the 1962 "Port Huron Statement" of Students for a Democratic Society."[26]

For Lambert-Beatty, these aesthetic characteristics, which demonstrate the importance of haptic experience, immediacy, participatory action, audience involvement, ephemerality and indeterminacy, are not arbitrary. Rather, they correspond to the social and political aims that were articulated in the New Left. Although Lambert-Beatty does not cite Schneemann's kinetic theatre as an example, I want to argue that her work relates aesthetically and politically to the participatory forms of democracy that were also practiced in the Students for a Democratic Society. The lack of reference to Schneemann is a significant omission which I address in this study.

The idea of participatory democracy resides at the core of the SDS. Their student manifesto, known as the "Port Huron" statement, was initially drafted by Tom Hayden and Alan Harber in 1961 and was developed collaboratively. It involved hours of collective debate with students and activists from the SDS and in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The final document was presented at the first SDS conference during the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis, in Lake Michigan by Hayden, who at the time was the president of the Michigan SDS chapter. One of the fundamental concerns of the SDS in the early 1960s was the role of the university and its need for

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26. Carrie Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 24.

reform. They argued that the "people's democracy" and the language of politics was not sufficiently fostered at the university: "but apathy is not simply of an attitude; it is a product of social institutions and of the structure and organization of higher education itself. The extracurricular life is ordered according to in loco parentis theory which ratifies the administration as the moral guardian of the youth."[27] If the university continued to benefit the status quo and produce "model citizens," then the SDS felt it could not provide an environment for political activism and change. They sought to create reform through activism and community outreach that instilled "student rights" and also challenged the authoritarian role of the institution. However, by 1965 the major political concerns for SDS were primarily directed to military draft and the anti-war movement.

Farewell to the 60s and Kinetic Theatre

By the 1960s the SDS became increasingly divided over debates about using violence as a means of form of resistance.[28] These internal struggles paralleled contemporary cultural traumas such as the Tet Offensive in 1968 and the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr., and Robert Kennedy. By 1969, news of the My Lai massacre had spread and the murder of Fred Hampton, who was a prominent leader of the Black Panther Party division in Chicago. The SDS, which was one of the largest student organizations in the country, had officially been taken over by an extreme and more militant faction known as the Weathermen.[29] Indeed, Jonathan Harris observes that "by 1969 [...] proliferating sub-cultural groups - such as the Yippies, Up Against the Wall

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27. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS): Port Huron Statement in "Takin' it to the Streets": *A Sixties Reader* Third Edition ed. Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 72.

28. Herbert Marcuse observes that by the late 1960s the New Left in America and Europe had been corrupted by militant theories of liberation and violence. See Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 36.

29. Please note that the Weather Underground only officially became known as the "Underground" after the Townhouse explosion March, 6, 1970. Prior to this event the radical group was known as the Weathermen and were a militant fraction of the SDS.

Motherfuckers, the Black Panthers and the Weathermen - making anti-Vietnam War protest central to their activities, had begun to 'weaponize' the consumer counterculture of Love and was by no means all you would need."[30] The historian Jeremy Varon notes that between 1969-1970 in the United States there were around 2800 attacks such as bombings, arson, and various forms of destruction on public, university, state and corporate property.[31] Moreover, in 1969 there were 281 attacks on ROTC buildings.[32] Within a period of a single year there were at least 233 bombs and planned attacks on college campuses and public property. On May 4, 1970 four individuals were killed by the National Guard at Kent State University; the soldiers who opened fire on students protesting against Nixon's decision to invade and bomb Cambodia. Ten days later there was another, less widely reported, massacre at Jackson State in Mississippi, which involved the deaths of three African American students who died from gun shots that were administrated by the National Guard during a student protest.

It is important to delineate this growing militarism within the anti-war community, as well as the collapse of the SDS, in order to understand why Schneemann's project of kinetic theatre ended in 1970. The "assassination" culture, in addition to the day-to-day violence that was coming from the extreme left and right, created a paranoid atmosphere within the anti-war community. In a 1977 roundtable discussion on "Time and Space" led by Lucy Lippard, Schneemann explains her involvement in the anti-war movement and how her original audience for kinetic theatre had disappeared. She states:

> The audience originally was a group of people who were being, keeping us company. They were, somehow, with their energies, marking our own risks, the steps that we were taking with changing media in the early sixties, and that's changed critically now, At that time, I had the feeling that we were creating an audience. They were essentially other artists, and then, like a fulcrum or interest around other artists, were people who

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30. Jonathan Harris, "Introduction" to *Summer of Love: Psychedelic Art, Social Crisis and the Counterculture in the 1960s*,(Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), 14.

31. Jeremy Varon, *Bringing The War Home: The Weather Underground, Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies,* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2004) 9.

32. Ibid. 9

> suddenly had the luxury or the psychic necessity in the sixties to care about art because its energy related to social and political energies and needs for assertions and transformations that everyone was sharing at that time. There wasn't the marked division at that time, for me, between the street movement- organizing, sensitivity awareness to police intrusions on group gatherings—that social situation, that political commitment was related to any kind of aesthetic groundwork being explored. It was all more of a piece. It was a much smaller world. It was more unified. At this point I no longer know who the audience is. My old audience seems to be dispersed. They're gone [...].[33]

The disappearance of Schneemann's audience can be directly related to the fact that the breakdown of the counterculture also occurred around 1969 and 1970. Scholars like Fredric Jameson, Jonathan Harris, Peter Braunstein and William Michael Doyle have noted this shift. For example, Doyle and Braunstein recognize that by the 1970s the counterculture had become increasingly fragmented. They observed the shifts towards "cultural liberation movements" which focused on self-actualization and "practical liberation" ideas which emphasized lifestyle and personal growth rather than radical politics and collective activism.[34] However, while my dissertation acknowledges the breakdown of the countercultural movement at the end of the 1960s as a factor that led to the disappearance of kinetic theatre in 1970, I depart from Schneemann in thinking that her audience was more cohesive and unified in the 1960s. Rather, this thesis examines how her performances expose the power struggles and gender inequalities that lay dormant within the anti-war movement, anti-psychiatry and the New Left. It asks why Schneemann abandoned her use of group choreography which was fundamental to her project of kinetic theatre and how the rise of militarism within the anti-war community and the breakdown of the counterculture affected Schneemann's kinetic theatre. The historical specificity of Schneemann's kinetic theatre and its relationship to the

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33. Carolee Schneemann in conversation with Lucy Lippard (July 20, 1979) for a roundtable discussion entitled "Time and Space" located in Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 9500001, box 70, folder 3.

34. William Michael Doyle and Peter Braunstein, *Imagine Nation*,12.

counterculture cannot be underestimated. Indeed, her artistic form of practice made specific interventions within the counterculture movement.

Literature Review on Schneemann

Feminist art historians, including Kristine Stiles, Rebecca Schneider, Amelia Jones and Jane Blocker have provided some of the primary scholarship on Schneemann. Although their research has been crucial for the understanding of the performative and bodily dimensions of her work, their explanations do not examine how her performances contribute to critical debates on the representation of the Vietnam War, the demystification of violence and the growing militarism within the New Left. Feminist scholarship has isolated and privileged an analysis of Schneemann's body in order to expose genderlessness as a fallacy within modern and postmodern art. This form of criticism has focused on an interpretation of the artist's body and, in doing so, fails to account for the political significance of her group choreography. Moreover, the relationships between Schneemann's kinetic theatre and the New Left, SDS, anti-psychiatry and anti-war activism have not been foregrounded in the past and current art historical literature on Schneemann.

Rebecca Schneider's book *The Explicit Body in Performance*, frames Schneemann's early performance works, such as *Eye/Body*, within the context of some of the existing feminist literature on Schneemann.[35] By applying a feminist and psychoanalytic approach, Schneider examines how the "explicit body" in contemporary feminist performance art sheds light on the limits of female representation within a highly visual and phallic economy. Schneider highlights a clear trajectory between Schneemann and various other female artists of the 1970s to more contemporary artists like Annie Sprinkle and Karen Finley, who also explicitly use their body as a medium.

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35. In my first chapter I provide an extensive literature review of how Schneemann's performance *Eye/Body* has been theorized in relation to feminist iconography and goddess symbolism. Each of these critics of Schneemann's work will be explored in detail in the following chapters. Here I will give a brief introduction of the key ideas that have shaped the critical canon as it relates to Schneemann in order to further elucidate my own contribution to the debates.

Schneider's analysis reveals the extent to which feminist performance art is indebted to Schneemann's earlier work and feminist performance art from the 1970s. Of Schneemann's work she writes:

> Because she made her body the literal site of so much of her art, and because she underscored her sexuality as a creative force in her work, Schneemann was often dismissed as self-indulgent and narcissistic by the art establishment. But she was not alone. Other women, many influenced by Schneemann, had begun to make similar work confronting the sacrosanct boundaries separating female sexuality and artistic authority. The roots of feminist performance art, which would flourish in the 1970s, took obstinate hold on many boundaries, closely linked to the socially demarcated margins separating artist/woman, high/low, subject/object, began to leak and bleed together under the banner of political pressure.[36]

According to Schneider, the use of Schneemann's body denotes a form of agency because it challenges the gendered hierarchies that were largely at play within male dominated artistic groups such as Fluxus and happenings. In reference to a single still photograph taken from *Eye/Body*, Schneider explains that Schneemann's nudity is not necessarily the problem. Rather it is the agency of Schneemann's female body, which challenged the male dominated and authorial structure of power in the 1960s.[37] She observes that the sexism within the culture of the 1960s automatically linked masculinity to notions of authority and control. Therefore, the feminine body, and by extension Schneemann's body, was automatically linked to notions of passivity.

In 1998, Amelia Jones explored the term "body art" in her seminal text *Body Art/ Performing the Subject*. This major publication provided a critical interpretation for work by female artists like Schneemann, Hannan Wilke and Ana Mendieta. For Jones, "body art" challenges modernist forms of art criticism. She observes how the body subverts the Kantian and disinterested approach, which has dominated much of art history and

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36.Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (New York: Routledge,) 31.

37. Ibid, 35.

modern art criticism. Significantly, Jones acknowledges the ways in which modernist forms of art criticism began to resurface in 1980s art criticism:[38]

> My interest in the work of Mendieta, Schneemann, Kusama, and other body artists is informed both by a desire to rethink postmodern culture (and subjectivity) in the broadest sense and by a desire to push beyond what I perceive to be the prescriptive nature of 1980s art history and criticism as well as its rather narrowly conceived focus on the formal or narrative structure of work [...] I am intrigued by the propensity of body art to unveil the hidden assumptions still embedded in critical discussions about postmodernism, its interweaving of the corporeal, the political, and the aesthetic[…].[39]

Jones argues that body art solicits a spectator and therefore provides an intimate form of intersubjective exchange. In arriving at this idea, she employs a phenomenological framework largely informed by the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty alongside feminist and poststructuralist theory. One of Jones's most important contributions to the study of contemporary performance art and feminist theory is her critical analysis of the body. For Jones, the use of the body as a medium is a construction of the self. In other words, the body cannot be understood as an authentic and direct reflection of the artist and the self:

> The self is inexorably embodied, body art tell us. And yet, as I will argue these works suggest, this does not mean that the performed body/self is ever completely legible or fixed in its effects. Body art, through its very performativity and its unveiling of the body of the artist, surfaces the insufficiency and incoherence of the body/self (or the body-as-subject)

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38. For a discussion about the debate over whether or not female artists should use their body in performance art please refer to Mary Kelly's article "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism" *Screen*, vol. 22, no. 3 (1981), 91; Griselda Pollock has written a defense of Kelly's argument which situates this text within a historical and theoretical framework of late 1970s British feminist art criticism. For Pollock, Lacanian and Brechtian theory is essential for examining the feminist interchanges between, psychoanalysis, language and visual culture. Her attention to Brechtian and Lacanian theory perhaps sheds light on the differences between 1970s American feminist debates and 1980s British feminist debates that took place. This view of the body, she argues, is in contradiction to the more Lacanian and feminist psychoanalytic approach to which she aligns herself. See Griselda Pollock, "Screening the Seventies: Sexuality and Representation in feminist practice - a Brechtian perspective" in *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader,* ed. Amelia Jones (London: Routlege, 2003), 76-93.

39. Amelia Jones, *Body Art/ Performing the Subject*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press),31.

> and its inability to deliver itself fully (whether to the subject-in-performance herself or himself or to the one who engages with this body) [...].[40]

Thus, the body cannot be interpreted in a straightforward way. Rather, Jones encourages art historians and critics to examine how body art reveals the limits of representation within visual culture. The "body" cannot reflect a direct and authentic representation of the artist and author. She explains how body art is a construction and points to the ways in which this construction is both limited to, and defined by, symbolic modes of representation.

In her 2004 book *What the Body Cost*, Jane Blocker is interested in how performance art is intrinsically linked to notions of desire. For Blocker, to "write a history of performance art is therefore to engage in the pleasures of the text."[41] She proceeds to argue that this task includes the ways in which the body is always caught up with complex notions of desire which are also solicited by the performer and the art historian. Blocker's definition of the body is a theoretical interpretation and one of its main characteristics she argues "is this quality of 'never knowing' that is the body's defining feature."[42] In other words, Blocker's definition of the body is similar to Jones's analysis because she insists that the body "lies on contested ground and at the limit of knowledge itself."[43] By taking a feminist approach Blocker examines how and why the body became such a contested medium especially within a particular moment of artistic production. According to Blocker, using the body as a medium within performance art enabled artists to liberate themselves from traditional forms of display such as the gallery, or the institutional setting of the museum. Furthermore, it was also an attempt to protect art from reduction to a commodity or object. The practice rejected the aesthetic

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40. Ibid, 34.

41. Jane Blocker, *What the Body Cost: Desire, History and Performance* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press), xi.

42. Ibid, 7.

43. Ibid, 7.

purity of Greenberg's "disinterested contemplation."[44] Crucially, however, Blocker demonstrates that introducing the living body into a form of aesthetics was not without cost. For example, both male and female artists used their body as an artistic medium in the 1960s and 1970s; however when female artists like Schneemann displayed their body as a conceptual object their work was not received in the same way as their male contemporaries. Moreover, the female body was read as something that had to be managed and controlled through a highly conceptual and masculine framework. For example, Blocker explains how Schneemann adopts a male persona in her performance *Eye/Body* (1962) in order to distance herself from the "body she is assumed only to be."[45] In this work, Schneemann is both the subject and the creator, which ultimately challenges the sexist and gendered assumptions of the female body in the 1960s.

In the chapters that follow, I will examine the use of the body in Schneemann's kinetic theatre and in particular how it relates to her group choreography. My definition of the body builds on the theoretical writings of feminist art historians and, like Jones and Blocker, I do not examine the body in a literal way. I am also interested in how Schneemann's performances reveal the way in which the body is caught in a dialectic process of visualization that momentarily holds a structure of identity. This is a particular form of identity that directly corresponds to a historically specific - 1960s countercultural - construction of the self. Moreover, these ideas were associated with a construction of the self that yielded the promise of liberation, collectivity and change. Yet, at the same time, Schneemann's kinetic theatre keeps these myths at bay. Performing these desires from a critical distance, liberation is never reconciled within Schneemann's use of the body, the group and her kinetic theatre performances.

It is surprising that Schneemann's archive has been given little attention within feminist art history, particularly as this material has been accessible to scholars since March 1996. This can be partially explained by the fact that it was not until 2011 that

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44. Ibid, 14.

45. Ibid, 62.

Kirstine Stiles' book *Corresponding Course: An Epistolary History of Carolee Schneemann* appeared. The book is an edited collection of Schneemann's letters of correspondence that range from the early 1950s up until the early 1990s. While the publication of Stiles' book made a large portion of Schneemann's archive available for scholars who had not had a chance to conduct primary research, these primary documents have not been historically contextualized.[46] In this dissertation, I employ a feminist methodology which builds on the existing art historical scholarship on Schneemann in order to provide a historical and critical interpretation of her kinetic theatre and the role it played within the countercultural movement. My research draws largely on primary resources from the Getty Institute in Los Angeles and the R.D. Laing archive, which is located at Glasgow University. In analyzing Schneemann's kinetic theatre, I also examine letters of correspondence, oral interviews, performances scores, still photographs and films.[47] I argue that both the contextual material, such as her letters of correspondence, and her use of material objects such as sculptural works and props, constituted a fundamental part of these performances and must be considered as such.

Overview

This thesis considers the nature and origins of Schneemann's kinetic theatre, its relationship to the counterculture of the time and the reasons for its disappearance in the 1970s. I argue in the following chapters that kinetic theatre is a unique countercultural artistic practice that belongs to the historical period of the 1960s. The rise of militarism within the countercultural movement and the New Left is a large but not determining factor that led Schneemann to abandon her project of kinetic theatre. Alternatively, I

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46. My primary research began in 2008 with a Getty grant and I did not have access to Stiles' book, which only became available in January of 2011 The majority of my research relies on the extensive archival work that I completed in 2008 and 2009. See Kristine Stiles, *Corresponding Course an epistolary history of Carolee Schneemann* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

47. The Schneemann papers are located in the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, CA. They were acquired in 1995 and were catalogued by Linda Bunting and made available to the public and scholars in 1996.

demonstrate that anxieties were already present within the countercultural movement. Her performances demonstrate that the violence that was actively campaigned for in the New Left, anti-psychiatry and anti-war politics was by all accounts from a feminist perspective still operating within the personal, group and social dynamics of the times. Thus, Schneemann's kinetic theatre made gender politics explicit not only in her artistic practice but also within the broader implications of the countercultural movement, avant-garde and anti-war politics in the 1960s.

I begin by examining the emergence of kinetic theatre by considering how the meaning of Schneemann's term is rooted in an artistic dialogue and correspondence with Stan Brakhage concerning their sense of political and social identity. In many ways their artistic personas both challenged and conformed to the countercultural movement. The subsequent chapters then proceed to examine her kinetic anti-war performances beyond the personal sense, in the wider context of the New Left, SDS and the anti-psychiatry movement. Chapter Two considers the artworks in relation to the psychological and personal effects of the Vietnam War and mass - atrocity images exploring their function as a resistance to media desensitization. The third chapter turns to the relationship between kinetic theatre and popular notions of liberation within anti-psychiatry. By returning to the personal and political experience of the countercultural movement the subject of group identity and violence is also re-examined in light of the themes explored in the first chapter. The final chapter further develops these themes by looking at the relation of Schneemann's kinetic work to the New Left's "neutral" position on violence and liberation. I argue that Schneemann's kinetic theatre not only actively defied the violence administered by the Cold War Military Industrial Complex, but also the separation between the micro and macro power structures exhibited within the "opposition" of the New Left.

Chapter Two sheds light on the crucial developments that led not only to the development of Schneemann's kinetic theatre, but also relate to an important political discussion that Schneemann shared with Brakhage about the use of the muse in art. Schneemann and Brakhage's debate over the muse was grounded in an aesthetic and

personal discussion regarding gender and the divisions of labor between the sexes. Her deconstruction of the muse is revealed in her kinetic theatre performance *Eye/Body* (1962-1963). Far from being a figure of an "Aquarian" Earth and Paint goddess that served male fantasies, I argue that Schneemann's ironic display of the Paint goddess, actively deconstructed sexist stereotypes of women. Moreover, Brakhage's persona of the "woodsman" in *Dog Star Man* not only corresponds to Schneemann's aesthetics interventions but also provides a critique of gender and masculinity. Both of these artistic personas: the "Aquarian Earth goddess" and the "mountain man" albeit visibly marked by gender and lived experience, demonstrate an alienated, non-unified and technological relationship to nature and the body. Ultimately, these artistic personas problematize the counterculture's unproblematic and feminized view of nature and gender. The personal problems that Schneemann and Brakhage discussed over the muse refer to the patriarchal structure of the family, the representation of women, gender equity and sexism. Kinetic theatre can be seen emerging through this discourse with Brakhage and as a result her practice continued to offer an investigation of gender and power within the larger countercultural movement.

The second chapter explores Schneemann's kinetic theatre in relation to Cold War neuroscience. The subject of media desensitization is examined through social debates that consider both Cold War practices and the anti-war aesthetics that Schneemann developed in her kinetic theatre performances, in addition to Brakhage's anti-war film *23 Psalm Branch* (1967). I argue that Schneemann's strategies were similar to those used in CIA-financed research on Cold War psychiatry. However, in contrast to the CIA's actual application of sensory deprivation, which was used as an attempt to win the war on "communism", Schneemann's fusion of art and technology create what I describe as a "laboratory of the senses". Kinetic theatre works such as *Snows* (1967) and *Illinois Central* (1968) can be seen as a series of experiments that were an attempt to sensitize her audience to images of atrocities in Vietnam. The overlaying of multiple media such as sound, video, group choreography and lighting effects in her performances work to

create a sensory overload, acting as a counterpoint to the sensory deprivation techniques used during the Cold War.

In the third chapter, I address a critical gap in the art historical discourse surrounding Schneemann's work by examining the uncharted relationships between the 1964 performance *Meat Joy* and the British anti-psychiatry movement. I highlight critical differences between Schneemann, Joseph Berke and R.D. Laing's theories of madness, liberation, the self and the body. Unlike the strategies that were practiced within anti-psychiatry, I argue that her kinetic theatre works neither appropriate madness, nor use the body as a tool for political liberation. Schneemann's use of group choreography, for example, shows an active use of the body as a metaphor for the breakdown of these very ideas. "Body balls" and "body packages" are terms she uses to describe the live sculptural structures that appear in her work, which are comprised of groups of choreographed performers arranging themselves into a number of shapes and configurations that resonate with 1960s symbols of free love and sexuality such as the "free wheel" and the "tree of life". These body sculptures have not been discussed as important signifying elements within the work, particularly in terms of how they "fail" as constructions. I argue that these bodily sculptures are created precisely in order to collapse (to fail), acting to challenge existing structures within the political sphere. In this way, Schneemann's strategic use of group choreography and live sculptures draws attention to the violence that was inherent in 1960s notion of collective identity and liberation.

My final chapter examines Schneemann's kinetic theatre performance *Round House* (1967), which took place in London at a conference entitled The Dialectics of Liberation. The subject of violence was a central theme that was examined by a range of invited speakers and theorists from the New Left, such as R.D. Laing, Stokely Carmichael, Paul Goodman and Herbert Marcuse. Indeed, Schneemann was the only female artist who was asked to participate and present her kinetic theatre within the context of the conference. In this chapter I argue that Schneemann's performance exposed the problematic nature of the theories of the New Left, in particular how

liberation is defined as "neutral" construct, but is in fact distinctly masculine. Within this context, I suggest that kinetic theatre, instead of offering an escape from it, worked to problematize 1960s political violence. These strategies were at odds with many of the invited speakers at the London conference. Using both men and women as part of the performance, *Round House* helped to expose the problem of violence as a larger social situation, which was not exclusively an issue for women in the New Left.

Although the subject of violence was prevalent at the Dialectics of Liberation conference, the speakers refused to engage in a discussion of gender politics. In this light, it is imperative to see how Schneemann's performance provided a demystification of violence by exposing gender politics as a critical and missing issue within the countercultural movement, the New Left and anti-psychiatry. The lack of attention paid to Schneemann's contribution to these debates demands redress. All of my previous chapters demonstrate a central aim of this thesis, which is to establish a link between Schneemann's kinetic theatre, and specific examples within the countercultural movement such as the anti-war movement, anti-psychiatry and the New Left.

The loss of Schneemann's kinetic theatre does not mean that gender politics were resolved and that the anti-war issues, which were at stake in her work, were suddenly no longer relevant. If Schneemann's artistic and political interventions are not contextualized and placed within a specific moment of history then it becomes difficult to see the legacy she left not only within the past but contemporary art as well. A historical and theoretical interpretation of Schneemann's kinetic theatre broadens the scope of feminist art history and recognizes how her kinetic theatre contributed to a feminist and countercultural practice.

Chapter 1

A Window for Stan Brakhage

> During my first years in New York City, I found an abandoned fur cutter's loft, on 29th Street and begin to build these large painting constructions that have motorized parts. Within this intensified dimensionality, I activate a series of photographs, *Eye Body*, in 1963 – an extended collage, which integrates fragments of photographs, mirrors, wood, panting, and motorized umbrellas. In 1963 the use of my nude body was a source of consternation. The *Eye Body* photographic sequence was considered narcissistic, exhibitionist […]The principle of embodiment, the extension of the self and to turn the self into a collage – was not understood. My intention was contrary to most cultural interpretations at a time. This work evolved as a constant series of actions, of spontaneously physical engagements photographed by my inspiring friend, the Icelandic painter Erró .[1]

Carolee Schneemann's performance *Eye/Body: 36 Transformative Actions* (1962-1963) has become one of the most iconic works of feminist and postwar art (fig. 1). To complete this work, Schneemann posed naked in her New York loft for a series of "thirty-six transformative actions" which featured the artist interacting with her own painting constructions and various studio props. These "actions" were then photographed and documented by the Icelandic artist Erró . With a few exceptions, there has been a tendency within the literature on feminist art history to focus only on one or two images from this series.[2] For example, feminist scholars such as Gloria Orenstein, Rebecca

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1. Carolee Schneemann quoted in an interview with Daniella Knafo, *In her own image Women's Self Representation in Twentieth Century Art*(Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009), 90.

2. Although Pamela Lee does not discuss Schneemann's painting constructions in *Eye/Body* she does provide an important analysis of her painting practice and thus demonstrates how this performance relates to her later and more public kinetic theatre works. See Pamela Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in The Art of The 1960s*, (Cambridge: MIT, 2004), 204. For a further discussion of Schneemann's earlier paintings and her relationship to the constructions see Kristine Stiles and Carolee Schneemann "The Painter as an Instrument of Real Time" in *Imaging Her Erotics: Essays, Interview, Projects* (Cambridge: MIT, 2002), 2-20; Brian Wallace also has an important introduction to the 2009 exhibition of Schneemann's works, which was curated by Maura Reilly and held at the P. P. O. W. Gallery. See Brian Wallace, "Carolee

Schneider, Johannes Birringer and, to some extent Schneemann herself have all emphasized the "goddess"[3] symbolism in this work, in particular in the image of Schneemann naked with two snakes (fig. 2). A considerable amount of criticism and attention has been paid to this image and it is often used in feminist exhibitions to discuss the emergence and development of body art and performance art.[4] The emergence of Schneemann's artistic persona, what I will term the "Paint goddess," played a significant part in the feminist readings of her kinetic theatre works in the 1970s; however, before delving into this body of criticism, I will briefly examine why the twelve painting constructions with which she posed are rarely mentioned within art history criticism. It is significant that that the eighteen photographs and the twelve painting constructions or

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Schneemann: Within and Beyond the Premises," in *Carolee Schneemann: Painting What it Became*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 4-10 and Lucy Bradnock's review of the exhibition "Carolee Schneemann: Painting, What it Became" *Rebus*, Spring 2009 issue 3, http://www.essex.ac.uk/arthistory/rebus/issue3.htm [accessed January 15, 2010].

3. In using the term "goddess" I am referring to the feminist analysis that was produced in the second-wave feminist movement. In the second-wave feminist movement, art historians such as Gloria Orenstein and critics such as Susan Hiller and were interested in examining goddess iconography in art works that were produced by women. This interest was connected to a form of conscious raising that allowed women to discuss female empowerment and oppression. There was a special issue dedicated to goddess art and iconography in the feminist journal *Hersies*. Moreover, Schneemann also used public forums such the feminist journal *Hersies* in addition to her 1977 performance *Homerunmuse* to discuss her works in relation to goddess iconography. These observations were noted and have had an effect on the historical interpretation of her works since the second-wave feminist movement. For a discussion of Schneemann's relationship to goddess iconography and feminism see Gloria Orenstein, "The Reemergence of the Archetype of the Great Goddess in Art by Contemporary Women," *Heresies* (Spring 1978), 71; Carolee Schneemann writing to Susan Hiller, February 15, 1978 in *Corresponding Course An Epistolary History of Carolee Schneemann And Her Circle*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 295-297; Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 131; Jonhannes Birringer, "Imprints and Re-visions: Carolee Schneemann's Visual Archaeology" *Performance Art Journal* 15:2 (1993), 34, and Pamela Lee, *Chronophobia*, 2004, 201. Although the scholarship has shifted from a goddess interpretation of her 1960s kinetic theatre works, Schneemann's public persona in the late 1970s had an impact on the critical and feminist reception of her works. I develop a critical analysis of Schneemann's " Paint goddess" and feminist persona and situate this in relation to a discussion of gender politics of the 1960s. This does not abandon a discussion of feminist art; rather it deals more historically with these issues. Moreover, my reading of this artistic persona deploys archival material and letters of correspondence, which in many ways betray Schneemann's later 1970s artistic persona. Yet, at the same time these materials and documents shed light on the aesthetic contributions that she made in the 1960s.

4. I am referring to the 2007 feminist exhibition *WACK: Art and the Feminist Revolution*. See also *The Power of Feminist Art The American Movement and the 1970s History and Impact* edited by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harry N. Abrams, INC., 1993), 161.

"environmental elements", such as *Window to Stan Brakhage*,[5] (1962) *Colorado House,* (1962) *Fur Wheel,* (1962) and *Ice Box* (1962*)*, which were critical for Schneemann's thirty-six "transformative actions" are rarely examined within the aesthetic and historical context, from which they emerged.[6]

Let us consider another image that was taken for *Eye/Body* (fig. 3). In this photograph Schneemann is also naked but she is kneeling down, so her body is completely covered and immersed by her large painting construction *Colorado House* (45" x 32.5" x 17.5"). This mixed media sculptural object was primarily made from wood and other materials such as mirrors, glass bottles, fur, gloves, a cut up oil painting, oil paint and a flag. At the top of the construction, Schneemann glued on a photographic reproduction of a small early modern self-portrait (possibly Rembrandt) and positioned it alongside a vertical piece of wood. Schneemann has her head through the middle of the open structure and her arms appear awkwardly wrapped around the entire object. She also holds a very large cow's skull, which is positioned at an angle in order to highlight the three heads: the skull, Schneemann and the old master self-portrait, located just above. The skull is an ironic reference to the traditional use of the memento mori, which figured in so many of the Dutch vanitas such as Hans Holbein's 1533 *The Ambassadors* (fig. 4). However, unlike Holbein's portrait, Schneemann does not deploy this object in order to provide an optical illusion such as anamorphosis. Rather, the skull draws attention to the structure of painting, specifically, the frame itself. This is most likely a reference to the death of modernist painting as, since the late 1950s, Schneemann had been interrogating the function of the frame. Indeed, her critique of the modernist form is

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5. Carolee Schneemann's painting constructions such as *Colorado House*, *Four Fur Cutting Boards* (1962) *Window to Brakhage* and *Gift Science* (1962) are all mentioned as being part of the performance *Eye/Body* in the 1998 exhibition *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the object, 1949-1979* edited by Kristine Stiles and Paul Schimmel (California: Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, 1998).

6. The recent 2009 exhibition at the P.P.O.W. Gallery, *Carolee Schneemann: Painting, What it Became* is important because it brought more awareness to Schneemann's painting practice. However, the exhibition did not fully contextualize Schneemann's painting constructions in relation to her performance *Eye/Body*.

illuminated by her menacing, but mostly ironic grin, which points to the limits of the two-dimensional frame. However, this is not to suggest that Schneemann completely rejects the medium of painting altogether, rather her body becomes an added dimension within her painting construction and a central part of the expanded frame. The object *Colorado House* is a critical and necessary part of the performance *Eye/Body* in addition to its photographic documentation, yet this work has not been fully considered in any of the scholarly debates on performance and feminist art history.[7] As I will argue, Schneemann's body is most often theorized as the dominant figure in *Eye/Body* with the result that the painting constructions which also appear are consigned to the background, thereby diminishing their significance to the performance itself.

There are historical reasons why so many feminist art historians have focused exclusively on the role of Schneemann's body in this performance. In the 1990s, this form of scholarship facilitated important debates about gender politics, feminist art and helped to develop a critical awareness and understanding of performance art and body art in the contemporary period. For example, in Amelia Jones's seminal text *Body/Art Performing Subject* (1998), she defines "body art" by using two examples of Schneemann's most infamous performances: *Eye/Body* and her later, and arguably most well known, feminist work *Interior Scroll* (1977). For Jones, body art and by extension Schneemann's performances are "antiformalist" and open up an intersubjective relationship between the artist, viewer and critic:

> Schneemann's works thus points to what I will argue in this book to be the particular potential of body art to destabilize the structures of conventional art history and criticism. In addition, *Interior Scroll* opens up the issue of the potentially heightened effects of feminist body art, as well as body-oriented projects by otherwise nonnormative artists who particularize their

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7. I am referring to feminist performance art scholars such as Rebecca Schneider, Jane Blocker, and Amelia Jones. These theorists focus on the agency of Schneemann's body in *Eye/Body*; however there is a considerable gap in the literature, which was largely produced in the 1990s that specifically addresses Schneemann's concept of kinetic theater and her painting constructions. See Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 130; Jane Blocker, *What The Body Cost: Desire, History and Performance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 98; Amelia Jones, *Body Art Performing the Subject*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 5.

> bodies/selves in order to expose and challenge the masculinism embedded in the assumption of "disinterestedness"[8]

Jones provides a rich feminist context for Schneemann's performances. She foregrounds the agency of the female body and recognizes how it disrupts traditional forms of art criticism, which are, she argues, infused with a Kantian mode of disinterested aesthetics. Jones's analysis articulates a very specific definition of body art, which attempts to further a more theoretical, postmodern and non- essentialist understanding of 1970s feminist art.[9] However, by classifying Schneemann's two performances as body art, she creates a feminist continuum between these two works, despite the fact that *Interior Scroll* was produced nearly twelve years after the completion of *Eye/Body*. I agree with Jones that body art is antiformalist in its impulse and it challenges a strictly formalist interpretation of art. This is precisely because the work is attentive to issues of class, power, gender and race. However, while my reading of Schneemann's body is informed by Jones's theoretical model, I examine this performance and display of the body within a very specific historical moment of the 1960s. As I will argue, it is important to differentiate antiformalism from something that is antiform. I am not suggesting that Jones collapses these distinctions, rather that a more historically situated analysis of these works is needed. Schneemann's use of the body in *Eye/Body* in addition to her painting constructions such as *Colorado House*, and *Ice Box*, are formal and conceptual dimensions, that in my view ought to be read as codependent. As we shall see, a more historical understanding of *Eye/Body* will shed light on the development of Schneemann's kinetic theatre and reveal the critical role that the body played in her 1960s performances.

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8. Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 5.

9. In her introduction Jones argues for a critical and post-structuralist interpretation of "body art." Unlike feminist theorists such as Griselda Pollock and Mary Kelly, Jones's definition of the body is not an authentic and literal interpretation of the artist. Rather, she argues for a more nuanced interpretation of the way and which both female and male artists introduced the body as a critical medium in the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, she argues that "body art" deconstructs modernist forms of art criticism, which is precisely what Mary Kelly and Griselda Pollock do not see in feminist works that use the body. Ibid, 22.

Feminism and the theorization of body art, have created an important critical context for understanding Schneemann's performances and have been at the forefront of recent feminist exhibitions of Schneemann's art. However, received definitions of body art and performance art do not account for the specificity of the 1960s as a historical context for Schneemann's kinetic theatre. An analysis that foregrounds the aesthetic and historical specificity, as I am suggesting here, puts alternative questions into play: what were the conditions in which Schneemann produced her work? who was her intended audience? and how were they meant to function on an aesthetic and political level? These questions are rarely addressed in the existing literature and categories of feminist performance art and theory.

As I suggested in the Introduction, the ahistorical framing of *Eye/Body* in contemporary exhibitions such as the 1984 Whitney Exhibition *Blam*, does not make for a nuanced enough reading of Schneemann's work. However, with the exception of a relatively small 2009 exhibition of Schneemann's works at the P.P.O.W. gallery – *Carolee Schneemann: Painting, What it Became* – little has changed within the scholarship to provide a more thorough reading of *Eye/Body*. For example, in the 2007 feminist exhibition *WACK: Art and the Feminist Revolution*, Schneemann's photographs of her performance were literally framed as a singular and individual artwork. *Eye/Body* is presented through a few photographs (the image of Schneemann and the two snakes) and there is no indication of how the performance initially began, or why it was made in the first place. Moreover, little explanation is given as to what kind of audience or viewer Schneemann would have had in the 1960s. To the right of *Eye/Body* at this exhibition, there were a series of photographs from *Interior Scroll*. Again, this pairing of these works presents a linear narrative of feminist art, which oversimplifies the aesthetic and political use of Schneemann's body and overlooks the negotiations that Schneemann had to make not only with male artists in the 1960s, but also with female art historians and critics. In 1975, Schneemann performed *Interior Scroll*, in East Hampton, for the "Women Here and Now" show. For this work, she appeared naked and drew a scroll from her vagina and proceeded to read the text out loud. Schneemann wrote the script and it comes across

as a dialogue that takes place between a female artist and a structuralist male artist who clearly does not approve of a "painterly" and "gestural" aesthetics. Schneemann states:

> he protested
> you are unable to appreciate
> the system the grid
> the numerical rational
> procedures –
> the Pythagorean cues – [10]

This described interaction has been outlined by Jane Blocker as a "symbol for the feminist struggle in the art world."[11] Some feminist art historians have speculated that the man in the script was the filmmaker Stan Brakhage.[12] However, in a 1988 interview with the film critic Scott MacDonald, Schneemann publically revealed that the dialogue for *Interior Scroll* was based on a conversation that Schneemann had with the prominent art historian Annette Michelson.[13] The performance was intended to be a "secret letter to Michelson"[14] who according to Schneemann "couldn't look at my films."[15] The fact that the script was based on an exchange between two women, does not necessarily delegitimize the sexism that many female artists experienced in the 1960s and 1970s. However, this crucial exchange between Michelson and Schneemann is not mentioned anywhere in the exhibition.[16] However, the memory of Schneemann's performance and

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10. Carolee Schneemann quoted in Jane Blocker's book, *What the Body Cost: Desire, History And Performance*, 125.

11. Ibid, 125.

12. There were also rumors that the man in the performance was the filmmaker Anthony McCall. See, David Levi Strauss, " Love Rides Aristotle Through The Audience: Body, Image and Idea In The Work of Carolee Schneemann," in *Imaging Her Erotics: Essays, Interviews, Projects* (Massachusetts: MIT press, 2011), 319.

13. Schneemann talks about this performance as a response to Annette Michelson in an interview with Scott MacDonald, *A Critical Cinema: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 143.

14. Carolee Schneemann quoted in an interview with David Levi Strauss in, *Imaging Her Erotics: Essays, Interviews, Projects* (Massachusetts: MIT press, 2001), 319.

15. Ibid, 319.

16. Ibid, 319.

this discussion in particular is still very much remembered as a conversation that occurred between a woman and a man. The public revelation that the man from *Interior Scroll* was a well-known art historian complicates Schneemann's relationship to feminist art history. The omission of this fact at the 2007 exhibition creates a cohesive narrative of Schneemann's participation in the feminist movement without contextualizing her engagement with a wider audience.[17] As we shall see, Schneemann often worked in collaboration with male artists, such as the American filmmaker Stan Brakhage, and within male dominated circles, such as the antipsychiatry community, the New Left and the antiwar movement.

This chapter focuses on Schneemann's painting constructions, broadening the focus on *Eye/Body* to explore her formal and political investment in the body by placing it into a wider artistic and political conversation rooted in the 1960s. The chapter also examines her artistic correspondences with male artists such as Brakhage. By doing this I will not abandon a discussion of gender politics in favor of a discussion on form. Rather, my intention is to illuminate an important exchange between Schneemann and Brakhage, which was concerned with artistic perspectives on embodied, sensorial and visual perception, in addition to gender politics. These issues were crucial to Schneemann's practice as a whole. Once we understand them, then it is possible to have a more historical and critical comprehension of her use of the body and the role it played in the development of her kinetic theatre. This artistic correspondence in particular, highlights some of the key aesthetic questions, which Schneemann and Brakhage both explored in their work such as embodied perception, media desensitization, and gender politics. Brakhage examined these concerns specifically in film and Schneemann approached these visual interrogations through her painting constructions and the development of her kinetic theatre. As Pamela Lee astutely observes "*Eye/Body* stages, at a relatively early moment in her career, many of the concerns that Schneemann would bring to bear on her

17. In the exhibition and the exhibition catalogue there was no reference to Schneemann's conversation with Annette Michelson.

more "public" kinetic theatre."[18] Lee's observation is fundamental to my study because she recognizes an important and often understated link such as in Schneemann's interest in visual perception, and technology, which she also pursued in her more public kinetic theatre performances. However, in my analysis of *Eye/Body*, I do not categorize this as a private work; rather I place this performance in a wider artistic conversation about art and politics as exemplified in Schneemann's correspondence with Brakhage.

Although, as I explore later in the thesis, Schneemann returns to these questions through technology, multimedia and group choreography in her kinetic theatre, before she began using these advanced forms of technology in her performances, she was already pursuing questions of embodiment, perception, gender politics and themes of violence in her painting constructions as her exchange with Brakhage demonstrates. Moreover, this correspondence also sheds light on some of the reasons why Schneemann used her body as a medium long before the theorization of body art and, to some extent, the formal recognition of feminist art.

As we shall see in subsequent chapters, the use of the body, collaborative choreography, media, technology and audience participation is fundamental to Schneemann's kinetic theatre. Although there was no audience (in the traditional sense) or use of group choreography in *Eye/Body* this is not to suggest that Schneemann was working private or in isolation. Rather, this study and chapter in particular, investigates new archival material, in order to shed light on a complex narrative that accounts for the role of artistic collaboration, and multimedia experimentation in the development of Schneemann's kinetic theatre.

In the beginning of my analysis I will first use archival material in order to demonstrate that Schneemann was not working in isolation during the critical development of *Eye/Body.* The written and artistic exchange between Schneemann and Brakhage takes form of an artistic correspondence, which I refer to as "visual rhymes." These visual rhymes range from witty letters to essays and artistic objects that

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18. Lee, *Chronophobia*, 204.

Schneemann made for *Eye/Body*. Moreover, Schneemann's painting constructions were also studied and filmed by Brakhage for his film *Dog Star Man.* I will then turn to a discussion of how Schneemann's painting construction, *Window to Brakhage*, is rooted in an artistic and ongoing dialogue with Brakhage concerning the use of the muse and the symbol in art. This argument is discussed in relation to aesthetics in addition to personal and private accounts of 1960s gender politics. Lastly, I provide a comparative analysis of *Eye/Body* in relation to *Dog Star Man*, in order to shed light on how Schneemann's and Brakhage's use of their body in their respective works reflects an artistic persona that corresponds to their pervious discussions about the muse. This collaborative relationship provides insight into the aesthetic and political development of Schneemann's kinetic theatre and it reveals a far more nuanced and dynamic interpretation of *Eye/Body* than the current art historical literature provides.

A window of opportunity

On November 30, 1963, Stan Brakhage wrote a letter to Schneemann. By this time she had already begun her kinetic theatre performance *Eye/Body* and there had also been a series of violent events: the assassination of president John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963, followed by the November 23 televised murder of Lee Harvey Oswald who had killed Kennedy and was shot by Jack Ruby (fig. 5). In his letter to Schneemann it is clear that Brakhage was personally affected by these violent events. Five minutes before Brakhage heard the news that Kennedy had been shot he was verbally assaulted by a group of cowboys in a car "who yelled we're going to run you out of town, (and) aimed a finger-pistol at me."[19] In writing about this experience to Schneemann he reveals a sense of shame and embarrassment about his attitude towards the death of Kennedy:

19. Stan Brakhage to Carolee Schneemann, Robert Creely, Dick Higgins, P. Adams Sitney, and James Tenney November 30, 1963. Accessed in Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series III, box 35, folder 5-8. Portions of this letter were also specifically addressed to Schneemann.

> There is also something tangential to my feelings caused by the death of Kennedy. I have never before wept because of anything that happened to a public figure. I was shocked at my grief, embarrassed about it, have been struggling since to come to terms with it. Was my feeling perhaps touched off by the following occurrence [...][20]

Questioning the validity of his emotions, Brakhage wonders if he would have normally felt this way about Kennedy's death had his own life had not been at risk One can never know exactly what probed the cowboys to threaten him with a gun. Were these men, like Rubenstein, reacting to Kennedy's murder in a hyper-masculine defense? Did Brakhage reflect something queer and non-masculine, which threatened the cowboys in light of Kennedy's death? Or was this assault driven by events that were independent of the assassination? Whatever the outcome, it seems likely that Brakhage was unaware exactly what triggered this confrontation.

The day that Brakhage went into Custer County Colorado to take photographs for one of Bruce Nauman's films and was shouted at by the cowboys, he would have physically resembled this photograph (fig. 6) with long hair that was well past his shoulders and a pronounced beard. During this time he was also working on *Dog Star Man* (1961-64) a four-part 8mm film that he starred in and filmed with his wife Jane Brakhage in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.[21] In an attempt to identify with the character of the woodsman, a subject that he critically examined in his film, he grew his hair long and observed his own physical transformation as well as the public's reactions to his new appearance. In a 1963 interview with P. Adams Sitney, Brakhage described the day-to-day affects of living out this image:

> My hair was well down below my shoulders and my beard was halfway down my chest. It was a hard image to live with. I mean to walk down the

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20. Stan Brakhage to Carolee Schneemann, November 30, 1963 in Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series III, box 35, folder 5-8.

21. Jane Brakhage helped Stan Brakhage with the difficult shots. She also sewed his clothes and encouraged him to grow his hair long for the film. Jane Wodening (aka Mary Jane Brakhage; and note that her surname is now Wodening, the name she took after she divorced Brakhage) email correspondence with author, June 19, 2009. In future footnote references I will refer to correspondences with Jane using her surname Wodening.

> streets of Boulder, Colorado, carrying that kind of image, but I was aware that somehow I needed it. I cast myself as a woodsman with an ax and started climbing up the hill.[22]

For the conservative cowboys from Colorado, Brakhage was not man enough and his long hair visibly marked him as an outsider and a long-haired hippy.[23] In the midst of the New York avant-garde community, however, where Brakhage frequently went to screen his films, his appearance served to perpetuate a myth that he was a macho man living off the fruits of the land. In using the term avant-garde, I am referring to artistic circles in New York and to Brakhage's relationships with various artists and critics such as Carolee Schneemann, James Tenney, Jonas Mekas, Marrie Menken, Willard Maas, Meyer Deren, Dick Higgins, Robert Creely and P. Adams Sitney. Brakhage's interaction with the journal *Film Culture* is also significant and it can be examined as a document that outlines some of the critical debates that he shared about film in addition to 1960s culture.[24] Indeed, *Film Culture* and his letter to Schneemann (which was addressed to multiple artists and critics such as: Robert Creely, James Tenney and P. Adams Sitney) suggests not only that there was an avant-garde community, but also that these artists were not working in isolation.

The fact that Brakhage lived in a log cabin in Colorado, where he and his wife Jane Brakhage raised five children, not only adds to the construction of his mountain-

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22. P. Adams Sitney, "Interview with Stan Brakhage," in *Metaphors on Vision* originally published in *Film Culture* 30, Fall 1963, 9.

23. Andrew Herrick argues that long hair for men in the 1960s became a symbol of youth culture, radical politics and a critique of American society. He notes that in the 1970s it quickly became appropriated and these "signatures" such as long hair and bellbottoms were not recognized as countercultural symbols. Moreover, I would suggest that in the 1970s long hair for men became more acceptable and it was a style that was sported by many bikers in the Hells Angels. Indeed, longhair for men became attributed to a masculine and working class image. However, in the 1960s this look was seen as a threat to the masculine order and this is clearly proven in Brakhage's case. For more on the politics of men's hair in the 1960s and 1970s see Andrew Herrick, "A hairy predicament: The problem with long hair in the 1960s and 1970s" (master's thesis, West Virginia University, 2006), 7-14.

24. For more on Brakhage's public objection to "hippy culture" which he aligns with fascism please see his public letter to Jonas Mekas, initially published in *Film Culture*. See Letter to Jonas Mekas November 26, 1976 by Stan Brakhage in Robert Haller, *Brakhage Scrapbook: Collected Writings* 1964-1980 (New Paltz: Documentext, 1982), 130.

man persona but also, as the film historian David James points out, his appearance was an anachronistic resistance to a time in which non-patriarchal sex and family roles were being challenged. In this view, Brakhage would have "appeared to embody not the solution, but the problem itself."[25] As will be shown, Brakhage's mountain-man persona had a longstanding effect and, by the late 1970s and 1980s, feminist film theorists and art historians, and even Schneemann herself, were openly critical of Brakhage's assumed patriarchal position.[26]

In his letter, Brakhage connects the timing of his assault and the death of Kennedy to his own realization of how important Schneemann's painting constructions were for him. He explains that he picked up a completed filmstrip and realized that he had in fact photographed and filmed Schneemann's work *Window to Brakhage* (1962) for his film *Dog Star Man* (1962-1964). He writes:

> My hand picked up a finished strip and my whole body chugged after into another room where your box: Window to Brakhage was compared therewith to from and all ins and outs there of check-mated the film strip being, finally in my mind, unquestionably inspired by that specific area of your new work.[27]

Were the historical circumstances of Kennedy's death and Brakhage's assault potential reasons why he felt compelled to tell Schneemann how important her painting construction was for his film? While Brakhage's letter to Schneemann (suggests that he has been reluctant to see her influence in his work) he nevertheless and rather enthusiastically explains that a recognition of her work is long overdue: "I have of direct visual, yes influence, even the shape and color [sic]."[28] In particular he was excited about

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25. David James, *Stan Brakhage: Filmmaker* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), 15.

26. Patricia Mellencamp, *Indiscretions: Avant-garde, Film, Video and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 5.

27. Stan Brakhage to Carolee Schneemann, November 30, 1963. Accessed in Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series III, box 35, folder 5-8.

28. Stan Brakhage writing to Carolee Schneemann, November 30, 1963. Accessed in Carolee Schneemann papers.

this filmstrip which corresponded to Schneemann's painting construction. It is also possible that the vulnerability he experienced - and the effect it had on his sense of masculinity - as a result of his confrontation with the cowboys prompted him to realize the significance of her work and the extent to which it had a direct effect on his aesthetic practice. Regardless of the effect of the cowboy incident, Brakhage was clearly impressed by Schneemann's work *Window to Brakhage*, yet he is also reluctant to admit how important her work was for him. Before exploring this tension revealed by the letter, which is central to Schneemann and Brakhage's aesthetic and political debates over the muse in art, I will briefly outline the nature of the painting construction in question.

In 1962, Schneemann completed *Window to Brakhage* (fig. 7). This art work was used for the initial development of *Eye/Body* and it was also given to Brakhage. This was a small painting construction that was made from a cigar box. She painted the inside of the cigar box from over 1,000 oil paint scraps that were also mixed with tiny bits of glass. Inside the painting construction there were two smaller shards of glass and a larger mirror that was diagonally positioned, dividing the cigar box. The piece of mirror was not arbitrary, but was designed to be held, moved around and looked into. Moreover, if held at a particular angle, the shards from the glass and the mirror would both refract and reflect the incoming light and the paint that was inside the box. Holding the box in this way thus produced animated and moving images, which were then projected onto the mirror. This animated the surface and depth of the paint. Indeed, the visual effects of movement, shadow, and depth are no longer produced by the paint from a two-dimensional flat surface. Rather, color is animated through a physical process of mediation, which involved a viewer interacting with her painting construction.

Shortly after receiving this painting construction, Brakhage studied it at length, photographed it and even filmed the inside of it for his film *Dog Star Man*. For Brakhage, witnessing paint transforms from a two-dimensional flat surface into an animated, timely and embodied perception had a profound phenomenological effect. This perspective is manifested in the following passage, despite its fragmented wording:

> I have of direct visual, yes influence, even the shape and color relationship co-respondances [sic] of strip in hand and "Window to Brakhage" being close enough in some areas that the film might almost have been photographed a frame at a time, and in extreme close up, off, or within, the box) all transforming from influence into the inspiration it is when the strip of film is set in motion [sic].[29]

However, this was not his first encounter with Schneemann's work. Rather, he had taken an active role and interest in her paintings, sculptural objects and her performance *Eye/Body* several years prior to filming her work. My argument here is that *Window for Brakhage* functioned as an aesthetic and technological tool, which enabled Brakhage to "see" and experience painting from new animated perspectives and dimensions. Moreover, these insights led to important aesthetic developments in his film work, such as painting directly onto the celluloid and using multiple superimpositions. Significantly, these developments occurred simultaneously in Schneemann's artistic practice and specifically through her painting constructions and performance *Eye/Body*. Schneemann's influence on Brakhage's cinematic aesthetics, such as painting directly onto the celluloid, remains largely unknown within the literature in art history and film studies.[30] Brakhage's unique form of aesthetics are usually only attributed to him with the result that Schneemann's collaborative influence is completely written out of art history. For example, Ara Osterweil has noted Brakhage's influence on Schneemann's experimental films such as *Fuses* (1965) and *Viet Flakes* (1965).[31] Osterweil states that although Schneemann subverted a phallocentric form of sexuality in *Fuses*, she "does not emancipate her film from Brakhage's cinematic signatures."[32] She writes:

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29. Stan Brakhage writing to Carolee Schneemann, November 30, 1963. Accessed in Carolee Schneemann papers.

30. P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943 – 2000,* (1974), Third Edition, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.176; David James, *Allegories of Cinema: American film in the sixties*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 38.

31. Ara Osterweil, "Absently Enchanted: The Apocryphal, Ecstatic Cinema of Barbara Rubin." In *Women's Experimental Cinema: Critical Frameworks*, edited by Robin Blaetz (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 139.

32. Ibid, 139.

> […] However, as the aesthetic of *Fuses* reveals, Schneemann's debt to Brakhage is substantial. Although she obtains direct control of the representation of her own body, Schneemann does not manage to emancipate her film from Brakhage's cinematic signatures. Through the copious amounts of superimposition, repetition, upside-down shots, as well as her dyeing, stamping, and scratching on the film itself *Fuses* pays significant homage to the very father it is anxious to displace.[33]

Osterweil here confers authorship on Brakhage and his signature aesthetics, such as multiple superimposition, scratching and painting on the celluloid, are described as being unique to him. However, in continuing to situate Brakhage as the artistic patriarchal father, something which Schneemann sought to subvert, film historians fail to see how her earlier works, such as *Window to Brakhage, Colorado House* and her performance *Eye/Body*, directly informed and challenged Brakhage's naturalized assumptions about the muse and the body. In order to shift the current perspective, and to account for Schneemann's active role in the development of Brakhage's cinematic aesthetics, I will expand on the notion of authorship, to provide a more detailed account of Schneemann's active role in the development of Brakhage's aesthetics, as exemplified in *Dog Star Man*.

This example of the type of interaction between Brakhage and Schneemann sets the context for the ensuing discussions of their mutual artistic influence. The rest of the chapter will broaden interpretations of *Eye/Body* by examining how Schneemann's practice developed alongside a critical self-awareness that she had in relation to herself and to Brakhage. Schneemann and Brakhage debated the aesthetic and political use of the muse in art. For Schneemann, the muse was an aesthetic concept that she rejected because it was an uncritical and symbolic appropriation of nature and the female body.[34]

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33. Ibid, 139.

34. Feminist art historians such as Whitney Chadwick and Griselda Pollock argue that the female body has been appropriated as a muse, which has typically aided modernist and male forms of artistic creation. For a discussion about the gender politics and the role of the muse in modernism see Whitney Chadwick, "An Infinite Play of Empty Mirrors: Women, Surrealism, and Self Representation' in Whitney Chadwick ed*., Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation* (Cambridge MA: MIT, 1998), 2-35; Griselda Pollock, "Painting Feminism, History" ed., Anne Phillips and Michele Barrett, *Destabilizing Theory Contemporary Feminist Debates* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), 139-40.

In what follows, I will examine how the longstanding argument between Schneemann and Brakhage on the nature of the muse led to an artistic strategy, which resulted in the two highly gendered and stylized artistic personas that Schneemann and Brakhage adopted in their works *Eye/Body* and *Dog Star Man*. These countercultural personas correspond with and speak to one another, revealing what I refer to as a "visual rhyming" that challenges not only traditional notions of the gendered muse in art, but also within 1960s countercultural gender constructions. Schneemann's critical self-awareness produced highly politicized discussions about the body, and the role of the symbol in art. Moreover, the often heated discussions she had with Brakhage led to combative, highly productive and often personal artistic debates over the gendered divisions of labor and the need for equitable artistic partnerships. The staging of Schneemann's artistic persona as the "Paint goddess" [35] and Brakhage's persona such as the "mountain man" in *Dog Star Man* sheds light on a personal and private discussion of gender politics in addition to the aesthetic transformations that both Brakhage and Schneemann negotiated in their respective practices.

Examining the use of the Muse

Carolee Schneemann first met Stan Brakhage when she was sixteen in 1955 through her partner James Tenney. By 1960 she had stared in four of his films: *Daybreak* and *White Eye* (1957), *Loving* (1957) and *Cat's Cradle* (1959). In the early 1950s the avant-garde scene that Brakhage, Schneemann and Tenney desperately wanted to enter was a mixture of Beats and Bohemians: "We fantasized that Stan was the future of film and poetry, I was the future of activated painting transformed as time, and Jim was the

35. By referring to the paint goddess I am drawing on countercultural representations of "hippie women" such as the Earth and Aquarian goddess. I am suggesting that by appropriating this well- known image Schneemann played with and manipulated these gendered stereotypes. For more on the representation of the goddess in the counterculture see Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, "Goddess, Chicks, Earth Mothers, and Groupies," in *Daughters of the Aquarius Women of the Sixties Counterculture* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2009), 8-34; Robin Morgan also gives a personal account of gendered constructions in the New Left. She makes references to the "Earth Mother" in *Demon Lover: On The Sexuality Of Terrorism*, (New York: Norton, 1990), 230.

future of music conceived as spatial dynamics."[36] Schneemann and Brakhage were too young to be "Beats," and they did not exactly know what their artistic identities were at this point in time. Noting these generational gaps, Schneemann fondly remembers how they were thought of as "annoying kids" to the older filmmakers such as Willard Maas and Marie Menken all of whom were in their fifties.

During this time Schneemann encouraged Brakhage to break out of clichéd references to the muse, a concept that was common in Surrealism, because she felt that it did not bear a critical significance to his practice. Schneemann's objection to Brakhage's concept of the muse dates back to her role in his 1957 short film Loving. The film depicts a couple, Schneemann and her partner James Tenney, in nature. Schneeman argued that Brakhage defined her as part the surrounding landscape in the film as opposed to creating an image by which she was able to define the nature of perception. Moreover, Brakhage's concept of the muse and his artistic rendering of Schneemann's body in Loving created a symmetry between her body and nature: "we used to argue over use [...] I said I couldn't do it, couldn't want it as an affective concept; you said it was a truth underlying learning, growth, influence: that you did indeed 'use' what you could. It's nice to pull the 'm' over a space from 'muse': and see the 'use'."[37] For Schneemann, the muse was a symbolic "dead end."[38] She insisted that she had to reject the muse as an affective concept for two reasons. First, it maintained an association between the female body and nature. Second, it used the symbolic structure of language to unify the gap that is experience in an embodied visual perception. For Schneemann, as she explained to Brakhage, art had to be attentive to this critical difference.

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36. Carolee Schneemann quoted in article by M.M. Serra and Kathryn Ramey, "The Cinematic Paintings of Carolee Schneemann" *Women's Experimental Cinema: Critical Frameworks* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 106.

37. Carolee Schneemann to Stan Brakhage, August, 1975 in Carolee Schneemann Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950000, series III, box, 35. folder 5-8.

38. Carolee Schneemann to Stan Brakhage, April 4, 1957 in *Correspondence Course*, ed. Kristine Stiles (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 9-10.

On April 4, 1957 she wrote to him concerning a discussion on painting and the role of nature and mentioned the importance of "artifice" when it comes to language as representative of the ultimate expression of truth and reality. She warned him that "emotion" and experience were always deceptive and language perhaps, like painting, would always in some ways fail to transmit the "truth" of one's perception and phenomenological experience of reality. This was most evident in her observation of nature, which she felt was not an orderly and organic structure. Rather, she was drawn to forms of chaos and tension, which she felt was active in an embodied perception of nature. She writes:

> My ideals are all for order; but ideals are very boring in the face of lifefullness [sic] where my instinct is all for chaos and tension [...] I generate it. The vision adjusts the act of tension, which is all feeling-sensitive to the point of a scream, of displacement, unbalance, flux- to its underlying organic structure which is an order; I can think of nothing organic which can be understood this way, for my purposes.[39]

For Schneemann, nature did not offer a unification of the body and the self. Rather, her interest in haptic and sensory forms of perception furthered her painting practice, and it was a means of both accepting and dealing with the limits of symbolic forms to represent an embodied visual perception in art. Although she points to the limits of the symbol and language, she does not entirely rule it out. She reminds Brakhage that perception always exceeds language: "it is a case of reality exceeding the imagination which has no compensation for such immediacy [...] this is the hardest part. So like Baudelaire you can use the misery and place it and isolation allows you to will or wish thru a 'we' [...] it is artifice."[40] For Schneemann, one's embodied perception of nature was not experienced harmoniously through vision. Rather, she understood nature as a chaotic structure that brings the self into a closer proximity with the unknown and the unreliability of the senses. These artistic debates occurred at a time when Schneemann

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39. Carolee Schneemann to Stan Brakhage, April 4, 1957 in *Correspondence Course*, ed. Kristine Stiles (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 9-10.

40. Ibid, 10.

was still very much invested in landscape painting as well as portraits. Indeed, she had recently completed portraits of Jane Brakhage, Stan Brakhage and James Tenney. However, these discussions in the 1950s about the muse also continued into more personal and political debates regarding the gendered divisions of labor and equity in artistic partnerships between Schneemann and Tenney, and Stan and Jane Brakhage. These debates became even more heated during the filming of Brakhage's work *Cat's Cradle*, in which they all participated.

In a letter to the poet Naomi Levinson dated May 29, 1959, Schneemann reveals the frustrations she experienced during the filming of *Cat's Cradle*, which took place in Schneemann's and Tenney's apartment near Bennington, Vermont. Schneemann believed that Jane Brakhage's aggressive behavior was provoked by her husband, who insisted that Schneemann wear an apron while she painted in a scene for his film despite the fact that she adamantly opposed his idea. She writes:

> "I hated you many times" (not saying how she accosted me in the hallway; "I am the Earth Goddess; you are the Paint Goddess"… "you are really stuck on yourself"; their un-subtle cringing at a dress I was mending - not my own but for Jim's youngest sister - with a look of superior incisive contempt passing between them as "this is something Jane would never touch a flashy hideous garment fit only for a vicious witch like Carolee" [...] the entire filming which was a nightmare of willful distortion and destruction […])"[41]

Both of the categories Jane describes - the "Earth goddess" and the "Paint goddess" - raise questions about femininity and the role of nature. However, rather than analyzing these categories comparatively, it is more useful to consider the question of nature as it concerns femininity and the divisions of labor between Schneemann and Jane Brakhage. The important question here is not if Schneemann or Jane Brakhage identified as an "Earth goddess" or a "Paint goddess," but why they individually devalued and did not recognize the value of their respective work as artist and mother/wife.[42] As a working

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41. Carolee Schneemann to Naomi Levinson, May 29, 1959, in *Correspondence Course*, ed. Kristine Stiles (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 38.

42. In the 1970s the feminist anthropologist, Sherry Ortner, examined why so many women had

artist, Schneemann felt that she had rejected traditional feminine roles and in fact her desire to choose art was a political act of defiance. Yet, it is also possible that she struggled to feel accepted as a serious working artist, or a good wife, within her artistic community. It may also have been the case that Jane Brakhage did not feel particularly valued for her work when Schneemann was around and perhaps this explains why there was a great deal of tension during the filming of *Cat's Cradle*.

If Schneemann's view of Jane Brakhage's femininity was that it was anachronistic and trivial, it is possible that she also felt alienated and disassociated from what Schneemann observed as Jane Brakhage's "choice" to "not work": sew, rather than buy a dress and live in the wilderness and have lots of children with Stan Brakhage. For Schneemann, it was not natural to be a housewife or automatically have children because of your sex.[43] Rather, she felt that it was a role that was imposed on women. In another letter to Levinson, Schneemann expresses her anger and frustration over these gender roles and explains how Jane Brakhage falls precisely within these categories.[44] She writes, "there is no longer the physical-economic as primal conditions, as necessities to produce children or anything else […] Now woman 'chooses' the natural but it is not truly to be chosen, for the process itself is one of the selfless non individualization, it is forever GIVEN."[45] However, despite Schneemann's criticism of Jane Brakhage's position within her marriage, she was also perplexed by Jane Brakhage's outward persona and her

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been excluded from culture. She argues that biology does not determine femininity. Rather, her analysis demonstrates that culture establishes categories that associate women with being biologically closer to nature. In this view, nature is understood as something that is outside culture and technology whilst culture is recognized as male and valued for its innovation and control over nature. This explains why so many women have been excluded from culture. Moreover, her argument sheds light on the reasons why Carolee Schneemann and Jane Brakhage, and many women in the 1960s and 1970s, depreciated their own labor. Her article has also been important to feminist art history. See Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" *Feminism- Art Theory: An Anthology*, 1968-2000 ed., by Hilary Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell University Press, 2001), 17-31.

43. Carolee Schneemann to Naomi Levinson, May 28, 1959, in *Correspondence Course*, ed. Kristine Stiles (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 26.

44. Ibid, 26.

45. Ibid, 26.

raw and natural-like "femininity," which seemed, from Schneemann's point of view, to defy and challenge gender norms.[46] She writes:

> [...] I am getting close to a paradox about M.J [Mary Jane Brakhage] wherein lies a real beauty of her, and 'idealess' for him but yet a certain relational peril. It has to do with an almost naked naturalness of her which is unique and which she disrupts in the context of "our worlds." In the way she is pure symbol for him than, say ourselves who are complicated and challenging to him. Specifically it is most clear in how we are crafted and evolved and the things about us are selected for and by a sensibility of aesthetics and working needs and the strictness of these. M.J. is wonderfully open, unencumbered, prepared for anything. Practical things impressed me: no underwear, no toothbrush and cosmetic paraphernalia, no ritualization of femininity, no baths, hair can be unwashed for three months, "possessions" can fit into a sack.[47]

Although Schneemann recognized that Jane Brakhage did not pay attention to standard rituals of femininity, she also noted how Jane Brakhage's naturalness was " a pure symbol for him."[48] This symbolization of the feminine made Schneemann suspicious because she did not want to be a placed in the category of a muse and support an artistic myth for Brakhage. Moreover, Schneemann notes that it was Jane Brakhage's naturalness "that was her most outward character sign"[49] and it was these features, which she recognized as source of artistic inspiration that created a mutual dependence for Brakhage. She writes about Jane Brakhage:

> A grandeur in this but she begins to feel it as idiosyncrasy, as insubstantial and resents his making much of this while it remains her most declared outward character sign. Somehow the grand potentially for filling always resist what loves it for it fallibility, for its simplicity. Cruelly we do always

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46. Ibid, 26.

47. Ibid, 26.

48. Ibid, 26.

49. Carolee Schneemann to Naomi Levinson, May 28, 1959, in *Correspondence Course*, ed. Kristine Stiles (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 26.

> resent in certain ways what we most depend on, and this increasing with the degree of dependency.[50]

It is important to question how Brakhage appropriated Jane Brakhage's image of the Earth goddess. Was she reduced to an objectified body and a muse that was a source of artistic inspiration for his films? [51] Moreover, how did Jane Brakhage manipulate and play with mainstream gender stereotypes in her persona of the Earth goddess?

Schneemann's interpretation of Jane Brakage's Earth goddess persona (as declared by Jane Brakhage herself: "I am the Earth goddess and you are the Paint goddess") resonates strongly with some of the countercultural constructions of femininity, which were appropriated by many women in the 1960s. Indeed, Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo observes that the Aquarian goddess and the Earth mother goddess are two images that were consistent with the values of hippie culture. For example, many women challenged the nuclear structure of the family and the sexual double standard by seeking a more spiritually minded and anti-capitalist existence in communal living environments such as Drop City and Morning Star.[52] Moreover, she notes that "hippie women's domestic labor took place outside the suburban domestic environment and it was charged with political meaning and a broader social agenda."[53] Significantly, however, these countercultural constructions of femininity, such as the Earth and Aquarian goddess, also embodied the mainstream and stereotypical assumptions of femininity. Lemke-Santangelo writes:

> The ethereal, otherworldly beauty (Aquarian goddess) and the receptive, nurturing, supportive earth mother or Madonna occupied the less degrading end of the spectrum but still functioned primarily to satisfy

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50. Ibid, 26.

51. For a more nuanced interpretation of the collaborative role that Jane Brakhage played in Stan Brakhage's film see James Boaden, "Father Figure Mountain Man" *The Avant-Garde as Swain: a Critical American Pastoral (*PhD diss*,* The Courtauld Institute, 2009), 212-247.

52. Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius women of the Sixties Counterculture*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2009), 53-57.

53. Ibid, 28.

> male needs and desires. The goddess served as a dream over, embodying male longing for untarnished, virtuous transcendent Woman, while the earth mother promised more immediate gratification in the form of unconditional emotional and physical nurture.[54]

Thus, the Earth goddess and Aquarian goddess personas were in some ways reactionary, yet many women were still able to occupy an alternative lifestyle, which was radically different to postwar suburban domesticity and this was perhaps most evident in the forms of women's work which were carried out in the communes.[55]

If Jane Brakhage inspired Brakhage, or was a muse for his film *Dog Star Man*, then it is important to understand her role and her persona of the Earth goddess within a 1960s and countercultural construction, which was anything but straightforward. For Schneemann, Jane Brakhage's persona, for better or worse, was also able to resist traditional gender norms and capitalist ways of living. This suggests that both Schneemann and Brakhage had a critical awareness of Jane Brakhage's contradictory role as a muse and an Earth goddess, which was to play a crucial role in their perspectives on gender in their art. Charting this awareness in the work of Schneemann and Brakhage, I will now turn to the ways in which Brakhage's view on the muse was engendered by Schneemann's artistic objects, as well as their through their correspondence. I will examine how Schneemann's and Brakhage's deployment of the muse reflects an ironic and playful construction of the self which enabled them to make critical advancements within the art world and at the same time negotiate their positions in relation to the sexual and social politics of the 1960s.

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54. Ibid, 26.

55. Ibid, 56.

Allegorical Value: Examining nature, the muse and the body in Dog Star Man and Eye/Body

In 1963, the woodsman was a long-lost nineteenth-century figure of American pioneer masculinity. However, by the time Brakhage played this role for his film *Dog Star Man* the character of the woodsman had become dated and no longer represented a symbol of a modern masculinity. Perhaps, then, the image of a hyper-masculine woodsman was something that Brakhage knew he could never occupy, and it therefore became a subject that provoked fruitful insight and investigation. The subject of the woodsman also speaks to questions of work and modern alienation that Brakhage could identify with. Indeed, his physical similarity to that of a woodsman is one of the main reasons why he did not have a job and could not rent a home. Ironically, he actually worked as a woodsman while he was filming:

> At any rate, here we were back in Colorado, living in my wife's parent's house in the mountains, and at some point I asked them, "What can I do to help out?" Jane's mother and father were teachers, and Jane had the baby, which was her life's work; and for a while I couldn't get a job of any kind. Her parents suggested I collect firewood. That became my job...[56]

Later, when he had been commissioned to make some films and was able to afford to move out of his in-laws house, he had to pretend to be playing the role of "Jesus Christ" in order to buy his house in Colorado:

> I couldn't rent a house, even when we got some money from these commercial jobs. Who would rent a house to a man with hair like that? Finally, I told some old lady who had a house for sale that I was making a religious film and playing Jesus Christ. That wasn't untrue, because Christ was another figure who very prominent in my sense of who I was depicting in Dog Star Man. I wanted Dog Star Man to apply to as many male archetypes as possible.[57]

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56. Stan Brakhage quoted in interview with Scott MacDonald, *A Critical Cinema 4: Interviews With Independent Filmakers* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2006), 117.

57. Ibid, 117.

The point that I want to emphasize here is Brakhage's interest in exploring multiple "male archetypes" in his films. Because he inhabited the role of these male archetypes - through his long hair and beard - Brakhage's day-to-day encounters were equally as significant as the critical reception of the film. On many occasions, Brakhage's long hair solicited violent reactions mostly from men that perceived it to be an authentic threat to masculinity. As we have seen, his image had become threatening to locals and it is interesting that the woodsman, an image that harks back to nineteenth century concepts of American Western Masculinity, could pose a threat to masculinity in the 1960s.

In *Dog Star Man*, Brakhage appropriates the image of the woodsman as an allegorical symbol of masculinity. However, his performance does not embrace a nostalgic nineteenth-century return to Romantic concepts of American transcendentalism: where nature and the self are discovered in a symbolic union of the body.[58] Rather, his performance demonstrates an ironic and alienating encounter with nature. This is expressed in his failure to master and control nature through his exaggerated falls up and down the mountain. As his body approaches the mountain, nature is depicted from the point of the view of Brakhage falling. His body does not dominate or "transcend" nature, rather nature is imposed upon him and this is revealed through the consistent breaking down of his body in multiple scenes of him falling down the mountain.

Dog Star Man has a four part structure. The Prelude (twenty-five minutes), which is based on a dream that the woodcutter has, followed by Part 1 (thirty minutes), in which he sets out on his journey into the mountains with his dog to obtain firewood. Parts II, III and IV are the shortest of the series, ranging from five to six minutes long. When asked about the process of filming, especially as it pertained to the mountain scenes, Brakhage emphasized that any shots of him from a distance were taken by his wife. Indeed, Jane Brakhage was not only a crucial collaborator on the film, she also sewed his flannel shirts

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58. Here I am referring to the Romantic and nineteenth- century concept of nature as it was used for artistic production. See Caroline Jones's argument in *Machine in the Studio: Construction the Postwar American Artist (*Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 7-9. For more on the symbol and how it is understood in Romanticism see Paul de Man, "Rhetoric of Temporality" *Blindness and Insight Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 214.

that were specifically for the performance, advised him on his long-haired appearance and took many of the images that were too difficult for Brakhage to do himself.[59]

In the close up shot of Brakhage holding his axe on the way up the mountain in the Prelude he looks directly into the camera. The sequence of the first fall begins with him starting up the mountain and quickly cuts to him lying on his stomach (figs. 8 and 9). This is followed by approximately nine seconds of a shaking and swirling camera, suggesting a dramatic fall down the mountain. Importantly, during these nine seconds there are no images of Brakhage falling. Rather, the film only depicts him tripping on his way up the mountain (fig. 10) and the final image in this sequence depicts Brakhage on his stomach lying face-down in the snow. These are rapid shots and at first glance, these images appear naturalized, as if Brakhage were about to get up with ease from his previous long fall down the mountain. However, the falling sequence has been carefully constructed; Brakhage's acting is deliberate and not necessarily hidden from the viewer. He appears lying down on his back (fig. 11) with his hair covering his face with his mouth slightly open. The overall effect of this image is that it has been self-consciously staged.

All of these shots are made to appear fluid and correspond with the previous sequence of him falling. Most importantly, Brakhage does not hide the fact that the fall was technically produced. Brakhage twirled and shook the camera in order to give the image a sense of movement and depth. This cinematic disruption appears to correspondence to images of Brakhage on the mountain. However, he is clearly trying to present an "authentic image" of him falling yet he is revealing it to be inauthentic. For example, the fall that is made technically in this nine-second interval is a mechanical disruption that lets the viewer know that it is not real and genuine. In my view, Brakhage's self-conscious staging, or performing, of his fall in *Dog Star Man* is significant because it relates to his correspondence with Schneemann regarding the use of the muse and, by extension, symbols more generally in artistic practice.[60] Because the fall

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59. Jane Wodening email correspondence with author, June 19, 2009.

60. I am using the muse and the symbol interchangeably in this chapter. The concept of the muse

is not genuine and is deliberately staged, the exaggerated performance is not a transmittable experience of nature through the lens and the body of the woodcutter, but becomes a depiction of nature as something foreign and impenetrable. Indeed, the appropriation of the muse in Brakhage's film as displayed in his body is not a straightforward construction of what Schneemann problematized in her earlier correspondences with him. Rather, Brakhage uses the muse in order to stage an ironic display of the woodsman. This performance is an artistic form of self- deception, which confirms the inauthenticity of the self and the symbol rather than an authentic portrayal of the artist.

In order to understand the significance of Brakhage and Schneemann's ironic use of the muse and how it comes to play as a visual rhyme in both of their performances, it is useful to turn to Paul de Man's definition of irony which is outlined in his 1969 text "The Rhetoric of Temporality." According to de Man, irony is a historical problem of the self. The act of irony reveals an awareness of the self's inauthenticity yet at the same time the self does not try to overcome this position. This mode of perception, he argues, is linked to a demystification of organic and symbolic forms of representation. For de Man, the ironic and allegorical position, relates to one's organic or so-called "natural" surroundings in terms of chaos, alienation and distance rather than a unified perception of nature. Moreover, in order to understand de Man's theory of irony and allegory it is first essential that we consider his definition of the symbol. The symbol (nature or the muse) can be defined as a translucent view of the world where life and form are perceived to be identical. For de Man, the symbolic imagination is coextensive with the external world: material perception and the symbolic imagination are, in de Man's thinking, continuous parts of a whole. de Man criticizes the Romantic view that an experience of the external world, such as landscape and nature, takes the form of a perception where the symbolic

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can be seen as a symbol insofar as it is a view of the world in which the material perception and the symbolic imagination are viewed as the same thing. In referring to the symbol, I am drawing on Paul de Man's analysis of it in romantic notions of literature and art. See Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality" *Blindness and Insight Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 187-228.

image is actually perceived internally as a "mode of sensory perception."[61] For de Man, there is "no distinction between experience and the representation of experience."[62] As a result, nature is perceived as a subjective experience whereby the poet or artist falsely believes that he or she is capable of overriding and "transcending this distinction and can thus transform all individual experience into truth."[63] This is also the moment where the symbol becomes internalized as a sensory mode of perception. Thus, de Man's concept of the symbol and allegory refutes the subject/object division that is produced in Romantic forms of art and literature. He argues that allegory and symbol are in a dialectical and temporal relationship that "exist[s] within a system of competing allegorical signs."[64] For example, allegory unlike the symbol denies the possibility of a unified identification with the self. In contrast to the symbol, which tries to shield the self from this negative self-knowledge, allegory appears as a rupture and prevents identification with an illusionary self, because it is recognized as the non-self.

There is an important relationship between irony and allegory. According to de Man, irony can be defined as a relationship of consciousness between two selves. However, this is not an intersubjective relationship because allegory and irony are always temporally linked. Like allegory, irony is self-reflexive, ensuring the past is pure mystification and the future remains inauthentic. The act of irony reveals an awareness of the self's inauthenticity, which it cannot overcome. This allegorical and ironic mode of perception is most evident in one's experience of and relationship to nature. According to de Man, Charles Baudelaire's example of the "fall," which comes from the poem "Le Cygne" in the *Flowers of Evi*l (1857), is crucial for irony because it acts as an important reminder of man's reified relationship to nature.

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61. de Man, 193-195.

62. de Man, 188.

63. Ibid, 188.

64. Ibid, 199.

> At the moment that the artist or philosopher, that is, the language-determined, man laughs at himself falling, he is laughing at a mistaken, mystified assumption he was making about himself. In a false sense of pride the self has substituted, in his relationship to nature, an intersubjective feeling (of superiority) for the knowledge of a difference. As a being that stands upright [...] man comes to believe that he dominates nature, just as he can, at times dominate others or watch others dominate him. This is, of course, a major mystification. The Fall, in the literal as well as theological sense, reminds him of the purely instrumental, reified character of his relationship to nature. Nature can at all times treat him as if he were a thing and remind him of his factitiousness, whereas he is quite powerless to convert even the smallest particular of nature into something human.[65]

For de Man and Baudelaire a man who laughs at himself falling, laughs at his own mystification. The fall is a reminder of one's alienated and distant relationship to nature. Of importance here is de Man's observation that irony is a form of self- splitting, by which the self comes to participate in an active form of demystification. For de Man, this form of splitting or the dédoublement can occur immediately after the fall:

> Irony comes into being at the expense of the empirical self, falling and rising from a mystified state. The ironic language splits the subject into an empirical self that exists in a state of inauthenticity and a self that exists only in the form of a language that asserts the knowledge of this inauthenticity.[66]

Irony brings the self in closer proximity with, and differentiation from, what it is not.

The image of Brakhage rising from the fall in his film *Dog Star Man* (fig. 12) is the work of both allegory and irony, which recognizes the inauthentic image but does not try to overcome it. The woodcutter is engaged in a demystified process of symbolic representation. The camera foregrounds a spatial distance and maintains a fundamental separation between the symbolic image of the woodcutter in nature and Brakhage.

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65. Ibid, 220.

66. Ibid, 216.

Moreover, the camera documents a staged performance where Brakhage does not observe nature from above as a dominating force. Rather, nature is observed through the fall and the "demystified" performance of the woodcutter. This is also demonstrated in the final images of part IV of *Dog Star Man* (fig. 13) in which Brakhage holds his axe and aggressively cuts down wood. When he finishes he appears emotionally distraught and images of a small log cabin house appear in the background. The images of wood, society and the house are reified symbols that come from nature, yet they do not reflect a unification or communion with it. Rather, the symbols expose the woodcutter's alienation from nature. Brakhage's allegorical performance of the woodcutter demonstrates that there cannot be a nostalgic return to nature where man is not alienated from it. Rather, he depicts a confrontation with a form of Romanticism where nature and consciousness are experienced through what de Man recognizes as a mode of temporality that denies a unified experience of the self.

Despite this critical interrogation of Romanticism in Brakhage's work, scholars such as David James have used biographical pieces of information, such as Brakhage's log cabin house which appears in the last sequence of the film, to construct a romantic narrative of his life. There tends to be a great deal of investment in his home as if it were a kind of "muse" and source of creative inspiration for his film. James even draws parallels between Brakhage's lifestyle and that of nineteenth-century poets such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge.

> The ideal of an anti-technological, organically human cinema, alternative but not oppositional to Hollywood, was lived by Brakhage in his retreat from the city to a nineteenth-century log cabin in the Colorado wilderness, where his family could be most free from the dominant categories of modern urban life, free to re-create the Romantic problematique. His discovery of a tradition, his evolution of a method of production and his choice of a social and geographical situation necessary to the formation of the role of the film artist determined the limits of his style and subject matter. That situation, pre-figured 150 years before in, for example, Wordsworth's retreat to Grasmere with his sister and Coleridge, ensured

> that the parameters of his aesthetic would remain within the general terms of Romanticism.[67]

This interpretation is a classic revival of the Romantic paradigm and serves to perpetuate the myth of the artist working in isolation. There is a persistent falsification of Brakhage's actual social and historical relations especially concerning his critical relationship to Schneemann. For example, film historians such as P. Adams Sitney and James have described his use of visual techniques as "anti-technological" or representing a "biological vision" (sight that is before language).[68] In these readings, Brakhage's body is perceived to be documenting an authentic and neutral experience of vision. By contrast, in my view, hypnagogic vision – a term that Brakhage often publicly used - was produced through techniques such as filming Schneemann's painting construction, anamorphic lenses, flickering of images, handheld camerawork, spitting on the glass and multiple superimposition. Not only were Brakhage's filmmaking methods not anti-technological, but, and more significantly to the current research, his innovative use of cinematic aesthetics were developed in dialogue with Schneemann.

In *Dog Star Man*, nature becomes an abstraction that is seen through the technological mediation of Brakhage's camera. In one sequence, for example, superimposed images of his infant son quickly cut to another superimposed image of a tree outside, which then fades back to a snowflake pattern that is part of a curtain and an interior living room space. Brakhage also appears outside climbing up the mountain, yet the celluloid image is ripped open, revealing scratches and painted dots. These images then fade into an interior and domestic image, which reveals a baby inside his home. Brakhage's very physical, and material gesture of painting directly onto the celluloid and

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67. David James, "The Film-Maker as Romantic Poet: Brakhage and Olson," *Film Quarterly* Vol. 35, No, 3 (Spring 1982): 38.

68. P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943 – 2000,* (1974), Third Edition, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.176; David James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film In the Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 38. Brakhage used this term interchangeably with his concept of closed-eyed-vision, which refers to a form of brain vision or sight that is not contingent on external perception. See Stan Brakhage, *Metaphors on Vision*, 12.

ripping it up generates a cinematic distance between nature and culture. One might say that the very materiality of the film, the paint on the celluloid or the spit on the glass lens, is a bodily trace and a reminder that marks its separation from nature. In *Dog Star Man*, Brakhage exposes the body in an ironic and alienating encounter with nature rather than a symbolic and transcendental experience of it.

Brakhage's willingness to artistically translate a technological and demystified experience of himself in nature is also reflected in his response to Schneemann's performance of the Paint goddess in *Eye/Body* and the inclusion of her art objects in *Colorado House*, *Ice Box* and *Window to Brakhage*. The following section will examine how Schneemann's performance and visual rhymes are informed by Brakhage's aesthetics and his refusal to depict nature as a pastoral environment that is removed from capitalism. I will now turn to Schneemann's performance *Eye/Body* in order to identify some key features of kinetic theatre.

Re-thinking the use of the muse in Eye/Body

In 1962, shortly after she had finished her MFA at the University of Illinois, Schneemann moved to New York City and rented an old furrier's loft on 29th street. In addition to working a stream of odd jobs to pay her rent, she completed a total of 12 painting constructions that same year. These works subsequently became the "environmental elements" for her performance *Eye/Body*. To complete this work she invited fellow painter Erró to come to her studio and photograph her "transformative actions." These various poses included the staging of her naked body in relation to her painting constructions like *Colorado House*, which was made from plywood, wire, fur, bottles, fabric and a broom handle. Like Brakhage's role of the woodsman in *Dog Star Man*, Schneemann reveals in her performance *Eye/Body* that nature cannot be experienced without the question of alienation and work coming into play: just as his film reveals the impossibility of severing nature from culture, her performance demonstrates that the studio can no longer be interpreted as anything other than a place of work.

In a 1963 journal entry Schneemann compared her relationship to Brakhage in terms of his interest in hypnagogic, or closed-eyed, vision.[69] A hypnagogic form of visual perception refers to what Andreas Mavromatis describes as a biological or internal "mind vision."[70] She also notes her understanding of embodied visual perception, especially as it pertains to observing the body and its relationship to nature:

> While I've not worked microscopically, smallest open eye activates full range of actual eye activity; scale in our works rooted in natural phenomena, visual immediacy as I find nowhere else [...]. Take arrowhead, horn, tooth, half-moon, yin-yang, take a snake! Take basic stroke of hand nerve pulse to brush, eye to hand, paint to canvas as related, integral organic rhythm: Monet, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Pollock, Joan Mitchell. Particle of universe action. Microcosmic movement building a world moment by moment, motion by motion![71]

The use of symbols such as the two snakes, horns and the yin yang in Schneemann's performance *Eye/Body* (fig. 14) can be contextualized in relation to her theory of embodied, visual and sensory perception. This relates to her practice of painting and is fundamental to her use of the body in performance. In other words, these props are not necessarily references to authentic and matriarchal symbols (fig. 15) that demonstrate a cohesive link to goddess iconography. Rather, they are essential for assisting the transformation of her body within a technological environment. She states: "I am after the interpretation of displacements which occur between various sense stimuli; the interaction and exchange between the body and the environment outside it; the body as environment."[72] Of importance here is how Schneemann locates vision as an all over

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69. Carolee Schneemann, *More than Meat Joy: Complete Performance Works & Selected Writings* (New Platz, New York: Documentext, 1979), 55. I also examine hypnagogic vision in the following chapter. I situate this concept in relation Cold War psychiatry in addition to Schneemann's kinetic theatre and Brakhage's aesthetics. For a more on the subject of hypnagogic vision see Andreas Mavromatis, *Hypnagogia The Unique State Of Consciousness Between Wakefulness And Sleep* (London: Routledge, 1987), 244

70. Ibid, 244.

71. Ibid, 55.

72. Carolee Schneemann notes on painting and process. See Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series 1, box 2/1967/71, folder 2.2

body experience that is enhanced by one's immediate surrounding and environment. Moreover, this mode of embodied vision is a form of displacement that also disorientates the self. This analysis of vision reflects her earlier theories of the symbol, nature and the muse, which she debated extensively with Brakhage, expressing her desire to reject the muse and the symbol altogether. Yet, despite her criticism of these notions, it seems that Schneemann turned herself into a muse and a Paint goddess in her performance *Eye/ Body*. However, this was not to reveal an authenticity of the self and the body. Like the anachronistic depiction of the woodsman, Schneemann allegorically performs the role of a Paint goddess. This image thus exposes the inauthenticity of the Romantic Paint goddess and speaks to a level of alienation and anxiety that she experienced in the early 1960s regarding her ability to successfully work not only as a female artist but a painter during a time when painting was considered to be out of fashion.[73]

Schneemann's staged performance does not demonstrate a Romantic and transcendental fusion between artist and environment. She complicates this position by appropriating iconic symbols of the goddess, which are placed within the technological environment of her studio. Indeed, *Eye/Body* demonstrates that there cannot be a romantic return to nature without the mediation of technology. In one photograph, for example, Schneemann wraps old abandoned mink fur coats (which arguably have no use value) around her body to complete her pose. Irony is performed here as a self-reflexive and self-aware act. Both Schneemann and Brakhage open up their bodies to symbolic interpretation. However, their appropriation of the muse in *Dog Star Man* and *Eye/Body* does not naturalize the body and gender. Rather, their ironic display of the Paint goddess and woodsman reveals a critical awareness of the body and how it is constructed within a technological and capitalistic environment.

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73. For a discussion and critique of painting in the 1960s See Donald Judd, "Specific Objects" in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art,* ed. Walter Horn and James Marrrow (Berkley: University of California Press, 1996), 114; Samuel Wagstaff, "Talking to Tony Smith," *ArtForum,* December (1966), 14-20. For more on the death of painting see Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (Massachusets: MIT, 1990), 230-235.

In *Eye/Body*, Schneemann poses with her painting construction *Colorado House*. As I have already noted, for this image she wraps her arms through the open wooden structure holding a large cow's scull. Holding the cow's skull in her hands, her mouth appears wide open, revealing her teeth and an awkward grin. There are three discrete faces in this photograph: the cow's skull, Schneemann and a small self-portrait of Rembrandt which is connected to the top of the wooden structure. Unlike traditional depictions of the skull in early modern paintings, which served as the reminder of death, this image reveals a playful defiance of the prevailing cultural consensus in the 1960s that painting was dead. Indeed, her studio an abandoned factory, originally used for the production of mink-coats, provides an interesting location to contemplate the supposed obsolesce of her chosen artistic medium.

Despite the precarious state of painting in the 1960s, Brakhage and Schneemann were actively engaged in discussions about the frame, vision and embodied perception. For example, Brakhage describes *Colorado House* in a 1962 essay entitled "From Schneemann" in which he outlines his experience of looking at Schneemann's works[74] : "I cannot since then look at a single painting without that whole blasted scene twisting my vision."[75] *Colorado House* could be considered a representation of Brakhage's home, which disrupts a mythic representation of his home. Indeed, Brakhage was also influenced by this work in particular because it seemed to displace and fragment his field of vision and perception.

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74. I am referring to an essay that Stan Brakhage wrote for Carolee Schneemann. The essay "From Schneemann" refers to their discussions and debates over nature and painting. This essay was written entirely in the forms of puns and shorthand. Moreover, Brakhage also mentions Schneemann's painting construction *Colorado House*. It was written from Brakhage's perspective and his visual engagement with this object. See "From Schneemann," Accessed in Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series III, box 35, folder 5-8. There is no date for this essay however Schneemann estimates that it was produced between 1960-1962. Carolee Schneemann interview with author, New York, August 26, 2008.

75. Stan Brakhage writing to Carolee Schneemann, November 30, 1963. Accessed in Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series III, box 35, folder 5-8.

In another image from *Eye/Body*, Schneemann appears naked in her studio, immersed in her art props, including the skull, and her painting construction *Fur Wheel* (1962). This painting construction is as a form of mixed media that attempts to connect painting to technology (fig. 16). It was originally constructed from a lamp base that was covered with fur, tin cans, small mirrors, glass and motorized parts. Finally, oil paint was applied to the external frame and it was mounted on a turning wheel. Here, the concept of painting is transformed into a technological and motorized object, which deconstructs the two-dimensional surface of the frame. Her body in many ways corresponds to her painting constructions which function as a technological medium.

> I began to work with my body in environment in 1962 and to do landscape, movement rituals, where people were invited to physically experience the environment, and then that came together in terms of theater pieces that I felt were still based on the principles- the visual principles- become concretized physically of a painter. During this time painting seemed to me to be dying. And this was a personal tragedy for me. I was working dimensionally with paintings that were ripped through in levels and paintings that were put on wheels, that were spun. I wanted to intensify the space and time congruence of what was lying there two dimensionally. But it began to seem to me that maybe in some way- because I was feeling isolated and driven out of these particular territories—that the forms of my work were changing that much.[76]

The changes taking place in painting Schneemann refers to here coincided with the end of the nineteenth- century Romantic model of the artists' studio. Indeed, the studio, as Caroline Jones explains, was aggressively challenged and "thus loaded symbolically, it became a prime site for critique and conversion in the 1960s, with artists as manger and worker in a social space or engineer of a de-centered and dispersed 'post-studio' production."[77] For example, Andy Warhol's factory, eighteen blocks from Schneemann's studio, shattered the illusion of American individualism by aspiring to be

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76. Carolee Schneemann quoted in roundtable discussion with Lucy Lippard, Vito Acconci, Poppy Johnson and Daniel Buren on the topic of "Time and Space," in Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession 950001, series IV, box 74-75.

77. Caroline Jones, *Machine in the Studio*, 55.

nothing more than a space of labor and production. The post-studio moment of the 1960s challenged the myth of the studio as a site of authenticity and individual creativity.

When Schneemann presented images of *Eye/Body* to Alan Solomon, who at the time was a prominent curator, he rejected her work and went on to exhibit the work of Yves Klein at the Jewish museum. According to Schneemann he said: "If you want to paint, paint; if you run around naked, you don't belong in the art world."[78] What is surprising about Solomon's reaction is that it was not uncommon for male artists in the 1960s to include their body as a medium. But it seems the aesthetic reasons for Schneemann's inclusion of her body as an added dimension and collage within her painting constructions were not understood in the 1960s. Moreover, the fact that Schnemann was using her body as an active image-maker, and refused to submit to the traditional gender norms of the muse or Paint goddess, defied a normative representation of femininity. For example, Schneemann's body is constructed as something that is technological, and her use of motorized components, in addition to elements from the natural world such as the two-snakes, bull's horn and cow's skull, further aids this physical transformation. However, these artistic interventions were not formally recognized and once more she was this time attacked by Solomon for being an exhibitionist, and not a painter. She states, "the principle of embodiment, the extension of the self and to turn the self into a collage – was not understood."[79] It seems contradictory that Solomon would reject Schneemann's painting constructions and her performance, especially as he was particularly interested in the new forms of media which he saw emerging out of painting in the 1960s. In his 1965 *New York Times* article "Is there a New Theatre," he wrote about Allan Kaprow's Happenings and the transformations that were taking place in the New York avant-garde. In particular, Solomon was interested in the new role of the painter:

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78. Carolee Schneemann quoted in Rebecca Schneider's book, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, 37.

79. Carolee Schneemann quoted in an interview with Daniella Knafo, *In Her Own Image Women's Self Representation in Twentieth Century Ar*t, 90.

> The painter has become accustomed to a great freedom, to the spirit of innovation, he can take chances or experiment without worrying about the board of investors; no one stands over his shoulder with a cautionary frown. For contemporary artists the freedom to invent new forms, new modes of expression, or even new media, has spilled over into other aspects of life, into the other arts, into film, dance, or whatever. Except for those painters who regard their art in the purest terms, it is simply no longer possible for artists to isolate their feelings of openness and speculative adventures about their creative activity from their ways of thinking about the audience for whom they are working.[80]

Schneemann and Brakhage were both responding to the technological and aesthetic shifts that were occurring in painting and film. Indeed, so much of Schneemann's kinetic theatre is a combination and an expansion of different mediums: film, dance, choreography, multimedia and technology. However, Solomon did not acknowledge Schneemann's aesthetic interventions and the development of kinetic theatre, which incorporated technology and her body and was actually an expansion of her painting practice. In the final section, I will reconsider the technological transformations that Schneemann made in her painting practice, which were clearly outlined in her visual and written correspondence with Brakhage.

A Portrait for Brakhage: painting as an expanded medium

While Brakhage was able to achieve a closer relationship to painting through film, Schneemann's painting practice expanded into kinetic theatre. This corresponded with her interest in an embodied perception and her painting constructions which were also central to *Eye/Body*. I am not suggesting that these concerns were abandoned in her performance; rather I am arguing that these tensions were rigorously examined throughout her work. Schneemann's desire to translate the visual perception of painting into the medium of performance art is expressed in her writing on kinetic theatre. For example, she focused on how the viewer's eye would process shapes and forms at an

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80. Alan Solomon, "Is there a New Theatre," *New York Times*, June 27, 1965.

unpredictable speed in performance art, which she distinguished from the temporality of the gaze in viewing a still painting. She observes:

> During a kinetic theatre piece the audience may become more active physically than when viewing a painting or assemblage; their physical reactions will tend to manifest actual scale- relating to motions, the body does make in a specific environment […] the eye will be receiving information at unpredictable changing rates of density and duration. At the same time their senses are heightened by the presence of human forms in action and by the temporality of the action themselves.[81]

Schneemann's painting constructions and the use of her body in *Eye/Body* were a means of breaking out of the fame and to extend painting into technological environments, movement, film and animation. For Schneemann, an audience becomes more active in her live performances and she acknowledges that this is a different experience from viewing one of her paintings or an assemblage. This passage provides a context for Schneemann's formal transition into live performance art and group choreography. However, *Eye/Body* teeters between these two categories: painting and performance art. Moreover her use of the body and painting constructions such as *Colorado House*, *Ice Box* and *Window to Brakhage*, highlights these tensions. Although Schneemann did not pose with her painting construction *Window to Brakhage* in *Eye/ Body*, I am suggesting that this work should be examined in relation to the evolution of this performance, insofar as this object was crucial for the development of her theories of embodied perception, and the deconstruction of the frame. Moreover, this work was instrumental for her performance, which used the body as a formal and conceptual element in *Eye/Body*. Indeed, *Windows to Brakhage* was created for herself in addition to Brakhage and it was meant to be physically held and interacted with. This work of art enabled Schneemann to expand the frame and use her body as a medium. I will now proceed to examine how Schneemann's painting construction *Window to Brakhage* functioned as both a portrait and a window, which enabled Brakhage to experience painting from new animated perspectives and dimensions. An analysis of this work sheds

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81. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 9-10.

light on how Brakhage saw and interpreted Schneemann's painting constructions and her use of the body in *Eye/Body*. Moreover, the visual effects of *Window to Brakhage* speak to the theoretical conversation about painting that Brakhage and Schneemann shared. Moreover, these discussions and exchanges took place against an attentiveness to the technological transformations of the 1960s in addition to the precarious fate of painting.

What is significant about *Window to Brakhage*, is that it was small enough for Brakhage to hold in his hands. One might find it rather unusual that Schneemann would make an abstract portrait of Brakhage, considering that portraits are most often a pictorial representation of a person and face. In my view, however, Schneemann's painting construction is a portrait of Brakhage. Instead of depicting Brakhage as she saw him, removed from his own perception, which is often the case in traditional portraits, she placed a mirror in the box so that when he looked inside he would see himself "seeing the painting construction." Brakhage observed this animated transformation and wrote to Schneemann about it, observing that "an edge of a mirror in your *Window to Brakhage* a work which is (perhaps understandably) the MOST opaque to me, was reflecting and throwing all the white paint areas into start shapes of unusual power."[82] What Schneemann wanted to explore with this piece was an embodied view of perception that she was desperate for Brakhage to experience as well.

In Brakhage's letter to Schneemann, he describes her painting construction and the extent to which it had a very immediate and physical effect on him "from influence into the inspiration it is when the strip of film is set in motion."[83]It is interesting that Brakhage recognized that, at first glance, Schneemann's painting construction was perhaps not the most visually transparent object; yet he also explains how, in viewing the work, he saw "not only himself" but also how the mirror reflected the color of the paint

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82. Stan Brakhage writing to Carolee Schneemann, November 30, 1963. Accessed in Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series III, box 35, folder 5-8.

83. Stan Brakhage writing to Carolee Schneemann, November 30, 1963. Accessed in Carolee Schneemann papers.

and created unique shapes that would flicker when they were set in motion. This notion provides an insight into Schneemann's theoretical view of painting, which emphasized vision as a tactile and haptic experience. About the same time Schneemann completed her portrait for Brakhage, she noted in her diary that "vision is not a fact but an aggregate of sensations."[84] For Schneemann, vision is not stabilized by the body or external environment; rather, it is something that is simultaneously both fixed and constantly shifting. Vision is a movement and it requires bodily actions to occur. The conceptualization of vision emerging from Schneemann's discussions with Brakhage and exposure to his work is a foundation for the development of her kinetic theatre.

Brakhage wrote to Schneemann explaining that not only was he influenced greatly by her painting box, but that it had transformed *Dog Star Man*; indeed he filmed *Window to Brakhage* in part II of the film. He explained that he photographed and filmed her painting constructions in a series of close-up shots that were both inside and outside the box. *Window to Brakhage* appears in part II of *Dog Star Man* as a mixture of natural and cinematically produced superimposed images. Significantly, these shots could have been a direct result of filming the inside of her painting construction, allowing him to capture the "flickering" colors from the mirror and the paint in the box. I am not suggesting here that he portrays Schneemann's painting construction in real time as the images of the box that appear in the film are largely edited and fragmented: for example, Brakhage superimposed images from the painting box onto his young baby's head with punctured holes in the film that produce a collage and mosaic like image (fig. 17).

Rather than attempting to identify the whole image of Schneemann's artwork in Brakhage's, I am interested in the process of translation the work undergoes in the film. By filming her work, and essentially "cutting it up" and by puncturing the film, Brakhage re-creates the "sculptural" aspect of what the painting produced for him as a phenomenological experience when he first encountered it. Although the image of Schneemann's painting construction, and Brakhage's initial encounter with it, does not

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84. Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series 1, box 2/11967/71, folder 2.2.

appear in the *Dog Star Man*, the superimposed images of it is an attempt to re-capture and translate what the work meant to him. By layering and puncturing the celluloid, and creating multiple superimpositions, Brakhage effectively built a thick canvas-like surface; an outcome which directly corresponds to Schneemann's strategy of using her body to add dimensionality to her constructions in order to break out of the frame. Essentially, both Schneemann and Brakhage were breaking down the dimensionality of their respective mediums in order for the image to be seen from new perspectives and angles. The remnants of *Window to Brakhage* appear in the *Dog Star Man* as fragment, bits of glass, color and reflections of the painting construction. There are even tiny glass portraits of Jane Brakhage and Stan Brakhage made from the glass in Schneemann's painting construction, that appear in the film. These portraits appear extremely quickly, making it difficult for the viewer to ascertain where or how each individual shot and superimposition was created. It is important to remember that viewers in the 1960s would not have been able to slow down or rewind Brakhage's film and therefore it would not have been possible to identify the microscopic images that Brakhage was working with.

Like Brakhage's use of superimposition in *Dog Star Man*, in *Eye/Body* Schneemann is also working with the concept of superimposition and the layering of images. Schneemann was eager to deconstruct the two-dimensional surface of the painterly canvas. In *Eye/Body* her body literally projects outside of the frame and her painting constructions. With every pose that Schneemann adopts, her movements are being photographed and documented. In one image (fig. 18), she poses inside the painting construction *Ice Box*, a wooden box containing paint, mirrors, glass, motorized fan and twigs. She appears to have flowers drawn on her face and a strong pronounced black marker outlines her mouth and lips. With one hand, she holds a large piece of glass on her face and her other arm appears to be under the box. The large piece of glass is actually cut into the shape of a mask. By pressing her face onto the glass, the make-up starts to smear and the outlines of her face become distorted. This image evokes a cinematic superimposition and there is clearly an element of layering taking place, such as the drawings on her face in addition to the piece of glass that is connected to the painting construction, which constitutes a collage like and layering effect. Both Brakhage

and Schneemann use collage and layering to build up the frame in order to visually interrogate and deconstruct their mediums. For Schneemann, the physical body was used literally in order to move into three-dimensional space and break out of the frame of painting, but it was also documented by photograph with the result that her use of the body moves closer to the medium of film. The body is the second main feature that defines Schneemann's kinetic theatre. This conceptualization of vision relies on the movement of the body and vision. Moreover, vision is not stabilized in the body. Such is the conclusion that Schneemann arrives to in her performance *Eye/Body* and her attempt to complicate pictorial framing. Although they worked in different mediums, I would argue that Brakhage moved closer to painting through the medium of film and Schneemann moved closer to film through the medium of painting and performance art. The layering and the building up of the celluloid frame is a way to animate and activate the still image, while the building up of the frame moves toward the medium and aesthetic style of collage and painting. Because the medium of film could not capture the phenomenological experience of Schneemann's painting construction, Brakhage translated Schneemann's work by re-creating a visual and perceptual experience of it.

Brakhage was concerned with the limitations of a Renaissance perspective, which he felt the medium of film inherited. Although the film's viewers would not have been able to identify the microscopic elements that went into the work, Brakhage carefully edited, physically cut, punctured, painted, scratched, taped and superimposed images. Indeed, his very material and physical editing process which he outlined in Metaphors on Vision, indicates each cut and superimposition:

> The hand painting was always in direct relationship to the particular kind of "closed eye vision" that comes only in dreams. The commonest type of "closed-eye vision" is what we get when we close our eyes in daylight and watch the moving shapes and forms through the red pattern of the eyelid. Since PRELUDE was based on dream vision, as I remember it, it had to include "closed-eyed vision." Painting was the closest approximation to it; so I painted, throwing down patterns and controlling them in various ways [...] The next step, once I had one whole strip of film, was to start with the second, the superimposition one image on another whenever one wants. I

> took the strips that were largely determined by chance and Surrealist operations and began editing a second strip to it.[85]

In referring to his desire to represent hypnagogic and "closed eyed vision" which he explains as the reason as to why he painted directly onto the celluloid in *Dog Star Man*, he does not mention the effect that Schneemann's paintings had on his thought and conceptual art practice. Brakhage's visual experiments and techniques with the camera such as anamorphic lens and painting on the celluloid in *Dog Star Man* was one of the ways that he felt he could challenge traditional forms of perspective.

Brakhage's method of painting directly onto the celluloid strip in *Dog Star Man* also provided a means to interrogate and deconstruct painting during a time when it was considered to be a reductive medium. His method of expanding painting into film shares a unique relationship to Schneemann's practice, a critical discussion of the muse and modernist criticism. Moreover, his interest in hypnagogic vision provided a means to interrogate and reduce vision, color and form to their most primary and basic elements: how the brain "sees", as opposed to light reflecting on the retina. However, this is not to suggest that hypnagogic vision is not "technologically" informed and influenced by his surrounding social and political circumstances. Brakhage's correspondence with Schneemann reflects not only a glimpse of what went on in his daily routine as a filmmaker, but it also indicates the ways in which he was actively being influenced by her work, leading to significant technological innovations in avant-garde film and expanded cinema.

Conclusion: "From Schneemann" a riddle unsolved

> My myth was that I was a mountain man with a mountain family; a mountain artist which is what the world so much needed as a counterbalance to Andy Warhol, and a macho man which I never was. A father figure which was a category that I did not fit and brought all sorts of wrath from the feminist movement increasingly over the years and still. I was a person ill throughout most of his life and suffered from neurotic and

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85. Brakhage, *Metaphors on Vision*, 12.

> physical disabilities living year round in a place where humans were not intended to live. I dealt with a continuous breakdown with nature; it was a combination of the most beautiful and terrifying experience that you could have.[86]

In an interview conducted shortly before Brakhage died in 2003 he laments his image as macho mountain artist. It is ironic that Brakhage's persona was built on the very subject that he set out to critique in *Dog Star Man*. It is clear that he perceives his artistic persona as something that was constructed by the critics and independently of the artwork he produced. Indeed, his myth appeared to take on a life of its own, and began to affect the way he perceives himself and his personal relationship to Schneemann.

The letters between Schneemann and Brakhage in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s reflect a far more nuanced and complex relationship than that traditionally depicted in art history. For example, on June 21, 1982, Schneemann wrote to Brakhage asking him to lend *Window to Brakhage* for the first and only solo exhibition of her painting constructions. In a six page letter that Brakhage wrote to Schneemann on August 20, 1982, just a month before her exhibition was due to open in New York at the Max Hutchinson Gallery, he explained that he would not lend the portraits for the exhibition and expressed his anger over the rumors she was spreading about him being a chauvinist. He writes:

> […] I think Norman Mailer is fair ground for chauvinistic attack; and I think I'm not! Aside from aesthetic, I don't think I have behaved with any particularity of chauvinism in my home life either: I don't think Jane or Brakhage daughters present a justifiable image of beaten womanhood to substantiate your continuous suspicion of me [...] quite the opposite. For years people have come to me with stories of your diatribes against me, puzzled because they have no such picture of me either as teacher or friend: I've always shrugged this off with Oh, it's an old argument between Carolee and Me![87]

86.Stan Brakhage quoted in *Brakhage*, directed by Jim Shedden, Zeigesit films, 1999.

87. Stan Brakhage to Carolee Schneemann, August 20, 1982 in Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series III, box 35, folder 5-8.

Brakhage explains that his refusal to lend Schneemann's paintings for the exhibition were personal and he explains how important paintings were for him since he studied them daily. Schneemann was extremely frustrated at Brakhage for not wanting to lend her works for her exhibition for "personal reasons," even though the works had only recently been found in his friend (Morton Subotnick's shed).[88] As a result, Schneemann's paintings were not in the exhibition and the (catalogue essay and her works were never shown in a public conversation with Brakhage's work). His refusal to loan the work for the exhibition highlights another example of how Schneemann's artworks have been overlooked within both art history and film studies. For example, feminist film historians such as Patricia Mellencamp and Ara Osterweil have created binaries and polarities between Schneemann's and Brakhage's works. However, I have demonstrated how Schneemann's performance *Eye/Body* hints at a more fluid and exchange between these two artists. The pairing of these two unlikely figures complicates the historiography and it reveals that Schneemann was not working in isolation. Instead, this collaboration provides insight into the aesthetic and political development of her kinetic theatre and it addresses a wider discussion of gender politics in the 1960s.

In private correspondences such as the letter above, Brakhage admires Schneemann's works and consistently points out how important they were for his own work. Yet her contributions to Brakhage's work, were never made public. After the exhibition Schneemann wrote to Brakhage describing the event, taking the opportunity to clarify some of the rumors that Brakhage believed she was spreading about him:

> I have never stated, intended told anyone that [sic]Brakhage women are held under the thumb of your art/ your creative authority or simple needs, to the contrary I've tried to make clear to people who ask or discuss our lives that yours with Jane was integral to your mutual consequences, being of self with each other [...] I suffered in the past from being made to feel that I would be an antagonist, that my life and Jane's were contradictory

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88. Schneemann explains that her painting construction *Window to Brakhage* was found in Morton Subotnick's shed. Subotnick was an electronic composer that was friends with Stan Brakhage, James Tenney and Schneemann. See Carolee Schnemann to Stan Brakhage, October 13, 1982, Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series III, box 35, folder- 5-8.

> rather than interlinked [...] a week or so before the exhibit Haller sent me a query about your essay "From Carolee Schneemann" and I was intrigued by it newly; realized no one could have any idea what were the embedded referents. For fun began to list those I recognized and then thought to make an index... I enclose it for your response.[89]

When reading each of these letters individually, it appears that Schneemann's and Brakhage's arguments were very heated, expressing at times clashing views about gender and politics. Indeed, Brakhage's last letter to Schneemann regarding her claims of his chauvinism, raises the question of why he withheld her paintings for the exhibition. It is interesting that Schneemann explains to Brakhage that she never told anyone he was an oppressive figure to his wife and his children. On the contrary, she characterizes their relationship as a partnership, noting that Jane Brakhage was an integral aspect to his work. In the letter Schneemann denies ever publicly calling Brakhage a chauvinist. Regardless of whether or not Schneemann thought Brakhage was a chauvinist, the significance of their relationship should not be overlooked, especially if one is to have a sense of the crucial conceptualizations of vision and the body (as movements) occurring in these initiating moments of her kinetic theatre. Schneemann's last letter to Brakhage ends by making a reference to Brakhage's 1963 essay "From Schneemann" which explored their artistic relationship. It seems fitting that in Schneemmann's last letter to Brakhage she mentions the essay which is a reflection on their artistic relationship. Her reference to the essay demonstrates the significance of their artistic correspondence, despite the fact that their artistic personas have often foreclosed the historical significance of their work. Through glimpses and fragments of the archive, I have attempted to demonstrate that despite the many contradictions that Brakhage and Schneemann faced in their political and private lives, they drew an enormous amount of inspiration from one another.

The critical reception of *Eye/Body* and *Dog Star Man* has to some extent shaped Schneemann's and Brakhage's gendered artistic personas. These categories are highly

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89. Carolee Schnemann to Stan Brakhage, October 13, 1982, Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series III, box 35, folder- 5-8.

commodifiable and work to further perpetuate the myth of the individual autonomous artist as opposed to the notion of the avant-garde as a community and a network of ideas and exchange. What remains apparent is that although Brakhage's and Schneemann's works were produced in the 1960s, their artistic connections are yet to be recognized by the critics and to some extent themselves. By perpetuating these classifications it seems that both Schneemann's and Brakhage's artistic contributions cannot be fully understood within art history.

Chapter 2

Cold War Psychiatry and the Recovery of Sensation in Carolee Schneemann's kinetic theatre

A week before Carolee Schneemann's kinetic theatre performance *Illinois Central* (1968) was due to take place at the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, she and the curator Jan Van de Marck received an official document from the United States Department of Information Service enquiring about the full content and subject matter of her forthcoming show.[1] Immediately following receipt of the letter, the funding from the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art and the Illinois Arts Council was withdrawn. Although Van de Marck, who was the lead curator responsible for commissioning the performance, was fired,[2] he intervened and found an alternative location in an old abandoned bakery loft at 1608 North Wells Street. In just two days, the loft was emptied and sound and lighting equipment was installed. After one successful performance, local Chicago fire marshals barged in through a "secret" entrance that Schneemann and her performers had created and shut down the performance.[3]

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1. Letter from Department of Information Services written to Carolee Schneemann, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA, Accession no, 950001, series III, box 2. (date) There is evidence to suggest that Schneemann's letter from the Department of Information Services was part of a mail infiltration scheme in which the CIA and FBI participated. According to primary research carried out by Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, "the FBI officially discontinued its own mail cover program in 1964, largely because it was duplicating that of the CIA, from which it had been receiving information accruing from the Agency's illegal reading of U.S. radicals' letters since at least as early as 1958. Consequently, during the period of 1958-1973, the Bureau received a total of 57, 4846 pieces of mail in 1966, 5,863 in 1967, 5,322 in 1968, and 5, 384 in 1969," *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBIS's Secret Wars Against Domestic Dissent* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 366.

2. These events are recalled in *More Than Meat Joy: Performance, Works and Selected Writings* (New Platz, New York: Documentext, 1979), 168, 169.

3. Schneemann explains that the Chicago fire marshals were ordered to shut down her performance. She also describes a hostile audience, which she attributed to having undercover police being planted during her performance at Nassau College. She and her performers were advised by Legal Aid to take precautions because her work could have been shut down if she broke any of the nudity laws. For more on this performance see, Carolee Schneeman, *More Than Meat Joy,* 168-169.

Illinois Central went on to tour at various colleges such as the University of Buffalo, *SUNY*, the Brooklyn Academy and the Boston Arck, followed by a successful tour with Intermedia 1968. Throughout the tour, however, Schneemann and the performers felt threatened by the Chicago police. Many of the performers thought they were being followed and that their phones had been wire-tapped. At the Boston Arck, the partner of one of the performers phoned from New York demanding that he return immediately because she had been raped and robbed in their apartment. That same day the group went to find a replacement performer and found that the tires of their rented van had been slashed while later that night "a ten foot lighting and sound projection collapsed, injuring an assistant and ruining several projectors."[4] At a community college in Long Island, men from the audience (who Schneemann and the performers believed to be police officers) caused riots as soon as any of the male performers touched each other.[5] Was the paranoia that Schneemann and her performers felt during the tour warranted, or was it disproportionate to the events that occurred? The series of hostile incidents which occurred during her performances could well be coincidences, unrelated to the inquiry into Schneemann's work initiated by the Department of Information Services. Yet they also suggest the possibility of a conspiracy in which the Chicago police officers and higher officials from the Department of Information Services collaborated to prevent Schneemann's work from taking place.

Schneemann's kinetic theatre was an aesthetic and political attempt to alter people's consciousness and raise political awareness about the Vietnam War. Integral to the ideas behind kinetic theatre, is the notion that her viewers needed to be physically and mentally sensitized to mass-produced images of atrocity. Moreover, works such as *Snows* (1967) and *Illinois Central* articulate an antiwar agenda and a political stance against the Vietnam War. She writes:

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4. Ibid, 170.

5. Ibid, 170.

> Because of the metaphoric political content-overriding language, polemic, propaganda, and abstraction I could never determine whether the difficulties in producing this work, and its reception, were random or somehow inevitable, coming at a time when the length of people's hair was taken as evidence of their politics. The difficulties were extraordinary, though Illinois Central was the most extensively performed of my theatre pieces.[6]

The paranoia that Schneemann and her performers experienced during this tour can be examined in relation to the larger political and social climate of the Cold War in America during the 1960s. As antiwar activist groups expanded in the United States, growing more powerful and militant towards the end of the 1960s, so did local military groups such as the National Guard. At the Chicago Democratic Convention in 1968, for example, 10,000 antiwar activists were met by 23,000 Chicago troops and National Guardsmen.[7] As the war in Vietnam and the Cold War progressed, their paranoid effects were systematically felt inside the US within the counterculture by antiwar activists who, according to the CIA and FBI, were a threat to internal security and part of a larger conspiracy to "brainwash" and ignite violence in the US government.[8]

In 1958, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover created a special counter-intelligence program, COINTELPRO, which was specifically directed against the Communist party. By the mid 1960s, however, there were a number of organizations which aroused the suspicions of the FBI and the CIA, among them the Students for a Democracy Society (SDS); the New Left; the Black Party Movement and many individual antiwar activists and artists. In 1969, the US Deputy Attorney General, Richard G. Kleindienst, publically announced that the SDS and "new left activists" were out to "subvert society" on a

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6. Ibid, 170.

7. The increase in police brutality and security at the Democratic Convention has been observed by Mark Rudd, My Life With SDS and the Weathermen, (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 155-157; Dan Berger, *Outlaws of America The Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity*, (Oakland: AK press, 2006), 115-119 and Martin Klimke, *The Other Alliance Student Protest in West Germany and The United States in the Global Sixties,* (New Jersey: University of Princeton Press), 81.

8. Seymour Hersh, " Huge C.I.A. Operation Reported in the U.S. Against Antiwar forces, other dissidents in Nixon Years," *New York Times*, December 22, 1977, 6.

national scale. He suggested that not only should there be legal a means of preventing their form of political action, such as protests and antiwar gatherings, but also that they should be "rounded up and placed in a detention camp." He states:

> If [SDS] or any group was organized on a national basis to subvert society, then I think Congress should pass laws to suppress that activity. When you see an epidemic like this cropping up all over the country—the same kind of people saying the same kinds of things—you begin to get the picture that it is a national subversive activity [SDS and other new left activists] should be rounded up and put in a detention camp.[9]

According to historians Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, by 1964 the FBI had already begun to systematically infiltrate the SDS. Indeed, their research draws on primary evidence to reveal that, "during the period of 1964-68 […] more than 800 wiretaps and some 700 bugs (facilitated by at least 150 surreptitious entries), and an unknown number of informants and infiltrators, were all utilized in 'non-criminal investigations'."[10] Both the CIA and the FBI were also involved in "mail covers", which involved reading the mail of many leftist and perceived radical thinkers. In an important article for the New York Times in 1974 Seymour Hersh writes:

> As part of its alleged effort against dissident Americans in the late nineteen-sixties and early nineteen-seventies the CIA authorized agents to follow and photograph participants in antiwar and other demonstrations. The CIA also set up a network of informants who were ordered to penetrate antiwar groups.[11]

Hersh goes on to note that 10,000 American citizens who opposed the war during the late 1960s and early 1970s were subjected to wiretaps, inspection of mail and various house break-ins.

This article contextualizes the paranoia that was experienced by Schneemann and her performers during her 1968 tour. In briefly outlining the activities of the CIA and FBI

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9. Churchill Ward and Wall Vander Jim, *COINTELPRO,* 166.

10. Ibid, 366.

11. Ibid, 6.

during this period, my aim is to explore the possibility that CIA officials deliberately set out to sabotage and infiltrate her kinetic theatre. This chapter examines what was so threatening about Schneemann's antiwar performances and whether the undercover police and the CIA actually recognized some of the methods that she was adopting in her sensitizing experiments. I examine Schneemann's kinetic theatre in relation to Cold War psychiatry and draw parallels between the sensitizing experiments used in Schneemann's antiwar performances *Snows*, *Illinois Central* and those used in CIA-financed research on Cold War psychiatry. Schneemann's performances can be interpreted as a series of experiments through which she sought to sensitize her audience to images of atrocities carried out in Vietnam. In contrast to the CIA's actual application of sensory deprivation, which was used in an attempt to win the war on communism, Schneemann's fusion of art and technology create what I term a "laboratory of the senses". In overlaying multiple media, such as sound, video, performance and lighting effects, in her kinetic theatre works, Schneemann creates a kind of sensory overload, which acts as a counterpart to the sensory deprivation techniques used during the Cold War.

In order to situate my argument, I will begin by exploring the ways in which Schneemann and Brakhage disrupt the viewing experience of mass produced atrocity images. In my previous chapter I established that Schneemann was not working in isolation. Rather, her correspondence with Brakhage sheds light on the development of her kinetic theatre. Moreover, this association also reveals how Schneemann's conceptualization of vision and the body emerged from mutual discussions about these topics. By situating Schneemann's work in the 1960s and within the broader context of the antiwar movement this research brings a new perspective on her work. As will be shown, political debates about media desensitization are considered in relation to Schneemann's kinetic theatre, in addition to the antiwar movement and Brakhage's aesthetics. I focus specifically on the psychological and personal effects that the Vietnam War had on Schneemann and Brakhage's "paranoid aesthetics." Both Schneemann and Brakhage experimented with visual technologies in order to develop hypersensitive ways of seeing that would provide an alternative to mass-produced images of the Vietnam War. A recurring feature of each of the artworks discussed in this chapter is their complication

and disruption of the process of viewing images of atrocity. According to both Schneemann and Brakhage, the American media was a form of mind-control and brainwashing that desensitized the masses. Therefore, it is important to question how Schneemann and Brakhage's aesthetics disrupts the media image but also produces a hallucinatory response in the audience. Before turning to a detailed discussion of Schneemann and Brakhage's works I will briefly outline the background to the CIA research that was conducted on mind-control and sensory deprivation.

From 1950 to 1962, the CIA spent a billion dollars annually for the development of psychiatric and mind-control research.[12] These classified projects were known as MK-ULTRA, Project Artichoke, and Bluebird. Many of these CIA financed experiments were carried out in psychiatric institutes and psychology departments throughout North America. For example, in 1954 the psychologist Dr. Donald O. Hebb used sensory deprivation techniques for his research at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. His subjects (paid grad students) were placed individually in a small cubicle that restricted all incoming light and tactile sensation.[13] Participants were required to wear "translucent goggles", and thick gloves that restricted all tactile and visual sensation. Most of these students abandoned the study within just two or three days. The outcome of his research proved that the effects of sensory deprivation produced behavioral changes in his subjects. Hebb observed the physical and mental effects that sensory deprivation and prolonged isolation had on the participants and most of his subjects reported an experience of visual and oral hallucinations. His experiments revealed that prolonged visual and tactile sensory deprivation dramatically affected an individual's capacity to think systematically. The social and political implications of Hebb's experiments were directly connected to the Cold War. According to the historian Alfred McCoy, Hebb's

12. Nicholas Horrock, "Private Institutions Used in C.I.A. Effort to Control Behavior; 25-Year, $25 Million Program, *New York Times*, 1 August 1977, 1.

13. Alfred W. McCoy, *A Question of Torture* (New York: Holt 2006),40-41.

research on sensory deprivation helped develop a new form of psychological, rather than physical, torture that was implemented within the CIA. [14]

McCoy writes:

> Through covert trial and error, the CIA, in collaboration with university researchers, slowly identified three key behavioral components integral to its emerging techniques for psychological torture. At Montreal's McGill University, the discovery, by gifted Canadian psychologist Dr. Donald O. Hebb, of the devastating impact on sensory deprivation became the conceptual core of the agency's paradigm.[15]

The outcome of Hebb's research led to the CIA's publication of the *KUBARK Manual* (1963).[16] This manual was used specifically for interrogation and it often cited the use of sensory deprivation, electric shock therapy and the use of psychedelic drugs to enhance interrogation methods. Evidence of the CIA's direct involvement with Hebb's research in addition to many other psychologists' research was only made public in the late 1970s.[17] However, even before its public dissemination, the fear of brainwashing and mind control was already widespread within the social imaginary. Indeed, postwar scholar, Timothy Melley explains that the notion of brainwashing was not confined to the right wing and although he traces it back to McCarthyism, he observes that by the 1960s "brainwashing went on to become a powerful and long-lived cultural fantasy."[18] About brainwashing Melley writes:

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14. Sensory deprivation experiments were done at McGill University and this research help support the CIA's manual on interrogation techniques. This point has been made by Alfred W. McCoy, *A Question of Torture* (New York: Holt 2006), 29; Nicholas M. Horrock, "Private Institutions used in C.I.A. effort to control behavior," *New York Times*, August 2, 1977 and Rebecca Lemov, "Brainwashing's Avatar: The Curious Career of Dr. Ewen Cameron" *Grey Room* 45 (2011): 60-87 and Brandon Joseph, "Biomusic," *Grey Room* 45 (2011): 148.

15. Alfred W. McCoy, *A Question of Torture*, 32.

16. Ibid, 50.

17. Ibid, 50.

18. Ibid, 50.

> By 1960 it had been the subject of more than two hundred articles in popular U.S. magazines, including *Time* and *Life*. It had become decoupled from communism and deployed to theorize frightening new forms of domestic social and political influence—especially American media and corporate power. It would regularly resurface at the heart of other conspiracy theories, like Lincoln Lawrence's assertion that Lee Harvey Oswald had murdered John F. Kennedy while under radio-controlled posthypnotic suggestion. Because of its association with invasive psychiatry, it would also become a central image of the postwar antipsychiatry movement and would eventually make its way into the 1980 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, under the heading of "dissociative disorders," a definition often cited in lawsuits aimed at religious cults.[19]

By placing this widespread public paranoia about brainwashing and mind control within the historical context of the countercultural movement, it becomes possible to examine how Schneemann's kinetic theatre works, such as *Snows* and *Illinois Central*, reflect what the 1960s journalist Richard Hofstadter describes as a "paranoid style."[20] For Hofstadter, the paranoid style is, above all, "a way of seeing the world and of expressing oneself."[21] However, it is important not to reduce Schneemnann's aesthetics here to a reflection of individualism and intention. Rather, Hofstadter brings to our attention that, "style has to do with the way in which ideas are believed and advocated rather than the truth or falsity of their content."[22] This concept of paranoia situates Schneemann's aesthetics within a broader, social and political context. Moreover, it considers artistic intention as a historical response to the political and social conditions of the 1960s. However, Hofstadter's definition of the "paranoid style" does not include the historical possibility of brainwashing and mind-control; for him a "paranoid style" is a term that

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19. Timothy Melley, "Brainwashed! Conspiracy Theory and Ideology in the Postwar United States," *New German Critique* 108 (2008): 148.

20. Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," *The Paranoid Style in American Politics: and other essays* (London: J Cape, 1966), 4.

21. Hofstadter notes that the truth and validity of one's paranoid ideas are not necessarily relevant. Rather, he is more focused on how ideas are circulated and understood on an epistemological level. Ibid. 4-5.

22. Ibid, 5.

remains a paranoid delusion. Unlike Hofstadter, I will examine various forms of brainwashing and mind-control experiments that took place during this period.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders was first published in 1952 and it defines "paranoid personality disorder" as an individual who suffers from irrational and obsessive thoughts of mistrust, suspicion, skepticism and doubt.[23] These thoughts are said to materialize in hallucinations, with or without the influence of drugs. Excessive paranoid thinking was categorized for the first time as a mental disorder in the DSM during the Cold War. Yet the cultural conditions that contributed to this "disorder" were not taken into consideration. In re-examining paranoia in this chapter, it is not my intention to reduce paranoia to the limiting context of Cold War psychiatry. Rather, I seek to examine paranoia historically, as it relates to a set of discursive political practices surrounding the CIA and the antiwar movement in the 1960s. Paranoia will be revealed here as a rhetorical problem of the self and as a way to interpret, order, and construct reality. This means carefully considering the hostility, suspicion and doubt that Schneemann and Brakhage had towards the American government as a consequence of real historical events. Rather than examining paranoia as a pathological and individual condition, then, I consider it through a historical lens that raises a series of aesthetic questions and conditions of possibility regarding Schneemann's kinetic theatre.

Schneemann's Paranoid Aesthetics

> In the summer of '66 Jim [James Tenney] was witness to hallucinations I suffered in the country, of Vietnamese bodies hanging in the trees; the kitchen stove became a miniature village, smoldering- seen from above- and I was afraid to bake in it. I was editing 'Fuses' (16mm) and began to make super 8 film from Viet-nam atrocity photographs; gradually drawing and notes formed a sinister reverie building towards a theater piece.[24]

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23. The DSM code for Paranoid personality disorder is DSM-IV code 301.0 Please see the *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* fourth edition (Washington, DC : American Psychiatric Association, 1996), 366.

24.Carolee Schneeman, *Imaging her Erotic*s (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 87.

While Schneemann was editing her film *Fuses* in 1966 she began making her antiwar film *Viet Flakes*, which was based on a collection of Vietnam atrocity photographs from popular magazines such as *Life*. As the extract from above describes, throughout this process she regularly suffered from hypnagogic hallucinations to which her partner, James Tenney (an electronic composer), was witness. Graphic photographs of the effects of war in Vietnam, such as the ones used in Schneemann's film, appeared weekly in Life from as early as 1963 and continued to be published throughout the duration of the war. The front cover of January 25, 1963 *Life* shows three Viet Cong men captured with their hands tied in a small canoe. The caption reads: "a field of death: Viet Cong soldiers, trapped and shot down in the Delta, lying dead on a nearby shore beside their flag while captured comrades huddle in defeat. Americans in the picture were advisors to the Vietnamese."[25] The article describes these atrocities as a "War by Torch by Vietnamese infantrymen fighting against Communist guerillas hiding in the nearby flooded paddies" (fig. 18).[26] The North Vietnamese are depicted as "guerillas and the enemies'" who must be defeated through total destruction and annihilation. The ambiguous presence of American "military advisors" in addition to the representation of the North Vietnamese in *Life* magazine was, according to Schneemann and many of her colleagues, a paranoid construction of the "enemy". It was not until after the Gulf of Tonkin of August 2, 1964 and Operation Rolling Thunder of March 2, 1965 that Lyndon Johnson and the National Security Council issued a series of bombings over North Vietnam and elsewhere. Prior to these events, American armed forces in Vietnam were known to the American public as military advisors and they were often seen in a positive light, guiding Vietnamese women, men and children and patrolling various camps. During this time, the American military presence in Vietnam was visible (16,000) but it was not necessarily made transparent to the American public. The threat of communism in the United States led to not only an expansion of the US military in Vietnam but it also led to the proliferation of censorship, surveillance and the imprisonment of "dissident"

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25. Editorial, *Life*, January 25, 1963.

26. Ibid, 2.

scholars like Wilhelm Reich. Reich's imprisonment and subsequent suicide, according to Schneemann and her community of artistic friends, were connected to the ideology of the Cold War and McCarthyism. She writes:

> In 1960 when Jim and I had graduate Fellowships [...] we had met a young woman Vietnamese poet [...]. She told me about the deep pervasive traditions of poetry among all the Vietnamese; that reverence for nature and for ancestors was shared by rural and urban settlements, that the French had long been a disruptive presence there controlling, tin, rubber and opium; that American military forces were subverting the economy and were destroying farming villages, building barbed wire encampments for farmers, radical professors and intellectuals. We had heard nothing of this before. This fragment fit with other astonishing stories we had heard from artists who in their free wheeling travels had told us of underground military installations in the New Mexico desert, where they had been brought to do a concert; or of passports withheld, of a relative dying from germ warfare research, etc [...] this also fit with an uncanny paranoia we felt to be the unraveling fabric of the cold-war and McCarthy pursuits. It related to humble health food stores in Illinois receiving bomb threats; to the firing of Prof. Ivey head of science research at the University of Illinois for his espousal of Krebiozen as a cancer cure; to the death of Reich in prison; to the bizarre notification of the Urbana bank informing us that in the event of a nuclear attack we should mail in our checks rather than come in person; to a theater director friend in Chicago who discovered his phone was tapped when the mechanism broke down and replayed his conversations as he dialed.[27]

This passage lists a series of paranoid fears and observations experienced by Schneemann and some of the performers, some of which echo those they had experienced during the making of her kinetic theatre performance *Illinois Central*. Yet these recollections should not be reduced to an individual suffering from clinical "symptoms" of paranoia; it is important to set these fears and experiences within a broader social and politically understanding. Therefore, any knowledge pertaining to an American involvement in the Vietnam War such as the news of military advisors being there, (seven years prior to the official start of the war) was understood by Schneemann as a form of private and secret knowledge.

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27. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy,* 146.

Hofstadter's 1964 article "The Paranoid Style in American Politics" allows us to move away from the clinical definition of paranoia. He coins the term "paranoid style" to describe a state of mind which evokes heated exaggeration, excessive suspicion and conspiratorial fantasies. He proceeds to make an important distinction between the clinical paranoiac and the paranoid spokesperson. Although both the clinical paranoiac and the paranoid spokesperson tend to be overheated, over-suspicious and over-aggressive, the clinical paranoiac sees the hostile and conspiratorial world in a way that is directed specifically against him or her. The spokesperson of the paranoid style, by contrast, directs his or her paranoia "against a nation or a culture and a way of life that affects not himself or herself alone but millions of others."[28] The paranoid spokesperson in politics, according to Hofstadter, does not single himself out as the individual who is a victim of a personal conspiracy. Rather, his or her political justifications are deemed rational and serve a moral obligation to protect and save their nation and culture.[29] The enemy from which the paranoid spokesperson must protect his or her nation is constructed as being radically evil and, moreover, that which is needed to defeat the enemy goes beyond any concept of political diplomacy.[30] Hofstadter proceeds to explain that conspiracy theorists regard history as a "conspiracy set in motion" driven by demonic forces of nature.[31] The enemy is supernatural, totally evil; human and yet at the same time inhuman.

Hofstadter writes:

> Very often the enemy is held to possess some especially effective source of power: he controls the press; he directs the public mind through "managed news;" he has unlimited funds; he has a new secret for

28. Ibid, 4.

29. Ibid, 4-5.

30. Ibid, 29.

31. Ibid, 31.

> influencing the mind (brainwashing); he has a special technique for seduction [...] he is gaining a stranglehold on the education system [...].[32]

According to Hofstadter, the construction of the enemy is very often an inner projection of the self. These projections are both the ideal and unacceptable aspects of the self, both of which must be prohibited. He writes: "a fundamental paradox of the paranoid style is the imitation of the enemy".[33] In Hofstadter's analysis, the means by which the paranoid construction of the enemy is defeated actually results in the paranoid spokesmen becoming the "enemy." This contradiction maps out an important context that is useful for examining the political effects of Cold War paranoia.

Snows was largely inspired by the vivid hallucinations that Schneemann experienced during the making of *Viet Flakes*.[34] How can we better understand her use of aesthetics in relation to a paranoid style? Are hallucinations a rational response to the Vietnam War? Was her performance an attempt to erase the paranoid hallucinations that she had accumulated as the result of making her film? To what extent does her use of aesthetics and technology interfere with the viewer's perceptions? Is her kinetic theatre a form of mind control? Before attempting to answer these questions by drawing parallels between Schneemann's sensitization techniques and those commonly used within Cold War psychiatry, I will first consider how Schneemann's representations of atrocity images in her film *Viet Flakes* (1965) challenged a 1960s paranoid construction of the enemy.

In *Viet Flakes* two recurring images appear as a film sequence. The first is of a Vietnamese corpse hanging from a tree - resonant of Schneemann's "hallucinations" for her later kinetic theatre performance *Snows* - and the second is of a US army tank dragging a dead Viet Cong soldier to a nearby burial site. The sequence begins as the camera glances over the body being dragged by a tank and proceeds to move upward

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32. Ibid, 32.

33. Ibid, 33.

34. Carolee Schneemann an interview in M.M. Serra and Kathryn Ramey, "Eye/Body The Cinematic Paintings of Carolee Schneemann," *Women's Experimental Cinema: Critical Frameworks* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 118.

following the ropes that connect the body to the tank. The camera zooms in on the tank and pauses at the symbol of the star (insignia of the American military) on its side (fig. 19). The shot then moves back down the tank following the ropes which direct the viewer again to the dragged body. The sequence ends with a shot of four men witnessing an execution. The camera focuses on the faces of the four men before moving upward toward the hanged man's body (fig. 20). Throughout the sequence, the musical score and the camera footage are edited in such a way that it creates the effect of a tank moving. Unlike the still photograph from which this image was originally taken, American soldiers do not appear on top of the tank in Schneemann's film. The score, composed by Tenney, was comprised of a collage of various personal audial fragments layered with faint sounds of Mozart, Bach, The Beatles, Bobby Hebb, Fontella Bass and a Vietnamese folk-song. The score produced a discrepancy between the image and score.

Schneemann's aesthetic techniques in *Viet Flakes* problematize the mass-produced photographic representation of atrocity in *Life* magazine. The circulation of atrocity images within the mass media and the way in which the public were visually bombarded with images troubled Schneemann. In Schneemann's view, this overexposure did not necessarily produce more empathetic or "sensitized" viewers, rather, the pervasive presence of such images tended to distance viewers from the events unfolding in Vietnam. Importantly, however, she did not equate this distance with political apathy. She states:

> The cultural discrepancies were constantly in my mind: our inability to act directly on a situation where we humanly [sic] wanted to intervene, to make a difference. The evidence of the personal experiences of the Vietnamese was reaching us at a great remove, through reproduced photographs: the unknown outcome of the situations depicted and the ambivalent role of the photographer (whose life was also threatened) "taking pictures," as people burnt, bled, fled and were tortured.[35]

Schneemann's film addresses the complexities of viewing atrocity images from the perspective of an increasingly distanced American audience. Unlike the mass-

35. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 129-134.

produced images in Life magazine, which reduced representations of the Vietnamese to paranoid "body counts" and statistics in order to ideologically prove that the US military was winning the war on communism, Schneemann's film provides an alternative representation of the static, mass-produced Vietnam atrocity images. The sense of motion conveyed in Schneemann's image of the tank, aided by Tenney's soundtrack, animates the original still photographs. The viewer is thus placed in the position of being both the tank driver and also the victim who is about to be dragged from the tank by the US soldiers. In addition to this technique, Schneemann used a magnifying glass to trace the atrocity images in order to draw attention to the presence of photographer/camera operator during the filming process and highlight the ethical implications of the act of making images. These aesthetic strategies obstruct the depiction of the North Vietnamese as the communist "enemy" by positioning the viewer's gaze from a range of perspectives, including the photographer, the persecutor's and the persecuted. The "hanged man" image in *Viet Flakes* is significant because it reappears as a choreographed live reenactment, within the context of her performance *Snows*. It is important to note that Schneemann's kinetic theatre is not based on the viewers being able to literally see atrocity images in a straightforward way. That is why *Viet Flakes* is only presented in a linear fashion from start to finish at the very end of the performance. As we shall see, part of the idea of the project was that the audience became sensitized to images of violence and became directly involved in her kinetic theatre before her Vietnam film was presented in *Snows*. I will now explore how her film was displayed as a multimedia dimension and a live interaction in the performance.

A Laboratory for the Senses

Snows was first performed on January 21, 1967 at Martinique Theater in New York City during Angry Arts week. Schneemann was one of 600 artists involved in a week of art projects organized as a protest against the Vietnam War.[36] She borrowed

36. Francis Frascina explains the importance of examining *Snows* within the antiwar context of the late 1960s. He notes the significance of the Angry Arts Week. See, *Art, Politics and Dissent: Aspects of*

around $4000 worth of technical equipment from Bell Labs Corporation. The performance used hand-held light beams, floor mikes, two large strobe lights, two swivel 16mm projectors, five films, three audio-tapes, a color organ and a revolving light machine, which was made by the sculptor Larry Warsaw. [37] The work began with a series of short archival 8mm films, such as her film Red News, based on archival footage ranging from World War II, Chinese communist parades, Winter Bavarian sports and images of local New York snowstorms. The live performance included a total of six performers none of whom were professional dancers: Shigeko Kubota, Phoebe Neville, James Tenney, Peter Watts, Schneemann and Tyrone Mitchell. Led slowly by Schneemann, each of the performers gradually crawled out from an opening of the water-lens. Their movements were intended to be slow and "animal-like." Once they emerged onto the stage, they gradually divided into pairs and began a series of grabs and falls, including a moment when Tenney and Neville appear to be fighting (fig. 21). Internal and collective struggle is a theme that is built within the choreography of kinetic theatre and is particularly present within this performance (fig. 22). These struggles could be interpreted as a "battle of the sexes", or a commentary on male aggression and violence. However, when a woman is captured and taken by a male performer he begins to copy his partner's lifeless body movements. Each of the performers have to transition between a variety of roles: "captors", "victim", "watcher", "pursuer", and "pusher". This is also a critical moment in the performance where the structure of the unit collapses (fig. 23). When Kubota is captured by the 'pursuers' this scene is achieved with an immense struggle and fight.[38] The remaining three performers desperately try to free Kubota and

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the Art Left in Sixties America (Manchester UK: Manchester University Press, 1999), 122.

37. For a transcribed explanation of some of the technology that Schneemann used for Snows See, Carolee Schneemann, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA. Accession no, 950001, series 1, box 2. "A color organ was used to trigger lights on Lawrence Warshaw's color machine. The color organ was activated either manually or by sounds produced by the actors on stage. Silicon controlled rectifiers (SCR) were used most for the overhead stage lighting and some were triggered by photocells picking up various light changes. Several audience seats were wired with contact mics which picked up random noises from the audiences movement which fed to the speakers placed around the theater. Some of the noises were also fed into the color organ and SCR units."

38. It is important to mention that Shigeko Kubota is a Fluxus artist and by the time she was in

save her from being dragged away. Eventually the "capturers" wrap aluminum foil around the base of her legs and place a rope around her head (fig. 24). There are evident echoes in this moment of the recurrent image of the "hanged man" which was also used in *Viet Flakes*.

During the live event, the performers restage the infamous photograph of a North Vietnamese man, who is hung by two other men.[39] However, in the performance this scene is based on the victim being captured and the moments leading up to his/her death. Moreover, in the photograph a North Vietnamese man is hung, while in the performance Kubota, who is a Japanese woman, performs the victim. The choreography in *Snows* disrupts the audiences' coherent relationship between the static media image of the "hanged man" and the performers' representation of it. Schneeman states: "the coherent relationship, connections we make are continuously broken apart; extreme shifts of content leaps in time, geography—all of it familiar. We put ourselves in and pull ourselves away."[40] The violence depicted in the live event is meant to convey a multiplicity of emotions, responding to what Schneemann described as "the unknown outcome of the situations depicted and the ambivalent role of the photographer (whose life was also threatened); 'taking pictures,' as people burnt, bled, fled and were tortured."[41] This imagery is based on real historical events, yet the performance sequence is constantly shifting in order to address and problematize the representation of atrocity images within the media. The televised coverage of the Vietnam War, according to Schneemann, left her viewers numb and desensitized. Moreover, she emphasized that this psychological condition could not be corrected by more media exposure of this type. Indeed, she wanted her audience to interact and participate in the display of atrocity

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Snows she had already completed her 1965 performance, Vaginal Painting.

39. For documentation of this performance and use of atrocity images please see Carolee Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 129-145.

40. Carolee Schneemann Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA. Accession no, 950001, series 2, box 1.

41. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 169.

images during her performance, rather than observe this violence as a passive onlooker. One of the ways that Schneemann attempted to further sensitization was by incorporating the use of technology in her kinetic theatre. She states, "I'm moving more into technology and electronics. My long-range project is completely activated by the spectators. I'll sensitize the audience through a performance situation in which detailed film images are set off by the audience as they move into the performance environment."[42] Schneemann's use of technology was designed to control the external media image but it also examined the audience members' physical responses to the live event. For example, the SCR unit (silicon controlled rectifiers) in *Snows* was connected to the audience member' seats and it picked up their physical movements and vibrations, which could immediately alter the lighting sequence and the choreography. The SCR unit also triggered the two film projectors, which were used in her live performance. During the duration of the performance, atrocity images from Schneemann's films *Red News* and *Viet Flakes* were projected onto the audience and performers' bodies. However, the audience members were completely unaware that their physical movements were monitored and subsequently interfered with the SCR unit, which was also used to display the projected atrocity images. These disruptions were more noticeable when the audiences' physical responses became more agitated and tense.

For example, when Kubota was captured and taken to the rope to be hung, the viewers' physical movements were monitored by contact microphones that were placed under their seats without them knowing. The contact microphones were able to pick up sensations from the audience's physical movements which then fed into an SCR unit that also controlled the lighting on the sage.[43] The audience's physical responses to the live

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42. Carolee Schneemann quoted in Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (London: Studio Vista Limited, 1970), 370

43. Detailed notes for the performance *Snows* are found at, Carolee Schneemann, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA. Accession no, 950001, series 1, box 2. "These contact mikes transferred audience sounds and movements to a SCR switching system which fed into and activated the electrical connections: projectors, sound tapes, the overhanding motorized light sculpture, ceiling lights, floor lights. For example "increasing restlessness', discomfort, sneezes, whispers and shifting would result in max activations."

imagery immediately triggered sudden flashes of blue light which altered the sequence of the performance.[44] As M.M. Serra and Kathryn Ramey describe, "during the performance, the audience, unaware of their contribution, controlled the electronics, the slide projectors, and film projectors so that they could speed up or slow down the images depending on how they were responding to the graphic horror."[45] This technique directly connected her viewers to the media (Schneemann's film), which displayed the atrocity images.

The SCR unit and contact microphones that Schneemann set up during her performance *Snows* was a radical way to measure her viewers' psychological and bodily responses to images of atrocity. Again, this was a means of connecting the body to the technology that she used to display such images. The media, according to Schneemann, altered the public perception of atrocity and her film and kinetic theatre performance was a direct way to interrupt this process. In a 1968 interview with Gene Youngblood, the author of *Expanded Cinema*, Schneemann described her use of technology in her kinetic theatre works and the critical role it played. Her control and use of the media and technology was a way to "sensitize" her audience, but it also provided a means of provoking direct audience interaction and involvement. She comments:

> What I am going more toward is not merely a sensual or perceptual activation of the audience but an actual physical involvement. There no longer can even be the situations of performers who prompt or provoke the audience; we must deal directly with the audience itself as performers. As much as we so-called actors need to be performers, so they need to become performers […]. They must give over a kind of trust in the situation and go into it. I approach the audience with a great deal of care and tenderness, never being physically aggressive. The media information may be aggressive, but it's going to stimulate them in ways that I have to

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44. Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series 1, box 2/1960-67, folder 2.2.

45. M.M. Serra and Kathryn Ramey, "Eye/Body The Cinematic Paintings of Carolee Schneemann," 114.

> be responsible for. So in terms of what that media might provoke, I have to oversee it.[46]

One audience participant, Mary Wilson, explained, "*Snows* held my attention every moment and I had the weird feeling that I was taking part in it [...]." [47] Paradoxically however, the viewers were unaware of their participation since most of the audience members did not know that their seats were wired with contact microphones. Yet Wilson's quote suggests that the performance had a mental impact on her and she felt as if she was taking part in the production even though she was a bystander. Perhaps Wilson's sense of connection to the live event was exaggerated by the fact that Schneemann projected stills of atrocities that took place in Vietnam onto the audience:

> The central imagery of *Viet-Flakes* (animates from still atrocity photographs) was so dire and agonizing that the audiences' pleasurable expectations within the glistening white environment—to be entertained or diverted by film—are confounded. The films were projected on surfaces throughout the theater, spread, then centralized to have as much physical strength and shift the performance movements; to finally appear on the torsos of the three women in their grey pajamas leaning against an unpinned white table top, and onto the wall of [the] water lens.[48]

The choreographed performance was based on the central imagery in *Viet Flakes*. As we have seen, the "hanged man" still photograph was reenacted during *Snows*. However, the audience (would not have known) that this portion of the choreography was also based on the mass-reproduced atrocity image that was circulating in the mass media and in her film. Moreover, Schneemann explained that the audiences' pleasurable experience of the choreography had to be disrupted or somehow connected to the violence on which it was based. Projecting images of atrocity onto the audience -

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46. Carolee Schneemann quoted in, *Expanded Cinema*, 370.

47. Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series 1, box 2/1960-67, folder 2.2.

48. Detailed notes for the performance *Snows*. These documents were accessed in Carolee Schneemann, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA. Accession no, 950001, series 1, box 2. Please also refer to Carolee Schneeman, *More Than Meat Joy,* 128-145.

allowing live and dead filmed bodies to collide in space - enabled Schneemann to connect viewers to the media and violence. Her film became a live interactive and three-dimensional medium, which was able to extend the medium of film. Because the projected images were distorted, and by the time they were projected onto the audience they would have been virtually unidentifiable, viewers would not have been aware of what was happening to them. What Wilson's account shows, however, is the extent to which Schneemann's performance was able to draw the audience into a participatory role, even if they were uncertain of the precise nature of their participation. All of these strategies attempt to disrupt a desensitized audience by creating a visceral and bodily response in both the performers and audience.

Recently, Amelia Jones has written about Schneemann's use of projecting filmed atrocity images onto the live flesh of the performers' bodies. Although Jones does not mention this in her text it is important to note that Schneemann also projected atrocity images onto the audience as well. Jones explains that this aesthetic technique is unequivocally "1960s" in style but that it also resonates politically with a call to bring "Americans back to their bodies in an era of imperialist invasion on the part of the USA."[49] Jones writes:

> This approach of activating live and film bodies as flesh across Schneemann's work during this period is very "1960s." While harrowing and visceral, particularly in the case of Snows and Viet Flakes, it is also very uplifting if one takes this attempt at transcendence- undoubtedly utopian and willfully "essentialising" …in its brutal historical context: a context in which activating the body erotically meant to reclaim its capacity for positive union over its tendency to wreak bloody havoc.[50]

According to Schneemann, *Snows* and *Viet Flakes* were a means to display "the genocidal compulsions of a vicious, disjunctive technocracy gone berserk against an

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49. Amelia Jones, "Screen Eroticisms: Exploring Female Desire in the Work of Carolee Schneemann and Pipilotti Rist" *Screen/Space: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 130.

50. Ibid, 130.

integral, essentially rural culture […]." [51] What is more, Schneemann argued, technology had taken Americans away from their senses and their bodies.[52] She argued that the "Western" and dualist split between mind and body had to be restored in her viewers.[53] The premise of Schneemann's antiwar aesthetics suggests that the more an individual is emotionally, erotically and physically connected to his or her body, the less likely they are to enact violence on others. Jones explains that Schneemann's desire to transcend or fill the mind-body gap was a way to counter 1960s forms of American imperialism and violence. Yet she also recognizes the utopian nature and possible limitations to Schneemann's 1960s antiwar aesthetics. For Jones, Schneemann's performance *Snows*, and her two films *Viet Flakes* and *Fuses* (1965), attempt to "unveil the political and military violence perpetrated by the US troops abroad. I feel *Fuses* (in my gut, my womb) as an attempt to redeem the flesh through an eroticism that seeks to transcend violence of nations through the personal euphoria of the orgasm."[54] The personal eroticism that Schneemann displays in her film *Fuses* extended into her antiwar aesthetics. However, according to Jones, this display of the body and the self retains a "master/slave dialectic and articulates her own agency clearly within the film […]." [55] For Jones, this dialectic is maintained in Schneemann's works because she asserts a control over her sexuality and the representation of her body. However, Jones observes that Schneemann's agency is rooted within a white middle-class, and heterosexual

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51. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 129.

52. See Pamela Lee, *Chronophobia On Time In The Art of the 1960s*, (Massachusetts: MIT press, 2004), 345. Lee transcribes an archival statement by Schneemann that outlines her use of technology and her relationship to E.A.T (Experiments in Art and Technology). Schneemann states: "My problems with technology are concrete, personal; my difficulties with using technicians are mechanical. I want to work with the gestures of machines: to expose their mechanical action as part of the total environment to which it contributes its particular effect. I would like technicians to be interchangeable with performers whenever possible. The work of technicians should become one other action parameter of my work, to be granted into the form of the whole things explicitly. For myself this means greater familiarity with possibilities of available technology and time to explore: a diet of E.A.T."

53. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 129.

54. Jones, "Screen eroticism: exploring female desire in the work of Carolee Schneemann and Pipilotti Rist," 131.

55. Ibid, 139.

position. While this analysis sheds light on why the body was used as a political form of antiwar resistance in the 1960s, Jones's argument does not examine the possibility that Schneemann, along with other similar countercultural artists during this period like Brakhage, could also participate, perhaps unintentionally, in a form of American imperialism and violence. My argument here is that while, Schneemann's paranoid aesthetics are undoubtedly a form of antiwar resistance, her use of technology and aesthetics are comparable to the methods that were used in Cold War psychiatry and therefore parallels can be drawn between them. Before investigating this conflict between Schneemann's methods of resistance and her paranoid aesthetics, I will briefly examine why and how the body was unequivocally related to a form of antiwar resistance in Schneemann's kinetic theatre.

For Schneemann and Brakhage, the body was a form of antiwar resistance that, if "awakened" and "sensitized" properly, could disrupt the physical and physiological effects of the mass media. They both argued that the media not only desensitized individuals to the Vietnam War but it was also a form of brainwashing and social control. As the paranoid threat of the Cold War increased, so did Schneemann's and Brakhage's desire to regain control, not only of their own bodies but also those of their viewers.[56]

As we have seen, the growing fear of brainwashing in the 1960s also led to a more common belief within the antiwar movement that that government was taking over the masses, enslaving their minds and controlling their bodies.[57] According to the historian Jeremy Varon, in order to oppose this way of thinking, a strong emphasis was

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56. Schneemann wrote extensively about how the media was a form that transformed the body and invaded the mind. She explained that the media was a form of colonization over the body. See Carolee Schneemann quoted in Pamela Lee, Chronophobia *On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Massachusetts: MIT press, 2004), 206. Brakhage also wrote about the media as a form of brainwashing and mind control. Stan Brakhage, "Hypnagogically Seeing America" (1967), reprinted in *Brakhage Scrapbook*, ed. Robert Haller (New Platz: Documentext), 10-14.

57.According to the scholar Timothy Melley, the topic of brainwashing and mind control was popular within the cultural imaginary throughout the 1950s and in particular during the 1960s. See "Brainwashed! Conspiracy Theory and Ideology in the Postwar United States," *New German Critique* 108 (2008) 145-164; Robert Coughlan, "Control of the Brain, Part II, The Chemical Mind-Changers," *Life* (1964) March 15, 60-65.

placed on being able to prove one's authenticity and political dedication to the antiwar movement.[58] For example, within the Students for a Democratic Society, individualism and authenticity were understood as positive associations that could challenge the process of brainwashing, which was linked to bourgeois norms and the cause of the Vietnam War. Varon cites the writer Paul Goodman as an example of how antiwar activists associated the Vietnam War with the problems of the US media and government. Writing in 1967, Goodman explained that the government could be destabilized and overthrown if the masses awakened from their brainwashed state, "We assume that Americans do not 'really' will the Vietnam War but are morally asleep and brainwashed […] that there has been a usurpation by a hidden government which makes policy, and that an awakened populace can throw it off."[59] Paranoid conceptions of mind control and the media dominated both the American right and antiwar activism in the New Left, and Schneemann and Brakhage were no exception. Yet these fears are not reducible to a clinical definition of paranoia; it is only by understanding mind control experiments within a historical context of Cold War psychiatry that we are able to have a more nuanced understanding of paranoia and brainwashing at large. According to Timothy Melley "the theory of brainwashing studiously avoids structuralism; it preserves the intentionality of the heart of individualism by understanding social control as the work of an exceptionally powerful, willful, rational, and malevolent human agent."[60] The argument put forward by Melley is important because it considers how mind control experiments were institutionalized and to some extent naturalized within psychiatry and the behavioral sciences in postwar America. Before it is possible to evaluate Schneemann

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58. See Jermey Varon, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventie*s (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 137.

59. Paul Goodman quoted in Jermey Varon, *Bringing The War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2004), 137.

60. Timothy Melley, "Brainwashed! Conspiracy Theory and Ideology in Postwar United States", 140.

and Brakhage's paranoid aesthetics as form of antiwar resistance, I would first like to examine the mind control experiments that took place in the 1960s.

Wake me up If I'm still dreaming...

Between the years 1957-1964 Dr Donald Ewen Cameron was the director of Allan Memorial Psychiatric Institute in Montréal, Canada. During this time he developed his methods of "psychic driving" and "depatterning", which he used to treat his patients suffering from mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and depression. However, Cameron was less concerned with creating techniques for psychotherapy. As Rebecca Lemov points out, "for Cameron, the psyche was not an entity to be psychoanalyzed."[61] Lemov explains that as early as 1948 Cameron was already in favor of abandoning the notion of cause and effect in relation to the behavior patterns of individuals with mental illness. This, he argued, would be replaced by a new hypothesis, which posited a chain of event sequences continually interacting with one another. Moreover, Cameron argued that the cause of a psychological problem, and by extension one's symptoms, could be interrupted and prevented at any point in time. Thus, behavioral patterns and modifications could be controlled, by the psychiatrist in order to produce behavioral changes in his patients. He writes:

> Now we are approaching a period when the whole concept of the cause may be abandoned in favor of a hypothesis of chains of event sequences continually interacting with, and modifying, each other. Causes, then, are seen to be no more than our recognition of places in these sequences at which we can most successfully interfere, either now or when we have gained more skill.[62]

This hypothesis shaped much of Cameron's new research and relates to many of the automatic techniques, which he used on his patients at Allan Memorial hospital

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61. Rebecca Lemov, "Brainwashing's Avatar: The Curious Career of Dr. Ewen Cameron" *Grey Room* 45 (2011): 61- 87.

62. D. Ewen Cameron, "Current Transition in the Conception of Science," *Science* 107 (1948): 556.

during his psychic driving and depatterning experiments[63]. The goal of psychic driving involved an automatic form of psychotherapy, which abandoned traditional forms of psychotherapy in order to cure his patients suffering from mental illnesses such as anxiety, postpartum depression, and schizophrenia. His original concept of "psychic driving" was first published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* in 1956. In the article he also describes the use of a high fidelity magnetic tape recorder, which was used, while the patient was undergoing psychic driving. Tapes were recorded by Cameron and other psychiatrists and were made into a loop and played up to twenty hours a day. Recorded messages were specifically designed to produce behavioral modification and correct the patient's psychological symptoms. In this example, desensitization techniques are employed in recorded messages during psychic driving as a means to both uncover and correct the patient's neurotic symptoms and problems:

> Freda, you have never been able to face your difficulties. You put them out of your mind or blame others for them, or blame your health. All your life you have been getting other people to do things for you. Until her death, your mother spoiled you and did everything for you but she has never understood you and treated you as yourself. When you married, your husband had to take over for you. You take all that he has to offer and give nothing in return.[64]

This message targets the patient's insecurities and fears. The "driving signal" refers to the data that was played on the tapes. According to Cameron, the data on the recorded messages was a means of identifying and uncovering the patient's repressed psychological problems. Once the patient's driving signal was identified then he or she could undergo a process of desensitization. "Periodically it is necessary to run a problem identification signal in order to crystallize material that has been learned prior to further

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63. Automatic techniques refer to Cameron's methods, which involved a six -step process such as: uncovering, problem identification, desensitization, patient-therapist interaction, problem solving and reorganization. These are outlined in his article "Cameron, D. Ewen, "Automation of Psychotherapy," *Comprehensive Psychiatry* vol. 5, no. 1 (1964): 4.

64. Ibid, 4.

uncovering or to desensitization or to moving over to actual problem solving."[65] For Cameron, desensitization produces a decrease in emotion reaction. However, he explained that it was not entirely clear how this was accomplished. "If after an individual has been desensitized with respect to a given area, we now have him cover the area again, this time under minimal adjuvants, we find that there is a return to sensitivity."[66] According to Cameron, this form of automatic therapy was more efficient and faster than psychotherapy and he continued to develop techniques in order to deal with mental illness. For example, when Janine Huard was treated at Allan Memorial hospital in 1958 for postpartum depression and was under his supervision she was forced to listen to a tape that proclaimed she was useless to her family.[67] She states, "they gave me terrible drugs, electroshocks, and made me stay in a bed with a mask over my face listening to recordings for hours a day…"[68] Huard's repeated exposure to these recordings was meant to alleviate her postpartum depression. Cameron's method of desensitization was used in his psychic driving experiments as a way to control and fix his patients behavioral patterns. Paradoxically, however, his patients were forced to listen to negative messages that reinforced their fears.

In 1961, Cameron published an article on his depatterning strategies, which he specifically developed in order to combat schizophrenia. Depatterning involved three stages and, like psychic driving treatments, it also required the use of drugs, chemically induced sleep and sensory deprivation. All of these techniques were used in order to create a dramatic disturbance of an individual's space-time image. According to Cameron, a space-time image specifically relates to an individual's ability to locate him or herself in an existing environment in both space and time. In other words, a space-time

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65. Ibid, 4.

66. Ibid, 11.

67. Katherine Wilton, "Allan Memorial Patient in Court seeks class Action," January 11, 2007, http://www2.canada.com/montrealgazette/news/story.html?id=2352686e-2f16-4fef-ae8a-708585c288df&k=24251 [accessed online March 15, 2008].

68. Ibid.

image can also be explained as how an individual constructs reality, memory and one's sense of self through and within an immediate environment. Before the depatterning process could take place the patient was required to undergo a form of chemically-induced sleep.[69] Then the patient officially entered the first stage of depatterning which involved the use of sensory deprivation and electroshock therapy. [70] Cameron explains that in the first stage the patient's memory is slightly obstructed because of the drugs yet the individual still has an awareness of where he or she is.[71] He writes "in the first stage of disturbance of the space-time image, there are marked memory deficits but it is possible for the individual to maintain a space-time image. In other words, he knows where he is, how long he has been there and how he got there."[72] By the third stage there is not only a loss of the patient's space-time image, but of all feeling and memory. Cameron notes that during this process all "schizophrenic symptoms are absent" and the patient's communications are brief and not spontaneous.[73] Once this occurs the patient does not remember his or her second language, marital status or even how to walk. He writes:

> His communications are brief and rarely spontaneous, his replies to questions are no way conditioned by recollections of the past or by anticipations of the future. He is completely free from all emotional disturbance save for a customary mild euphoria. He lives, as it were, in a very narrow segment of time and space. All aspects of his memorial function are severely disturbed. He cannot well record what is going on around him. He cannot retrieve data from the past. Recognition or cue memory is seriously interfered, with his retention span is extremely limited.[74]

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69. Cameron, D. Ewen. "The Depatterning Treatment of Schizophrenia," *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 3, no. 3 (1962): 67.

70. Cameron, "The Depatterning Treatment of Schizophrenia,"67

71. Ibid, 67.

72. Ibid, 67.

73. Ibid, 67.

74. Ibid, 67.

The objective of the third stage is to make the patient symptom free. However, the depatterning process requires that the psychiatrist stops the patient from accessing any sense of his or her identity and memory. By alienating an individual from the development of a space-time image, the patient cannot record what is going on around him or her. Indeed, sensory deprivation and electro-shock therapy prevent an individual from being able to relate temporally and spatially to his or her existing surroundings. Ultimately, the third stage of depatterning prevents individuals from being able to access their own memories. However, this is precisely the psychological state in which Cameron argued that the individual could become "symptom free."

In order to prevent the development of an emerging space-time image, sensory deprivation, electro-shock therapy and chemically-induced sleeping drugs were administered at all times. Yet Cameron noted that patients' psychic defenses were very strong so he also used a combination of drugs to counter their defenses. He explains:

> These latter cases represent probably the most extensive periods of driving- some cases, receiving 10 or 20 hours a day for 10 or 15 days. Another attempt to reduce the defensiveness of the individual while applying driving was an adaptation of Hebb's psychological isolation. Here the individual was isolated not only from incoming stimuli by putting him in a dark room, covering his eyes with goggles, reducing auditory intake and preventing him from touching his body- thus interfering with his self image, but also attempts were made to cut down his expressive outflow.[75]

The final and third stage of depatterning is when the patient's space-time image is so dramatically reduced that he or she is only able to respond to answers and questions in the immediate present. As such, future thoughts are not formulated on the basis of past memories or what is to come. Rather, the individual is in a perpetual state of the present. Cameron refers to this stage as a mild euphoria, where the patient is finally "symptom free" from schizophrenia. Ultimately, the third stage of psychic driving constructs a suspended state of the immediate present. By blocking the patient's ability to access a

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75. Cameron, Dr. Ewen. "Psychic Driving," *The American Journal Psychiatry* 112 (1956): 504.

space-time image the process prohibits the formulation of memory to take place. Moreover, Cameron argued that depatterning and sensory deprivation methods could cure his patients from mental illness. He observed that memory was a powerful tool that could be manipulated and got in the way of his patients' recovery process.

Cold War psychiatry centers on an investigation and a manipulation of the mind. This preoccupation emerges in Schneemann's and Brakhage's aesthetics and, highlights the political climate of the Vietnam and Cold War era. For example, the use of sensory deprivation and mind-control experiments in psychiatry fed directly into Cold War psychiatry and torture practices. Schneemann's and Brakhage's aesthetics aimed to resensitize their viewers, and their works can be seen to be in an implicit dialogue to the dominant modes of psychiatry. Alternatively, their works offer two opposite solutions for the curing of subjects.

Both Schneemann and Brakhage aimed to sensitize their audience to Vietnam atrocity images as a technique for politically activating spectators who had been increasingly subjected to the desensitizing techniques of war and psychiatry.

The subject of media desensitization was also a concern with which Schneemann, Brakhage and many antiwar activists took issue with in the 1960s. However, the debates in the countercultural movement, which focused on the televised effects of the Vietnam War, were radically different from the sensory deprivation and desensitization experiments that were practiced in Cold War psychiatry. The goal of Schneemann's antiwar film *Viet Flakes* and her kinetic theatre performances *Snows* and *Illinois Central* was to activate her viewers' mind, and awaken their senses. Her performance *Snows* addressed the Vietnam War by examining the negative effects that the media had on the body and mind. According to Schneemann, and many antiwar activists, the overexposure to media atrocity images did not help Americans understand the political situation of the Vietnam War. Rather, Schneemann and Brakhage saw the televised coverage and mass produced photographs as a paranoid form of brainwashing that left the masses politically apathetic and desensitized not only to the violence they were witnessing on a daily level but also to their own bodies. As will be shown, memory and the body were understood by

Schneemann and Brakhage to afford active modes of resistance that provided an alternative representation to the mass media.

Seeing the 1960s Hypnagogically

In 1967 Brakhage wrote an essay titled "Hypnagogically Seeing America", which was published in the Los Angeles Free Press.[76] The article, which argues that the medium of television distances viewers from their own visual perceptions and memories, is similar in style and tone to the arguments of the popular 1960s media theorist Marshall McLuhan, who also believed that the medium of television was a "tool" for the eye that could have negative consequences and prevent critical thought.[77] Brakhage argued that the television screen mimicked hypnagogic vision by tricking the viewer into thinking that the screen was a product of his or her most intimate memories and visual perceptions. Before examining Brakhage's interpretation of hypnagogic vision and how it relates to his article and antiwar film *23 Psalm Branch*.

According to the social scientist Andreas Mavromatis, hypnagogia is an intermediate state between wakefulness and sleep. During the process of hypnagogia the need to sleep disappears, and the absence of sleep turns hypnagogia into a state of wakeful dreaming.[78] It is within this state of consciousness, Mavromatis explains, that hallucinations and visual imagery appear briefly and change rapidly. For example, these visual hallucinations can range from phosphenes (tiny white dots) that can occur from rubbing the eyes to prolonged sensory deprivation and electric shock therapy. However, hypnagogic visions and hallucinations are not contingent on external light hitting the surface of the retina. It is for this reason that Mavromatis described this visual perception

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76. Stan Brakhage, "Hypnagogically Seeing America" (1967), reprinted in *Brakhage Scrapbook*, ed. Robert Haller (New Platz: Documentext), 104-106.

77. Though scholars tend to emphasize McLuan's positive stance on the media, he also noted some of its negative effects in particular pertaining to the representation of the Vietnam War. Please see Marshall McLuan, T*he Medium is the Massage* (Toronto: Bantam, 1967), 23.

78. Andreas Mavromatis, *Hypnagogia The Unique State Of Consciousness Between Wakefulness And Sleep* (London: Routledge, 1987), 244

as a form of biological or internal "mind vision."[79] He distinguishes between fully-developed hypnagogic hallucinations, which he defines as "subcortical" in nature, and faint visual hallucinations that he categorizes as white "phosphenes," which are primarily cortical. During a deep state of hypnagogia, phosphenes do not develop and, when subcortical activity is severed from the retinal and visual cortex, absorption takes over and the role of the visual cortex diminishes."[80] As an example of this, Mavromatis describes an experiment in which scientists observed a female subject who experienced fully-developed hypnagogic visions at the same time as watching a television screen that displayed changing checkerboard patterns. When the subject experienced hypnagogic hallucinations, the "image" blocked all of the incoming visual responses from the television. The "electroretionographic recordings revealed that her retinas responded normally to external stimulation from light while she was engaged in the production of the apparition."[81] This experiment revealed that the incoming images from the television screen did not prevent the subject's hallucinations and hypnagogic state. The recorded evidence suggested that the incoming images from the television screen did not effect or respond to the viewer's visual cortex.[82] Mavromatis' research suggests that during a state of hypnagogic hallucinations the subject is able to block the external media image.

For Brakhage, hypnagogic vision was also a form of "brain vision" that was not contingent on external light hitting the retina. He rather poetically explains that memory is also connected to an inner visual process. Moreover, he warned that the television mimicked this visual process and therefore displayed "…the picture being re-membered as if it were a slide cast from the brain..." [83] The psychological effect of viewing atrocity images from this perspective he argued produced a form of critical dependency. This

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79. Ibid, 244.

80. Ibid, 244.

81. Ibid, 244.

82. Ibid, 244.

83. Brakhage, *Scrapbook*, 8.

made viewers more willing to accept violence and the war as a product of their viewers' inner creation. He writes:

> I began to feel that what was causing the hypnosis of the set, itself, was simply that it presented an image in a way so similar to the act of memory that the effect was as if my brain was in the television set. While I was viewing TV's experience of date, I would automatically feel like acting on it as I would on my own experience...And it seemed to me that the hope lay in remembering, accurately enough, the order of the those images as they arouse in the mind's eye in the act of intensive memory, and the patterns and shapes that arose with them.[84]

This passage communicates his paranoia and fear about television. Indeed, he describes media as a form of control that manipulates the body, memory and the mind. For Brakhage, the television image goes straight into the viewer's mind without a process of refraction. He writes:

> Nevertheless when you have a machine that comes on in the form that television does, where the images are carried by the light directly to the eyes (that is, not reflected), and where the images are composed of moving dots and particles (as emphasized by American TV), the effect psychologically was the same as in so-called memory recalls.[85]

The television screen, he argues, mimics an artificial form of hypnagogic vision because - let us recall Mavromatis' earlier definition of hypnagogic visions - they were not contingent on external light hitting the retina. In order to forestall this brainwashing tactic he developed a form of hallucinatory aesthetics that demanded an embodied way of encountering atrocity images. If the television usurped one's visual memory, which Brakhage defined through a unique state of hypnagogia, then his film *23rd Psalm Branch* was not only an attempt to negate the medium of the television but to restore this hypnagogic process. The film both provides and demands a physical form of spectatorship and its particular way of presenting images complicates an objectified gaze. One cannot simply "stare" at these atrocity images. Rather, his use of aesthetics is an

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84. Brakhage, *Scrapbook*, 110

85. Ibid, 110.

attempt to negate the representation of atrocity images within the mass media. Thus, Brakhage justifies his use of atrocity images as a rational and scientific approach that challenges the media, which he saw as an extension of US power and the Military Industrial Complex. Convinced that the media brainwashed individuals he set out to produce a form of hypnagogic imagery that would evoke a bodily response in the viewer. On the one hand, the state of hypnagogia is supposed to block an incoming media atrocity image. On the other hand, it is important to consider how these hallucinations are also a purely internal response and a result of what the mind sees. But can the state of hypnagogia also trick the viewer into thinking that the violence he or she is observing is an extension of his or her own mind and body?

It's all in the mind!

> The most crucial images are the bodies from Auschwitz that weigh so heavily on man's consciousness. So I had to deal with them and see them as natural phenomena. Not cold like that [...] what I mean is that I had to see their existence as images as some kind of real thing and then that started in me a tremendous resentment and feeling of horror which had to be counterbalanced immediately [...] I started collecting all explosions of the second world war from the Atomic bomb to the smallest grenade that I could find and like blowing them up all at once so that I could isolate what it is that is so attractive to myself or any human being in something blowing up and what release of tension it is about or what answer it is to guilt or whatever.[86]

Like Schneemann, Brakhage used a personal collection of atrocity images that he obsessively studied and used in order to complete his film *23 Psalm Branch*.[87] In the opening scene of his film there are close-up shots of bones, skulls and dead corpses from Nazi concentration camps. These images of dead bodies caught in the barbed wire of the concentration camps flash on screen intermittently between shots of the Colorado

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86. Stan Brakhage quoted in *Brakhage*, directed by Jim Shedden, Zeitgeist films, 1999, interview with Brakhage.

87. Brakhage's personal collection of atrocity images came from a local lab which was throwing away old 8mm newsreels. These images were mostly from the Second World War. Jane Wodening (Brakhage) in conversation with the author, email. April 10, 2009.

landscape (fig. 25). To make these quick transitions, he cuts to monochrome images of red and uses tiny white flashes that appear in the background. These themes are further extended in a sequence of WWII newsreels depicting scenes of atrocity, which are juxtaposed with archival images of bombs, wars and natural disasters such as storms, flooding and aerial bombs. Scenes of war and disaster are consistently presented in relation to footage that was taken of scenes in Boulder, Colorado.

In the third sequence, earlier shots from the concentration camps and the images of the Colorado landscape reappear in the film. Yet the difference between these images here is that they are arranged in a grid comprising four small individual rectangular screens. What is interesting is that in the earlier footage these shots appear so quickly that it is difficult to even make out the two distinct landscapes. By placing them in a grid, however, these visual juxtapositions become more obvious. Dark, monochrome colors, momentarily flash on screen and occupy one box while the other box is filled with images of skulls and dead bodies from concentration camps. Close-up shots of a man caught in barbed wire, skeletons, heads and piles of dead bodies all appear in the grid in addition to images from the Colorado landscape (fig. 26). Nature is an important theme in *23rd Psalm Branch* because, as we have seen, it frames the concentration camps and the chemical warehouses in relation to images of the Colorado landscape (fig. 27). Yet Brakhage's grids do not depict nature as authentic and pure. Rather, nature appears to be lacking a redemptive quality; it does not save man from the concentration camps. I am not suggesting that Brakhage is condemning nature; rather that images of nature, technology, atrocity, war and culture are not isolated into separate categories. Landscapes such as those of Auschwitz, Bergen Belsen and the Rocky Mountains of Colorado are inextricably linked to war and atrocity and these paradoxes are not reconciled. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that during the filming and production of the film Brakhage lived about 65 miles from the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, one of the largest chemical weapons plants owned by the US government, encompassing 19,000 acres. Though initially opened in 1942 it was used during the Cold War, Korean War and during the

Vietnam War and in 1965 it was one of the largest manufacturers of red phosphorus, mustard gas and napalm.

Towards the second half of Brakhage's film, he turns the camera on himself and the inside of his Colorado home. He presents a series of close-up shots of himself in his house which then quickly blend into atrocity images that appear in earlier sequences. It seems as if atrocity images from World War II start to invade Brakhage's domestic setting and home environment. At one point in this sequence, the Jewish poet Louis Zukofsky, a close friend of Brakhage's, appears to be sitting at his kitchen table. Shots of Zukofsky's face then cut to archival, atrocity images from the death camps and cremation ovens, a transition which takes place a number of times.

The second half of *23rd Psalm Branch* is more directed at the private world that surrounds Brakhage, such as his home, family and friends. The subject of war not only enters his personal domestic space, but also starts to invade his mind, thoughts and patterns of behavior. At one point in the film, he writes a letter to his wife explaining that he can't go on:

> Dear Jane,
> I can't go on
> I must stop. The war is as in thoughts
> ideas
> images
> thought s/ p
> rhythm
> pattern
> thoughts patterns are
> as thought/ patterns are- as endless as
> ...precise as eye's hell is![88]

This letter is presented in fragments and flashes on screen throughout the second part of the film. In fact, during the process of making his film, the subject of war invaded

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88. I am drawing on an analysis that was conducted by William Wees. The letter/ poem that Brakhage writes to Jane Brakhage appears in Wees's article in addition to Brakhage's film *23 Psalm Branch*. I am referring to his observation of how the text can also be read as a poem in addition to a letter that Brakhage wrote to his wife. Please see "Words and Images in Stan Brakhage's "23rd Psalm Branch," *Cinema Journal*, vol 27, no.2. (Winter, 1988), 46.

Brakhage's personal and domestic environment. His wife at the time, Jane Brakhage, commented after the film was completed in 1969 that it took a large toll on their marriage:

> From the beginning until the end of that film we were constantly at war. It was like we were playing it out. When I finally realized that it was exactly the duration of that film that was the duration of our argument I was just astonished that it seemed like we were just doing it for the film or something but it was two years in which every night when I went to bed my throat was sore from screaming (laughs). It was a real long haul.[89]

Although the subject of World War II entered Brakhage's thoughts, mind and his domestic sphere during the process of filming - to the extent that he was on the brink of divorce from his wife Jane - he does not reflect on the way these events contributed to his aesthetic and decision-making process. It is important to note that he uses absolutely no images of Vietnam atrocity in his film. Instead, he worked only from World War II archival images that he and Jane Brakhage found by chance. It is possible to suggest that in trying to sensitize his audience to violence Brakhage was also trying to erase some of the past memories that he had which were associated with his film.

Ultimately, Brakhage creates a form of representation where both the viewer and the artist are unable to stare directly at the atrocity image. The physical effects of his film are extremely demanding. The images appear so rapidly and last for only a few seconds, so that the viewer cannot visually retain the images being displayed. In a 1967 letter to his colleague Guy Davenport, which was also published in the magazine *FilmCulture* he describes the importance of not relying on emotions and feeling when watching his film.

> The military wants to sicken you, vacuum-ate you, with those images—the government, too, to get you implicated in the guilt, etc....whereas the 23rd Psalm Branch is created out of my need to restore those images, through an act of memory as intensive as prayer, to individual sight. You write: "I suppose I'm not FEELING enough": but, that's a natural enough reaction—for all of my films, this one can least afford the risk of

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89. Jane Brakhage quoted in *Brakhage*, directed by Jim Shedden, Zeitgeist films, 1999, interview with Brakhage.

> superficial feeling, or surface emotions... your feeling for it will, I'm sure, come thru seeing it in-depth, after many viewings, after living with it awhile...[90]

He places value on the act of remembering these images but through a hypnagogic state. This act he argues will expose violence as a consequence of history rather than the individual alone. He writes, "the military wants to sicken you, vacuum-ate you, with those images— the government, too, to get you implicated in the guilt…"[91] The film he argues is radically different to the archival newsreels which he believed were a form of propaganda. A hypnagogic atrocity image by contrast was a form of antiwar resistance because it disrupted the mainstream media image. However, Brakhage warns Davenport about the artifice of emotions and places an importance on the "physical" experience, which he believed was generated in the body from watching the film. This technique creates a heightened visual response that attempts to place his viewers in an almost hypnagogic and trance like state. He explains: "I'm trying, primarily, to deal with the eye's sight of it - the rapidly shifting rhythms of optic never-end output, the colors thereof it, their shape-making, and so forth: and all this is integral to the form 23 Psalm Branch is taking."[92] His display of violence demands physical viewership that is of the pure present and seems to prevent the process of memory recall by depriving viewers of their capacity to retain a visual image in their minds. This is largely due to the fact that the images appear and disappear so rapidly. This artistic, perhaps scientific, technique was designed to alter the viewer's state of reality and perception. For Brakhage, this method was essential for exposing the violent political system. However, it was not the film alone that provided a form of political resistance against the Vietnam War. Rather, it was a combination of the viewers' bodily response to the film, which Brakhage believed challenged the propaganda and the main- stream representation of atrocity images. The

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90. Stan Brakhage, "Letters to Guy Davenport" in *Brakhage Scrapbook: Collected Writings* 1964-1980 (New Platz: Documentext, 1982), 88.

91. Ibid, 88.

92. Ibid, 130.

body, according to Brakhage could be sensitized to violence, provided there was a strategic form of visual stimulation that not only heightened the viewer's senses but also obstructed the original atrocity image. In the following section I broaden my analysis of Brakhage's hypnagogic aesthetics by examining a discussion of hypnagogic hallucinations within the field of Cold War psychiatry and the CIA. However, these two fields could not have been any more different. Indeed, Brakhage's essay "Hypnagogically Seeing America" conveys a direct political message: about hypnagogic vision and as an aesthetic intervention it challenges the government's use of media as a form of social control and brainwashing.

This is a form of "paranoid aesthetics" that also sheds light on a parallel investigation of the mind, occurring simultaneously in psychiatry and the art of the counterculture. Closer inspection will reveal that the CIA were also interested in visual hallucinations and hypnagogic imagery. An analysis of Schneemann's and Brakhage's paranoid aesthetics broadens a discussion about media desensitization and Cold War psychiatry. In addition, it helps to identify and locate Schneemann's kinetic theatre and Brakhage's use of paranoid aesthetics as a resistance to the televised representation of the Vietnam War.

Brakhage's film *23rd Psalm Branch* creates a hypnagogic response in the viewer. Rapid eye movements force the spectator to blink and this causes a physical disruption which prevents the viewer from being able to stare directly or for a prolonged period at the image. Similarly, Schneemann also used her kinetic theatre in order to disrupt mass produced representations of atrocity images. *Snows* was developed from her antiwar film *Viet Flakes* and it was adapted from well know atrocity images such as the "hanging man." However, in her live performance this imagery was displayed in such a way that it was barely recognizable. Indeed, her performers or viewers could no longer identify and locate these widely circulated atrocity images.[93] She explained that "at the end of *Snows* many people in the audience are crying, and they don't really know why, because it

93. Carolee Schneemann, "Notes on *Snows*" in Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series 1, box 2/1967-71, folder 2.2

happens with an incredible immediate speed and it's overwhelming."[94] Like Brakhage, Schneemann also used a form of hypnagogic aesthetics that physically bombarded her viewers: "I'm giving them more than they can possibly assimilate at any one point."[95] These sensorial environments were intended to activate the spectators, which in turn distracted them from the desensitized media image. In contrast to this view, visual and hypnagogic hallucinations were understood in Cold War psychiatry, and especially CIA financed sensory deprivation experiments, as a loss of control of the mind and body.[96] Moreover, it also signaled to the experimenter that the experimentee was most likely susceptible to brainwashing and propaganda at this point in given time.[97] These differences in view are important because they reveal opposite solutions to political and aesthetic questions concerning the politics of the Cold War and media desensitization.

In 1958, the psychiatrist Dr. Donald Hebb at McGill University in Montreal, Canada carried out sensory deprivation experiments. The goal of Hebb's research (a fellow colleague of Dr. Ewen Cameron) was to obtain information on how humans behaved in environments in which they were isolated and completely restricted from incoming perceptual and sensorial stimulation. During his experiments, subjects were isolated for three days at a time and kept in dark rooms with white noise playing in the background. For example, rooms were wired with contact microphones that recorded their movements and sounds. Individuals were required to wear headphones that played repeated songs such as "Home on the Range" and random stock market figures. Participants were provided with dark goggles that restricted pattern vision and their arms were also covered to the tips of their fingers with cardboard tubes in order to restrain touch (fig. 28). The outcome of this research revealed that twenty-five subjects out of a

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94. Carolee Schneemann quoted in, *Expanded Cinema*, 370.

95. Ibid, 370.

96. CIA, *KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation* (July 1963), 88, in National Security Archive, George Washington University, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB122/#kubark. [accessed June 20, 2010].

97. Ibid, 88.

total of twenty-nine at the McGill experiment experienced visual or auditory hallucination. However, the most common visual hallucination were not be classified as hypnagogic.

Hebb's research was directly appropriated by the CIA for their 1963 *KUBARK Manual*. This document clearly outlines methods of psychological interrogation and torture. Sensory deprivation was used by the CIA as a means of achieving psychic states that disorientated the subject's usual sense of self. Moreover, the manual draws important conclusions from both Hebb and Cameron's studies. For example, it explained that interrogations could be rapidly advanced if the detainee endured as little as one or even a full day of sensory deprivation or solitary confinement. If visual hallucinations occurred as a result of sensory deprivation then these were regarded by the CIA as "proof" of the subject's break from reality.

> The apparent reason for these effects is that a person cut off from external stimuli turns his awareness inward, upon-himself, and then projects the contents of his own unconscious, outwards, so that he endows his faceless environment with his own attributes, fears, and forgotten memories.[98]

The manual explains that sensory deprivation is not the sole cause of visual hallucinations. Rather, hallucinations were evidence that the detainee had lost contact with reality and therefore controlled by the inner workings their mind, rather than their external environment.

In contrast to the CIA and the sensory deprivation experiments, both Schneemann and Brakhage did not regard visual hallucinations as a loss of control over the body. Rather, one could argue that it was the paranoid environment of the 1960s, in addition to the televised and excessive coverage of the Vietnam War, provoked such a hallucinatory and aesthetic response in their works. It is important to recall that *Snows* was based on the visual hallucinations that Schneemann experienced from mass- produced atrocity images. For example, during a hallucinatory state her kitchen stove turned into a blazed

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98. Ibid, 88.

"Vietnamese village." These visual hallucinations reflect an inability to contain the external shock that Schneemann experienced from the media. Indeed, the horror and imagery of the Vietnam War infiltrated her own personal and domestic environment. Moreover, Schneemann's and Brakhage's response to these images resonate with the cultural predicament that the journalist Michael Arlen put forward in his 1966 article titled "The Living-Room War."[99] His popular slogan refers to the daily shock that Americans observed from the televised coverage of the Vietnam War. However, the second part of Arlen's argument refers to the domestic setting in which this news infiltrated the American home. It was the unusual combination of watching the war in a domestic setting, which led Arlen to believe that it contained the shock and produced a form of social madness, for which there was no outlet.[100] The televised coverage of the Vietnam War, he argued, made combat seem more real because of the way it was projected. However, he warned that this depiction not only distorted the reality but it was creating a crisis in which "you couldn't feel: the reality of the actual war (whatever that may have been), and the reality of the play of media over the people of this county as they transmitted the war…"[101]According to Arlen, the mediated representation of the Vietnam War was a form of social madness and therefore it was not unlikely that someone could have a hallucinatory response to these images. His analysis offers an alternative view of paranoia, and it helps us move away from understanding Schneemann's and Brakhage's aesthetics within a clinical definition that was used within the field of Cold War psychiatry.

Though my research does not separate Schneemann and Brakhage's paranoid aesthetics fully from the political attitudes and mindset of the Cold War, this is not to suggest that Schneemann's and Brakhage's aesthetics provided a similar means to an end. Although scientific technique was appropriated in their works, this method was used as a

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99. Michael Arlen, "Living-Room War" (1966), reprinted in *Living-Room War* (New York: Viking Press, 1969), 8.

100. Ibid, 8.

101. Ibid, 8.

means of activating their spectators, who had become increasingly subjected to the desensitizing techniques of war and psychiatry. In the following section I return to the subject of media desensitization through an analysis of Schneemann's sensitizing experiments in her kinetic theatre and her performance *Illinois Central*.

Sensory Expansion

In 1963 Schneemann wrote to Dow Chemical corporation asking for financial support for her kinetic theatre performance, unaware of the role that corporations like Dow would play in relation to the Vietnam War.[102] By 1965, however, Dow had become the largest manufacturer of napalm and it was impossible for her and many other activists within the New Left to deny the central role that these corporations played in relation to the American Military Industrial Complex. In 1967, Schneemann was one of the very first recipients of a grant from Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), money which enabled her to complete her antiwar performance *Snows* and work closely with engineers from Bell Labs to develop a partnership that provided her with a privileged access to technology.

Just four years after she wrote to Dow, Schneemann began extensive preparations for *Snows* and *Illinois Central*. One of the photographs, which was used for the poster, depicts Schneemann standing naked with bits of paper glue and molasses covering her arms, genitals and legs.[103] This image was then superimposed onto one of Art Sinsbaugh's photographs of a Chicago mid-western landscape. The bits of paper that hang from Schneemann's body resemble the burnt flesh and the devastating effects that napalm and white phosphorous have on the body and the landscape background to the picture emphasizes that these chemicals were manufactured in the United States within "natural landscapes" that seemed to be untouched by the devastation of the Vietnam War.

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102. Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series III, box 27.

103. Carolee Schneemann wrote to DOW corporation in 1963. Please see Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angels, Accession no, 950001, series 1, box 2.

The image thus draws together the Vietnam War and the Military Industrial Complex in the same frame. A few months prior to Schneemann's performance, there was a large protest at the University of Illinois against the Dow Corporation and the part it plays in developing chemical weapons used in the war against Vietnam. Given this historical context, it is important to consider *Illinois Central* in relation to the growing awareness of the collusion of corporations in the acts of atrocity carried out in Vietnam as well as how the Vietnam atrocity images that were so prevalent in the news media of the time are subverted in the performance. Although the image of Schneemann aroused negative attention from the press, this does not explain why the secret police or the Department of Information Services wanted to shut the performance down.

Illinois Central connects two different geographical landscapes: Vietnam and the agricultural landscapes in the Midwest of the US. To do this Schneemann incorporated photographs from the American photographer Art Sinsabaugh, whose slide environment was projected along two walls at 160 degrees. His slides consisted of trains, desolate farms and prairie landscapes and, by programming five-second slide projections, Schneemann created the visual effect of a moving panorama. As in *Snows*, *Viet Flakes* and Red News was also incorporated and projected onto Sinsbaugh's slide panorama. The central left image used in the multimedia projection was of a singular tree. The surrounding walls of the loft were heavily collaged in large strips of torn paper. The performance began in total darkness with five performers who appeared in tightly wrapped in paper from head to toe with only small slits for their hands and eyes (fig. 29.) The group proceeded to walk slowly towards the audience. After the performers broke out of their costumes they ran at full speed into one another and began a series of "body ball" movements and various poses. Large Strobe lights were used on the audience and appeared on the performers bodies. At this point blindfolds were provided and the performers began to touch each other (fig. 30). Schneemann writes: "We blindfold each other. As each person blindfolded, she or he stands and slowly walks into the open area,

hands extended, turning (to become disoriented)."[104] Once this was finished the performers moved into the open space of the audience. Spotlights were directed at the performers' bodies who gradually removed their blindfolds:

> From touching each other's face in removing the blindfold, sequences of contact improvisation begin: an exchange of turning, tipping one another's heads; holding one another's shoulders in a gradual slow wrestling in which each turns form one partner to another to another [...].[105]

As the blindfolds were removed the performers requested volunteers from the audience who were then asked to paint and apply glue onto the performers' bodies. The use of paper functions as a particular kind of Intermedia that binds, covers, and physically connects the performers' and audiences' bodies.[106] In this way the paper can also be read as a skin or a protective layer that covers the body.

In *Illinois Central*, Schneemann's images of nature expose the violence that is inherent within the American landscape. Thus, Schneemann's construction of nature is not a pure and mythic, but nature becomes a commodity and a source for the production of the American war machine. This is demonstrated in her use of cancelled Illinois bank checks as the paper in which the performers were wrapped, which relates to the symbolic image of Sinsabaugh's tree (fig. 31.) Schneemann explains:

> The intimate and at times violent imagery is anchored in a tension of contrasting focal planes linking the exposed Illinois landscape to the devastation of Vietnam. If there was a mythic association between human body and tree, there was as well a tactile and sensory extension of flesh

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104. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy,* 179.

105. Ibid, 174.

106. For Dick Higgins, an "intermedium" is a form of art practice that is not bound up to the medium itself. I would like argue that the paper in Schneemann's performance also functions as an intermedium. Indeed, the paper is not used to support the medium of performance art, rather it is used as tool that connects and binds the audience together. In 1966 the Fluxus artist Dick Higgins defined his concept of the "intermedium" in his essay titled "Intermedia." He wrote that "an intermedium like the readymade was not intended to conform to the pure medium, which is usually between the general idea of art media and those of life media." Please see Dick Higgins, "Intermedia" (1966) republished in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 728-730.

> into paper- malleable, expressive, sculptural. The scrap paper we used in Chicago was bales of cancelled bank checks--Illinois trade representing millions of dollars--completely shredded.[107]

While the paper is a form of protection from the body, it can also be interpreted as a part of nature and of the capitalist order. The paper used within this work also connects the audience and the performers. Once the performance was finished the audience was asked to join the extremely large shredded paper pile, which was created by the performers throughout the duration of the event.

The significance and use of the paper in *Illinois Central* sheds light on how nature plays a fundamental role within the American war machine. For example, agricultural landscapes in Chicago and Colorado were used to manufacture chemical materials that would be used to destroy the vegetation and agricultural structure in Vietnam. Indeed, chemical corporations such as Dow were often in the Midwest. Therefore, Schneemann exposes how nature is used to further the service of American capitalism and aggression.

> From the prairies Native Americans had been driven West; the high buffalo grass gradually cleared for roads, homesteads, farming. Tree planting became a measure of domestic and agricultural order; shelterbelts, wind barriers, water retention, erosion and protection. Decades later the agri-business expanded acres of corn, soy beans and wheat; the trees once marking the boundaries of small farms were cut down as if an effluvium, inviting soil erosion, floods, destroying natural cover, the ecology of wild life. The destruction of the intensive, traditional farming in Vietnam meant the ruin of a coherent agricultural system, defoliation, the diabolical intention of paving over the jungle with concrete.[108]

In this passage, Schneemann connects trees to an agricultural order which serves man as they offer a form of domestic and agricultural protection. The paper that was used in her performance of *Illinois Central* thus evokes the mythical relationship between man and nature. Schneemann's performance does not suggest that the body is protected or can

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107. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 167.

108. Ibid, 167.

be saved from nature. Rather, that it is a commodifable resource. By connecting the Illinois landscape to the atrocities in Vietnam she also exposes a history of American violence that is related to the use of nature. This relationship between violence and nature returns us to Brakhage's film *23rd Psalm Branch*. For both artists, nature does not have a redemptive quality and does not protect humanity from war. Schneemann's and Brakhage's works deconstruct a myth of nature and reveal its fundamental relationship to the Vietnam War.

Lastly, *Viet Flakes* was used as a sensitizing experiment in her performance. Indeed, the film was projected on the central wall. At the very end of the event the audience were asked to participate (fig. 32). Once the audience joined and the performers joined the stage, they proceed to immerse themselves and others in the paper pile, which was a mixture of, shredded paper, paint and glue. These sensitizing methods require that her performers and audience members physically interact with one another. However, by engaging in a process of physical contact the performers and audience members also distract themselves from the actual film (*Viet Flakes*) that is being presented. The film can be seen; however it is part of the background and it does not take precedence over the physical aspects of the event. Rather, what is equally important is the various ways in which the audiences and performers engage in a communal form of interaction while the film is being projected. Schneemann's film was screened as part of sensitizing exercise that enabled her performers and audience members to encounter atrocity images in an environment that was radically different to the domestic setting of the home and television. Her performance required a form of group participation that at first may appear to be a distraction from her film. However, after closer inspection, it becomes obvious that her use of group choreography was another means of sensitizing her audience and her performers to her antiwar film.

Schneemann's aesthetic strategies and sensitizing techniques demand an active and physical form of spectatorship and resonate with the countercultural debates about media desensitization in the 1960s. If the overexposure of media violence, desensitized the masses then it can be said that Schneemann's kinetic theatre, in addition to

Brakhage's aesthetics aimed at providing a recovery of sensation in the viewers' experience of seeing atrocity images.

Conclusion

In 1977 a *New York Times* article revealed that many North American universities and hospitals "were involved in a secret, 25-year, $25 million effort by the Central Intelligence Agency to learn how to control the human mind."[109] Earlier, Seymour Hersh's 1974 article on American activists who were spied on by the government led to the development of an official investigation of the CIA. The Church Committee led by Frank Church, began to inquire about claims regarding the Department of Defense and their use of LSD and Mescaline on human subjects. In a hearing held by the senate select committee in the summer of 1977, Church revealed the specific details regarding mind control experiments that were funded by the CIA covert project titled MK-Ultra.[110] It transpired that from 1953 to 1973 the CIA had financed research on behavioral modification and had carried out tests that ranged from the use of LSD, sensory deprivation, mind-control, enforced isolation, and hypnosis on 20,000 unwilling US and Canadian subjects.[111] The Church report also disclosed how Dr. Cameron's research was specifically tied to, and financed by, the CIA investigation under false contracts issued by government agencies.[112]

However, by the time this information was publicly disclosed in the 1977 *New York Times* article by Hersh, the Vietnam had ended. The 1970s was in some ways more openly paranoid then the 1960s because of events such as Watergate, the Kent State shootings, the murder of the Black Panther Party leader Fred Hampton and the rise of the

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109. Nicholas M. Horrock, "Private Institutions used in C.I.A. Effort to Control Behavior," *New York Times* (August 2, 1977), 3.

110. Ibid. 3

111. Ibid. 3

112. Ibid, 3.

Weather-underground and, unlike in previous decades, the events were not hidden from the public. I do not want to suggest that Schneemann and Brakhage were consciously aware of the CIA's involvement with sensory deprivation and mind-control experiments. Rather, I have argued that it is important to consider Brakhage's and Schneemann's fears of the media and the government in relation to a social and political and aesthetic context.

Throughout this chapter I have demonstrated that Schneemann's kinetic theatre attempted to re-sensitize her viewers to mass-produced atrocity images. This was done by creating artworks that disrupt normative ways of perceiving mainstream media Vietnam atrocity images. Moreover, Schneemann's kinetic theatre and Brakhage's hypnagogic aesthetics, in opposition to the research aims of Cold War psychiatry, then attempt to resensitize their viewers to such imagery, generating an active form of spectatorship. Both Schneemann and Brakhage approached the Vietnam War as a personal invasion of the mind, body and the domestic home. However, these symptoms of paranoia do not necessarily reflect an internal form of "madness." Rather, as I have demonstrated, these symptoms are embedded within the specific aesthetic, historical and political background of the Vietnam War. If Schneemann and Brakhage did experience symptoms of madness and "paranoia" in the 1960s, their experiences may not have been cured by the radical anti-psychiatric practices of the 1960s. Being skeptics in their own right, their waves of cynicism and doubt would have been regarded by the anti-psychiatry community as "blocks" and emotions that would prevent an authentic, liberation of the self. As will be addressed in my third chapter madness was viewed by Dr. Ronald Laing and Dr. Joseph Berke, anti-psychiatrists and New-Left scholars, as a bourgeois illness that had no place within the realm of political resistance. Madness was viewed by Laing as serving two purposes; it offered political liberation on the one hand, and a destruction of the bourgeois self. On the other hand the purpose of madness was to overthrow the system.

In the next chapter I examine the radical methods of anti-psychiatry in relation to liberation politics and the aesthetics of Schneemann's kinetic theatre. Both Laing and Berke (key figures within the antipsychiatry movement) argued that psychic breakdowns

were necessary in order to deconstruct the old ego. Having established Schneemann and Brakhage's paradoxical relationship to Cold War psychiatry, it is important to turn our attention to the role that antipsychiatry played in relation to kinetic theatre and the liberation politics of the 1960s.

Chapter 3

More than Free Love: reconsidering the role of antipsychiatry in Carolee Schneemann's kinetic theatre

In 1964, Carolee Schneemann began a written correspondence with the American antipsychiatrist Dr. Joseph Berke. This exchange occurred shortly after Schneemann's successful tour of *Meat Joy*, which took place in three different locations: London, Paris and New York. Berke saw *Meat Joy* in New York and he was incredibly enthusiastic about Schneemann's kinetic theatre, and was eager to stay in touch, even though he was moving to London in order to work with the prominent antipsychiatrist Dr. R. D. Laing. For Berke, Schneemann's art was radical because she used the body to communicate political truths. These truths according to Berke, addressed the self, the mystification of violence and the politics of liberation. Likewise, Schneemann was well aware of antipsychiatry, Berke's role within it and the innovative approaches that he and Laing were taking not only to mental health in the 1960s but also within the broader context of the countercultural movement.

The historical links between antipsychiatry and the aesthetics of Schneemann's kinetic theatre have not been fully explored within the literature in art history. This is unfortunate because, like Laing and Berke, Schneemann asks similar and important political questions about the self, violence, the antiwar movement and the politics of liberation. It is useful to study the parallels between Schneemann's kinetic theatre and antipsychiatry because of the starkly different conclusions drawn by Schneemann, Berke and Laing. These distinctions are really important because they help us consider issues of sexual and gender difference within the counterculture during the period, establishing a feminist perspective that has so far been elided within the literature. To consider this comparison further, I will also examine Schneemann's kinetic theatre in relation to a New York based performance group of the period called The Living Theatre, who were also enthusiastically engaged in antipsychiatry but were radically different in approach from

Schneemann-a difference that firmly establishes a feminist perspective. But first: what *was* antipsychiatry?

The term antipsychiatry refers to a theoretical shift that took place within the field of psychiatry during the late 1950s and 1960s. Laing, along with contemporaries such as Berke, Gregory Bateson, Erving Goffman, Don Jackson and Aaron Asterson, challenged the clinical definitions and categories that defined mental illness and took issue with the various ways in which mental illness was being treated within psychiatric institutions. Observing the operation of Cold War psychiatry in the UK and the US, Laing and his colleagues objected to the routine use of electroshock therapy, sensory deprivation and chemically induced comas. Laing saw psychiatry as an oppressive institution which, like the family, was an authoritative force that needed to be radically challenged. Moreover, the field of antipsychiatry responded to the bourgeoning political and social changes that characterized much of the 1960s. This change in direction can be linked to the fact that Laing did not rely on medical and psychiatry journals to get his point across. For example, many of his critical texts on violence, the family and his analysis of Jean-Paul Sarte were published in *The New Left Review*, a London based journal for which Laing regularly wrote.[1] The development of *The New Left Review* in addition to the radical changes in left wing politics, combined with the rise of the counterculture in the 1960s led to the wide spread advancement and circulation of Laing's ideas. In return, these social shifts created a larger and much broader audience for antipsychiatry.

Although the subject of Laing's lecture was love and violence, his presentation did not provide a comforting commentary on the current state of intimate and interpersonal relationships in the 1960s. Rather, Laing used the opportunity to attack the

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1. In many ways the field of antipsychiatry responded to the bourgeoning political and social changes that characterized much of the 1960s. This change in direction can be linked to the fact that Laing did not rely on medical and psychiatry journals to get his point across. For example, many of Laing's critical texts on violence, the family and his analysis of Jean-Paul Sarte were published in *The New Left Review*- a London based journal that he often wrote for. See R.D.Laing, "Series and Nexus in the Family," *New Left Review* 1 issue (1962), 1-8.

nuclear structure of the family, which he believed to be one of the most violent agents of oppression. He stated:

> From the moment of birth, when the stone-age baby confronts the twentieth- century mother, the baby is subjected to forces of outrageous violence, called love, as its mother and father have been, and their parents before them. These forces are mainly concerned with destroying most of its potentialities. This enterprise is on the whole successful. By the time the new human being is fifteen or so, we are left with a being like ourselves. A half crazed creature, more or less adjusted to a mad world. This is normality in our present age.[2]

Far from being an environment of stability and care, for Laing the family was a source of toxicity that generated fear and anxiety. Moreover, he argued, its unifying concepts of love and trust were falsely presented as love. Being a "half crazed creature" is a large price to pay when "normality" results in an estrangement of the self.[3] "True sanity," he observed, called for the disillusionment of the normal ego because it is alienated from one's authentic self. Controversially, Laing suggested that madness had the ability to "re-establish the ego function, where the ego is the master of the 'divine' as opposed to being a slave to its alienated betrayer."[4] The "divine," according to Laing, offered a feeling of connectedness to the world and to the subject's body. Thus, going mad, according to Laing, was a form of liberation that had radical and generative qualities.

In 1965, Laing took over a community center in east London called Kingsley Hall and turned it into a radical alternative to traditional mental institutions. For Laing, going "mad" and having a psychotic breakdown in a safe communal environment such as Kingsley Hall, was the true meaning of the word "asylum."[5] At Kingsley Hall patients

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2. Dr. Ronald Laing, "Love and Violence" presented on January 21, 1064 as a lecture at the Institute of Contemporary Art Institute, London. This document was accessed at the Dr. Ronald Laing archive at the University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK. Accession 2406, F43.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. It should be noted that Michel Foucault's book *Madness and Civilization* (1967) was significant for Laing and his colleagues. Indeed David Cooper, a British psychiatrist working with Laing, wrote the

and psychiatric doctors, such as Laing and Berke, lived communally. Patients were free to come and go as they pleased as there were no locks, no keys, no electroshocks and no boundaries between the patients and staff.

Laing's close colleague, Berke, who lived and worked at Kingsley Hall, was eager to see "whether psychosis was our culture's means of an archetypal renewal of the inner self."[6] For both Laing and Berke, emotional death and rebirth were necessary in order to achieve a renewal of the self. They encouraged their patients to go back to their innermost primal and repressed memories without a sense of fear, prohibition and guilt. In one famous case, patient Mary Barnes arrived at Kingsley Hall in 1965 and regressed into an infantile state. She refused to eat, had to be fed from a bottle and was frequently found naked in her room, smeared in her own excrement.[7] Barnes' "madness" was celebrated and attracted a great deal of attention because she embodied Laing's theory of regression.[8] Barnes' recovery is attributed to her discovery of painting, which occurred during one of her psychotic episodes, and involved smearing her own feces on the walls of her bedroom. Her psychological breakdown and "rebirth" as an artist became a model of success within the antipsychiatry community and, to some extent, her "persona" derived from Laing's and Berke's writings. The publicity from her 1969 exhibition at Camden Art Centre in London and her co-authored book with Berke, documenting her experience at Kingsley Hall, both created a legacy that reached larger audiences.[9]

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introduction to Foucault's text. There are important parallels between *Madness and Civilization* and Laing's texts *The Divided Self* (1965) and the *Politics of Experience* (1967). Laing shared Foucault's view that the end point of a "cure" for mental illness was incorrect because it was based on traditional categories and definitions of mental illness, which he found to be problematic. Please see Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (London: Tavistock, 1967).

6. Robert Boyers, *R. D. Laing and Antipsychiatry* (Octagon: London, 1974), 101.

7. Ibid, 107.

8. Ibid, 107.

9. See Jim Hodder, "Making the Break" *The Sunday Times*, April 13th, 1969. This article documents the exhibition that Barnes had at the Camden Art Centre. This article was accessed in the Laing Archive. Please see Dr. Ronald Laing archive at the University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK. Accession 2406, f105.

Interestingly, the subject of Barnes' recovery was a topic that Berke was keen to discuss with Schneemann. In 1964, exactly one year before he left the United States to live and work with Laing at Kingsley Hall, Berke had attended Schneemann's New York performance of *Meat Joy* at Judson Church. Berke's engagement with Schneemann's art - which explores notions of sexuality and eroticism without prohibition - led to a lifelong correspondence that greatly influenced his work. In a letter to Schneemann, dated October 4, 1966, he wrote about Kingsley Hall and his supervision of Mary Barnes. He describes Barnes' experience at Kingsley Hall and explains to Schneemann how she began to take an interest in painting:

> For the life of me I can't remember whether I sent you a copy of this *Guardian* article on Kingsley Hall. [...] I am particularly proud of Catherine in the article whose real name is Mary who I am attempting to save from some psychotic whatever there is, especially normality. So anyway after smearing shit on the wall for two months, very artistically, I might add, she was getting people down and went onto black paint. Still people didn't [understand], well at least too much, her Rothko-like figurations on the walls. So I take her in my hand and say, Mary, you're too much. Why don't you paint, that is, you know, try it with real paint. So she did, and hundreds of canvases later was still growing strong. So bravo except now she's been in bed for three months...and not laying hand to brush, but that's the art world for you.[10]

Obviously, Berke did not attribute Barnes' desire to paint with her own excrement and roll around like an infant to clinical "symptoms" of insanity. Rather, Berke's interest in Schneemann's work, led to an important acceptance of Barnes' behavior and more importantly, he drew important parallels between Schneemann's kinetic theatre and the radical methods that were used in antipsychiatry. Antipsychiatry did not exist in a vacuum and Schneemann was also working in an environment resonate to Laing and Berke's writings. Moreover, Berke supported Schneemann's work and he felt that her performances addressed some of the critical debates that were circulating within

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10. Joseph Berke writing to Carolee Schneemann, October 4, 1966. First accessed in Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, series III, Box 35. The letter is also reprinted in Kristine Stiles, *Corresponding Course: An Epistolary History of Carolee Schneemann and Her Circle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 111.

antipsychiatry at the time. Laing's critique of the authoritative model of the family combined with his interest in alternative forms of psychiatry resonate with Schneemann's opposition to social control, authority and the normalization of sexuality. Indeed, the sexual liberation of the 1960s and the use of the body as a means of protest in both Schneemann's kinetic theatre and antipsychiatry can be understood historically as a radical means of redefining the self.

In this chapter I argue that Schneemann's kinetic theatre corresponds to and even partakes in the discourse of antipsychiatry. However, *Meat Joy* interestingly provides a feminist critique of Laing's theories of liberation and departs from some of his central concepts in very important ways. Schneemann comes to starkly different conclusions regarding the self and interconnectivity and this is clearly displayed in her kinetic theatre. For example, liberation is redefined in *Meat Joy* as a collective rather than an individual transformation of the self.

Of importance here is how Schneemann recognized the negative and violent impact that phallocentricism had within the body and communal relationships. I propose that *Meat Joy* does not dissolve sexual and gender difference. Rather, her use of materials and "projective exercises" were meant to de-emphasize the self in order to foreground a communal form of intimacy and exchange. For example, meat is used in Schneemann's performance as a mediator that separates the performers' bodies but it also brings them together. Meat highlights subjectivity and difference. Yet at the same time it also forms a bridge and a mode of interpersonal communication, despite the social and political constraints of a sex/ gender system.[11] The concern with the constraints of a sex/gender system was a crucial intervention that was made by Schneemann; however gender was absent from antipsychiatry debates in the 1960s. Indeed, Laing's and Berke's descriptions

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11. Gayle Rubin explains that a sex-gender system is not determined by biological sex. Rather, her article examines how kinship structures in addition to the social divisions of labor reinforce a cultural and social structure which subordinates women to men. Moreover, she also notes that this structure prohibits sexuality because it consistently reinforces heternormative relationships. See Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes On the Political Economy of Sex," in Rayna Reiter, ed. *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: New York Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157-210.

of the liberated "body" and the self fails to consider how the social divisions of labor, the family, psychiatry and the larger political structures of power, effected women differently from men. These important differences were absent from discussions within antipsychiatry and the New Left; yet the subject of gender is carefully examined and maintained in Schneemann's performances. This predicament is clearly articulated throughout the thesis and in my final chapter, which examines Schneemann's underacknowledged performance *Round House* (1967) a kinetic theatre event that was organized by Bereke and officially part of the 1967 conference in London titled the Dialectics of Liberation. However, the feminist contributions that Schneemann made within her kinetic theatre were not always recognized and observed by her contemporaries in the 1960s.

Taking account of the deeper significance of Schneemann's relationship to antipsychiatry is crucial for understanding how her kinetic theatre actually contributed to the field in quite critical radical and innovative ways. Of importance here is how Schneemann acknowledged gender as a critical aspect of experience and a problem that had an impact on social, private and interpersonal relationships. Thus, her kinetic theatre provided a means of communicating these issues, by exposing some of the limits of liberation and the genderless fallacies that were inherent within the aesthetics of The Living Theatre and antipsychiatry. Through comparisons to the antipsychiatry movement and The Living Theatre, I intend to disrupt prevailing narratives of universalized sexual liberation and eros in the counterculture. Schneemann's work has similarities to those movements, engaging with similar concerns about the self and liberation, but ultimately her work is very different- a difference that has been elided and that I will insist on as crucial to a feminist understanding of the period.

The past and current interpretations of Schneemann's performance *Meat Joy* do not adequately address how the work deals with the unspeakable and violent psychic repressions that characterize the period of the 1960s. For example, the art historian Jonathan Katz has recently argued that *Meat Joy* was a reflection of a 1960s utopian lost community whereby the participants and spectators did not internalize gender and sexual

difference.[12] In 2005, Alice Mahon argued that Schneemann's art, and *Meat Joy* in particular, "had liberated female sexuality."[13] Partly as a result of these readings of Schneemann's work, *Meat Joy* has come to symbolize a mythic interpretation of the 1960s that favors a narrative of free-love and sexual liberation. In order to refute these claims, and to shed light on Schneemann's critical engagement with antipsychiatry, I offer a comparative analysis of *Meat Joy* in relation to the 1960s performance work of The Living Theatre. By comparing these two works, I differentiate Schneemann's use of nudity and the body from that of the The Living Theatres. Katz's and Mahon's readings of Schneemann's work seems to be influenced by the methods of sexual liberation that were practiced by The Living Theatre. Moreover, The Living Theatre uncritically applied Laing's theories of liberation in their performance *Paradise Now* (1968). Unlike the liberation strategies that were adopted in antipsychiatry and by The Living Theatre, I argue that Schneemann did not use "madness" or use the body as a tool for sexual liberation.[14] Rather, what is at stake in this chapter is examining how Schneemann's display of the body and her use of group choreography in her kinetic theatre offered an

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12. Jonathan Katz reads Schneemann's performance *Meat Joy* in relation to Herbert Marcuse's concept of "Eros." Applying Marcuse' theory he argues that the work reflects a utopian 1960s form of Eros where gender differences are collapsed and bodies are unified. Katz's interpretation of Schneemann's work is influenced by Marcuse's new definition of on a non-genital form of Eros. According to Katz and Marcuse, this new form of Eros offered a deeper connection to the world which was less alienated. Katz writes "For Marcuse and Ginsberg, as well as other roughly contemporary advocates of Eros such as Norman O. Brown, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Wilhelm Reich, it was thus a route towards a deeper kind of freedom." Jonathan Katz, "Allen Ginsberg, Herbert Marcuse and the Politics of Eros", http:/www/queerculturalcenter.org/pages/katzpages/Ginsberg.html [accessed January 10, 2010]. See also Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A philosophical inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955) which was very important for the counterculture because it read the history of civilization through a history of repression. Applying both Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxist theory Marcuse's goal was to provide a "cure" and to treat social repression with an erotics of liberation. See Norman Brown *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning Of History* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press: 1959), xii; and Norman O. Brown, *Love's Body* (New York: Random House, 1966), 80.

13. Alyce Mahon, *Eroticism and Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 196.

14. In 1947 Judith Malina and Julian Beck formed the experimental theater group in New York, which came to be formally known as The Living Theatre. For more on the understudied relationships between The Living Theatre, happenings, the avant-garde and art history see Judith Rodenbeck, "Madness and Method: Before Theatricality," *Grey Room* 13 (2003), 54-79.

alternative form of intimacy and interpersonal communication that confirmed to neither the patriarchal structure of the family, or to Laing's model of liberation.

Therefore, in order to demythologize the free love movement and to situate Schneemann's feminist intervention within it, I will need to address how liberation was defined and understood in antipsychiatry in the 1960s. First, I will address Laing's theories of liberation and then proceed to examine how his colleague Berke shared his theories. I attend to critical differences between Schneemann's, Berke's and Laing's theories of madness, liberation, the self and the body. It was not just Berke and Laing who observed madness as a radical and potential form of liberation; such views were also circulating within the counterculture as well as within the avant-garde and started to influence the 1960s critical reception of Schneemann's performance *Meat Joy*.

R. D. Laing and the Politics of Experience

> A child born today in the U.K. stands a ten times greater chance of being admitted to a mental hospital than to a university, about one fifth of mental hospital administrations are diagnosed as schizophrenic. Perhaps it is our very way of educating them that is driving them mad.[15]

R. D. Laing's 1967 book *The Politics of Experience* was a bestseller in the UK and North America.[16] It was a popular text read by many students and artists, including Schneemann. According to Laing, notions of human behavior and individual experience have become divided into two separate categories: an inner reality based on one's imagination, and an outer reality, which is connected to perception, truth and objectivity. He explained that perception, imagination, dreams and reverie are equal modes of perception which offer different modalities of experience, none of which should be regarded as anymore inner than outer. Splitting, denial and reification, according to Laing, are destructive forms of depersonalization. For Laing, these psychoanalytic terms

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15. R.D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), 27.

16. Nick Crossley, *Contesting Psychiatry Social Movements in Mental Health* (London: Routledge, 2006), 119.

such as splitting and denial refer to patterns of behavior and communication. However, instead of regarding these emotions as a crucial part of an experience of alienation, Laing observed that they are "normal" everyday emotions and critical in order to successfully adapt to one's family and society. Sanity, for Laing, is measured on the sublimation and repression of alienation, rather than a direct confrontation with it.[17]

For Laing, a psychotic breakdown offers a therapeutic, spiritual and existential healing process. He characterized madness as a voyage that moves from outward perceptions towards the "inner, from life to a kind of death, from ego to the self."[18] Madness, he argued, can be seen as a breakthrough that destroys the ego and offers a new form of experience and perception, providing the opportunity to have a liberating experience that challenges oppressive modes of thought. Laing maintains that the spiritually enlightened individual goes through a process of awakening that destroys the "old ego" and, as a result, a "new" and more spiritually enlightened "self" emerges. Laing explained that individuals were becoming more and more alienated from their bodies. Madness in contrast, provided an authentic experience of the body and self.

Laing's views on alienation, madness and the self were also shared by his colleague Joseph Berke. Berke was concerned with how the body and the mind were corrupted by a form of "false consciousness." He saw the visual arts, and Schneemann's kinetic theatre works in particular, as a political form of art that challenged alienation and the negative effects that he believed it had on the mind and body. In a 1967 letter to Schneemann, Berke describes the negative somatic effects of alienation and explains how her kinetic theatre works such as *Meat Joy* reflected an authentic experience of the body. Most importantly, he observes how her performances provide a demystification of reality:

> First as you and I recognize, we live in a time so perilous, so dangerous, also so illusionary, that most anything anyone would do would be and is

17. Ibid, 103.

18. Ibid, 103.

> permitted by this most false consciousness, until even the smallest cells of the body are false and the mind is riddled with thousands of layers of lives not our own we live as the embodied "other." We are victims of this disembodied other which we are taught and then ourselves embody, or so we think. Your art is great Carolee because you have seen through this all with your body and that is the prime mover of it all, and the source of all else. And you communicate that and would have others see through the falseness of their lives by the vision which is yours. […]. Your art is the most political and the most subversive of any art I have ever seen. Watch and it will be subverted.[19]

For Berke, Schneemann's use of the body in her kinetic theatre communicates a form of truth to the mystified viewer. Yet it was not only Berke who observed Schneemann's kinetic theatre as a potential form of liberation. Similar views were circulating within the New York avant-garde film circle and started to influence the 1960s critical reception of Schneemann's performance *Meat Joy*.

In 1965 the filmmaker Jonas Mekas (a close friend of Stan Brakhage) defended Schneemann's performance *Meat Joy*. In his essay "In Praise of Surface" Mekas responds to Michael Smith's negative review in the *Village Voice*, criticizing Smith's claim that Schneemann removed the social context from her work.[20] Mekas' response to Smith explains how Schneemann's work reflects the very "meat" and underbelly of that which society considers the most abject and repellent and enables the spectator to take pleasure in what is considered to be arbitrarily repellent. He explains that the meat used by the performers is celebrated and this experience places the viewers in touch with their bodies and senses. He writes:

> The Kinetic Theater, Carolee Schneemann's Meat Joy brings us back to the touch, smell, to the surfaces of things and bodies; it accepts, with love, every-thing that our insistence on ideas (certain ideas) kept us away from; even what was "repellent," like "raw" meat, or chicken guts, what we

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19. Joseph Berke writing to Carolee Schneemann September 13, 1966 reprinted in Kristine Stiles, *Correspondence Course*, 110.

20. See Jonas Mekas' review "In Praise of the Surface" in Carolee Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 277. Please also see Michael Smith, "Theatre: Meat Joy" *Village Voice*, (November 26, 1964).

> usually dread & fear to touch-glittery, vomity substances (under the excuse of our own "delicateness," the delicateness of our nature...) […].[21]

Mekas praises *Meat Joy* because it does not comfortably anesthetize the viewer. Rather, he argues, Schneemann aims to shock viewers into an awareness of their flesh, senses and corporeality. This realization occurs because "we realize that we can't look disdainfully at the meat world without somehow somewhere deeper in ourselves condemning our own meat, our own body, our own soul."[22] For Mekas, desensitization to the body was the result of western capitalism and *Meat Joy* represents a refusal to participate in a further numbing of the senses. Thus, he argues, the meat used in the performance "becomes an act of liberation"[23] For Mekas as with Berke, as we have seen, meat is understood in Schneemann's performance as a binding element that combines the performers' bodies together.

The concern with the body and interpersonal communication is also found in the response of the French artist Jean-Jacques Lebel. For Lebel, Schneemann's kinetic theatre epitomized a new form of communication that provided a heightened awareness of sensory perception for both performers and spectators. Lebel invited Schneemann to perform *Meat Joy* in Paris at the Festival de La Libre Expression in 1964.[24] He argued that Happenings like *Meat Joy* were an expression of the "libertarian spirit" that made the viewers and performers physically aware of their alienation: "Happenings bring us back to our instincts, whose sexual basis has been sublimated for the sake of culture. They give expression to our subconscious and turn dreams into action."[25] Like both Berke's and Mekas' interpretation of *Meat Joy* in the 1960s Lebel characterizes happenings as

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21. Jonas Mekas quoted in Carolee Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*: *Performance, Works and Selected Writings,* (Newplatz: Documentext, 1979), 277.

22. Ibid, 277.

23. Ibid, 277.

24. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 63

25. Jean-Jacques Lebel quoted in Mariellen Sandford, *Happenings and Other Acts* (London: Routledge, 1996), 282.

political acts that reveal alienation. Importantly, however, the bodily alienation created in *Meat Joy* is able to momentarily close the inner-outer divide that Laing describes as a process of alienation in the Politics of the Experience.

For Mekas, Berke and Lebel the meat in Schneemann's performance symbolized spiritual, sexual and political freedom. They argued that having direct contact with the flesh awakened the self. Of importance here is how value is placed on the performers' immediate exposure and contact with the meat. According to Mekas, Berke and Lebel, this encounter with the meat alone was enough to liberate the male and female body.

However, these interpretations fail to consider how Schneemann incorporated a range of materials in order to disrupt a unified sense of self. In the following section, I examine Schneemann's choreography, "projective exercises" and "body balls" in order to shed light on how these artistic structures disrupt a universal and therefore neutral understanding of bodily unification and liberation.

Meat Joy and the Politics of the Self

One of the effects of Schneemann's kinetic theatre, and her performance *Meat Joy* in particular, was to deconstruct the traditional proscenium stage and open up a more collective and communal relationship between the audience and performers. For *Meat Joy*, the audience was seated on the floor and as close as possible to the performers. Schneemann states, "our proximity heightened the sense of communality, transgressing the polarity between performer and audience."[26] The performance began with a twenty-minute prelude entitled "Notes as Prologue" that consisted of a pre-recorded tape of Schneemann talking from her notes.[27] Her voice was superimposed with sounds of a

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26. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 63.

27. For my research on *Meat Joy* I was able to order a DVD copy of the performance through LUX in London. However, in August of 2008 I also took a research trip to Electronic Arts in New York City and saw a more recent edited version of the work. Photographic documentation and scores were accessed at the Getty Research Institute in addition to Schneemann's text *More Than Meat Joy*. For photographic documentation and original score sheets please see Carolee Schneemann papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 950001, box 1, folder 8.

ticking clock, street noises from the Rue de Seine and her articulation of French grammar exercises. *Meat Joy* included a total of nine performers that were not classically trained in dance but were chosen on site in Paris. In a letter to Lebel, Schneemann explained that she had been working with dancers at the Judson school who were adamant about applying "non-dance" movements; a new form of choreography intended to disrupt the pre-determined and physical traditions which governed the dancers' classically-trained bodily movements.[28] The cast consisted of a total of nine performers: a central man and woman, two lateral men and women, an independent woman and an independent man followed by a "serving maid" who was responsible for allocating materials and props throughout the performance.[29] Once the audience was seated, the performers entered the stage carrying a large dining table and chairs. After the prelude ended the table was removed and there was a black out. Schneemann, who played the "central woman," appeared on stage under a balcony that was lit by a spot light which illuminated the paper pile on stage. She slowly began to undress in front of the "central man." Two other men then appeared from the side, who were dressed in street clothes. They carried the remaining female performers to a large pile of newspapers on stage.

Before the meat was dispersed and laid out onto their bodies, the performers participated in a range of choreographed movements, described by Schneemann as "body balls" and "body packages," which took the shape of a star, a wheel and a flower.[30] Similarly, four female performers lay on their backs and placed their legs straight up in the air (fig. 29) while the male performers used rope to tie their legs together. When the male performers attempted to move the female bodies along the surface of the floor the women rebel and the structure of the star and body package begins to unfold. When the male and female performers were made to work collectively in order to build up or maintain the shape of a tree, star, wheel or flower this process was repeated and the

28. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 62-63.

29. None of Schneemannn's performers for *Meat Joy* were classically trained in dance or theatre.

30. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 82.

female performers resist being led by the male performers. As these techniques of group choreography show, Schneemann makes active use of the body as a metaphor for the breakdown of utopian and collective ideals that were associated with 1960s notions of liberation. Schneemann writes:

> Women link arms and legs; the men may tie their legs with the rope, arrange them lying down, sitting up, spread-eagle, coiled in a ball, and then try to move them as if one solid structure (star, wheel, flower crystal) Each time the "unit" fails and falls apart: all shout instructions, suggestions, advice, complaints. But each time the women are set and the men begin to move them, they roll apart, lose balance, fall over [...].[31]

Schneemann's live sculptural structures were comprised of groups of choreographed performers who arranged themselves into a number of shapes and configurations which resonated with 1960s symbols of free love and sexuality, such as the free wheel, star and the tree of life. As will be shown, these body sculptures are important signifying elements that reproduce the particular kind of phallocentricism that Schneemann observed in language and various social structures in the 1960s.

Towards the end of *Meat Joy*, in a final attempt to produce a tree structure, the male performers raise the female performers' hands way up over their hands. All of the performers try to move collectively as a free-wheeling circle. Yet in the end, the structure of the tree is broken and the performers fall to the floor:

> The tree as the final arrangement: here the men stand the women up, raise their arms and hands over their heads touching together in the center. Each man stands against the grouped women, encircling with his arms as many as he can. They all try to move as a freewheeling circle (impossible). All fall over and lie motionless.[32]

This structure starts to breakdown as soon as the women and men start to move and work collectively in order to create a freewheeling circle. On the one hand, the tree reflects a symbolic and phallocentric composition that maintains unity and order.

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31. Ibid, 80.

32. Ibid, 80.

However, on the other hand the shape of the tree cannot be cohesively held together by the performers actions. It is possible to contextualize the meaning of the "tree" (fig. 30) within a broader context of 1960s liberation and Laing's politics of the self. Indeed the motif of the tree resonates with some of the ideals that were associated with sexual liberation. Later on in this chapter I will compare and contrast Schneemann's use of the body and in particular her construction of the tree in relation to the work of the The Living Theatre. However, for now I would like to focus on the construction of the tree and the meaning it bears in relation to gender politics and Schneemann's use of group choreography. The structure of the tree is initiated by the male performers, who guide the female performers towards liberation; perhaps then it is no coincidence why the structure collapses and does not hold? The men hold the female performers' arms to build the structure of the tree. However, in order to create a freewheeling circle the group must run together as a unit. This is also the point when the male and female performers shout instructions and give advice to one another. However, the unit collapses when the men proceed to guide the women. Schneemann states:"But each time the women are set and the men begin to move them, they roll apart, lose balance, fall over fall together and lie motionless on the ground."[33] The failure to reproduce the shape of the tree, as a strong and stable unit suggests that perhaps some of the "freewheeling" beliefs, which were associated with sexual liberation, were not as emancipatory and equal for the women that participated in them.

It is only at this particular moment, when the shape of the tree collapses and the performers lie down in a row on their backs, that the "serving maid" introduces meat into the work. Once the meat is placed onto and between the performers' bodies, the couples appear to be making love to the meat. At one moment, Schneemann's partner rolls around on top of her but also aggressively bites into a chicken. The "independent man" leaves the group and places the meat in his underwear. Meanwhile, a woman in the performance is dragged by her feet by another man, while desperately trying to hold onto a mackerel

33. Ibid, 80.

and James Tenney, the "central man" of the performance, sucks his thumb while cradling a large chicken. Each of the couples appears to be performing a range of different emotions: love, jealously, rage, sexual passion and sorrow. The performers use the meat in a variety of ways. For example, they place it between their bodies, tenderly caress it and aggressively bite into the flesh. Once this scene is finished the paint is brought in and the men begin to carefully paint the bodies of the women. Towards the end of the performance the women fight back by throwing buckets of paint at the men. At that point each man picks a woman and takes her to the paper pile and everyone starts to bury one another while the "central woman" yells "enough, enough" and there is a black out which signals the end of the performance.

Like the radical methods practiced in antipsychiatry and at Kinsley Hall, Schneemann's kinetic theatre attempted to provide a form of liberation that transformed bodily perceptions into a form of consciousness and direct action. Her use of lighting, materials, sound and choreography played an essential part in creating a transformative group experience. It is important to note, however, that this performance is not an attempt to liberate the self but rather to emphasize the performers' choreographed actions and sequences in order to provide a possible form of communication between the sexes. The materials used - paint, meat and newspapers - are designed to produce interpersonal interaction and communication. For example, meat functioned as a mediator that separated the performers' bodies. Moreover, the unification of the body and the self is not achieved (as Mekas, Lebel and Berke observed) through contact with the meat alone. Rather, Schneemann explained that the materials used in her performance should be understood as something distinct and separate from the self. Schneemann observed:

> I didn't want anyone who's trained because they are trained to configure the self as the subject of the material they're going to work with. Whereas with me it is the material, it is not you. You are looking out into the space, into your connection with other participants.[34]

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34. Carolee Schneemann quoted in an interview with William Raban. Please see "On the development of *Snows* and other early expanded cinema works" in *Expanded cinema: art, performance,*

The meat does not unify the performers bodies. Rather, the materials were strategically used in order to disrupt a unified sense of self. The use of paint and meat can also be seen as playing an important role in enhancing intimacy and interpersonal communication among the participants. Art historian Jane Blocker draws attention to how Schneemann's "Love-Paint-Exchange" and paint attack scene reflects not only a celebration of painting; it also depicts the act of painting as an equal, sexual and romantic exchange. She writes:

> Painting is portrayed as an activity for two, in which there is one who paints and one who is painted. This is a romantic, sexual exchange in which the liquidity of the paint rhymes with perspiration, vaginal, lubrication and semen. In Schneemann's version of this erotic love, the distinctions between painter/painted, lover/beloved, active/passive become blurred.[35]

This articulation of Schneemann's aesthetic sexuality and eroticism is in direct opposition to Berke's and Mekas' universalized understanding of liberation and the body. Schneemann uses the medium of performance art to deconstruct/disrupt traditional gender and binary divisions. Blocker contends that Schneemann was an advocate of women's sexual liberation, long before the second wave feminist movement which occurred in the 1970s.[36] I would add that Schneemann's choreography and writings about her kinetic theatre performances clearly highlight the particular kinds of discriminations

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film (London: Tate, 2011), 87.

35. Blocker, 98.

36. In addition to Blocker, Rachel Middleman's recent dissertation discusses *Meat Joy* in relation to the subject of sexual liberation in the 1960s. She argues that contrary to the feminist literature, critics in the 1960s would have interpreted and therefore understood Schneemann's work in relation to the subject of eroticism and sexual liberation. Moreover, she explains that sexual liberation was already on the map in America in 1962 because of major texts from authors such as Herbert Marcuse, Wilhelm Reich and Betty Friedan. Please see Rachel Middleman, "A New Eros: Sexuality in Women's Art Before The Feminist Art Movement" (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2010), 41-65. See also Annette Kubitza's work, which examines Wilhelm Reich's theories of sexual liberation in the context of Schneemann's 1960s performances and position in the avant-garde: Annette Kubitza, "Fluxus, Flirt, Feminist? Carolee Schneemann, Sexual Liberation and the Avant-garde of the 1960s," *N. Paradoxa* 15 (July/September 2001), 15-29.

that she often faced as a working female artist in the 1960s. These discriminations have been carefully examined and demonstrated throughout this thesis.

Schneemann's kinetic theatre grew out of her personal despair over language. She argued that language acted to reinforce a 1960s social and sexual structure, which routinely kept her and many other female artists at the margins. She observes:

> When I am saying what I see, men find it difficult to hear that I say it- they take it away, use my words as their own because a female source of illumination registers negatively [...]. To some extent this also occurs in regard to my Happenings kinetic theater pieces. So-- definitely- in its brief new life here-a man's enterprise, that I get a sort of wavery [sic] regard, as if my work is a vagary, dismissible, because my aggressions, anxieties are not those the male community recognizes.[37]

As the passage indicates, although Schneemann was an active participant within the essentially male avant-garde community, her innovations were easily dismissible. Her position was contradictory. On the one hand, Schneemann explains that male artists acknowledged her ideas. I would also add that male antipsychiatrists, such as Berke and Laing would give her credit. However, on the other hand, her artistic contributions posed a threat because they challenged the sexist structure of the 1960s counterculture movement and the avant-garde. Kinetic theatre, as Schneemann explains, was an attempt to release vision from the phallocentric structure of language. This is one reason why she first incorporated the use of her body as an important medium for her art. As an alternative to a masculine structure, Schneemann's kinetic theatre aimed to offer the possibility of providing new modes of consciousness, perception, physical contact and interpersonal exchange between the sexes.

Unlike Laing's emphasis on madness as a form of private liberation, *Meat Joy* encourages an exchange between materials and bodies designed precisely to prevent notions of the self from emerging within the group. As Schneemann notes: "the focus is never on the self, but on the materials, gestures and actions which involve us [...]. [A]

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37. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 118.

certain tenderness (empathy) is pervasive -- even to the most violent actions: say, cutting, chopping, throwing chickens." [38] This erotic exchange is displayed through a range of emotions, which the performers enact. For example, they hold one another, throw paint at each other and touch the meat in various ways. The fleshiness of the meat echoes the human body, but it also functions as a mediator that separates the performers bodies as well.

As such, we should note that the liberation at play in Schneemann's kinetic theatre differs from Laing's definition in very important ways. Firstly, Schneemann attempts to transform and de-emphasize the self through her specific use of choreography and raw materials. For example, the meat and paint facilitate a new form of bodily interaction, intimacy and connection that is not solely based on an individual an awareness of the self. Rather, Schneemann attempts to redefine the self through a series of physical actions that place the individual in a closer relationship and connection to the group. The use of materials was meant to create a physical connection with the other participants. Group choreography was used in order to facilitate a radical transformation of the self; however the emphasis was not placed on individual liberation. Rather the purpose of Schneemann's choreography was to shift the political consciousness of the group. This form of aesthetics shares similar political concerns that relate to antipsychiatry and in particular Laing's theories of liberation. However, important distinctions need to be made.

According to Laing, the family was a breeding ground for violence, and love was nowhere to be found within this nuclear structure. The question remains: how does Schneemann's performance display an alternative form of love and sexuality, that does not totally conform to Laing's critique of the family and the politics of liberation? Laing explained that the nuclear structure of the family repressed "Eros." The body he argued was a somatic and pure zone that had to be freed from oppressive forces. Schneemann also agreed that individuals needed to be reintroduced to somantic and bodily pleasure.

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38. Ibid, 66.

She states: “people do have to be taught that ecstasy, joy, anger, intuition, invention are their rights, are deserved, acceptable.”[39] In this way, it is possible to suggest that her performance communicates what Schneemann understood as the “people’s rights.”

Unlike Laing, Schneemann did not interpret anger and jealously as entirely negative emotions that need to be liberated from the self and body. However, she did recognize the negative impact that the social divisions of gender had on the body and the mind. Moreover, she approached this problem as an illness that could be cured in her kinetic theatre. Indeed, *Meat Joy* required a physical transformation of the self. However, this political form of consciousness was not entirely dependent on the individual. Rather, Schneemann’s choreography played an essential part that attempted to provide a form of communication between the sexes. This new form of communication suggests that Schneemann was aware of the particular problems, emotions and anxieties that surfaced as the result of a sex-gender system. Schneemann’s use of choreography played an important role that facilitated a form of intimacy and communication that was contingent on how the individual physically encounted, and interacted with the other participants.

This is why antipsychiatry is crucial for understanding Schneemann’s kinetic theatre because, like Laing, Schneemann was also interested in curing or at least transforming some of societies problems through a radicalization of the self. However, Schneemann did not approach the subject of gender in a similar way that Laing dealt with madness, liberation and the body. Indeed, Schneemann actively critiques Laing’s politics of individual liberation and provides a feminist reading of antipsychiatry. For Schneemann and Laing, the nuclear structure of the family was a repressive force that normalized and prohibited sexuality. However, unlike Laing, Schneemann examined gender as a problem within this equation. For Laing, the concept of “love” had been distorted by the family and it was a form of violence that plagued interpersonal relationships. Schneemann’s kinetic theatre attempts to provide an alternative form of intimacy and communication that refuses to conform to the patriarchal structure of the

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39. Ibid, 123.

family or to Laing's model of liberation. However, the subject of gender was not examined within the discourse of antipsychiatry. Schneemann's kinetic theatre therefore contributed to the field of antipsychiatry by examining gender as a critical issue that remained absent within the liberation debates.

It has been important to examine Schneemann's, Laing's and Berke's understanding of the self and the politics of liberation. These definitions are historically grounded and it is only by considering the critical relationships between antipsychiatry and kinetic theatre that we can address the feminist contributions that Schneemann made not only to antipsychiatry but within the countercultural movement at large. My particular reading of Schneemann's work acknowledges a feminist perspective that is currently lacking within the contemporary literature surrounding Schneemann's performances from the 1960s.

I will now turn to recent interpretations of *Meat Joy* that focus on Schneemann's relationship to the free-love movement in addition to the political efficacy and use of nudity in her performance. Current interpretations of *Meat Joy* elide its political and gendered aspects in favor of a universalized conception of 1960s sexual liberation. Also these views do not address the important parallels between antipsychiatry, performance art in the 1960s and sexual liberation. If these historical connections are not established within art history, then it will remain difficult to see how Schneemann's work challenged much of the sexism that dominated the counterculture of the period - from the antipsychiatry community to the free love movement.

More than Free Love: Reconsidering Meat, Eros, and Madness in Meat Joy

In Jonathan Katz's recent article "Allen Ginsberg, Herbert Marcuse and the Politics of Eros", he analyses Schneemann's performance *Meat Joy* in relation to Herbert Marcuse's concept of "Eros", outlined in the 1958 book Eros and Civilization.[40] For Katz,

40. For Marcuse, "Eros" provided a vehicle for social dissent that aimed to liberate the mind by returning to the body as a political source of pleasure. See *Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization: A philosophical inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 56-83.

Schneemann's performance - as well as the work of other 1960s artists, such as Richard Hamilton, Yayoi Kusama and Lygia Clark - produces art which politicizes the body and eradicates social constructs of gender and sexual difference. Katz claims that before sexual difference was "embodied" and characterized as an artistic identity, the concept of Eros was at the forefront of 1960s radical politics. Of importance here is Kat's identification of Marcuse's concept of Eros within early 1960s art, which he believes is stylistically characteristic of the "insane, messy, authentic and unpredictable."[41] Katz attributes these styles to radical applications of social freedom that chip away at societal constraints and taboos. Above all, Katz describes this important type of "experimental" art as "taking away participation in capitalist spectacles that substitute commodity pleasure for somatic pleasure."[42] For Katz, as for Marcuse, Eros is not gender-specific: it maintains a universal quality that binds its participants together. It also registers a psychic and bodily feeling of connectives, that was similar to what Freud defined as the "oceanic." According to Katz, Freud's concept of the oceanic presents a universal feeling of boundlessness between the subject and the world. He states: "more importantly there is no women's Eros, nor men's Eros. It's neither gay, lesbian, straight or heterosexual. It's never made specific that way. Rather, it is always simply Eros in its proclaimed universal human capacity."[43] Katz regards *Meat Joy* as an example of Marcuse's concept of Eros because it does not embody gendered divisions. He observes:

> In our highly identitarian times, we no longer read in *Meat Joy* the ecstatic impulse to recover what was lost, to bind and equalize all its participants—men and women, gay and straight, audience and players—in a common restoration of a lost human community through the shared language of Eros. Here was a public expression of desire that was for a change collective, unmarked, that served to aggregate people in contradistinction to desire's usual disaggregating impulse. In its deliberate refusal of boundaries and differences—including sexual and gender

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41. Jonathan Katz, "Allen Ginsberg, Herbert Marcuse and the Politics of Eros."

42. Ibid.

43. Jonathan Katz, "Queer Before Stonewall: Art, Eros, and the Sixties," paper given at Elon University October 2, 2012, YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_IzDRQsnu0 [accessed November 2, 2012].

> difference—in its flouting of proscriptions and customs, it pursued a loss of specificity, of particularity, of that very social situatedness of the self which today we elevate as the chief means to combat repression. Like *Howl, Meat Joy* is testament to the fact that before the notion of sex became the ground for difference, Eros was the cradle of commonality. Such ecstatic refusal of difference was radical at the time, but its radical politics have been blunted by a putative sexual revolution that in fact postdated it by several years. [44]

In his analysis of *Meat Joy*, Katz fails to acknowledge the ways in which sexual and gender differences were present in the 1960s. In a diary entry 1965, she explains that she turned to the medium of kinetic theatre because it offered the possibility of using the body and movement to communicate precisely what was prohibited in a phallocentric structure. Schneemann describes the despair she felt about language, because it validates a symbolic structure of masculine forms, symbols and universalism. She notes that often men find it difficult to listen to what she has to say about her kinetic theatre despite the fact that her male contemporaries might need her help. Schneemann explained that the body in motion offered an artistic form of interpersonal communication "where people are speaking to (not "at" or away) from one another."[45] In short, her use of the body, of group choreography, indeed her very practice of kinetic theatre, attempted to communicate the violence that results from phallocentrism. Schneemann's political use of the body and group choreography in her kinetic theatre was not recognized by in the 1960s by her male colleagues. She states:

> In the early sixties I felt quite alone in my insistence on the integrity of my own sexuality and creativity. There were many reasons for my use of the naked body in my Kinetic Theatre works: to break into the taboos against the vitality of the naked body in movement, to eroticise my guilt-ridden culture and further to confound this culture's sexual rigidities- that the life of the body is more variously expressive than a sex-negative society can admit. I didn't stand naked in front of 300 people because I wanted to be fucked; but because my sex and work were harmoniously experienced I could have the audacity, or courage, to show the body as a source of

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44. Ibid.

45. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 118.

> varying emotive power: poignant, funny, beautiful, functional, plastic, concrete, "abstract"; the key to related perceptions of our own nature as well as the organic and constructed worlds with which we surround ourselves. Alienation from our physical joys, constrictions in the scope of our own physical natures, meant endless disasters, acts against our own deepest needs.[46]

This quote highlights some of the problems that Schneemann faced as a female artist who used her naked body in her kinetic theatre performances. She explains that her nudity was recognized as a sign of sexual availability and promiscuity. In addition, the passage also reflects some of the reactionary and sexist tendencies that characterized the free love movement.

For Laing, Berke and Mekas, nudity and the use of the body within art and antipsychiatry were essential and it was not something that should be feared or rejected. Moreover, Schneemann also explained the political reasons which motivated her use of nudity and the body in her kinetic theatre. Nudity, Schneemann explained, was a necessary means of critiquing a society that reinforced a "sex-negative society."[47] Therefore, it will be important to specifically examine how Schneemann utilized the body in a way that challenged liberal and reactionary attitudes about sexual liberation. How did women participate equally in sexual liberation? How does Schneemann's kinetic theatre expose some of these gender inequalities?

Recently, Alyce Mahon has argued that *Meat Joy* reflects an erotic and liberated female sexuality. She states, "Schneemann's art liberated female sexuality, making her own erotic body integral to her art work. She celebrated the power of the erotic to affect the spectator and to challenge society radically, especially patriarchal society."[48] Like Katz, then, Mahon foregrounds sexual liberation as an important factor in both the reception and aesthetics of Schneemann's works. While I do not dispute the significance

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46. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 194.

47. Ibid, 194.

48. Mahon, *Eroticism and Art*, 196.

of Schneemann's challenge to "normative" representations of the body and sexuality in her performances, Katz and Mahon rely too heavily on universalized theories of sexual liberation in the 1960s. As such they disregard the specificity of the feminist interventions that were at stake in Schneemann's kinetic theatre. Moreover, such readings gloss over the gender politics that were at play in the antipsychiatry community. It is also important to provide a more nuanced account of the type of free love and liberation that was available to Schneemann and other women in the 1960s. Clearly, Berke's, Mekas', and to some extent Laing's, notions of liberation were rooted in an understanding of a universalized body and did not account for the feminist integrations that Schneemann was producing.

Katz and Mahon's interpretation of Schneemann's performance reflects a form of sexual liberation and eroticism that was more common within the artistic strategies of The Living Theatre. Hence, it would be more useful to compare *Meat Joy* in relation to The Living Theatre's 1968 production of *Paradise Now.* The aim of this comparison is to demonstrate how Katz's and Mahon's reading of Schneemann's work is influenced by the work of The Living Theatre and their legacy of sexual liberation within the counterculture. Unlike *Meat Joy*, in *Paradise Now*, sex is performed as a spiritual act of liberation. This ritual very much reflects Berke's, Mekas' and Laing's understanding of the body. Indeed, the body was used in their performance as a vehicle for transcendence. As I will explore in the next section, in countercultural performances such as *Paradise Now*, nudity in addition to sex was not only expected but also mandatory. In *Meat Joy* in contrast, sex is not performed and Schneemann's performance is less to do with the explicit act of sex. Rather, I argue that her work evokes a complicated display of sexuality, structured by the gender politics that were at play in the 1960s.

Performing the Revolution: Utopian Dreams in Paradise Now

> I am not allowed to travel without a passport. I cannot travel freely. I cannot move about at will! I am separated from my fellow man. My boundaries are set arbitrarily by others. The gates of paradise are closed to me. I am not allowed to smoke marijuana. I am not allowed to take my clothes off. The body itself, that of which we are made, is taboo. We are

> ashamed of that which is most beautiful. We may not act naturally towards one another. The culture represses love. By this time the cast would have revealed their undergarments, and the police would move in to arrest them. I am not allowed to take my clothes off. I am outside the gates of paradise.[49]
>
> What do you want? To be free of money, to be free of property. To be free of the police. To be free of power, to be free is to be free, To be free is to be free of lying. After the revolution there will be no money. After the revolution there will be no useless work.[50]

Such were the questions posed by the Living Theatre to an audience of mostly college students at MIT on November 8, 1968 (fig. 31). The performance was held at Kresge auditorium and, although the venue only had capacity for 125 people, it attracted an audience of over 500. Police and CIA officials threatened to arrest the company director Julian Beck for any potential display of nudity.[51] Like Schneemann's 1968 performance *Illinois Central*, *Paradise Now* aroused a great deal of suspicion from undercover police because of the "radical" content of the play and the public demonstration of nudity, which conservative officials believed were corrupting the minds of the youth. There were whispers and rumors throughout North American universities that the Living Theatre performed live orgies on stage and almost militaristically demanded their audience to strip. Indeed, Beck insisted that if the audience wanted to be fully transformed and liberated from their middle class consciousness, then spectators would have to strip and be shocked out of their usual comfort zone.

Paradise Now was an extremely popular performance and it toured throughout major college campuses with audiences of up to 500 people. The lead singer from band The Doors, Jim Morrison, who was also later charged for indecent exposure, frequently attended performances of *Paradise Now* and even provided bail money for Julian Beck

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49. Julian Beck and Judith Malina, The Living Theatre, Paradise Now, 1968. See the following website for a clip of the original performance http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jF7_BdHi_NA [accessed January 15, 2010]

50. Ibid.

51. John Tytell, *The Living Theatre: Art, Exile, and Outrage* (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 258.

so that they could continue their work.[52] In 1969, the Living Theatre left America and began a European tour, making their first stop in London to visit Laing, whose theories and therapies they admired and had incorporated into their play.[53] By the time the company met up with Laing he was seriously depressed and disillusioned by the radical movements of the 1960s. However, Laing agreed to meet Beck and Malina before he departed for India and attended many of their performances and rehearsals for *Paradise Now*.

Laing had reservations about how his "rebirthing" exercises were practiced by the Living Theatre and, at that point he was more interested in his work on group theory and violence.[54] He was convinced that individuals would go back to old methods and patterns of communication and that behavior could not be altered through the use of psychedelic drugs.[55] The Living Theatre was greatly indebted to and inspired by the writings of Laing, William Reich and Sogyal Rinpoche's The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying. The goal of the performance *Paradise Now* was to create an atmosphere that would arouse/engender anarchy in the audience. However, this anarchy was not characterized by violence and destruction. Rather, the motives behind the company's revolutionary stance were intended to liberate the self from existing powers of domination and control. According to Beck and Malina, the family and military state denied one's right to sexual freedom. Paradise, they argued, was the opposite of "unfreedom."It was "real" love and freedom of the body. However, according to Beck, the censorship and prohibition of nudity further alienated individuals from their own bodies and their natural right to freedom. He argued that sexual prohibition was the underlying cause of violence, and that the theater provided a critical outlet for these repressions. Despite the ideals of the

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52. Ibid,259.

53. Ibid, 259.

54. Ibid, 259.

55. Ibid, 259.

free love movement, for Beck, it still tended to replicate the sexism and homophobia of the culture at large.

In *Paradise Now*, performers and spectators were invited to speak out about sexual taboos, to undress, and join the "body pile." The "body pile" (fig. 32) consisted of members of the audience and the performance sexually groping one another on stage."[56] While the sex during the "body pile" mainly involved the rubbing of genitalia, some of the actors openly engaged in sex with the spectators. The public display and practice of sex was, for director Beck, necessary for the revolution as sexual repression was the underlying component of violence. He used theatre as a means of providing an outlet and a cure for these repressions: "Spectators are invited to speak out about sexual taboos, to undress, and to join the "body pile," a gathering onstage of actors and audience groping each other."[57] Sex was encouraged during the "body pile" and during the scene entitled "The Rite to Universal Intercourse." Moreover, one's participation in sex and the "body pile" reflected an authentic commitment to the revolution. One spectator, Jenny Hecht, "believed she had to be as generous and open as possible in order to convince anyone of her revolutionary stance, and as a result she would have sex with anyone as often as she was asked."[58] She felt that her sex offered a unique gift that was a necessary component for the revolution.

Paradise Now was designed to function like a ritual. During the first part of the performance, the performers declare their oppression by shouting: "I am not allowed to take my clothes off", or "I don't know how to stop the war."[59] While this occurs, performers re-stage Eddie Adams' infamous 1968 photograph of a Viet Cong solider being shot. They rise in unison as the victims and then, as the executioners fire, they fall.

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56. Ibid, 259.

57. Ibid, 228.

58. Ibid, 259.

59. Julian Beck and performers quoted in, The Living Theatre, *Paradise Now*, 1968. For reference see "Paradise Now," YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jF7_BdHi_NA [accessed January 15, 2010].

This re-enactment is repeated twenty times. The next scene, "The Rite to Universal Intercourse", purges the violence which has been inflicted on the performers and spectators by bringing individuals closer together through sex and the body piles, paving the way for a spiritual rebirth of the self. The performance ends with the "The Rite of I and Thou." In this section performers die and come together collectively to be reborn and form the tree of knowledge which is created by the performers coming together to form a circle. Some of the men and women in the circle carry individuals on their shoulders. This "rebirth" is meant to suggest a cathartic release from existing oppressive political structures.

Schneemann's enactment of the "body pile" and the structure of the tree function fundamentally differently to the intentions of the Living Theatre (figs. 33 and 34). Rather than symbolizing or functioning as a utopian gesture, Schneemann's focus is collectivity, which plays a strategic role in her kinetic theatre. Schneemann's use of the body is a symbolic reminder that the "self" can never be transcended or used as a vehicle for liberation. In fact, I would argue that *Meat Joy* speaks to a highly contested notion of a collective and unified body. She writes, "the essence of any imagery is so elusive anyway. It's always about failure. It's like climbing up Everest and you get half-way up and you have to lie down on the ice."[60] Her use of group choreography, bodily sculptures and "body balls" are created in order to collapse. Ultimately, they fail as unified constructions. In doing so, they expose not only the limits of the body but of individual liberation. The unified, utopian and collective body is performed in Schneemann's works as a failed concept that is highly unattainable and not necessarily desirable. If elements of "madness" are exposed within these works it is to reveal the unified and collective body as a mad, and potentially fatal, idea.

Although *Meat Joy* and The Living Theatre production *Paradise Now* share stylistic similarities, such as the body pile, and the use of nudity, it is important to

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60. Carolee Schneemann quoted in an interview with William Raban. Please see "On the development of *Snows* and other early expanded cinema works" in *Expanded cinema: art, performance, film* (London: Tate, 2011), 88.

separate and specify their historical and political differences, which are not accounted for in the art history literature. Clearly, The Living Theatre rather explicitly incorporates Schneemann's use of the "body pile" and the structure of the "tree," all of which were used in her early kinetic theatre performances. However, The Living Theatre uses sex and the body as an object that facilitates political liberation and transcendence. The Living Theatre's representation of the "tree of life" symbolizes the collective (fig. 35) revolution. Moreover, each individual body, figures in this bodily construction as an important element that holds the unit together. As such, individual bodies are used in order to facilitate the revolution. The structure of the tree is also created in *Meat Joy*; however as soon as the performers attempt to work collectively in order to maintain this structure the unit collapses and does not hold. The meaning and use of the tree functions differently in Schneemann's kinetic theatre and it does not facilitate bodily liberation. Rather, it is possible to interpret the failure of this bodily structure as a comment and possible critique of individual and collective liberation.

The fact that liberation was "performed" through the body in a controlled environment led Herbert Marcuse to believe that the Living Theatre's notions of liberation and its application of Laing's theories had no real political consequences. Indeed, he argued that sexual liberation was being used for the purposes of control and domination rather than a genuine liberation of taboo and guilt. He writes: "the group" becomes a fixed entity (verdinglicht), absorbing the individuals; it is "totalitarian" in the way in which it overwhelms individual consciousness and mobilizes a collective unconscious which remains without social foundation."[61] Ultimately for Marcuse, performances like *Paradise Now* do not break with the familiarity of destruction and barbarism; rather, he sees this particular kind of work as a reproduction of destruction. He writes:

> The Living Theatre may serve as an example of self-defeating purpose. It makes a systematic attempt to unit the theatre and the Revolution, the play and the battle, bodily and spiritual liberation, individual internal and social

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61. Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (London: Allen Lane, 1972), 115.

> external change. But this unison is shrouded in mysticism: "the Kabbalah, Tantric and Hasidic teaching, the I Ching, and other sources." The mixture of Marxism and mysticism, of Lenin and Dr. R.D. Laing does not work; it vitiates the political impulse. The liberation of the body, the sexual revolution, becoming a ritual to be performed (the rite of universal intercourse), loses its place in the political revolution: if sex is a voyage to God, it can be tolerated even in extreme forms. The revolution of love, the nonviolent revolution, is no serious threat; the powers that be have always been capable of coping with the forces of love. The radical desublimation which takes place in the theatre, as theatre, is organized, arranged, performed […] it is close to turning into its opposite. Untruth is the fate of the unsublimated, direct representation. Here, the "illusionary" character of art is not abolished but doubled: the players only play the actions they want to demonstrate, and this action itself is unreal, is play.[62]

Marcuse's warning here is that performances such as *Paradise Now* generate the opposite of liberation if they do not critically challenge domination and oppression. The imperative that each individual performing in *Paradise Now* is required to prove his or her commitment to the revolution through nudity and sexual acts that are performed on stage only results in oppression. For Marcuse, far from breaking with the familiarity of destruction, The Living Theatre succeeds only in reproducing it.

Schneemann's kinetic theatre is this sense but only in this sense pro Marcusian because the body is not used as an object through which to create a sense of solidarity. While in *Paradise Now* liberation is performed through the medium of the body, kinetic theatre raises different kinds of questions about the self, collectivity and liberation. Schneemann's work questions where the self, autonomy and individuality figure within the collective. It is clear that the Living Theatre was greatly influenced by both Schneemann's and Laing's work.[63] Yet the use of nudity by the Living Theatre and Schneemann's kinetic theatre offered very different possibilities. Rather than focusing on individual liberation and the spiritual rebirth of the self, Schneemann's work examines

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62. Ibid, 114.

63. Schneemann was invited by Berke to perform at the Dialectics of Liberation Conference in London (1967). Coincidently, The Living Theatre was also there doing some workshops and performances. Beck and Malina went to visit Laing in 1968. See John Tytell, *The Living Theatre: Art, Exile, and Outrage*, 259.

the vast challenges and power struggles within group dynamics and performance art. Such power struggles reflect Schneemann's frustration with her position as a woman within the 1960s avant-garde. Although *Meat Joy* and *Paradise Now* share stylistic similarities, such as the body pile, and the use of nudity it is important to note that *Meat Joy* does not provide a method of individual and private liberation, nor can the work be read exclusively as a form of sexual liberation.

The main motive for *Paradise Now* was to shock the middle-class viewer. These tactics would hopefully, according to Beck, provoke a mode of peaceful anarchic revolution which would begin with the sexual revolution. "After the revolution" Beck famously said, there would be the promise of love, equality, the eradication of work, property and hate.[64] However, these declamatory statements offered a utopian future of which Schneemann was highly critical because it assumed that the individual could be completely liberated from his or her alienation and oppression.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the different means by which liberation was achieved in Laing's theories of antipsychiatry, Schneemann's kinetic theatre and the methods that were appropriated by The Living Theatre. According to Laing, madness was as an authentic journey of the self that had the ability to free the individual from all ideological constraints. Liberation, he argued, was a perfect unison of the mind and body. Once this was achieved Eros was possible. Like Laing, Schneemann was also interested in creating ways that could politically redefine the self and body. For example, Schneemann's sensitizing awareness exercises, which included the use of group choreography, the body and raw materials, were a means of transforming group consciousness. Indeed, Schneemann's kinetic theatre attempted to redefine the self in relation to the politics of the group. However, unlike The Living Theatre, Schneemann did not use the individual body as a tool for sexual liberation. Rather, *Meat Joy* attempts to foreground an erotic

64. Tytell, *The Living Theatre: Art, Exile, and Outrage*, 258.

and communal exchange that is based on an awareness of sexual and gender difference. These problems are not effaced within Schneemann's kinetic theatre. Indeed, it was this awareness rather than the suppression of gender and sexual difference that came to define the aesthetics of of Schneemann's kinetic theatre.

Schneemann's performance *Meat Joy* can be seen as an important aesthetic intervention that also contributed to the field of antipsychiatry. By providing a feminist critique of Laing's methods of liberation, Schneemann's exposed some of the problems that were associated with liberation in the 1960s. Clearly, individual liberation is not a concept that Schneemann tried to achieve. However, that does not mean that liberation was not at play in her performances either. Like Laing, Schneemann attempted to transform the self through a form of sensorial awareness and an expansion of the mind and body. However, the self is consistently de-emphasized in Schneemann's kinetic theatre.

In the last chapter I return to Schneemann's important affiliation to antipsychiatry by examining her kinetic theatre performance Roundhouse, which was presented in London at the Dialectics of Liberation. Antipsychiatrists such as Berke, Laing, and Ross Speck organized the conference. The main purpose of this event was to critically examine the demystification of violence. Indeed seminal thinkers from the New Left and antipsychiatry were invited to present papers and provide workshops on this subject. Although the subject of violence was central to the conference, many of the speakers refused to engage in a discussion of gender politics. In this light, I argue that Schneemann's kinetic theatre provided a demystification of violence by exposing gender politics as an imperative and missing discussion within the discourse of antipsychiatry and the New Left. Indeed, Schneemann's performance at the conference revealed the limits of using violence as a direct form of political action and liberation especially as it pertained to the antiwar movement.

Chapter 4

Reading between the lines: examining sexism and violence in the Dialectics of Liberation.

> Come to London, I order, beseech, implore, tell, ask, direct, command […] let the Congress extend itself beyond the space/time of words [...]. *Peace News* says the Dialectics of Liberation will be the greatest intellectual event of the decade [...]. But the body speaks louder than the word and you understand [...] what must be done. [1]

In 1967, Joseph Berke wrote to Carolee Schneemann and invited her to perform one of her kinetic theatre performances for the Dialectics of Liberation, an international conference that took place at London's Roundhouse in the last two weeks of July.[2] Guest speakers included prominent intellectuals from the New Left, such as Herbert Marcuse; antipsychiatrists R.D. Laing and David Cooper; infamous poet Allen Ginsberg and Stokley Carmichael, the vociferous leader of the Black Power movement. The conference entailed a series of workshops and political discussions and only one artistic performance, presented by Schneemann on the 29th of July.

The Dialectics of Liberation was initially funded and organized by the Institute of Phenomenological Studies, a small ad hoc committee that was comprised of well-known antipsychatrists such as Berke, R.D. Laing, Leon Reddler, and David Cooper.[3] While psychiatry was one of the political issues that was discussed at the conference, there was also a broader critical focus on political liberation, the demystification of violence and

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1. Carolee Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy: Performance, Works and Selected Writings* (New Platz: Documentext, 1979),151.

2. The Roundhouse was used as a venue for British playwright Arnold Wesker's experimental theatre group, Centre 42. Wesker renovated the Roundhouse, which used to be a Victorian train station, in 1964.

3. Funding for the conference was also aided by the Philadelphia Association an organization in the United States that had previously helped out Laing and Berke during the period in which they started Kingsley Hall.

the Vietnam War. Laing, Berke, Reddler and Cooper considered antipsychiatry a form of praxis, and used the conference as an opportunity to "demystify" some of the most violent and deep-rooted structural problems of society. The conference was seen as an important way to bridge the gap between theory and praxis and to explore radical solutions to some of the most politically contentious problems of the 1960s. Indeed, for the groups of psychiatrists, scholars, artists and activists which drove the Dialectics of Liberation conference, the demystification of violence was approached through a form of consciousness raising, whether through art, antipsychiatry or radical texts: "The purpose was to demystify human violence in all its forms, the social systems from which it emanates, and to explore new forms of action."[4] However, it was not enough to simply highlight this violence. Speakers and invited guests were brought in for their established repertoire of work that had addressed the intricate connections between human objectification, political oppression and violence. More specifically, violence was examined in relation to what Berke describes as the "micro social and the macro social".[5] Where the micro social represented personal relationships to one's family or community, the macro social referred to larger political institutions such as the state, psychiatry, the Vietnam War and the military.[6]

Berke respected Schneemann's work and had previously recognized the political value of her kinetic theatre and the relationship it bore to antipsychiatry and the antiwar movement. Moreover, in his letter to Schneeman, he observes that only Schneemann understood the importance of the body and the negative effects that alienation had on individuals and society at large. Significantly, he commented privately to Schneemann "that the body speaks louder than the word."[7] Clearly, Berke did not understate the

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4. "Introduction to the 1967 Dialectics of Liberation," Dialectics of Liberation, http://www.dialecticsofliberation.com/ [accessed September 15, 2012].

5. Joseph Berke interview with author July 17, 2010.

6. Ibid.

7. Joseph Berke writing to Carolee Schneemann quoted in *Corresponding Course An Epistolary History of Carolee Schneemann And Her Circle*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 106.

significance of her performance art and he went on to say that it is more important than the "written word."[8] This also suggests that Berke, understood Schneemann's kinetic theatre as a political form of praxis that had a more immediate and direct effect than text alone.

If the main objective of the Dialectics of Liberation was to examine and demystify violence, it is critical to examine Schneemann's role, participation and experience in light of that objective. Although Schneemann was invited to contribute to a discussion about human objectification, antipsychiatry and violence, as soon as she arrived at the conference she was not treated as an equal and, as we shall see, was subjected to a great deal of aggression, violence and hostility.[9] This particular form of violence had no name in the 1960s. Indeed, "sexism" was almost entirely disregarded within the political context of the conference, the antiwar movement and the New Left.[10] As we have seen throughout this thesis, Schneemann's contribution to these debates has been grievously overlooked and, as demonstrated in Chapter Three, my aim is to establish a link between kinetic theatre and the debates of antipsychiatry. Although the subject of violence was prevalent at the conference, the speakers refused to engage in a discussion of gender politics. Gender was considered self- indulgent and a distraction from "universal" struggles such as the draft and liberation.[11] This final chapter will argue that Schneemann's performance at the conference, and her kinetic theatre in general,

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8. Ibid, 151.

9. Carolee Schneemann's experience is documented in *More Than Meat Joy*, 150-155.

10. I am referring to the various ways that feminists such as Carolee Schneemann, Robin Morgan and Shelia Rowbotham describe the 1960s and their experience of the New Left. Though it was not discussed, sexism was a significant factor. For example, many feminists argued that the second-wave feminist movement helped identify and locate sexism as an institutional problem. See Robin Morgan, "Goodbye to All that" *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement,* ed. id. (New York: Vintage Books, 1970); *The Demon Liver: On the Sexuality of Terrorism* (New York: Norton, 1990); Todd Gitlin, "Women: Revolution in the Revolution" in *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 349-362.

11. David Barber, A *Hard Rain Fell*: *SDS and Why It Failed* (Jackson: University of Mississippi press, 2008), 96.

provided a demystification of violence by exposing gender politics and the rise of militarism as a critical and missing issue within the New Left and anti-psychiatry.

One of the central research questions this thesis considers is the emergence and disappearance of Schneemann's kinetic theatre. The rise of militarism and violence within the New Left is a strong, though not determining, factor which led Schneemann to abandon her practice in 1970. By the late 1960s, militancy became synonymous with theories of praxis and direct action in the antiwar movement. Liberation was understood as a politics that was based on lived experience, and an authenticity that challenged the supposed passivity of the theoretical writings that dominated the New Left.[12] I will argue that Schneemann responded to this crisis, through her kinetic theatre, which attempted to heal the self within and (not outside) a culture of violence. This healing dimension derives from Schneemann's deep investment in the antiwar movement and proto gender politics.

This chapter suggests that Schneemann's kinetic theatre, specifically her performance *Round House*, made a significant and overlooked contribution to the discussion regarding the demystification of violence. *Round House* was a multimedia event that incorporated the use of live action, group choreography, film stills (which were projected onto a wall), in addition to the use of "unauthorized" texts. These four components are essential for understanding antimilitaristic strategies deployed by Schneemann in *Round House*. However, these techniques also clashed with some of the militant theories that were at upheld by some of New Left speakers participating at the conference. As I will demonstrate, Schneemann, approached the subject of the Vietnam War by examining violence as an internalization of guilt that led to a manifestation of conflict and the rise of militancy within the antiwar community. *Round House* incorporated two antiwar films: *Viet Flakes* (1965) and *Fuses* (1966), as well as group choreography which extended her aesthetics into a political form of praxis that sought to re-shape the way individuals communally encounter and interact with one another.

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12. Jeremy Varon, *Bringing The War Home: The Weather Underground, Red Army Faction and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 2004), 89.

Schneemann used the films and group choreography– as well as sensitizing exercises and props – as a means of restoring and healing the subject, so that both men and women could equally participate in a less violent and direct form of political action. Schneemann's participatory approach intended to address and examine the subject of violence within the context of the conference by providing a transformation of the self. However, this form of political consciousness did not offer an escape or emancipation from violence but rather a radical alternative that did not subscribe to the antiwar rhetoric and increasingly militant and utopian ideologies that were inherent within some of the political debates expressed by Laing, Cooper, Carmichael and Marcuse.

In order to theorize and question why Schneemann's performance was misread by her contemporaries, and was not understood within the context of violence and the antiwar movement, I will foreground two key factors: sexism and the rise of militarism within the New Left. The following questions will be examined: how exactly did Schneemann's performance *Round House* deviate from the antiwar agenda that was expressed by speakers such as Laing, Cooper, Marcuse and Carmichael? How did Schneemann's incorporation of her antiwar and personal erotic film *Fuses* potentially destabilize or put pressure on some of the "acceptable" methods of antiwar politics that were put forward by the Congress and the New Left? Lastly, was Schneemann's aesthetic deviation productive and how did it expose gender as a problem that was not taken seriously within the antiwar movement and the New Left?

Inclusion and Exclusion

Shortly after Schneemann arrived in London she was invited to attend a dinner party but was intentionally given the wrong directions and as a result arrived very late.[13] Upon her arrival, Schneemann explains that nobody would talk to her and she was deliberately snubbed by most of the male academics in particular Laing and Marcuse.[14] It

13. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 150.

14. Carolee Schneemann documents her experience of the dinner party in portions of her diary

was also at the dinner party that she realized her name had not been printed on any of the handouts, publications and posters for the conference.[15] Incidents such as these began to multiply and before the end of the two weeks Schneemann began to think that there was a direct sabotage of her performance and her perceived authority and presence at the Dialectics of Liberation. For example, at the introductory event, Schneemann explained that her work would "draw upon the dominant themes and issues that were examined within the context of the Congress."[16] Immediately after she said this, however, Paul Goodman, an American activist and popular writer known within the New Left, publically announced from the audience that he objected to her work and took issue with her being there in the first place, shouting "we weren't consulted about inviting her […] why in the world would we want her to do this sort of thing?" [17] A few years after the conference Schneemann moved back to London and ran into David Cooper who explained his deep regrets about the way in which the Congress treated her:

> I always felt that we owed you an apology […] but the disillusioning fact seems to have been that we didn't welcome a woman taking an equal space among ourselves, we distrusted a theatrical form, and we certainty didn't want a very young woman putting on a performance which incorporated our own words with a countering physicality.[18]

According to Schneemann, some of the key male speakers within the New Left and antipsychiatry movement, and their students, felt that her performance was "individualistic", "self-indulgent" and against the politics of the collective.[19] On the one

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that were also published in *More Than Meat Joy*, 150-155.

15. Ibid, 155.

16. The author James Harding provides a brilliant analysis of Schneemann's performance and he argues that her use of collage challenged the authorial structure of the conference. See James Harding, *Cutting Performances Collage Events, Feminist Artists, and the American Avant-Garde*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 130-133.

17. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 153.

18. This discussion took place between David Cooper and Carolee Schneemann. See *More Than Meat Joy*, 151.

19.Ibid, 155.

hand, it would seem reasonable to suggest that there was some blatant sexism at play at the conference, especially since Schneemann was the only woman invited to perform. Indeed, Cooper's retrospective apology explicitly admits that he and many of his colleagues found it difficult to "listen" to a young woman. Moreover, the author James Harding has recently explained that the medium of Schneemann's performance was considered "theatrical" and therefore a deceptive form of art that triggered anxiety and frustration.[20] On the other hand, it is important to differentiate Schneemann's perspective and experience of the conference (for the most part understood retrospectively) from the actual reasons why she felt that her performance was deliberately marginalized, misunderstood and sabotaged. There may not be a way to prove a direct correlation between the perceived gendered criticisms of Schneemann's kinetic theatre and the censorship of her film *Fuses* at the conference.[21] However, this does not mean that we can rule out sexism as a determining factor that placed Schneemann in a precarious and marginalized position not only within the context of the conference, but also in the New Left and the antipsychiatry community. My explicit use of the term sexism in this chapter refers to a form of whistle blowing, a calling out if you will, and it provides a way to frame and address the sexist behavior and language within the context of the 1960s and the Dialectics of Liberation. While my use of the term sexism in this chapter may seem anachronistic – this vocabulary only came into consciousness and more common use within the rise of the 1970s second-wave feminist movement – I am therefore using this term to retrospectively locate the sexist structure of the conference and the New Left antiwar community more broadly. Shelia Rowbotham, an important British socialist and second-wave feminist who also participated in the Dialectics of Liberation conference,

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20. Harding, *Cutting Performances Collage Events, Feminist Artists, and the American Avant-Garde,* 133.

21. Laing, Berke and the lawyer from the conference advised Schneemann not to screen her film *Fuses* (1965) during the conference as she could have been prosecuted for strict laws relating to pornography. It was made clear to Schneemann that nobody from the conference would prevent her from showing the film, but they could not come to her defense in the event that she would be formally prosecuted. In the end, Schneemann used film stills during her live performance without informing the Congress. See *More Than Meat Joy*, 156.

notes that in the 1960s there was no way of naming or addressing sexism. She remembers gender discrimination as an oppressive force that affected her editorial position at the magazine *Black Dwarf*, in addition to her political role in the London Socialist Labour party.[22]

In an oral history interview with Ronald Fraser conducted about the 1968 student revolt, Rowbotham explains some of the difficulties that she and many other women experienced at the Dialectics of Liberation, as well as in the positions that women held more broadly within the New Left. The conference was just one of many incidences when she felt that her ideas were not legitimized and were blocked by her male contemporaries:

> I mean there were many things around 67, 68, 69 which left you with a feeling that you came up against a blank wall and that you did not understand why there was this resistance or block or something and then also I would notice in meetings not only in IS [socialist labour party] but in meetings [...] where I had all sorts of good ideas [...] and I noticed there was real difficulty with men actually taking my ideas and receiving them but I could not formulate that. I thought these people are just funny you know [...] just totally unreceptive people [...].[23]

Rowbotham's memories reflect many of the frustrations that Schneemann experienced at the conference and as a working artist female artist. As will be shown, Schneemann met with a great deal of resistance when she decided to use unauthorized sections of male speeches for her kinetic theatre performance. While these texts were not attributed to a particular author, audience members would have been aware of the questions that Schneemann cited, because they were taken from arguments that took place at the roundtable discussions, which usually broke out into shouting matches. It is important to consider why Goodman and Cooper objected to Schneemann's use of their texts: did their resistance relate to the fact that she was a woman and did not ask their

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22. Shelia Rowbotham, interview by Ronald Fraser, May 16, 1984, transcript, Ronald Fraser *1968- A Student Generation in Revolt*, Oral History Collection, British Library, London, UK.

23. Rowbotham, interview.

permission? Did Schneemann's appropriation lessen the political currency and weight of the claims that were made by these male authors? In other words, did Schnemann's use of performance expose some of the problems that were related to the conference's definition of violence and liberation?

It is possible that Schneemann was not aware of the negative reaction her participation provoked among many of her male contemporaries. This is why the second-wave feminist movement was so important to Schneemann and Rowbotham; it provided a consciousness that "names something is going on [before] you didn't have that way of naming it [...]."[24] In attempting to locate and examine sexism as a large but not determining factor that affected Schneemann's role and the critical reception of her performance at the Congress, I am presented with a historiographic problem that feminist art historians are all too often confronted with: the records, oral history and archival evidence of Schneemann's excluded position are almost entirely documented from her point of view. As feminist scholars such as Griselda Pollock, Gayatri Spivak, Jacques Derrida, Amelia Jones, Rebecca Schneider and Jane Blocker have suggested, the archive is a hegemonic force that silences marginalized voices. In this particular case, however, Schneemann and Rowbotham's "voices" complicate the archive because they bring up the subject of gender; a topic that was completely absent at the conference. Indeed, their recollections are nowhere to be seen in the official publication of the conference talks, and the dominant archive that surrounds the Dialectics of Liberation. In excavating these marginalized experiences, and looking at the event from a gendered perspective, this research also challenges the hegemonic archive of the conference.

Schneemann's performance *Round House* can be seen as an attempt to demystify some of the gender politics that were present within the power structures of the conference and the New Left. Indeed, I see the conference as a reflection of how the New Left struggled to tackle the subject of gender as it was not debated and nor was it deemed relevant to the subject of violence. David Barber's book examines how the New Left

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24. Rowbotham, interview.

ignored the subject of gender as its primary focus was liberation. If a white western woman or female radical were to question her unequal position within the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), for example, it was thought of at best as a distraction, and at worst as racist and a diversion from the subject of liberation and the third world struggle. Barber writes:

> For its part, the New Left used radical women as a foil against which it measured the purity of its own radical politics, that is, it legitimized its own radical stance by charging radical women with "racism." Moreover, and this is the main point, the New Left systematically refused to deal seriously with its own male supremacy, isolated and alienated even the radical women closest to itself, and, ultimately defended its white male perspectives and values. In defending its male supremacy by falsely casting itself as pure in its antiracism, however, the New Left strengthened the feminist tendency that sought to forgo all struggle save that which it defined as "women's" struggles.[25]

Barber's analysis sheds light on the difficult position that Schneemann, Rowbotham and many women occupied at the Dialectics of Liberation. Not only was Schneemann a woman, but she was the only female artist presenting her work within the context of the male-dominated New Left and antipsychiatry. Moreover, her contributions to these important discourses in the context of the conference were not properly acknowledged.

The aesthetics of Schneemann's kinetic theatre bears an important relationship to antipsychiatry and the New Left, despite its historical marginalization within these contexts. As I will examine more closely below, Schneemann's performance *Round House* functioned as a political praxis that used both women and men in order to expose gender and the rise of militarism as an important problem within the New Left. This element of Schneemann's kinetic theatre proved to be incompatible with the New Left. Firstly, Schneemann's performative praxis attempted to heal the self, an approach that greatly differed from the methods of praxis and liberation strategies proposed by Marcuse and the even more militant views put forward by Carmichael and the Weathermen.

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25. Barber, A *Hard Rain Fell*: *SDS and Why It Failed*, 96.

Secondly, gender politics were by no means exclusively an issue for women in the New Left. Using the conference as a case study, I examine how Schneemann's performance provides a demystification of violence, by challenging the male dominated discussions regarding alienation, liberation and violence. However, in order to fully grasp and comprehend the feminist contributions that Schneemann made at the Dialectics of Liberation, it is equally important to differentiate Schneemann's understanding of, and theoretical position on, violence, liberation and alienation and key authors such as Laing, Cooper, Carmichael and Marcuse. A more nuanced comparison of these ideas will highlight the particularity and significance of Schneemann's ideas in relation to these authors and suggest that gender was a critical lacuna within the context of the conference.

On Saturday July 29th, 1967 at approximately 9:30 p.m. five hundred people formed a semi-circle at the Roundhouse to watch Schneemann's live performance. As in her earlier kinetic theatre performances, *Snows* for example, she included a number of choreography movements such as performers painting each other's faces, body balls and props which included: a lorry wagon, styrofoam materials, aluminum foil, metal, and the use of mud. There was also a multimedia projection of her earlier films *Viet Flakes* and *Fuses*, which took place simultaneously during the choreography and sensitizing exercises. This performance included a total of sixty participants in two distinct groups: the core, which consisted of eight principle performers: Schneemann, Michael Kustow, Bobby Harrison, Henry Martin, Brenda Dixon, Mary Hanna and Jean Michaelson; and a mass group of thirty people.

Schneemann arrived two weeks in advance of the show in order to physically prepare her performers. Extensive sensory workshops, group exercises and meditation sessions were essential components that were mandatory for all of her kinetic theatre events. In a journal log, Schneemann describes the performance, as a "sensory expression of the conditions explored verbally by the Congress […] get them into their senses."[26] In other words, she places significance on the body and its ability to communicate and

26. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 151.

represent some of the theoretical debates that were being verbally expressed at the conference. However, she does not suggest that all forms of corporeal representation can be directly equivalent to the logic and symbolic structure of language and speech. Indeed, as I argued in Chapters One and Three, Schneemann used the body in her kinetic theatre not only as a means of expanding her medium, but also a form of representation which challenged the phallocentric structure of language. In addition, she was interested in examining the social, cultural and psychological effects that imposed gender differences had on the psyche and the body. More precisely, Schneemann was politically invested in using the body as a way to expose social taboos, norms, and the repressive structures of power, which alienated men and women not only from each other, but also their politics.[27]

Significantly, Schneemann did not define alienation exclusively in terms of gender differences. Rather, she used her kinetic theatre as a means of addressing the violent and often disorientating effects that the Vietnam War had on the New Left and the antiwar community. Of importance here is that Schneemann sought to connect the important political issue of gender to the broader themes of violence that were addressed at the conference. As will be demonstrated, the inclusion of gender and sexuality as integral to Schneemann's antiwar aesthetics and politics proved incompatible with the theoretical debates that were presented at the conference, which were also circulating within the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the more militant factions within the American New Left. Before addressing this paradox I will unpack the ways in which Schneemann's performance approached the topic of violence, arguing that, for Schneemann, violence is a problem of the "guilt" that increasingly fractured the antiwar community.

Guilt was a political issue that dominated the New Left. For example, Carmichael's theories of liberation and the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre insisted on the belief that white guilt had to be accounted for; it was a serious problem that had to be

27. Ibid, 143.

politically addressed.[28] According to these authors, one of the ways to do this, alongside the radical politics of the Weathermen[29] (a more militant fraction of the SDS), was to renounce one's bourgeois norms and to fight on the side of the politically oppressed, such as the Vietnamese, and the Black Panther community in the United States. In other words, white guilt was understood as something that could be liberated from the self, through violent means of resistance and protest. For example, militant forms of protest such as the "Days of Rage" and the Storming of the Pentagon were not understood as symbolic acts, but were regarded as a theoretical praxis that actively challenged the passivity that was associated with the theories of the New Left.[30] According to the historian Jeremy Varon, there was a growing impatience and frustration amongst many individuals within the New Left. This discontentment was directed at language and it became synonymous with an "ineffectual politics" that was precisely understood as the opposite of a theoretical praxis. Varon writes:

> The New Left's skepticism about language intensified toward the end of the 1960s. With whatever irony, young activists responded to the escalation of police violence and the war in Vietnam with a dizzying explosion of discourse, in which they exhorted one another to greater resistance. Guns and bombs entered the imagery of the more radical sectors of the movement and became standard in the graphics of underground newspapers. It was as if the New Left were trying, through the sheer accumulating of subversive words and images, to will a new

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28. Jean-Paul Sartre famously equates passivity and non-violence within the context of the Algerian War to systematic forms of violence and colonial oppression. Sartre's preface to Frantz Fanon's text *The Wretched of Earth* was an deeply influential for more militant fractions in American and West German circles of the New Left. See Jean-Paul Sartre, Preface to Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington. (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 12.

29. The Weathermen took over the SDS in June of 1969. It should be noted that they only became a wanted terrorist organization in 1970; a direct consequence of the Greenwich Village townhouse explosion, which took place on March 6th. Diana Oughton, Theodore Gold and Terry Robbins were the three members that were killed. They were originally preparing a bomb, which was going to be planted at an Army ball in Fort Dix. After this event the Weathermen had to officially go underground as the FBI had a warrant for their arrest. From this point on they were known as Weather-Underground.

30. Jermey Varon, *Bringing The War Home: The Weather Underground, Red Army Faction and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies*, 89.

> world into being. But New Leftists also expressed impatience with the perceived limits of their largely verbal protest.[31]

Varon sheds light on how and why the language, tactics and framework of resistance and protest culture shifted in the late 1960s. A number of historical factors contributed to this change such as the increased police presence at antiwar marches, and the riots which occurred at the storming of the Pentagon in 1967 (in which Schneemann participated) and the 1968 Democratic Convention, which also ended in a police riot and the incarceration of seven well-known political activists: Abbie Hoffman, Tom Hayden, David Dellinger, Rennie Davis, Jerry Rubin, Lee Weiner and Bobby Seale.

The Pentagon march took place on October 21, 1967 and it proved to be a seminal moment within the history of Schneemann's kinetic theatre and the antiwar movement. There were over 50,000 protesters, 652 arrests and around 30 more militant protesters that stormed the entrance of the Pentagon. Shortly after the protest, Schneemann became concerned with the rise in police brutality and the police's increased presence at antiwar marches, universities and demonstrations in the United States. It was the ever increasing militarized presence of the State, in addition to the escalation of the Vietnam War abroad, that led Schneemann to observe "feelings of guilt," "helplessness," "rage" and "victimization" within the antiwar community. She explains that these feelings were having a direct and negative effect on the collective structure of the antiwar community:

> The insufficiency of our abilities to move co-operatively, instinctively to protect one another and self was vividly apparent in the charge of rigid police flaks against the Grand Central Station Yippy celebrants […] (and the Pentagon) […] our responses were helpless, confusion, victimization […] the cultural symptoms of frustration and anger over the Vietnam war increased as we confronted the unsuitability of our own behavior to the conditions affecting us […]. In '67, '68 I did a series of public workshops with the expectation that what we learned in [Kinetic] theatre could be used in mass actions [...] It wasn't like a school, a company, a fixed practice […] it was in its particularity that it had its vitality, its richness,

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31. Ibid, 89.

> and the fact that Kinetic Theatre could keep changing, letting people go on, and absorbing disasters and mistakes […].[32]

The historical events that Schneemann refers to, such as the storming of the Pentagon, the Detroit riots, and the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention, are important examples that parallel the New Left's increased frustration with traditional modes of resistance and protest. Schneemnann's examples refer to an extremely volatile and unstable moment within the history of the antiwar community, which she addressed in direct and pragmatic ways. For example, workshops on choreography were provided to the public in the hope that activists could apply these techniques in demonstrations. Kinetic theatre thus became a means of addressing the psychological and internalized effects that externalized accounts of violence such as the Vietnam War and police brutality had on the antiwar community.

The schisms within the New Left and antiwar community to which Schneemann refers also manifested themselves in the militant and draconian forms of protest referred to above. Unlike these militant strategies, Schneemann's kinetic theatre provided a means of extending her aesthetics into a form of political praxis which was not a means of liberating the self from guilt and violence, but rather a radical means of collectively re-shaping the ways in which individuals identified with the violence of the Vietnam War. What is significant about Schneemann's approach is her attempt to heal the self by removing guilt as an underlying basis for political action and resistance.

For Schneemann, as well as for many of the theorists who presented their research at the Dialectics of Liberation, addressing this "guilt" was a critical means of demystifying violence. Moreover, it was a way of understanding and theoretically connecting micro social politics, which emphasized the role of personal experience and theories of subjectivity, to macro socio-political structures. In other words, Schneemann, Laing, Berke and Cooper were interested in how systematic accounts of violence, such as the state of psychiatry and the Vietnam War, were also connected to an "origin" and a

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32. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 188.

source of inner violence that occurred within the nuclear structure of the family.[33] Cooper states, "if we are to talk of revolution today our talk will be meaningless unless we effect some union between the macro-social and micro-social, and between inner reality and outer reality." For Cooper, Laing and Berke the Vietnam War was connected to a micro and macro system of institutionalized violence, which required a critique and disidentification with the State and the structure of the nuclear structure family.

For Laing and Cooper, the origin of violence is generational and is located deep within the family structure and psyche. Questioning authority and the power of the family unit was therefore a way to actively challenge and demystify this historical pattern of violence. This awareness, they argued, was critical for understanding the relationship between western alienation and the larger political acts of violence such as the Vietnam War. In what follows, I will now turn to an examination of Laing's and Cooper's analysis of violence and guilt and consider how it differs from Schneemann's understanding of the same phenomena. Unlike Laing and Cooper, for Schneemann, guilt was a symptom of violence, and it was something that could be healed, controlled and managed. For Laing and Cooper, antipsychiatry presented a radical means of identifying patterns of violence that were present in both the nuclear structure of the family in addition to the State. Moreover, these theoretical views embraced a theory of the liberated self, which was based on the rejection of guilt, shame and parental authority. Using similar strategies to those practiced within antipsychiatry, Schneemann attempted to re-shape her performers' and the audience's relationship to violence. For Schneemann, an internalization of guilt led to feelings of hopelessness, confusion and rage, which prevented a critical consciousness crucial to maintain opposition to the war. However, it is important to point out that Schneemann's investigation of violence also exposed antipsychiatry as a structure that like the family and the State, needed to be demystified. These differences in view are essential when considering the new forms of direct action that Schneemann adopted in her kinetic theatre.

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33. Joseph Berke, interview with author July 17, 2010.

It might not be obvious: addressing the invisibility of violence and conflict in the New Left

> The demystification of violence is one of the essential components of the conference is attempting to address. It is by no means obvious why this inhuman violence is occurring [...]. If it is Vietnam today it might be the Middle East tomorrow it might be all over the world practically everyone who is fighting [in Vietnam] has never even heard of the place.[34]

At the conference, Laing presented a paper titled "Obvious." For those attending his talk who were familiar with his work, the paper did not extend beyond the usual context of his theories of the "self" and "alienation." However, in this presentation Laing made a point of connecting the notions of alienation and self-hatred to larger political events such as the Vietnam War. Laing was interested in examining how institutionalized notions of violence, and theories of alienation could be discussed in relation to macro social and broader political conflicts.

In order to examine the macro effects of violence, Laing explains that it should not be understood exclusively in terms of an act deriving from an individual, but should be explored in relation to the ways in which systemic accounts of violence are always carefully balanced between a macro and micro framework. According to Laing, an inability to criticize authority derives from the fact that most individuals feel bad for not doing what they are told. He explains that feelings of guilt, failure, and disappointment prevent a critical mistrust of significant authoritative figures and notes that adults become blind to this violence because it is an internalized self-hatred that is rooted deep within the family structure:

> The spiral of alienation goes back whirling back, way out of sight. And by the time one has lost oneself in the turn of this spiral of alienation and grown up to see, without knowing that one sees, one's mirror image in the face of one's enemy; to become the Other to an Other who is himself Other than himself; then we are just beginning to get to the precondition of the possibility of the amazing collective paranoid projective systems that operate on large scales. We attribute to Them exactly what We are

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34. *Anatomy of Violence*, directed by Peter Davis, Villon Films, 1967, R.D. Laing lecture.

> doing to Them. Because We are seeing ourselves in Them, but we do not know that we are. We think that They are Them, but They are US.[35]

Laing was not alone in locating the roots of the Vietnam War in Western alienation. Cooper agreed that the American treatment of the Vietnamese was a reflection of Western repression and self-hatred:

> The Vietnamese are the receptacles for all the split-off bad aspect of the U.S. They are the vicious, hyper-sexual, aggressive, subverting, offensive aspects that the White House and the Pentagon refuse to recognize in themselves.[36]

For Cooper, the West viciously constructs the North Vietnamese as an enemy. However, this fantasy he argues is not only a fear of the "other," rather it reflects a systematic mode of repression that is unequivocally rooted in capitalist forms of American society. Yet, in drawing comparisons between western alienation and the Vietnam War, Laing and Cooper evade the distinctions between the self and the other. In this way, the "enemy," as Laing and Cooper suggest, can only be seen as a reflection of the self.

Schneemann did not see the violence of the Vietnam War as a product of western alienation. Indeed, she urged her colleagues to reject the avant-garde's dated emphasis on alienation as a valid source of artistic inspiration and influence:

> First day at the Congress seminar I explained the shift in art-life attitudes; that many of us rejected being "outside" society--- "alienation," "neurosis," not making-it, troubled relations, mythification or life, fragmentation as basic to creative process, "role of the artist." That we worked from communality, integrations, trust or self and each other, shared process, abandon, certain joys, pleasures (as swell as darker forces to be grasped)-- but emphasis has shifted. Old romanticism, neo-

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35. R.D. Laing, "The Obvious," in *Dialectics of Liberation* (Baltimore: Penguin Press, 1968), 29.

36. David Cooper, "Beyond Words" in *Dialectics of Liberation* (Baltimore: Penguin Press, 1968), 200.

> Freudianism was not where we pivoted. The older people didn't believe me; the younger ones didn't know what I was talking about.[37]

Importantly, this diary log emphasizes that Schneemann felt her contemporaries did not understand what she was trying to get across. As this entry shows, as opposed to concepts of alienation, Schneemann desired to work within the community as a collective, which incorporates the self and others into a shared, trusting environment.

As we have seen, Schneemann does not locate western and male alienation as the source of the Vietnam War nor as equivalent to the pain and suffering of the Vietnamese. Rather, her writings and artistic practice exposes violence as a condition of humanity. Referring to her position on violence she states:

> As far as I can see it is the artist who is always feeling that it could happen to him and that he stands right where that human being is and that's where his commitment is and that is where his position is to being to expose it and through it all out and make it concrete in whatever way he can.[38]

Here, Schneemann explains that the artist must expose violence to the world and make it concrete. Yet her practice of kinetic theatre also questions how the subject can react to institutional forms of violence when, at the same time, the self is becoming more integrated within existing political structures such as the New Left. This is something that Laing and Cooper do not consider, addressing instead the invisibility of violence and offering both an explanation for its origins and a solution. More explanation here would be useful or a link back to Laing's talk above.

In a journal entry, Schneemann notes that she does not want to assault the audience, as was the case for some other contemporary performance groups, but to break down some of the invisible barriers that were associated with repression and guilt. She proceeds to explain how some physical imagery (produced out of her choreography and

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37. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 127.

38. Carolee Schneemannn quoted in *Anatomy of Violence*, directed by Peter Davis, Villon Films, 1967, Art and Poetry Workshop.

sensitizing awareness exercises) can break down these barriers and, in doing so, put a "sudden awareness into action." She writes:

> Not telling the audience what to do but where openings can be taken in and beyond the event (shift the dangerous blocking) from where imagery evocation makes concrete link to actions breaking into certain barriers putting that sudden awareness into actual time an inevitable expression of communality reorganize rage violence guilt not atomize moving together towards unknown qualities undefined […] not aggress the audience some other performance groups put me off even their sensitivity exercises competitive foolish idealization loses the track […]. [39]

This form of praxis addresses the internalized and violent effects that guilt had on the antiwar community by moving between the individual and the collective identity. Kinetic theatre, therefore offers a form of praxis that attempts to communally address the various ways in which violence was fracturing the antiwar community. Given the increasingly militant and violent fractions that surfaced within the American New Left, such as the Weathermen,[40] Schneemann's performance *Round House* offered an alternative method of praxis to militant strategies, offering a way to re-organize this collective experience of guilt and violence. One of the central questions that the performance raises is how to "heal" the self within a culture and ideological system that produces violent subjects? Her performance examines the possibility of shifting a state of mind and providing a form of consciousness that is built around openness and trust rather than aggression and mistrust.

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39. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 159-160.

40. Schneemann explains in the previous quote that some performance groups were too aggressive and assaulted the viewers. She may have been referring to the Living Theatre, since Julian Beck provided some workshops at the Dialectics of Liberation. The rise of militancy in the New Left was a concern that Marcuse had as well. For Marcuse, militants were distorting notions of liberation and utopia. Please see Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 5-22. However, it should also be noted that Marcuse wrote more sympathetic texts that advocated the use of violence within the context of the African American community in the United States. Please see "Repressive Tolerance" in Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington More Jr., and Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 23.

Like many of the kinetic theatre works I have discussed in this thesis, group choreography played an important role in *Round House* . During the work, performers on stage experimented with (sensory awakening) exercises which involved wrapping each other in aluminum foil and painting each others faces, and flinging and throwing mud and paper at one another. It is perhaps difficult to see the significance of Schneemann's use of "ordinary" materials and props within her works, yet her use of such objects was always contingent on an interactive exchange with the performers. For example, in figures 51 and 52, she and another performer on stage wrap the body of third performer in aluminum foil, which acts as a means of facilitating interaction and interpersonal exchange among the performers. These techniques sought to build intimacy and create a sense of trust and closeness with the community: "[b]asic physical relationships- their development as imagery and action in performance situation. Sensitization, experience in itself; what it makes possible in performance situation."[41] In other words, these actions can be seen as a 1960s antiwar form of praxis that attempt to collectively reorganize the performers' relationship to rage, guilt and violence. It is also a way of working together in order to deal with the political volatility of the times and, more specifically, within the context of the conference itself. Schneemann observes:

> The core group's developing closeness spread into the actions of the mass group. We were evoking not simply a "performance," but a microcosm of creative inter-relations. Despite harassment and shortness of time, we were discovering a concrete clarification of the actual social situation, and a full self-identity within a group process.[42]

Here, Schneemann emphasizes the connection and the intimacy that is exchanged between the performers; a sense of community is established through her performance, which is then actualized by the group and their specific actions. According to Schneemann, the closeness of the group provided protection from some of the aggressive attitudes that were displayed at the conference. The atmosphere at the Dialectics of

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41. Carolee Schneemann, "Notes on Motions and Effects, 1968" Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 9500001, box 68, folder, 3.

42. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 157.

Liberation was by no means calm; there were numerous shouting matches and a display of egos that did not go unnoticed by Schneemann. Indeed, these fights became source material for her performance and she incorporated these elements into her work. It seems that Paul Goodman's open objection to Schneemann's participation had a negative effect and soon after his comments, many students openly dismissed her work:

> The rehearsals with the performers were constantly impaired by a group of students who felt that what I was doing was, "imperialistic," "individualistic," that no particular group had a right to define itself within the congress. They stormed through the area where we meditated, stole our props, banged on tin cans while we struggled to concentrate on sensitized movement and contact improvisations. The paradoxes would not be unraveled, only experienced head on.[43]

The heated atmosphere of the conference reflected the turbulent mood of the New Left. Despite these accusations against her, however, Schneemann observed a strong sense of community and a collective identity that was beginning to emerge among her performers. It is possible that the performers' sense of collective identity and coherency was in fact strengthened by the hostility and resistance emanating from some of the participants and key speakers.

The precise nature of these accusations that Schneemann's artistic practice was "imperialistic" and "individualistic" help contextualize kinetic theatre and provide a historical reason why her performance was misinterpreted by her contemporaries, who felt it contributed neither to the discussion about the Vietnam War nor the demystification of violence. I am not suggesting her performance was completely misread by her contemporaries. Rather, that the criticism surrounding Schneemann's work persuasively suggests that her contribution to the debates about violence deviated from the prevailing discourse at the conference in "unacceptable" and in revealing ways, which provoked an explosive response.[44] Labeling someone an "imperialist" or an "individualist" in the

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43. Ibid, 153.

44. David Gale remembers that a group of militant feminists stormed the Dialectics of Liberation and held the stage for fifteen minutes before walking out: "Towards the end of the two week gathering, it having been eloquently if implicitly, established that the future, rather like the past, was male, the Congress

1960s within the context of the antiwar movement, and the New Left in particular, was not to be taken lightly. Individualism was automatically linked to capitalism, imperialism and Western forms of domination and control. These types of critiques were not unusual in fact they were fairly common. Many radical women in the New Left for example were also accused of being racist and imperialistic when the subject of gender was brought up. Attacks of these kinds were a means of silencing individuals who did not agree with certain points of view. The feminist poet and activist Robin Morgan remembers the backlash and criticism that many people received for opposing some of the Weathermen's strategies in the SDS:

> A new rallying cry of the peace movement is "Bring the War Home." Not many dare to point out the irony in that. The few women and the rare man who argue against this trend are derided as cowards, liberals, or that horror of horrors- bourgeois.[45]

As David Barber observes, in the New Left the subject of gender was considered a betrayal and viewed as a distraction from the more pressing concerns of the draft, Third World oppression and Black liberation.[46] For Barber, racist charges made against women

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stage was invaded by a group of six incensed women. Without prefatory cries or rumblings from the floor, they jumped onto the platform – I can't recall who was on it at the time – seized some hand mics and began to denounce the entire structure and organisation of the Congress. The women were not beautiful – something that, in the Summer of Love, men had come to expect of expressive females, and they had working class accents. They shouted, raged and swore at the audience, giving ground to no-one and, in fact, receiving very little audible reaction from a stunned crowd. The lack of local friction did not deter them in the least for they were, it quickly became apparent, not merely vexed by the maleness of this revolutionary occasion, they took it as absolutely typical of the whole, burgeoning late 60s revolutionary enterprise. The Dialectics of Liberation Congress was just one more kick in the teeth, delivered by superstars in the blissfully unreflective male firmament of hot new radicalism." This account is important because it documents a form of female resistance and criticism of the conference. It is interesting to note that Schneemann did not document this particular occurrence. It may be the case that some of these feminists were also not sympathetic to Schneemann's practice and they may even have been part of the group of students that wanted to shut down her rehearsals. See David Gale, "Memories of the Congress," Dialectics of Liberation, http://www.dialecticsofliberation.com/1967-dialectics/memories/ [accessed June 6, 2012]. This is not the time to discuss the schisms within second-wave feminist circles. However, I thought it would be interesting to point out that Schneemann does not provide an account or a description of the feminist intervention that was described in Gale's memory of the conference.

45. Robin Morgan, *Demon Lover Lover*: *On the Sexuality of Terrorism* (New York: Norton, 1990), 225.

46. This point was made by Juliet Mitchell, a former editor for the *New Left Review*: "in the early sixties, I was on the editorial board of the *New Left Review*. We decided to divide up what we saw as the

were symptomatic of the New Left's white male supremacy and their complete rejection of feminist concerns. Legitimizing the purity of the New Left's politics, these charges paradoxically reinforced a belief system that was dominated by white, middle class men.

While it is likely, given these attitudes towards women in the New Left, likely that Schneemann was criticized for the feminist issues that she explored in her performance, it would be misleading to claim that these issues were understood and fully recognized within a context of gender politics. In a moment, I will specifically examine how Schneemann subverted the rise of militancy within the New Left. However, these political contributions were not formally recognized and understood by many of the male speakers at the conference. This is in part because, Schneemann connected sexuality to a discussion of violence and the Vietnam War. Gender and Sexuality were seen as a form of individualism that had no relationship to the subject of war and violence. Indeed, individualism had no bearing within radical politics and for Carmichael it was a deterrent that hindered liberation. Schneemann was tackling with feminist issues however they could not have been situated within a gender politics because this discourse had not come to fruition at this point. The accusation that Schneemann's performance was imperialistic situates a discussion of gender politics within a context of militancy in the New Left. As American imperialism was understood as the "enemy" there was a concerted effort to fight it all costs and if you were not fighting against imperialism, then you were perceived to be an active part of the problem. Moreover, there was a bourgeoning set of militaristic beliefs within the New Left, which insisted on the notion that imperialism could be fought through direct means of action, protest and violence.

Before situating some of the criticisms that Schneemann received within the context of militancy in the New Left, I will first give a more detailed description of *Round House*. As will be shown, Schneemann's kinetic theatre functions as a form of

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tasks confronting postcolonial Marxism. I said I would take the subject of women. And the other editors objected that it was not a subject." See Tamar Garb and Mignon Nixon. "A conversation with Juliet Mitchell," *October* 113 (Summer 2005), 9-26.

praxis that does not use violence as a means of direct action. Rather, her performance questions how the subject can react to institutional forms of violence when it is simultaneously being integrated within these existing political structures. Her kinetic theatre addresses the rise of militancy within the New Left, by providing sensitizing awareness exercises, which attempt to heal the self within, and not beyond, a culture of violence. In other words, her performance does not liberate the self from violence. This method drastically differed from the emancipatory politics, which were proposed by Carmichael and the more militant strategies advocated by the Weathermen. The performance began when a large wagon was brought onto the stage out of which stumbled some performers. Schneemann, along with Kustow and a few others from the core group, began rummaging through torn piles of paper (which were actually extracts from the speeches) and then spread a mixture of these materials on the stage. At the same time, Schneemann and Kustow read some of the speeches that they had appropriated from the conference, which were addressed as questions to the audience: "Is it possible to develop a separate system in which we can live our lives completely outside of the existing system? Is it possible to develop a separate system completely outside of the existing system?"[47] Though taken directly from one of the conference sessions these extracts were not ascribed to any single author. Despite this anonymity, James Harding suggests that the audience would not have had any trouble identifying these questions as most were pulled from previous panel discussions. Harding also points out that many of the statements Schneemann drew on were taken from the most heated and contentious moments during the conference.

During the live performance of *Round House*, while Schneemann and Kustow were addressing the audience with the questions drawn from the conference panels, Schneemann's antiwar film *Viet Flakes* and her personal and erotic film *Fuses* were projected as slides (fig. 50). While there has been a significant amount of scholarship focusing on the feminist and experimental aesthetics of *Fuses*,[48] the literature rarely

47. Ibid, 155.

48. See Amelia Jones, "Screen eroticisms: exploring female desire in the work of Carolee

addresses how or why Schneemann incorporated this film during her live kinetic theatre performances.[49] Rather than providing an in-depth or linear interpretation of *Fuses* I am interested here in how it functioned within the context of the multimedia performance. *Fuses* was initially seen as a dialogue with, and a critical response to, Stan Brakhage's 1959 film *Window Water Baby Moving*. According to Schnemann, her film was meant to examine the "fuck" which she felt was absent and lacking in Brakhage's film: "I really wanted to see what the fuck is and locate that in terms of a lived sense of equity."[50] The sexual imagery in *Fuses* is explicit: both Schneemann and her partner engage in a number of sexual acts, all of which are depicted in the film and were mostly shot in the domestic setting of Schneemann and Tenney's home. There are no visual references to, or reminders of, work or looming household chores. Labor is not divorced from feminine sexuality and nor is it reduced to a function such as procreation. Rather, Schneemann's provocative and experimental film reflects a merging of art and life; an eroticism that is also detached from the banality of "every-day" chores or even a nine-to-five job. This display of sexuality and her work (by which I am referring to the film itself) are harmoniously intertwined and the highly gendered and social divisions of labor, which often took precedence within the domestic setting of the home in the 1960s, start to unfold in Schneemann's display of eroticism. Her film provides a demystification of sexuality because it does not reduce the female body to an image of procreation. Rather, the film offers an alternative vision of female sexuality that is distinct from its capitalist objectification.

Schneemann and Pipilotti Rist" in *Rethinking Art's Histories Screen/Space The Projected Image in Contemporary Art* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2011), 126-141; Julie Lavigne, "L'art féministe et la traversée de la pornographie: érotisme et intersubjectivité chez Carolee Schneemann, Pipilotti Rist, Annie Sprinkle et Marlene Dumas" (PhD diss, McGill University, 2004); Rachel Middleman, "A New Eros: Sexuality in Women's Art Before The Feminist Art Movement" (PhD diss, University of Southern California, 2010), 41-65; James Boaden, "Father Figure Mountain Man" *The Avant-Garde as Swain: a Critical American Pastoral* (PhD diss, The Courtauld Institute, 2009), 212-247.

49. There is a score for the artwork. See Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 152.

50. Carolee Schneemann, "Notes on Fuses" *Imaging her Erotics*, (Massachusetts: MIT press, 2002), 45.

Schneemann initially wanted to screen *Fuses* within the context of the conference, because she felt it related to the themes of violence and demystification.[51] Having made plans for the screening, however, she was told by Berke, Laing and the lawyer from the conference that they could not come to her defense in the event that she was arrested or sent to jail for breaking obscentiy laws.[52] Ignoring their advice, Schneemann incorporated slides from *Fuses* into her live performance. I will now proceed to consider why Schneemann's performance was not understood within an antiwar context, specifically questioning how far the inclusion of her film *Fuses* led to critics viewing her performance, not as part of the antiwar discourse, but as individualistically concerned with issues of sexuality. In my view, Schneemann's film, and by extension her entire performance, was interpreted, as imperialistic and "self-indulgent" because she examined themes of sexuality and she connected these issues to the subject of the war.

The combination of erotic and sexually explicit imagery from *Fuses*, which was rendered from a female perspective and the violent imagery of the antiwar film *Viet Flakes*, did not fit within the "acceptable" antiwar agenda that was proposed by the theorists at the conference. As I will demonstrate, Schneemann's inclusion of these two films in the live performance in fact challenged some of the theoretical debates that were proposed at the conference by Carmichael, Laing, Cooper and Marcuse. My aim is to highlight the repressed feminist issues that arose in some of the debates and arguments that occurred at the conference. These clashes have not been properly examined within the history of the conference and they are crucial for understanding how the subject of gender was viewed as a negative and "individualist" distraction within the New Left, distinct from the antiwar movement and Third World and black liberation. In the following section I will explore the militarist rhetoric of Carmichael and show how this is distinct from Schneemann's performances.

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51. Ibid, 156.

52. Schneemann, *More than Meat Joy*, 156.

The rise of militancy in the New Left

For Rowbotham and Schneeman, as well as many other women, the 1967 Dialectics of Liberation conference was an important event, which was marked by the presence of Stokley Carmichael and in particular his lecture and participation at various workshops. Rowbothan explains:

> The other thing that affected a lot of women in 1967 was the Dialectics of Liberation [...] there was this conflict between a white middle class woman and Stokely Carmichael who was very sneering about white women. Yes, I was very confused because I assumed as a socialist obviously I supported the Black movement in America and then there was this person who I thought I was supporting was sneering at this person who was actually like me [...] and lots of women had said that moment was really important to them.[53]

Rowbotham was troubled by Carmichael's response, which was directed at a question posed by a white middle class woman. Her comparison of black suffrage, Third World oppression, and the unequal treatment of women in general was mocked and ridiculed. Within the context of the New Left, Carmichael's reaction was not necessarily out of ordinary: many women, including militant women activists within the New Left, were attacked for being racist if they compared or made connections between women's oppression, black oppression and the marginalized subjects of the Third World.[54] Rowbotham she wanted to understand why women were not included in a discussion about liberation and she went back to the workshops in an effort to try and understand the political reasons for this exclusion: "I was very troubled I went back the next day because I was confused because I was troubled by it and I wanted to understand the politics." The workshop did not resolve the concerns she had. Like Rowbotham, Schneemann, also remembers Carmichael's presence and his participation at the conference. She writes:

> There was the last minute arrival of Stokley Carmichael, pinpointing the alienation of London's black community from the congress itself. Since at

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53. Rowbotham, interview.

54. Morgan, *The Demon Lover*: *On the Sexuality of Terrorism*, 222.

> that time there were no "feminist issues" as such, my very participation was something of a vague anomaly. The conventions of intellectual address presume a man's point of view. I would not presume to present a woman's point of view.[55]

Schneemann realized that her participation in and contribution to the Dialectics of Liberation would not have the same validity as Carmichael's or any of the other male speakers for that matter. This was mainly due to the fact that feminist concerns, such as unequal pay, sexism, rape, childcare and poverty, were "individual" concerns that were deemed petty and bourgeois.[56] By contrast, issues such as the draft and Black and Third World liberation were given more attention because they were understood as universal and more urgent problems.

Harding explains that Schneemann's performance at the conference was mistrusted because her art was seen as an irrational medium in a context in which greater importance was placed on theory, speech and text.[57] For Harding, these criticisms were rooted within an obvious gender bias. Yet this bias only partially explains Schneemann's marginalized position. His analysis does not account for the fact that there were also prominent debates within the New Left, which challenged the political effectiveness and the limits of theory and language.[58] Varon observes that the SDS and the Weathermen in particular, endlessly debated the relative merits of theory verses political action. For many in these groups, language and theoretical debates were considered bourgeois and less assertive and more militant groups within the SDS argued that the use of one's body in protest was a public intervention that had more political currency. As we have seen, even Berke privately confided to Schneemann that her work made him see that "the body

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55. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 156.

56. Morgan, *The Demon Lover*: *On the Sexuality of Terrorism*, 222.

57. Harding, *Cutting Performances Collage Events, Feminist Artists, and the American Avant-Garde*, 133.

58. Varon, *Bringing the War Home,* 90.

speaks louder than the word."[59] In many ways, performance art was understood by Berke as a form of direct action and therefore is important to note that these debates were going on at the same time as the Dialectics of Liberation. On the one hand, performance art was recognized as an important form of political resistance; yet on the other, Schneemann's strategies were considered "individualistic" and they were not formally recognized as being part of these antiwar strategies. Thus, rather than connoting a simple gender bias, as Harding suggests, the misunderstanding and mistrust that surrounded Schneemann's performance should be understood in light of the complex, and often contradictory, strands of thought and action within the antiwar movement of the period.

In what follows I will address Carmichael's political theories of liberation (which in many ways rejected the effectiveness of theory and language) and then proceed to examine how Weathermen appropriated his ideas for militant forms of action such as the "Days of Rage" protest. In order to address this historical moment within the New Left, I will be making a slight detour from Schneemann. However, it is important to bear in mind that both Schneemann and Carmichael were Americans that were visiting the UK for the purpose of the conference. In other words, their context and awareness of violence was predominantly rooted within an American form of antiwar activism and Black liberation. Before turning to a closer examination of how Schneemann's performance subverted the rise of militancy in the New Left, I will briefly unpack Carmichael's theories of liberation and examine how they were appropriated by the militant faction within the SDS for the purposes of pursuing a political form of direct action.

According to Carmichael, individualism was a highly problematic construct. Unlike Laing, he was not interested in examining how a subject was constituted from the family, the institution and larger political and social structures, arguing that psychology and antipsychiatry had no place in the revolution or Black liberation unless it was aimed at examining white violence:

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59. Joseph Berke writing to Carolee Schneemann, *Corresponding Course*, 103

> Now since I've been at the Congress from Saturday I've been very confused, because I am not a psychologist or a psychiatrist. I'm a political activist and I don't deal with the individual. I think it's a cop out when people talk about the individual. What we're talking about around the US today, and I believe around the Third World, is the system of international white supremacy coupled with international capitalism. And we're out to smash that system. And people who see themselves as part of that system are going to be smashed with it- or we're going to be smashed.[60]

Calling on white liberals to become more radical, Carmichael advocated the use of violence as a means of self-preservation and defense. For example, Carmichael believed the SDS movement in the United States was overpopulated with non-violent white middle-class liberals and would never fully incorporate what he called the "black proletariat."[61] In order to do this, he argued, white western liberals would have to be willing to take up arms and join the side of the oppressed African Americans in the United States and the Third World:

> We are fighting a political warfare. Politics is war without violence. The white West will make the decision on how they want the political war to be fought. We are not any longer going to bow our heads to the white man. If he touches one black man in the US, he is going to go to war with every black man in the US.[62]

Carmichael not only proposed violence as a solution, but also argued that white liberals would have to make a choice between fighting on the side of the politically oppressed or remaining passive, which, for Carmichael, was a systemic form of violence. Also touching on the much-discussed issue of white guilt, Carmichael proposed that in order to effectively deal with this problem white liberals had to prove their alliance through violent forms of direct action.

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60. Stokely Carmichael "Black Power" in in *Dialectics of Liberation* (Baltimore: Penguin Press, 1968), 151.

61. Ibid, 173.

62. Ibid.,173.

Carmichael's theories were adopted and appropriated by many white radicals, and in particular within the American New Left. Indeed, "white-guilt" and privilege was seen as a negative strain from which the self had to be liberated. By the mid to late 1960s, militancy had become an important political strategy in the American New Left and particularly within the SDS. It seemed to offer both an authentic experience of the self and a way to expel some of the "white guilt," which Carmichael identified. This meant that the body came to be perceived as a perfect medium and vehicle with which to carry out and perform acts of liberation. On the one hand, violence offered a subjective experience of the self that aimed to liberate it from external and oppressive power structures; yet on the other hand, it also promised to free the self from "internal" psychic constraints. For the Weathermen In particular, Carmichael's brand of militant action and violence offered what I term as a "politics of experience" that was understood as more radical, direct and less passive.

In June of 1968, the Weathermen, who had become increasingly disillusioned with its "liberal tactics"[63] officially took control of the SDS. [64] For the Weathermen, the term "liberal" itself was negatively associated with "white-skin" privilege and a form of pacifism and so they took a radical approach to activism in order to counter their privilege. The Weathermen dispersed into several affinity groups throughout the country in places such as Flint, Pittsburgh and Iowa.[65] The idea was based on the notion of an authentic revolutionary collective that would put theory into practice by means of living, eating, and working together. By day, the Weatherman would train extensively in martial arts and recruit working-class youths to join the revolution, while at night the group would endure endless hours of "gut checks" and "criticism-self-criticism" exercises.[66] These self- criticism awareness exercises were based on the belief that bourgeoisie,

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63. Varon, *Bringing the War Home*, 90

64. Ibid, 90.

65. Mark Rudd, *My Life With SDS: The Weathermen Underground*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 161-168.

66. Ibid, 161.

individualistic, white-skin privilege and selfish tendencies needed to be confronted head on so they could be liberated and removed from the self. As monogamy was strictly prohibited in the group, partners were split up and group sex was enforced and any sign of an opposition to these practices was considered to be weakness and lack of one's commitment to the revolution.[67] These sessions were intended to prepare the Weathermen for militant forms of direct action.

The protest titled the "Days of Rage: Bringing the War Home" was led by prominent members of the Weathermen in Chicago from October 8-11, 1969 (fig. 48) and was designed to confront white Americans with their white skin privilege. Scholars such as Dan Berger and Varon agree that this particular antiwar event, unlike any other before, was a deliberate "street fight."[68] Protesters came dressed in steel-toe boots, helmets and were fully armed with knives and baseball bats, ready to take on the Chicago cops.[69] Unlike previous antiwar marches, the "Days of Rage" protest was organized as a series of direct actions involving the Chicago police, the Chicago Draft board office and private property such as homes, cars and commercial retail shops, all of which were seen as symbols of American capitalism. There were over 800 Weathermen participants and nearly 280 arrests. Their slogan, "Bringing the War Home", referred to a central ideological belief of the Weathermen: that Americans needed to confront their passivity and realize that it was a form of systemic violence linked to war abroad. In other words, the Vietnam War had to be confronted and addressed in America itself, rather than through the distanced and mediated representation of the television set and the mass media.

Militancy was a topic that Schneemannn took quite seriously. She responded to this crisis within the New Left by establishing strategic methods within her kinetic

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67. Ibid, 168.

68. Dan Berger, *Outlaws of America The Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity* (Oakland: AK press, 2006), 114.

69. Ibid., 114.

theatre that aimed to both address and shift one's internalized feelings and attitudes regarding the Vietnam War. For Schneemann, guilt and anger blocked the collective potential of the group and prevented a critical consciousness that was crucial to maintaining opposition to the war. In other words, guilt had to be addressed, managed and controlled, rather than used as the means for direct action and protest. Schneemann did not shy away from the subject of violence. Indeed, her kinetic theatre performances, and *Round House* in particular, were meant to function as ritual that could heal the self, through a communal form of interaction:

Violence is not always destructive. Destructiveness is essential to creation. The central imagery of Kinetic Theatre works during 1966-68 was built around Vietnam atrocity photographs. It was essential that my anger, outrage, fury and sorrow become concretized. The violence of the performance and the destructiveness of the audiences [sic] engagement with the nourishment assumed a ritual transgression and the permission for us to communally discover share unleash the repression and distortion of our most basic perception. The criminality of the war and the need to subvert and make clear its relentless persistence […].[70]

This quote inevitably reflects on many of Schneemann kinetic theatre performances, such as *Snows*, *Illinois Central* and *Round House* , which were based on mass-produced atrocity photographs from the Vietnam War. For Schneemann, then, violence has a creative potential, which can be used in art practice. First, this violence had to be "concretized"[71] and made evident, second, it had to be countered and to some extent controlled by the performers and audience. Of importance here is that Schneemann recognized the impact that media had on her viewers and, crucially, the need to subvert it. However, though she too believed in "bringing the war home", Schneemann's performances differed to the militant strategies in the New Left because they provided a

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70. Carolee Schneemann, "Notes on Motions and Effects, 1968" Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no, 9500001, box 68, folder, 3.

71. Carolee Schneemann, "Notes on Motions and Effects, 1968."

critical distance, which was activated by the social immediacy of the performers and audiences' actions. In *Round House* , some of the core performers wrap each other in foil, sling mud at one another and apply white paint to each other's faces. These techniques are used as a process of healing the self and a means to enhance and develop a sense of intimacy and interpersonal exchange. In addition, such actions are meant to expand the senses, while at the same time Schneemann's diverse use of media (such as slides from *Viet Flakes* and *Fuses*) creates a corporeal dislocation. Such contrasting images of intimacy and violence also highlight the differences between the immediate contact that is exchanged by the performers on stage and the projected bodies, which are displayed in the slides. Moreover, these media juxtapositions, in addition to the performers actions on stage, uncover a range of personal and cultural taboos:

> I work with untrained people and various waste materials to realize images, which range from the banal to the fantastic- images which dislocate, disassociate, compound and engage our senses to expand into unknown and unpredictable relationships. I'm after an immediate, sensuous environment on which a shifting scale of tactile, plastic, physical encounters can be realized. The nature of these encounters, while personal to me, exposes and confronts a social range of current cultural taboos and repressive conventions. [72]

Her use of media reveals a disconnection between the violence and eroticism displayed on screen and the particular kinds of emotions that Schneemann was trying to solicit in her audience and the performers. However, this is not to suggest that the immediacy exchanged by the performers on stage is unified and authentic in comparison with the media images shown. In conjunction with the live performance, the media is used as a healing dimension expanding the senses and momentarily dislocating the self from cultural taboos, repressed and buried in the body and the psyche.

Schneemann's use of choreography, media and sensitizing exercises were a form of praxis that sought to address the subject of violence within the New Left. However,

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72. Carolee Schneemann quoted in"Carolee Schneemann: Image As Process," *Creative Camera* no. 76 (October 1970): 304.

these strategies do not approach violence either in a straightforward or a symbolic way. Rather, her multiple and layered use of media and choreography in *Round House* provides a layer of mediation. Schneemann's use of *Fuses* in her performance demonstrates an alternative to militarism located in the body. Amelia Jones notes that although the film "is in no way directly a commentary on Vietnam, its visceral approach to embodiment clearly parallels Schneemann's strategic attempt in her other projects to unveil the political and military violence perpetrated by US troops abroad."[73] She locates an antiwar aesthetic in Schneemann's film, which she argues is "an attempt to redeem the flesh through an eroticism that seeks to transcend the violence of nations through the personal euphoria of the organism."[74] For Jones, Schneemann activates the body erotically and this is "meant to reclaim its capacity for positive union over its tendency to wreak bloody havoc."[75] According to Jones, Schneemann's emphasis on erotic embodiment is not coincidental. Rather, it provides a critical way to reclaim the body in a "positive union," which acts as a counter to the era of imperialist invasion.[76]

While I agree with Jones that contrary to contemporary readings, *Fuses* articulates an antiwar aesthetic, in my view, Schneemann's performance, and the use of *Fuses* and *Viet Flakes,* reflects a far more fragmented and displaced body. This becomes clearer when considering her use of choreography, performers, props and media. The utopian possibility of bodily unification, which is initially presented in *Fuses*, is disrupted not only by the context of the war, but also by the performers' movements and interactions. More importantly, there is skepticism in her use of media; it is not enough to show images of Eros and violence. In a way Schneemann, attempts to reclaim the body

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73. Jones, "Screen eroticisms: exploring female desire in the work of Carolee Schneemann and Pipilotti Rist" 130.

74. Ibid, 130.

75. Ibid, 130.

76. Ibid, 130.

from the effects of media desensitization, through a direct and communal interaction that is activated by her performers.

Round House explores and links themes of sexuality and the violence of the Vietnam War. Framed within this context, *Fuses* acquires a slightly different set of significations, which are further nuanced by the particular way in which *Fuses* was presented during *Round House* . The film was projected as a series of slides that corresponded and related to one another as well as to the live performance. For example, graphic atrocity images from *Viet Flakes* and erotic images from *Fuses* were projected simultaneously during the live performance. These visual juxtapositions challenge a utopian and stable representation of Eros and the body and begin to answer the anonymous questions which were presented to the audience by Schneemann and Kustow: "Is it possible to develop a separate system in which we can live our lives completely outside of the existing system?" [77] This question is significant because it refers to the various ways in which liberation and certain modes of resistance were theorized and debated at the conference. When framed and posed within the context of the multimedia event, it becomes clear that Schneemann challenges this statement and encourages her audience to think critically about the political demands that would be required to "live completely outside of the system." What kind of political reality would this new system be and would it be any less violent than the current one? Kinetic theatre is by no means outside of the system; it uses the language and rhetoric of the antiwar movement. However, her use of media and subject matter extends from within a culture of violence and it does not provide an escape or emancipation from the horrors of the Vietnam War. Yet, at the same time Schneemann's strategies differ from the nihilistic and militaristic ideologies that were circulating in the New Left. Indeed, her performance encouraged a form of direct action. However, this participatory element was not defined in strict ideological terms. Rather, her use of media and sensitizing awareness exercises were meant to facilitate a collective exchange, acknowledging guilt and violence yet at the

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77. Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*, 155.

same time it does not provide a psychic retreat or liberation from systematic forms of violence.

Kinetic theatre reveals how some of the New Left's claims for liberation are contradictory. Indeed, her performance does not try to liberate the self from guilt and violence. Rather, her work sheds light on the fact that "guilt" can be misrepresented and legitimized in order to secure political forms of violence and direct action.

Conclusion

The combination of Schneemann's antiwar film *Viet Flakes* and the erotic, personal imagery from *Fuses* created a crisis in the viewer's identification with her work. How was a viewer versed in the theoretical arguments that were put forward by Laing, Carmichael and Marcuse supposed to respond to these images? Her performance does not fit in within the acceptable framework of the New Left's position on the Vietnam War and therefore it was not considered to be an acceptable form of political art. Moreover, her contributions to a discussion of violence and militancy were completely ignored. The dualities that Schneemann examined within her kinetic theatre such as the combination of sexuality and violent images from the Vietnam War were excluded from the debates at the conference. Indeed, many participants and seminal speakers from the conference criticized her work for mixing personal issues with those relating to the Vietnam War. The subjects of gender and sexuality were seen as a distraction and self indulgent, with no place within radical politics and art. Paradoxically, while gender was viewed as a non-subject that had no place within the New Left, at the same-time gender politics dominated the conference. This exclusion of gender issues is perplexing considering that one of the main objectives at the conference was to examine all levels of violence especially the invisibility of it within the framework of macro and micro contexts.

Schneemann's performance examined the relationships between the personal and the political, the micro and the macro well before the second-wave feminist movement. The second-wave feminist movement made it not only possible but also acceptable to discuss the subject of gender and sexism and it was this framework that led Schneemann

and many other feminist artists and activists to reconsider their marginalized position within the New Left in the 1960s. I have demonstrated the importance of examining the repressive structure and context of the 1960s antiwar movement, and the Dialectics of Liberation in particular, which made it virtually impossible to discuss gender and violence, without being on the receiving end of it. Schneemann's performance exposed this gender bias and it offered an alternative to the militaristic approach of the New Left which was inherently sexist.

Conclusion

Warped perspectives: looking back to look ahead

In 1970, Schneemann collaborated with the British filmmaker John Lifton to create an *Electronic Activation Room*. This work was exhibited at the Köln Museum for the happenings and Fluxus Retrospective. In her initial proposal for the performance Schneemann provided a detailed account of a space called the "environmental room," which consisted of copious slides and films documenting some, but not all, of her major 1960s kinetic theatre works: *Meat Joy* (1963), *Eye/Body* (1962-1963), *Water/Light/Water/ Needle* (1966) and *Snows* (1967).[1] Lifton created an electronic circuitry unit that responded to the viewer's location, temperature and movement by automatically activating audio and visual material that would be projected, reflected, distorted and refracted around a plastic dome. Moreover, the photographic documentation of her past kinetic theatre performances were physically distorted, fragmented and superimposed depending on the where the viewer was standing. Unlike Schneemann's previous kinetic theatre performance, in this work there were no live performers or audience. Rather, the individual spectator entirely controlled the work. Their presence activated the technology which displayed photographic and film images of Schneemann's kinetic theatre as if it were entirely historicized; a part of the archive.

The viewer's fragmented position within this display can be seen as a metaphor for writing about Schnemann's kinetic theatre, a process which is hampered by the critical view that performance art is only alive "in the present."[2] This is something that performance art scholars such as Rebecca Schneider, Amelia Jones, Jane Blocker and

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1. For more information on this proposal see Carolee Schnemann, *More than Meat Joy: Performance Works and Selected Writings*, (New York: Documentex, 1979), 203. I have not examined *Water/Light/Water/Needle* and there are some other kinetic theatre works which I have written about that not mentioned in this performance.

2. Peggy Phelan, Unmarked: *The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 146.

Peggy Phelan address in varying ways.[3] In particular, Phelan notes that the radical interventions of performance art do not support an economy of the archive:

> Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance's being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance. [4]

For Phelan, documents and the archive betray the authenticity of performance art because the performance exists only in a specific time and space. This ephemerality, Phelan explains, is the reason why performance art refuses to participate and comply with the laws of economic reproduction. There is something inevitably lost which cannot be retrieved when writing about performances that exist in the past. Like previous scholars, I have had to construct an interpretation of Schneemann's works, which, at times, has been limited to archival fragments: scores, films and photographic stills. However, I have also drawn on a broad and rich range of archival material, photographic documents, newly-edited films, correspondence, oral history interviews and primary and secondary accounts of Schneemann's kinetic theatre, none of which had previously been studied in the feminist and performance art scholarship.

My aim, then, has not been to provide a totalizing view of Schneemann's performances, but to build on analysis from existing feminist art history, social art history and performance art scholarship on Schneemann, by means of these multiple sources. Existing methodologies acknowledge that the archive is a source of limited knowledge

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3. Art historians and critics observe the ephemerality of performance art and in many ways these theorists have used this concept to further methodological questions about the nature of the discipline. See Rebecca Schneider, "Archives Performance Remains," *Performance Research* 6:2 (2001), 106; Peggy Phelan, Unmarked: *The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 146; Amelia Jones, "Presence" in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Document" *Art Journal* Vol. 56, No. 4 (1997); 11; Jane Blocker, "Ambivalent Entertainments: James Luna, Performance and the Archive," *Grey Room* 37, Fall (2009), 52-77.

4. Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, 146.

that does not reveal a singular "truth" about Schneemann's works. [5] Moreover, feminist art history demonstrates that women's accounts and voices have often been excluded from dominant narratives, and this is precisely because their testimonies are often eclipsed from historical records. By turning to Schneemann's archive, I have not rejected critical theory, but rather sought to situate Schneemann's kinetic theatre within an awareness of 1960s artistic traditions, gender politics and the hegemonic narratives that are produced as a result of these exclusions. This unusual performance *Electronic Activation Environment* thus encapsulates the key questions that have been addressed in this thesis: what was Schneemann's kinetic theatre? what was its relationship to the counterculture? how did it emerge? And, lastly, why did it disappear?

These questions have been addressed in the preceding chapters, which demonstrate that to position Schneemann's kinetic theatre within a broader understanding of feminist and postwar art does not provide a straightforward narrative of history. In re-examining Schneemann's position within the context of feminism, the antiwar movement and anti-psychiatry, my aim was not to legitimize her work through male artists and theorists. Rather, these performances provided an internal critique and in-depth analysis of gender, violence and power within the counterculture long before the discourse of identity politics or the second-wave feminist movement were established. Indeed, Schneemann's attentiveness to these subjects constituted a valuable critique of the countercultural movement

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5. I am referring to the problem of biography and artistic intention. These issues were a concern for art historians such as Fred Orton, J.R.R Christie and Griselda Pollock. However, both Orton and Pollock explain that the solution is not to disregard artistic intention altogether. It is only problematic when these interpretations are used to create a fixed narrative of an artist's work within art history. See J. R.R. Christie and Fred Orton, "Writing on a text of the Life" in *Avant-gardes and partisans Reviewed* ed Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1996), 295-314; Griselda Pollock and Fred Orton, "Rooted in the Earth: A Van Gogh primer" in *Avant-gardes and partisans Review* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1996), 3-50; Griselda Pollock, "Artists Mythologies And Media Genius, Madness and Art History," *Screen* 21 (30) 1980, 57-96. Following Pollock and Orton, I also incorporate artistic intention, statement and biography in my analysis however this does not determine or reveal the "truth" of Schneemann's work. See Chapter One for a discussion of artistic persona, biography and intention.

Kinetic theatre is a particular form of art that resonates with the aesthetics, values, ideals and beliefs of the 1960s. Indeed, much of the 1960s criticism of Schneemann's works categorized kinetic theatre as a new form of multimedia that, like Allan Kaprow's happenings, broke away from the single medium of painting and turned to theatre, dance, film, technology, media and performance art, in order to account for the technological and aesthetics shifts that took place in the New York avant-garde. In order to avoid imposing a contemporary understanding on Schneemann's performances, I have been attentive to these modes of cultural production of the 1960s. In other words, I set out to examine the initial art criticism on kinetic theatre, which has been lost within current art history and performance studies criticism. Although the term "kinetic theatre" was recognized and in common currency by the 1960s, my intention has not been to simply reassert an original definition of kinetic theatre, or one given by the artist herself. Rather, my analysis examined this term in order to understand how and why these works were understood as a new form of 1960s art. While these historical descriptions of kinetic theatre provide insight into the development of her performances, they do not provide an in-depth and critical analysis of the networks and affiliations that Schneemann had within the counterculture, nor do they address the collaborations she had with male artists such as Stan Brakhage.

Art historians and feminist critics have focused almost exclusively on the agency and the role of Schneemann's body in her work. As I have argued throughout this thesis, while these interpretations have undoubtedly made a vital contribution to the history of feminist art and performance studies, an exclusive focus on Schneemann's body risks privileging this interpretation as the truth. By contrast, in examining the body within the specific context of the 1960s, this study has sought to determine the political and aesthetic use of Schneemann's group choreography within her kinetic theatre. More specifically, I have addressed how notions of the individual and the self were redefined in relation to theories of liberation, collectivity and antipsychiatry. The body in Schneemann's kinetic theatre corresponds to the rise of interest in ideas of transcendence, collectivity and liberation in the 1960s. Exploring these ideas from a critical distance, Schneemann's performances never reconciled liberation in the body, the group or the

performance. Moreover, these differences in attitudes about liberation and the body are pertinent because they help us consider issues of sexual and gender difference within the counterculture during the period, establishing a feminist perspective that challenges a mythic narrative of the counterculture and the 1960s.

This research charts an exciting new direction of scholarship on Schneemann and, more broadly, it addresses the discourse on mid-twentieth century performance art and feminist art history. I have demonstrated that Schneemann was working in collaboration with male artists such as Stan Brakhage and that her kinetic theatre was politically situated within the antiwar movement and the politics of antipsychiatry and the New Left. As we saw in Chapter Two, the Vietnam War is a binding element that connects Schneemann's works to this history: the paranoid and psychological affects of the televised representation of the Vietnam War relate both to Schneemann's kinetic theatre and Brakhage's aesthetics. This resulted in a form of "paranoid aesthetics" that sheds light on a parallel investigation of the mind that was occurring simultaneously in psychiatry. The analysis of Schneemann's performances *Snows*, *Illinois Central* and Brakhage's film *23rd Psalm Branch* in Chapter Two substantially broadens the critical discussion about media desensitization and Cold War psychiatry by demonstrating how Schneemann's kinetic theatre and Brakhage's aesthetics constituted a resistance to the desensitizing techniques of war and psychiatry.

The collective body is performed in *Meat Joy*. Unlike popular theories of antipsychiatry, which rejected the nuclear structure of the family, liberation is not achieved through the individual or the body alone in Schneemann's performance. Rather, sexual difference is exposed in *Meat Joy* as violent structural category - a hangover from the normative structure of the family - which alienates but also binds her performers together. I have argued in Chapter Three that kinetic theatre offers a new form of interpersonal communication that is based on an interconnectivity, which crucially acknowledges gender and sexual difference. This approach is radically different to the methods of antipsychiatry and the performance work of The Living Theatre, a difference which has been largely overlooked in the work of contemporary scholars.

As I have demonstrated in Chapter Four kinetic theatre makes a unique contribution to the exploration of violence within the New Left. In her use of the group choreography, Schneemann's works exposed the normative masculine grounding of concepts of alienation and liberation within the New Left. Unlike the militant theories in the New Left and antipsychiatry, Schneemann did not privilege the medium of the body as a source of liberation or direct action. Rather, her performances employed diverse forms of media and choreography in order to expose how the body and identity do not exist outside culture, but are always constructed and situated in relation to surrounding environments. Thus, it is important to rethink the various ways in which feminist art could be linked to antiwar debates. By situating Schneemann's work of the 1960s within the context of the antiwar, antipsychiatry and the politics of the New Left, this research brings a new, and previously neglected, perspective on her work.

Ultimately, an examination of Schneemann's intricate network and collaborative associations in the 1960s, and the particular kinds of artistic interventions that she made within the antiwar movement, permits a more expansive understanding of the counterculture. Moving beyond a mythic narrative of the 1960s, this study has provided a broader approach to Schneemann's kinetic theatre by including a diverse set of practices within the counterculture, which have previously not been studied. Importantly, however, this approach does not simply situate Schneemann's performances within a lost narrative of 1960s art. Rather, my investigation has paid attention to a particular view of history, which challenges contemporary assumptions and classifications about the body, feminist art and antiwar art. If we turn to the art of the 1960s in a way that is not totalizing, but more accommodating for artists and artworks that do not "fit" within the dominant narratives of art history, then we might see how Schneemann's works continue to problematize and challenge contemporary assumptions about the past and even the future.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Carolee Schneemann, *Eye/Body 36 Transformative Actions*, 1962-1963, photograph taken by Erró (source; Getty Research Institute).

Figure 2: Carolee Schneemann, *Eye/Body 36 Transformative Actions*, 1962-1963, photograph of two Schneemann with two snakes taken by Erró (source; Getty Research Institute).

Figure 3: Carolee Schneemann, *Eye/Body 36 Transformative Actions*, 1962-1963, inside *Colorado House* photograph taken by Erró (source; Getty Research Institute).

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Figure 14: Carolee Schneemann, *Eye/Body*, 1962-1963. Posing with Ying and Yang. photograph taken by Erró (source; Getty Research Institute).

Figure 15: Carolee Schneemann, *Eye/Body*, 1962-1963. Photograph of Schneemann with two snakes taken by Erró (source; Getty Research Institute).

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Figure 17: Carolee Schneemann, *Fur Wheel* 1962, construction on lamp shade base: fur, tin cans, mirrors, glass, oil paint, mounted on turning wheel, (19 x19 x 11.5').

Figure 18: Stan Brakhage, *Dog Star Man,* (1961-1963), detail from part II.

Figure 19: Carolee Schneemann, *Eye/Body* detail with *Ice Box*, 1962. Photograph taken by Erró (source; Getty Research Institute).

Figure 19: Carolee Schneemann, *Eye/Body* detail with *Ice Box*, 1962-1963. Photograph taken by Erró (source Getty Research Institute).

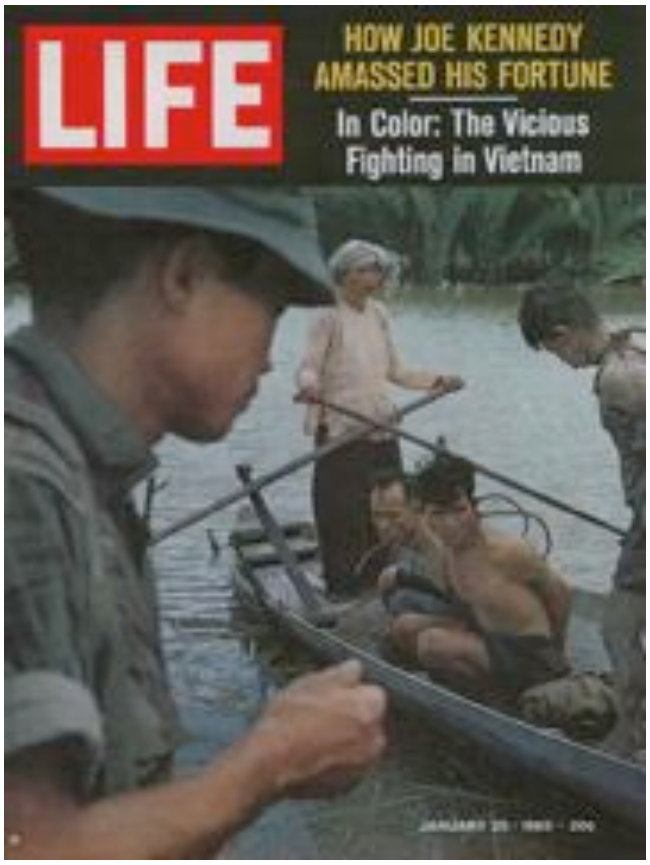

Figure 20: *Life Magazine*, January 25, 1963, cover.

Figure 21: Carolee Schneemann, *Viet Flakes*, 1965 (film still).

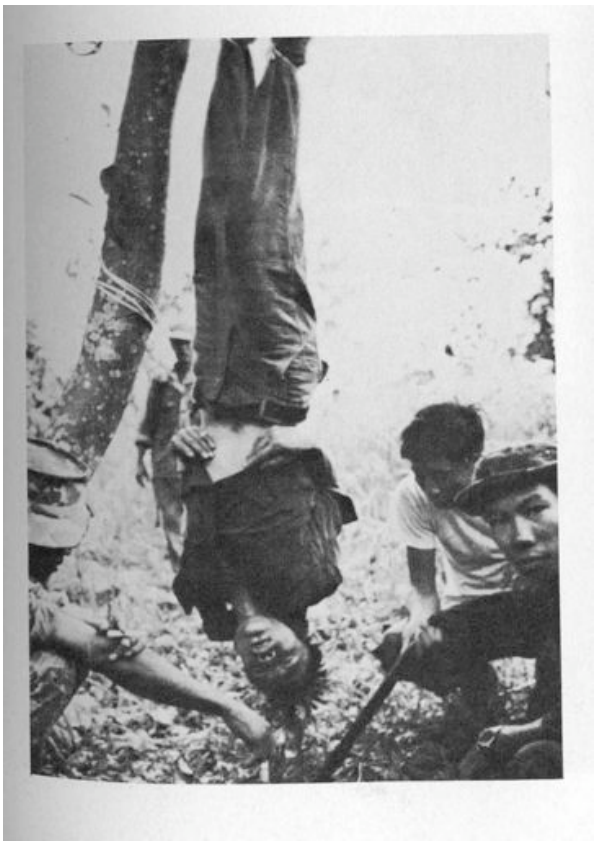

Figure 22: Carolee Schneemann, *Viet Flakes*, 1965 (film still).

Figure 23: Carolee Schneemann, *Snows*, 1967 (Carolee Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*).

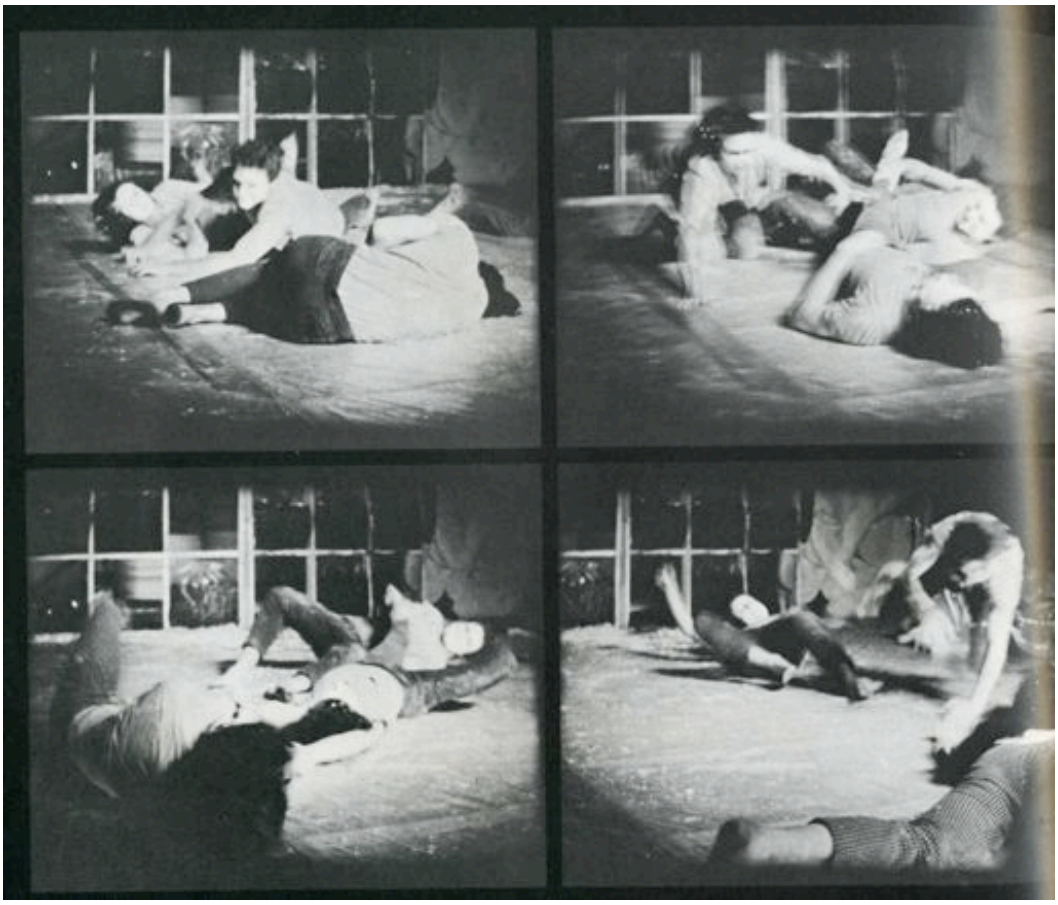

Figure 24: Carolee Schneemann, *Snows*, 1967 (Carolee Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*).

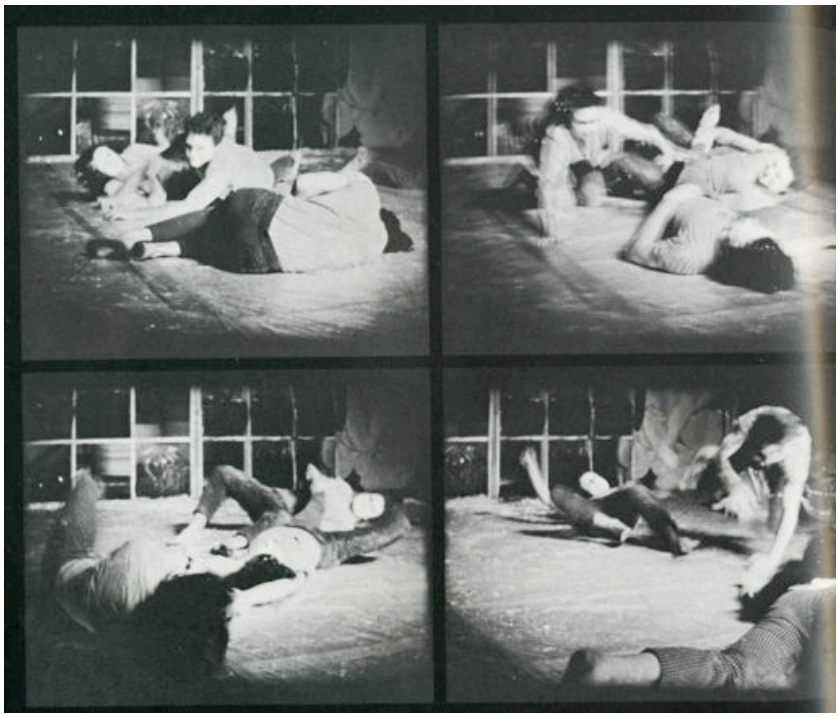

Figure 25, Carolee Schneemann, *Snows*, 1967 (Carolee Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*).

Figure 26: Carolee Schneemann, *Snows*, 1967 (Carolee Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*).

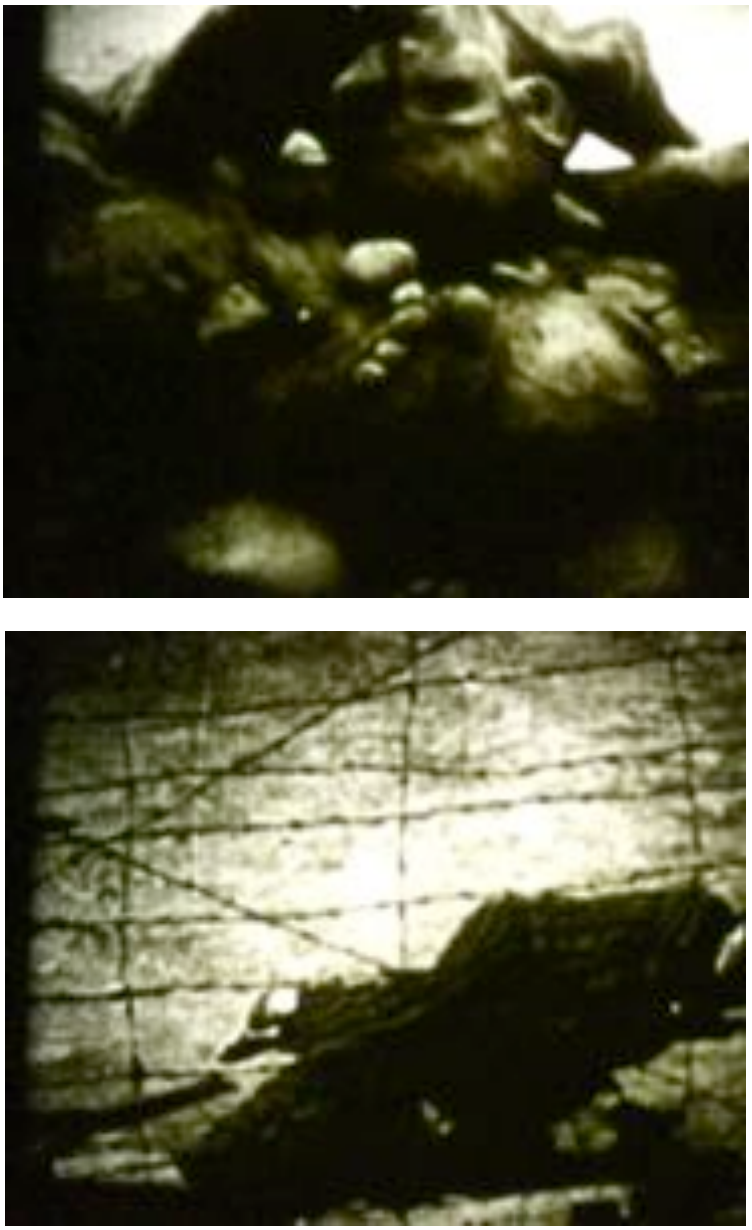

Figure 27: Stan Brakhage, *23rd Psalm Branch*, 1966-78 (film stills)

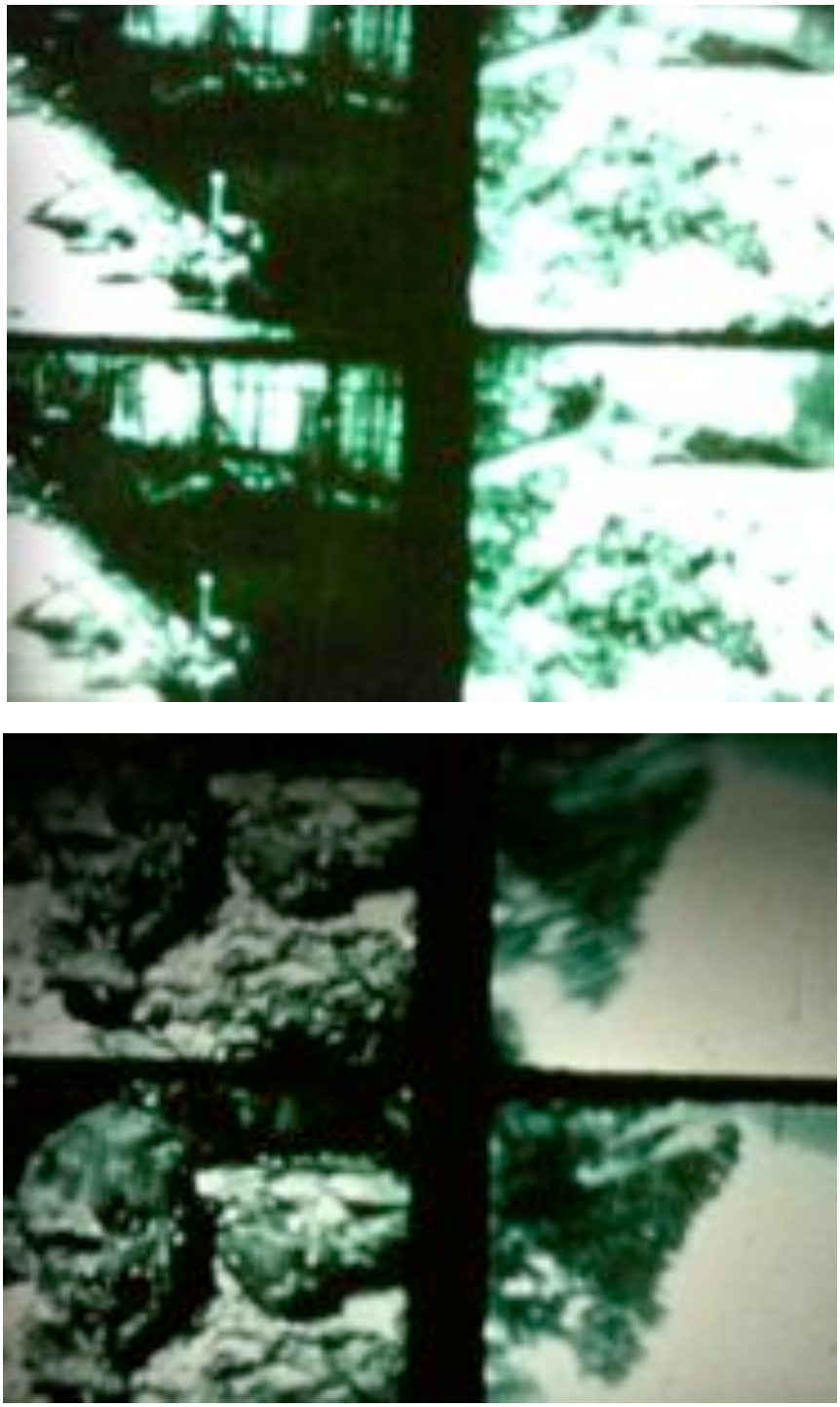

Figure 28: Stan Brakhage, *23rd Psalm Branch*, 1966-78 (film stills).

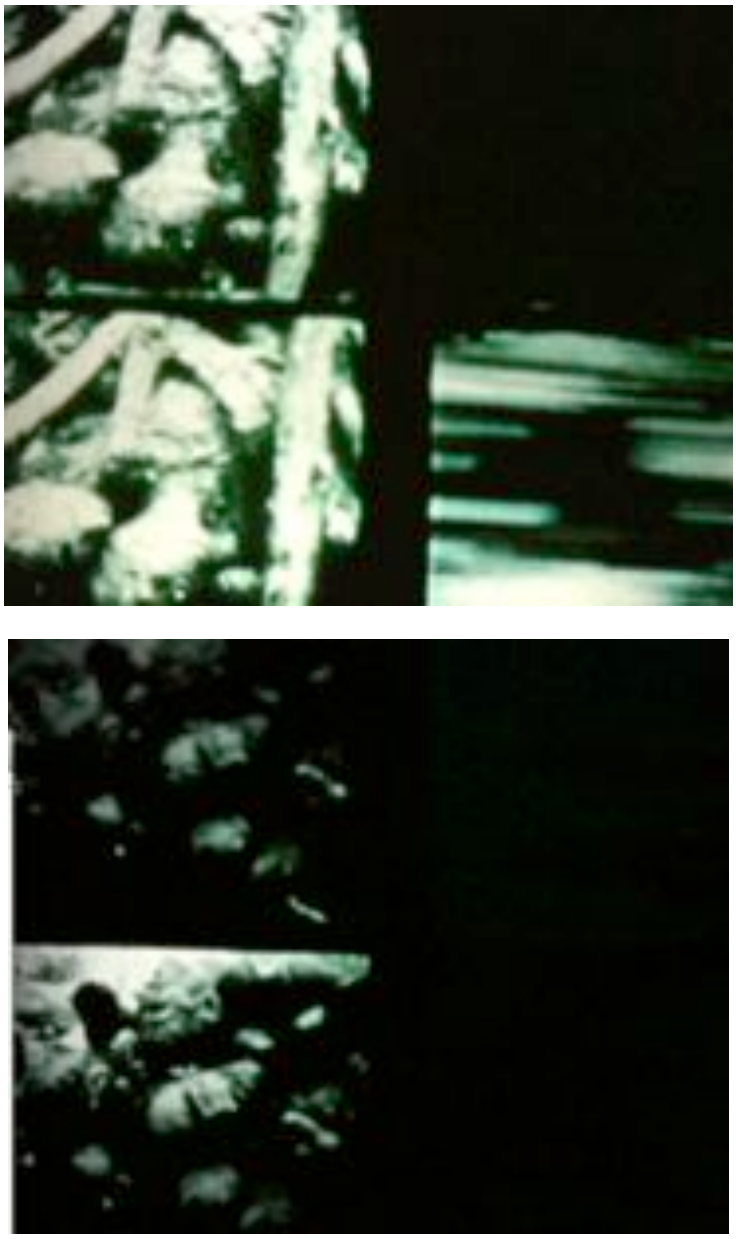

Figure 29: Stan Brakhage, *23rd Psalm Branch*, 1966-78 (film still).

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FIGURE 2–7. This experimental condition was specifically designed for short-term studies (4 hours or less) in which the subjects were not fed or toileted during isolation and movement restrictions were severe. The room was air-conditioned, white noise was used as a masking sound, and the subjects wore translucent eye coverings which diffused light from a bank of fluorescent bulbs. The subject's chair faced the fluorescent lights during the course of the experiment.

Source: Reprinted by permission from an unpublished photograph supplied by P. Solomon, Harvard Medical School.

Figure 30: Dr. Donald O. Hebb's experiment constructed at McGill University in Montreal, to study the effects of prolonged sensory deprivation.

Figure 31: Carolee Schneemann, *Illinois Central*, 1968. (source; Getty Research Institute).

Figure 32: Carolee Schneemann, *Illinois Central*, 1968 (source; Getty Research Institute).

Figure 33: Carolee Schneemann, *Illinois Central*, 1968 (source; Getty Research Institute).

Figure 34: Carolee Schneemann, *Illinois Central*, 1968 (source; Getty Research Institute).

Figure 35: Carolee Schneemann, *Meat Joy*, 1964 (Carolee Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy*).

Figure 36: Carolee Schneemann, *Meat Joy*, 1964 (source; Getty Research Institute).

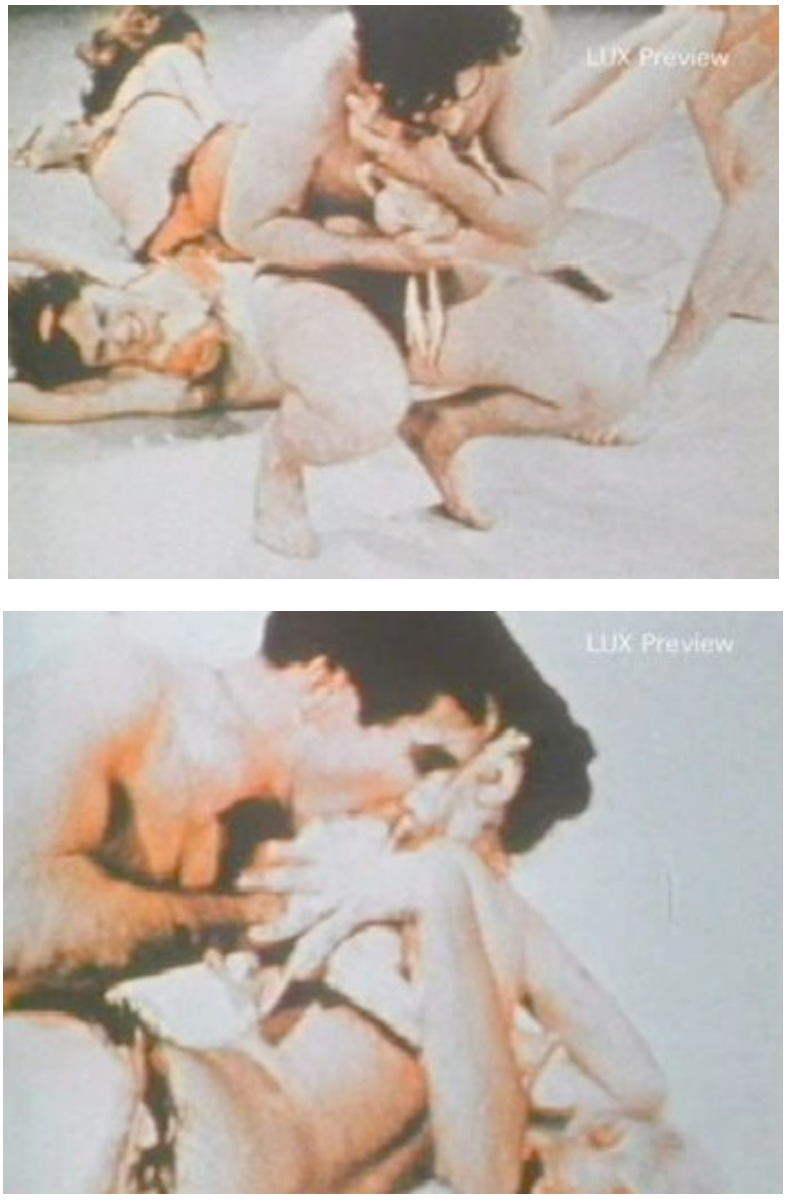

Figure 37: Carolee Schneemann, *Meat Joy*, 1964 (film still).

Figure 38: The Living Theatre, *Paradise Now*, 1968. MIT performance

Figure 39: The Living Theatre, *Paradise Now*, 1968.

Figure 40: Carolee Schneemann, *Meat Joy*, 1964. Detail of the tree structure (source; Getty Research Institute).

Figure 41: The Living Theatre, *Paradise Now*, 1968. Detail of Tree of Life.

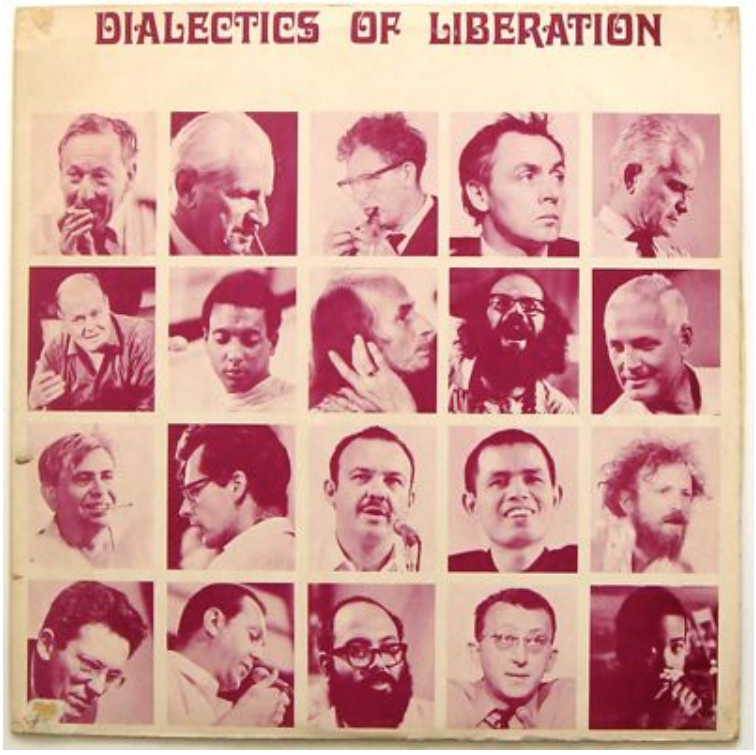

Figure 42: Poster for the Dialectics of Liberation, 1967.

Figure 43: Carolee Schneemann, *Round House*, 1967.

Figure 43: Carolee Schneemann, *Round House*, 1967 (source; Getty Research Institute).

Figure 44: Carolee Schneemann, *Round House*, 1967 (source; Getty Research Institute).

Figure 44: Carolee Schneemann, *Round House*, 1967. Detail of performers wrapped in foil. (source; Getty Research Institute).

Figure 45: Carolee Schneemann, *Round House*, 1967 (source; Getty Research Institute).

Figure 46: Carolee Schneemann, *Fuses*, 1965 (film still).

Figure 46: Carolee Schneemann, *Viet Flakes*, 1966-67 (film still)

Figure 47: Weathermen marching at the Days of Rage, 1969.

Figure 48: Carolee Schneemann, *Round House*, 1967. Detail of performers painting faces.

Figure 48: Carolee Schneemann, *Round House*, 1967. Detail of performers with painted faces.

Figure 49: Carolee Schneemann, *Viet Flakes*, (1966-67).

Figure 50: Carolee Schneemann, *Fuses*, 1965 (film still).

Figure 51: Carolee Schneemann, *Round House*, 1967.

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