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The
Aesthetics

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BY KEN FRIEDMAN



BEAU GESTE PRESS

Langford Court South
Cullompton . Devon

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1970, 1971, 1972

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Dedicated to:

Christo
Christo, Jean-Claude
De Neergaard, Amy
Diacono, Mario
Higgins, Dick
Knizak, Milan
Paik, Nam June
Sweigert, Greg

for varied reasons of their physical and
spiritual connection to these works, but
listed alphabetically, since there is no
proper sequence in the language of the
heart.

PREFACE

THE AESTHETICS is four books in one. A LOGIC OF CLOUDS, the first, completed in October of 1971, CREATIVITY, CONSCIENCE AND ART, completed just as the New Year of 1972 was upon us, THE SACRED JOURNEY, completed several times and revised as here presented, and THE SYMPOSIUM, comments by several friends who are involved in art.

The book was born of the concern and urging of several friends. Most directly, Mario Diacono, Nam June Paik and Greg Sweigert, with help from Dick Higgins and reflections, ideas, inspiration from the others named in the dedication. Where I use the personal pro-noun in this text, it is to indicate that I try to speak for myself rather than for artists in general, and particularly other members of the Fluxus group who in many ways feature here.

The book took shape in texts and essays between 1966 and the present. Portions appeared as small writings or lectures for: San Francisco State College, San Francisco State College Experimental College, Free University of Berkeley, San Diego State College, Kairos Institute, Liberal Religious Youth, SRL-A Free Religious Fellowship, The University of Saskatchewan and Radio KPFA. As well, portions have appeared in The Context, ARTWEEK, Center, and FlugFLUXBlattzeitung.

The interchanges of energy, desire, fear, transcendence, ... the not-to-be-named, here conjoined as THE AESTHETICS are now complete. I am glad to have done them, and glad to be free of them. Most glad, further, to have laid here the groundwork for future research in the areas of culture and social philosophy in which the artists, critics and art-workers of today must act to create a viable future for us all.

We share with all men the responsibility to ourselves and to the future: to do the most important and necessary work possible. In order to approach our potentiality, we must begin at last to uncover those roots of cultural vitality which will enable us to accomplish the required tasks.

Artists and art-workers have too often been sealed away from the world, too concerned with our profits, our rights, our jobs ... the vague glories and prestiges of the art world and its ingrown politics and gestures. The message of the Buddha is that none may be enlightened until all are enlightened. We work together to build the future: we stand together or we don't stand at all.

To awaken to this vision is more than possible to us: it is necessary. To bring our sentiments into action is a difficult matter, requiring both keen tools of understanding and appropriate modes of being rooted in the deepest levels of life and spirit. It is impossible through any one discipline alone to bring about the needed situation: it is an interdisciplinary task in which the arts, the social sciences, the behavioral sciences, the natural sciences and the humanities all take part. The greatest contribution of the intermedia and concept arts to the world is not their own inherent validity, but the fact that they prepare us for the greater tasks which face us even at the present moment.

The need for a radically rehumanized culture was what led me to my formal training, not in the arts, but in the fields of education and social science. It is ultimately a religious quest, amenable not to scientific description, but to existential solution. The new work, the work yet to come, must fuse spirit with science to accurately lay open fields of investigation and work as yet untouched but on the surface, fields most fertile and necessary to our survival. It is to this end that I complete these researches and the art works of the last few years ... both to pave the way and clear the ground for that work in terms of my own time and life. I turn now to face the new task with fresh resolve of spirit and of time.

Ken Friedman
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10 March 1972

A LOGIC OF CLOUDS

AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY

AESTHETICS IN PRACTICE

Ken Friedman

" The vocabulary of truth is so extensive
that only through continual experimentation
and research can an 'artist' even begin to
approach the meanings at the edge of 'art'. "

-- Ken Friedman

Friedmanswerk, Deluxe Edition
Edition Hundertmark, Berlin

SOME INVESTIGATIONS

1970

Some Investigations

(1.)

A problem in intermedial work lies in terms of the understandings available to others, such as the consumer, critic or curator. The problem is that of an ideal of consistency, or at least in the idea of such an ideal. In the traditional teaching, it is necessary for an artist to work in one medium, or at least in only a few inter-related media.

For an artist of the intermedia, this is not the case. The work is one of new relationships and interfaces, new boundaries and explorations on whatever front it breaks through. When one builds a road, one sometimes travels its length to see where one has been, but one also moves forward into the unknown: while the new journey emerges from the experience of the past, and in that sense is consistent in time, it may emerge in a way unrecognizable because of its new aspect.

The exploration through intermedia is of two natures: first, the exploration, where scores of the new music, for example, may also be instructions for choreography, graphic executions, concrete poetry, or graphic or painterly works, and when realized become vocal (poetic), body-motion (dance, theatre, event), interactional (theatre, therapy, religion), ~~or~~ ~~or~~ or spatio-temporal works (sculpture, concept art), and more to produce experience of aesthetic or spiritual value. Second, the aspects or mementoes of the intermedia may be themselves valuable, in this case, possibly the music score itself, the recordings, the dance, the motion, the delineation of space, the use of time, the feelings involved, etc. The intermedialist is one who works with and through many forms in the exploration of relationship and prophetic expression.

Where is consistency? In the devotion to relationship as a basic concern of intermedial art which ~~finds~~ finds expression in the world as totalkunst.

This devotion to relationship is of ultimate concern. The discrete aspects of work must have integrity, but it is not all. What is all? Has there ever been a complete work of art?

Paul Klee once wrote, " I cannot be understood in this world, for I am as much at home with the dead as with those yet to be born -- a little closer to the heart of creation than is normal, yet still too far away. "

The work is never done, the journey always ahead, the interface expanding at the very moment new discovery and revelation takes place.

One cannot place value in "consistency" of itself. The new art does not emerge from the academies, and the epitome of consistency to be found in the military or the industrial situations is a death of creativity. The new work has the intermedial consistency of relationship, to itself, to the interlocked network of searches and parallels, to the elements of the world about.

I feel that each work may stand in phases on its own merit. Thus it is that one's participation as, perhaps, a composer, a poet, a preacher, an artist has two frameworks in which to stand: in the aspect of each individual medium and in total related synthesis of life in the intermedia. In these twin frameworks judgement can take place.

Thus, for many, the major problem of intermedial work is one of relationship, interface, and goal.

For the past few years, my discrete projects, some inter-related with others, some not, have been taking second place to a search for refinement and power. The goal is not simply to produce good art (product), nor to succeed in the art world (competition and commerce), but to discover the meaning and direction of what we do (the therapeutic or religious).

We seek an art which can be a self-contained vehicle for enlightenment, speaking directly and significantly to the participant who comes to meet it. This art I consider an art of the I-Thou relationship, a subject-subject art.

Art relationships, as most relationships, have tended to be I-It relationships. They have taken place between the viewer (subject) and the work (object.). Or, perhaps from another view, between the artist (subject) and the viewer-as-object or the object of art or the work itself as object with no consideration to the viewer at all. At root, an intercourse between the seeker and the sought, the affector and the affected.

Through happenings, events and certain forms of concept art, an I-Thou relationship has existed, but only in a limited context which almost negates the work itself. The relationship takes place between the artist and the participant but tends to remove from this relationship any tangible work other than as a souvenir or memento of the work itself. Thus, the work does not truly exist on its own merit without the artist, and it is in some sense necessary for the artist to be present for the work to be effective.

In speaking of that work which speaks to the participant, we are aware that the difference in any message generally takes place inside a participant, in the subjective world, and that a work is still an object to be mediated by the feelings of the subject. In reality, of course, the work does not speak, or when it does, it is a recorded transaction which does not speak directly and particularly to the needs and feelings of each and every individual participant. My goal is a direct, important, prophetic speech: in which the work actually addresses the individual in his own right as a person, and only then is mediated by the participant into the further ramifications of that message-potential.

Two probes are now moving into this area. We deal with the first here, in order to dismiss it from the realm of prophecy, though it has, as we recognize, other potentials.

We see coming in the future a programmed experience which will be able to move directly from the program to the experience of the individual. This will be accomplished by a very sophisticated projector/computer/bio-affective complex which will act directly on the brain and body of the participant. Thus it will be possible for you or I to experience at any moment a hunt, the act of making love, or a series of emotions arranged as a symphony of feelings. By becoming the central figure experiencing this program, we will indeed be living it, but: in order to accomplish this, we no longer remain self as self, but necessarily become other. Thus, in the deepest sense, we are robbed of personal participation in the experience, since rather than taking part in and part of the experience according to our nature, the experience programs and uses us according to the nature planned for it.

This is objectionable for several reasons. If we want a work to speak directly to the self in an I-Thou relationship, then it must by definition exist between two subjects, two selves. When self becomes other, the brain and body becoming the canvas or screen of the new medium, this is impossible. The machinery will be so sophisticated that only vast financial resources and technological resources will make it possible: the exclusion for financial and technological reasons of any participant from an experience removes from it the prophetic influence. Further, such a machine assumes a technology akin to that of Huxley's Brave New World and I find this devaluation of the person in which self is supplanted by other the antithesis of art. No matter how intimate or realistic, how fantastic or pleasurable this experience might be, and regardless its great possibilities if used well in psychology and education, it remains a program molding all to the same experience and thus stands removed from I-Thou speaking self-to-self.

The second trend is more fruitful. This is the area of concept art, art povera, neo-haiku where experience is ever more refined and intimate on an existential basis in the real world permitting deep participations and new understandings.

The work of the Fluxus group presages this in events, concept art and early intermedial explorations. Happenings, concretism and new music touch here. Special movements like the correspondence arts or image groups approach this realm. Here intermedial exploration becomes a new theology in its attempt to grapple with the central issues of life and inner experience.

Yet somehow, we still only approach the interface. While it is possible to ask whether this subject-subject art is possible in reality, we still look for a breaking point.

The emergence of this possibility, even merely the idea of which we speak, in the relationship between art and participant points to a new and significant transaction between the work and the participant at the crucial foundation of the inner world.

Ken Friedman
1970

Some Investigations

(2.)

It is difficult to write or speak about art. The matter of articulation is one which bears thought: much depends on the moment, the mood, the right conjoining of ideas.

Sometimes we are speechless. When people ask me to talk about art and I have nothing to say, I feel awkward. Yet this attitude is provincial: some find their tongues with ease or wield their pens with might, but few can do it at every moment. The work is what is important.

We ask: if an artist creates a moment of beauty or truth, and yet cannot interpret it as well, does the work-in-itself have less merit? Obviously not. Why then, one wonders, do some consider such a person less an artist? An artist is not always a teacher of art, even more rarely a critic or an historian. An artist is an artist. Isn't that enough?

The matter of articulation about work, interpretation of work and public expectations of an artist in this regard bears in a way on the matter of subject-subject (I-Thou) art.

The whole art system as we know it today, involving artists, critics, curators, museums, galleries, buyers, participants, viewers, etc., is predicated on the fact that some have a sense of vision and the talent with which to bring this vision forth as a statement. This essentially is the role of the artist. The others in the system see in the work many things, each to their own interest or purpose: experience, enjoyment, appraisal, purchase, investment, sale, housing, etc. Yet to each, in some way, a work has meaning, place and value.

As the system grew over the years, certain expectations came to be made. At its root, many surmise that art evolved from an attempt on the part of mankind to appreciate or invoke the spirits of his world. Thus: early cave paintings, religious objects, etc. As man developed, this process became more refined. In almost every major culture, art was first a part of the religious life of the people. Early artists always knew what art was about, as did the people at large: it was about the great game of the Gods and the dealings of women and men with these Gods. There was no need to define, only to present.

As long as everyone knew the system, there was no need for further explanation. All had common reference, common understanding.

Man's religion changed, however, and so did his art. As man awakened to himself, the arts awakened to man. Portraits, civic works and monuments, lively entertainments entered the arts to share space with icons, churches, temples, religious allegories and such. Artists saw new beauties about them and thus landscapes and representational work came into being, but still there was common understanding. Everyone knew what a landscape "meant", it was but a question of each artist's technique. Only religious allegories needed explanation for those unversed in esoteric symbolism, a job primarily for historians or theologians.

At some point, the artist realized a new truth about the world: that it exists to be itself and to play itself out through the ages. Whether a conscious attainment at first, or more likely a primordial urge, the discovery was made and a new art came into being.

Form, color, light, texture, shape ... the many elements which had previously belonged merely to the realm of technique came into their own as the subject and substance of art itself. At length, ideas, games, jokes, puns, puzzles, pure sound, transformations, evolutions ... and more, entered the realm of art as works hitherto unthinkable. Another trend in art was the use of technique in more-or-less representational interpretation of religious or secular experiences in man's attempt to better understand his world and his experiencing through the reflection of art. As Phil Corner so aptly put it, a situation came into being where today "limits are henceforth of vision, never of permission."

We find here a new problem: where before there was common ground, mutual understanding and easy communication, there came a secret inner world struggling for emergence. Perhaps the artist didn't always understand himself what he saw and attempted to communicate. It might not have even been beauty ... merely some thing which he brought to birth, half as creator, half even as midwife or witchdoctor.

Can you ask a parent to explain a child? They know only the facts that are, feeding, playing, cleaning up, waking in the middle of the night and all the rest.

Meanwhile, as the artist tuned in to the new understanding, the very nature of the private journey made what was before a common understanding about art

now an uncommon understanding perhaps available to only one person, or at best, a very few. So critics, recently emerged to judge technique and style, were called upon to interpret. In fact, everyone was called on to interpret.

In our world few make their own judgements. So many look to others, in this case critics, for guidance. Some few perceptive critics guide. Others merely fool around or follow the lead of more astute guides.

The public, disturbed by the unknown as it is always disturbed, clamored for understanding. They asked, and still ask, "What does it mean?" Now, with any sense, they might ask of an artist, "What do you mean?" They rarely do, but here even it may be that the artist does not so much mean meaning as mean to share an experience. And here, the snake of paradox bites its own tail, for the work is itself the telling and the sharing. All else is telling about what they tell and share.

A work is, of itself, and stands rooted in its own nature. To experience it, to take the only path to understanding, one must simply experience the work. Much like a journey to Topeka, if you want to get to Topeka, you've got to go to Topeka. If this sometimes means a bending of old boundaries, an effort, then this is the price of a new vision. The only reality is a choice to make the journey or to remain where one is.

We must dispense with this idea of interpretation, and above all the idea that an artist must be able to articulate his work. His work is his articulation. The reason that an artist is an artist and not a critic is that he speaks through works and not through words. Some may do the other, as well, but it must not be confused with art: this speech is another aspect of the personality separate from work and having little to do with talent as an artist. Some fabulous art teachers who can bring out the best in aspiring artists are themselves not great artists. Some fine critics could not draw a graceful line for love nor money. Why then must an artist be able to teach others about his work or criticize it?

Here we return to the matter of subject-subject art. The artist presents his articulated experience in a work. It is the responsibility of the participant to experience the work in his own way.

A learned scholar went once to a Zen master to learn about Zen. He was invited to tea at his first call on the master. The master placed a cup before him, and poured it full of tea ... and then, he kept on pouring until the cup flowed over copiously.

"Stop!" cried the professor, "It's full. The cup will take no more."

The master then replied,

" You are as full as that cup. How can you learn Zen when there is room for nothing more ? "

It is said that the man experienced enlightenment in that moment.

Two monks walked once down a road in a rain storm. They came upon a finely-dressed lady afraid to cross a muddy street because of her clothes. One monk picked her up and carried her to the other side where he set her down.

Several miles later, one monk turned to the other and asked, " How could you touch that woman ? Have you forgotten your vows ? "

The first monk replied, " I set the woman down hours ago. You are still carrying her. "

Thus it is with art: carrying old weights, one has not time to appreciate the present moment, the moment of greatest importance in experiencing.

If one comes too full, why come at all ? There will be nothing new. Yet even an old work becomes new again if one does not come too full. And at some point, it is truly necessary to drain the cup completely before refilling it.

If one expects as a participant to enjoy a subject-subject art in an I-Thou sort of way, he must be himself a worthy subject, capable of growth and relationship.

This is possible for even the illiterate: it requires nothing but honestly and availability to experience. The work is the work, and each moment of honest experiencing is a monument to the spirit that will be heard, the power that cannot be put aside when it must stand clear.

In the moment of deep participation, all else stands aside. If the moment is worthy, rhetorics, price, fashion, the very world itself falls away. For here is a new witness to the Creation, that moment when the Spirit moves over the water to become the world, saying for all time,

" Let there be light ! "

Some Investigations

(3.)

What constitutes an important work of art ?

It is possessed of a telling power, moving, mellow of its own accord. Like the legendary snake, it raises its head to strike at the right moment.

This power is a natural phenomenon. It is at base a matter of grace, of the right touch. In a sense it is austere. Yet as we look at work by perhaps a Motherwell or an Oldenburg, we ask: is this truly austere ? Yes, for austerity is the avoidance of the over-done, the half-baked. Thus the work is graceful. Even of artists such as Knížák, Vostell or Beuys, their is a roughness, yet the roughness is akin to the sure hand of the calligrapher, the roughness of the sea-battered cliff. This is grace.

Of this grace one cannot always describe how it comes into being, only that it is present. The Shakers, folk craftsmen and furniture makers, were aware that it is indeed " the gift to be simple. " They attained the same gravity of quiet elegance which marks the finest products of Japan or of the Bauhaus. From my experience as a folklorist, I gained an understanding that steps across the boundaries of art and music to serve for me as a touchstone to grace. Each person must attain their own touchstone, in whatever way best suited, but attain it one must: for only grace serves as the key to understanding that which is most important.

At the end, as at the beginning, it is the responsibility of each person to meet with the work and thus to experience. Only through this meeting will come the bridge of power and grace which serves to clarify the issues of greatest importance.

Some Investigations

(4.)

We have reached two tentative conclusions regarding subject-subject art as it was previously defined. First, that by exercise of art alone, such an art is impossible, even through the intermedia. Second, that through psychology, religion and an art of personal investment, it may be possible. Other than by strict philosophic category, of course, the question may be open. It is in me still the subject of a progressing debate.

In my own work, the breakthrough into subject-subject art was via shrines.

Some years ago, on trips through the Southwest, I would make and leave beside roads small shrines for people to find and use. Some were ornate, some simple. They often had places or possibilities for participation: for food, money, messages, etc., from one participant to another who might come later.

In undertaking the essays that have become these pages, I cast the I Ching. On reading my hexagrams, a connection flashed to me, and the shrine became apparent as an ancient vehicle for prophetic participation. In a sense, the I Ching itself is such a vehicle, standing in its own right as a subject speaking directly and prophetically to the participant who comes as a subject to enter into sacred conversation. Each in his or her own needs and experiences, the meetings can not be but direct and individual. Thus, from these experiences and insights, I was launched into the project of shrines.

Since then, I've been trying to work out shrines of varied nature: The Shrine of Names, The Shrine of the Violent Pilgrim, The Shrine of Clouds and others. A personal iconography, a series of monuments and testimonials - offering to each participation and the opportunity to recreate.

Then, I wondered that perhaps the shrine itself may be prophetic. And perhaps, if a participant is truly and deeply attuned, any work, any moment may be in reality a shrine. The questions thus become endless.

It seems that perhaps all questions may be answered negatively and affirmatively. Like Jorge-Luis Borges' eternal library ...

The library contains an infinite number of books, printed in infinite sequence in all possible permutations and transformations. Thus: volumes with blank pages, volumes with only the letter 'a' in one place - placed differently through all possible changes, volumes with millions of possible sequences and spacings of letters 'a' in filled and empty space, and so on.

Further, the library must contain the complete works of Shakespeare ! Not only the complete works, but millions on millions of versions of the complete works, each varying in detail, and infinitely more false versions of the complete works and partial versions, and versions trailing into nonsense, as well as the life of Shakespeare, and false lives, and combinations of both. And again, the complete works of Shakespeare, and the single works, all attributed to every other other, and to you and I, and the works of all others attributed to him.

It would contain as well your life and mine. And all our works and letters. And all and more, in every possible true and false combination.

Endless numbers of everything, true and false alike, varying in major and minor details. Refutations of the false, and refutations of the true, and refutations and supporting arguments for each. It would be, in fact, impossible to understand or even find them all. Nor yet, within this mass, any, save that one find the one true and complete catalogue or a very close approximation among the infinity of false catalogues which must easily outnumber the true, and the catalogues of gibberish and absurd permutation which again would outnumber both.

Thus, as Borges indicates, the library is limitless: it contains all answers, and yet most of these answers are inaccessible.

We find then only one route to truth: experiential knowledge and verification. If the subject-subject art were to exist, yet it should not could noone come to participate.

Let us illustrate via paradox:

If a tree were to fall in a forest, yet noone be present to hear it fall, would there be a sound ?
Answers: if sound is defined only as air-waves moving in ordered sequence through space and time, there would be a sound. If sound is defined as those waves acting on the ear of a person, there would not be a sound. If an animal were to be counted as a person if that animal should have an ear, there might be a sound. And so on. And what if a person, if we were told that only a human being were to be admitted into the proposition, were present, yet that person were to be deaf ?

One may parse the paradoxes infinitely.

In terms of art, then, the answer is to move beyond words into the area of pure experience.

The possibility of subject-subject art as a concept opens new horizons for exploration. For the process of intellectual definition, a great playground. But the work itself is perhaps unrelated to all these considerations. The answers ... ?

The natures of motions toward this art are lovely and intriguing, themselves of worth. There are worlds within worlds, worlds without end, like an onion which is composed of infinite skins each larger than the skin before. At length, the path of speculation leads always to a corner beyond which the conscious mind cannot progress.

The way to experience is simply to experience.

After seeking enlightenment zealously for years, studying the sutras and doing Za-Zen to no avail, a monk went to see his master.

The master suggested that he meditate for a week. He did so, with no success, and returned. The master suggested that he meditate for three weeks without pause. He did three weeks in sitting, and returned again not enlightened.

Finally, the master said,

"Meditate one week longer. If by then you have not attained enlightenment, kill yourself."

Vowing this course of action, the monk entered a tower and sat in meditation one week, day and night, without break. At the end of his week, he had not yet found satori.

He stood, and resolutely walked to the edge of the tower to end his life. As he lifted his leg over the railing to do the deed, a weight was lifted from him, and in that moment, he attained grace.

Chants and Poems

1968-1971

i dance the singing chasm

i dance the singing chasm:

the feast complete,
pursued by whining furies.

morbid vacancies,
present in a shaking solitude;

the hour is comprised
of sixty laughing minutes.

sit a while longer at this table,
demon.

" sit a while longer at the table. "

our planet is misnamed

towing icebergs from antarctica
to los angeles,

our planet found itself
misnamed:

but shaken at the depths,
and in her soul-less mirror,

came rekindled in the fires of winter,
came rekindled in the fires of winter.

on your knees, sinner

if lacking in some conversation
with your lord,

all most angels dance

all
most angels dance
and dance,
and dancing spell

and spelling,
spell this life
to breath.

to breath,
this breath,
this very chanting breath:

and breathing, breath
and breath such trees,
and breath such dreams,
such lives
as are the words of breath
spelt out.

all most,
all words,
all very words ...
the veriest of very words,

of feet,
of all most feet
which dance,
and dancing dance,

which breath,
and breathing breath,

which chant,
and in their chanting chant,

and move,
and here in moving move
the vast and lonely
stillness

over silent water.

spell now

spell now,
to spelling spell
the water of this word,
this wordless word,

our silent wordless water,
earth,
to light.

floating
from dark to dark,
as if by swaying bridge
above the channel

shaking
in my depths and at my fingers:
by virtue
of an unnamed fear.

above me and below me,
before me and behind me,
around and all about me:
here is darkness.

which, may it be said ?

which, may it be said, in still solitude
is the center of this question ?

and if a patriotic bird could sing,
what wings would be the flower of our flag ?

which, may it be said ?

which, may it be said
in still solitude
lies
at the center of this question ?

and if ... a patriotic bird could sing,
what wings
would be the flower
of our flag ?

(2)

if i had not words to speak,
to speak,
 words, these
 which i have not

nor hands, nor clumsy feet
nor song, nor breath

then how should i, to you
present this love ?

and if i were a fool, a drunk,
besotted in some madness more divine,

 yet still it should be thee,
 that thou art god,

whom i'd petition.

the celestial gang

the lightbulb king
who comes on silver wings
here framed in standing joy
repents, and now he sings.

WATER SONG

It rains

The tides

In snow

At night

The cloud

At dawn

We bathe

I float

You dance

It sings water

The sleepers wake

He drowns

There is no voice

The ocean receives

There is dust

There are fish

There is life

There is death

The fountain stops

(1.) somewhere

i. somewhere, a foggy night. a cove. white rolling against a sea-wall, lapping and eating at the edge.

ii. somewhere, in a harbor, a bell-buoy. in the night. clanging, hollow and full. a noise not to be described in words, but in an essential tremor. somewhere, a bell. it clangs.

iii. somewhere, there is a ship. clean, and parting the waves with surety. sails filled with free wind, sailing into freedom.

iv. somewhere, a drowning man. rising and falling, struggling above the water. he goes down. his lungs are wet, they fill with water. fish enter his mouth. he is the aquarium of our dreams.

(2.) maybe

i. maybe it came today. it was uncertain. it was the maybe. it held a knife. it cut, the edge dripping blood. it cut. "unclean!" it cried. it cut. it cut.

ii. maybe ... we expect a visit from the scam-king. he will roll in, it is said, on flaming wheels, feet churning the stillness. he will hold out yarns and fables, offering a hand. it will be certain.

iii. maybe ^{forgot} that old dog happiness wags its tail in some ^{palace}. maybe somewhere the moon shines. maybe the clouds part. maybe here ^{there} will be order, here ~~there~~ a presence.

iv. the elements are measures, songs that lengthen, songs that shorten. songs that will be sung, songs that will remain unheard. one in the north, one to the east. one that goes down, one that remains.

It sings water

I am deaf

You are not sure

We cannot swim

He is clean

She is the fish

Here is a plunge

There is a ship

There is a dance

There is a dance

Will the dawn ... ?

Will the cloud ... ?

Will the sea ... ?

Will the wave ... ?

Will the day ... ?

Will the king ... ?

Will I ever ... ?

Will you maybe ... ?

Will the water ... ?

It sings water

A tide
A tide

A song among the clouds:

Poetic fragments from
the oceans of the South.

A song
A song

The sun, it seems

Is perched on tree limbs
in the forest of my dreams.

A voice
A voice

Declaiming hidden words:

Travelling in the Western night
with companions dressed as birds.

of such beauty, kings,
as cloudlost riders
might abdicate their thrones
in wonder,

birds
forsake
the great blue palace
of the sky;

stars depart the night
for calmer destinations.

lady, i would sing the song of you
in orange morning

dance your dance
beneath the noonday sun

or listen to the silence
of your eyes at nightfall.

these things, lady,
all these things,
and all these things again
might do

where for such beauty, kings,
as saints might weep
and pray most humbly
at the shrine of you.

which is what
where is when

how is why
if is not

perhaps is where
what is now

not is if
when is which

where is perhaps
why is as

as is maybe
when is if

now is what
how is now

as if is if as
as if is if as

how morbid this approach

a seeking after purity:
form beyond the past.

here nor there,
here nor there.

i know it not,
dharma-laden one,

but stand ashamed,
and only stand ashamed.

as if is if (as)

CONCEPT ART

NOTES ON CONCEPT ART

~~Introduction~~

Concept art is not so much an art movement or vein as it is a position or world-view, a focus for activity.

One way to understand this world-view, these activities as focused, is to understand the doings of the first major group of concept artists, the Fluxus Group. The ideas, attitudes, and indeed actions of concept art had pre-figuration not only in this century, but back into the ages. It was through Fluxus, however, that concept art first attained form under the name concept art, so here we begin.

Henry Flynt, the man who named concept art, defined it as "first of all an art of which the material is 'concepts', as for example the material of music is sound." Through his exploratory work in the late '50's and early '60's in concept art, culture, politics, mathematics and linguistic philosophy, Flynt developed a philosophical basis for what he called concept art. The first known publication of the term is copyright in his 1961 essays on concept art.

A short definition of concept art as it came to be practiced might be:

A series of thoughts or concepts, either complete in themselves as work(s), or leading to documentation or to realization through external means.

Before continuing, I should like here to trace the history of my involvement with concept art. In my childhood town, many things fascinated me. My fascination came alive in fantastic activities that I wanted to make happen, in giant environments I was continually building and tearing apart and in plays and dramas or musical form. Though I was not involved in art as such, these fantastic little activities lived out were, in effect, events, that is, a form of concept art. The earliest such piece of record of mine is Scrub Piece (1956), involving the cleaning of a public monument on a Spring day.

In 1959, I discovered Japan and the East. Having seen screens, scrolls and paintings by the Orientals before, the opening of a Japanese shop drew my attention. Thereafter, Zen, Japanese art and architecture, and Buddhist literature drew me to it, again and again, for hours daily.

In 1961, still not aware of my activity as art, I began systematically to realize my little events in many places, public and private. I considered these activities both as a form of poetry and of religious meditation.

Since these first actions to me held a deeply foreign sensibility - and were alien to the lifestyles prevalent around me - since they somehow spoke of a migration and a new spiritual residency, I came to call most of them between 1961 and 1964 Immigration Acts. These events were for the most part unrecorded, short, poetic and very enigmatic.

In 1966 I entered into a lengthy friendship and correspondence with Dick Higgins. He suggested that I visit George Maciunas, who was then directing the publications and many of the activities of Fluxus. I joined the Fluxus group in August of 1966.

As George enlisted me, he asked, "What shall we call you?" I didn't have a reply. He thought for a while, about me, my work and my interests, and presently stated, "You're a concept artist." Thus my work and activities, previously indescribable, came into a name.

Since that time, of course, my friendships among artists and my acquaintance with the art world has deepened, as have my critical abilities and historical knowledge. In 1966, as I look on it now, concept art and the Fluxus world seemed only an interesting logical progression of the work I had been doing as an independent individual with a background in the classic humanities, linguistics and a taste for the un-nameable activities which I did because I simply did them.

Most of the members of the Fluxus group or its parallels have been working in concept art for the last decade or - under other names - longer. Rather than concept art, or as it is sometimes called conceptual art, being a recent creation, it is, as we have seen, a thing with deep roots and an historical basis as itself since 1959-61. While there are indeed a great number of artists in the conceptual field today, there is a relatively small number of individuals who comprise the historical founding circle. These are, most outstandingly, Henry Flynt, George Maciunas, Yoko Ono, George Brecht, Robert Morris, Bob Watts, Simone Morris, Walter De Maria, Ben Vautier, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Nam June Paik, Ayo, La Monte Young, Ray Johnson, Emmett Williams, Tomas Schmit, and Stanley Broun. Others, like myself, had been working, and came into the ~~Fluxus~~ group, slightly later following independent activity, such as Milan Knížák, Eric Andersen, Per Kirkeby, Joseph Beuys, Geoff Hendricks, Bici Forbes, Sigeko Kubota, Chiako Shizumi, Jock Reynolds, and members of the Zaj group. As well, a few quiet and indescribably individuals whose activity and variety, or whose quietude, places them beyond definition, among them Phil Corner, Toshi Ichiyonagi, Richard Maxfield, Bengt Af Klintberg, Wolf Vostell and Jackson Mac Low.

The history of the early days and the early documentation is rather obscure, and my categorization may be not entirely accurate among my three broad groupings. Nonetheless, among these several dozen names are the majority of originators and early developers of concept art. A certain interesting intermedial interchange takes place here, as well, since innovators and explorers rarely choose to delimit their range of activity. This we will again discuss later.

There are some common grounds between these diverse peoples and these activities. We can approach it by looking again to the first area of our discussion: attitude.

The concept artist is characterized by an intuitive, outstanding essence in work and in living, which must be - which cannot but be - manifested in particular products or works of art. It is a grace, if you will, a certain presence which distinguishes the concept artist from the general realm of artists. Without this attitude, this gracefulness, gesture and idea are meaningless, for above all concept art is dependent upon a new vision of the world, a new sense of meaning.

What is this vision essential to concept art which is so difficult to verbalize? Perhaps it is the sense of innate given-ness of the particular moment, subject or object at hand in present time, the is-ness of things, people, or times as they exist.

Thus it is that most of the early concept artists are rather like the new men of the Renaissance, skilled in many fields. Through many media and through the intermedia we found our paths: architecture, film, video, anthropology, painting, sculpture, collage, decollage, theatrics, packaging, the neo-haiku arts, minimalistic arts, dance, happenings, the new music, practical jokes, Zen, religion, sociology, political science, mathematics, theology, street theatre, guerrilla theatre, publishing, design, manufacture of many assorted wares, festivals, puzzles, games, cooperatives, worship, communications, biological sciences, and more.

As well as the arts, we find among us many other professions represented, being chemists, book-keepers, photographers, teachers, publishers, lawyers, pressmen, journalists, zookeepers, encyclopedia salesmen, recording engineers, musicians, ministers, cooks and more.

Taking in example one name picked at random, that of Nam June Paik, he is: filmmaker, video-wizard, composer, teacher, electronic technician and philosopher. In at least four of these fields and as an artist, he is extremely well known, and in the video world, he is sometimes called "The Father of Underground Television." Though not all of the persons listed are as well known as Nam June Paik, and while others are perhaps even more varied and better known than he, all share that Renaissance sensibility which encourages analogy and flow between fields of pursuit. This sensibility is at the root of the grace which marks concept art at its best, for in allowing each activity to suggest its own

needed components, not only are better individual works apt to come about, but a milieu which fosters deepened and enriching activity.

Our common ground is a desire to manifest our sense of vision - perhaps the common ground of all artists and individuals involved in communicating - but a further willingness to be continually exploratory in the fulfillment of that desire, ~~to~~ to the point of applying a rigorous series of scientific methods and searching methodology to ~~our~~ explorations. *often*

The element of search was always coupled with the element of allowing the moment to emerge. Many of the media we were later to use came about through intuitive discovery at the time of rightness, much as scientific findings are so often brought about. We did street pieces and guerrilla theatre works for a long time before bringing them to formal name and thus achieving a "medium" of sorts. Names come about descriptively after a work attains form in most cases, either through the creators or through the categoric needs of observers.

First an idea or intuition is had. Then, perhaps, a slight description or prescription. At length, the actualized version of the idea, as a work, as a documentation, or as a medial exploration. Finally, the descriptions, write-ups and analyses.

Creation from a view of the way things "should" be done is not and was not characteristic of the development or practice of concept art, nor is it consistent with the search for liberation and enlightenment at the root of the concept arts. This fact will often explain the fluid nature of concept art pieces, the loose organization of concept art groups and the minimal description of concept art activities which allow for personal and imaginative interpretation.

We might turn now to a brief historic sketch of the Fluxus movement to better describe this urge to liberation.

In its earliest stages, Fluxus was a loose cooperative effort of artists working together to create a new mentality.

The members of Fluxus banded together in opposition to the stiff, hide-bound mental orientation of the art world, and stood further opposed to the financial piracy common to that mentality. We sought to create a concrete art not only readily available to people at low cost and with easy reproducibility (much as a scientific experiment is easy to reproduce via proper documentation), but which might stimulate new forms of productivity and creation.

Our forms thus needed to be new, easily reproductive, of as high a quality but at a lower expense than previous art. Thus emerged the form of concept art and the particular items and publishing ethic of the Fluxus movement. Later, from the original group, came new associations such as the Something Else Press and around the world, we discovered

sympathetic affiliations such as Aktual, Zaj, Total Art and other groups. The ever-changing nature of membership in Fluxus -which has never had a real formalized creed or requirement- is always producing new offshoots, new developments, and members are forever leaving, joining and re-joining the group. In the last few years, in my sphere of activity alone, the Fluxus West, radical expansion has taken place bringing Fluxus and concept art to an often mystified public before the concept arts and intermedia were acceptable in general to the art world, and now in the '70's with a vigorous expansion into new centers in the States and in England and Germany. This has paralleled similiar expansion and activity everywhere, all emerging from this basic radical ethic. Much of the politics of Fluxus, in fact, bears analogy and sometimes stems from the politics of other such activities in history, ranging from the Diggers and Transcendentalists, to the Abolitionists and Unionists, and to the activities of certain socialists and ~~anarchists~~.

LABOR
Political
Unitarians

In every way possible, we have tried to bring the entire range of human understanding and experience to bear upon art: psychology, design, environmental design, the behavioral sciences, social science, learning theory, theology, and others named and to-be-named. A brief glance through any Fluxus archive will make this apparent: The work of Patterson in The Four Suits, Flynt's design and culture manifestoes of the mid-'60's, Higgins' essays and histories of intermedial arts, Feelisch Vice Versand series of multiples, Maciunas' cooperatives in New York City which launched the new development of the Soho and the big coop housing boom of recent years, Knowles' giant books and poetry projects or the emerging concerted attack on the strangling politics of the art world.

These many concerns are eventually bound up with that basic attitudinal concern of concept art: a total art speaking to and bringing about change in the human condition. It is a concern of the deepest nature and intensity.

The ultimate goal of concept art is a cultural change, then, a goal both spiritual and social in nature. It approaches religion and anthropology. For the first decade of our activity, our efforts were rejected: museum and gallery directors had nothing to do with us, the public and the media generally ignored us, and we carried out our work basically among ourselves.

It is perhaps significant that ^{in the U.S.A.} rather than through the arts, but in an even more cultural arena, we first gained hold: through the developments of the underground press, ^{radical activism,} guerrilla theatre, humanistic psychology, new education and in the church, the work of concept art first began to emerge publicly. Many of us brought this focus to bear through our careers other than in the arts, as mentioned above. In my own experience, various youth and adult groups of the Unitarian Universalist Association sponsored my activities

of concept art and intermedia. They sponsored them for their own purposes of worship, education or entertainment, but bring them about they did, and thus we had opportunities to exhibit Fluxus materials and concept art works throughout New York and New England in 1966, to stage large happenings and events-festivals all across the country, to publish work by concept artists such as Yoko Ono or George Maciunas for larger circulations than had been possible earlier, and a host of other developments. My activities in teaching and in the media produced similar situations. And thus it went until recently for most of us. The new success of concept art was nurtured by dozens of odd enterprises who never had an initial interest in the fine arts or in art per se, and when such help was not possible, we simply tightened our belts and kept on working.

Eventually, things happened and the art situation as it is today came about. The mechanics of the new success of concept art and intermedia are not entirely clear to me, but in line with earlier analogies between scientific discovery and concept art, perhaps after the initial laughter, the time had come for the new development to bear fruit.

~~_____~~

We deal with human concerns. We refuse limitation, but choose to explore the full range of forms and attitudes. For some, there is no choice involved: it is impossible to choose not to do so.

One recognizes the true art by the intuitive essence of its nature. Looking for the untutored eye, we must look with unclouded vision. If you know yourself by the flavor of your feelings, you can taste the others around you. We cannot exactly say what comprises good concept art, yet we keep no secrets: if you come to live with us and work with us, you will know, for nothing is hidden.

Concept art has perhaps history, and a line of transmission, but it cannot be taught. One sees its traces in time and space. It is a special transmission, not to everyone, but to that person who looks into the mirror to see beyond the glass.

Ken Friedman
1969-71

CONCEPT ART AND ZEN

There exists a striking and unmistakable relationship between concept art and Zen Buddhism. Much early concept art was comparable in philosophy to Zen, and in form to the teaching puzzles of Zen known as Koan. The theatrics of concept art events were called, in fact, neo-haiku theatre.

The Four Vows chanted often by Buddhists are rather analogous to the discussions of the *raison d'etre* underlying the creation and practice of concept art. They are:

The beings are numberless:	I vow to enlighten them.
Desires are countless:	I vow to tear them down.
Dharma gates are limitless:	I vow to master them.
Buddha way is highest:	I vow to follow through.

With a certain hesitation, we see at length that art and religion are one. There is, in the highest practice, no distinction between the two, joined as they are by the transcendent linking value of a seeking after enlightenment. This is not to say that art equals religion as it is now seen among Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, etc., save in a few rare individual cases. Most organized religions and religious forms are slavish creations and serve deeply anti-human causes, intentionally or not, but certainly in action. From religion as it is practiced to truth is a great distance indeed, but from much art as we see it to truth is perhaps as great a distance. Art and religion at root are one, however the present situation may be. Concept art is the uncovering of a vigorous new theology.

To create concept art is to approach the truth. This approach may be compared with the traditional approach to art much as the approach of Zen was compared to the decaying *life* Buddhist culture when ~~Zen~~ appeared. Concept art is a rich existential striving after illimitably defined spirit, a graceful understanding of life: if a work is not of such nature, it is not concept art, but mere imitation.

Concept Art: A Concluding Essay

In conclusion, the last thing to be said about concept art is the first thing:

You work because you work. (or)
You can not not work.

The essence of concept art is a fine, graceful striving toward liberation. Filliou's marvelous Ample Food for Stupid Thought bore on its jacket a probing note by Jackson Mac Low condemning the war in Viet Nam. In a space the size of a file card, as much was said as has been said since.

It is the foolish who need years to see, who need rhetorics and histories. We marched in 1963 to protest what was then called "the involvement" in Viet Nam. A few were aware, peace-creeps and poets by and large. It took a while for the public to catch on, and still the public has not caught on enough to force real action.

The same with art: concept art is at least as old as Zen. Hakuin Zenji was a great concept artist in his day, the 17th century when the West was still killing over hairsplitting points of dogma. And concept art under the name it bears today dates back over a decade.

Eventually, there is no distinction between art and anti-art, or not-art. Even anti-art acknowledges in a way that there is an "art". The only distinction to be made is that the work is good or bad. Or perhaps both, according to its nature.

In a phone conversation with Dick Higgins about concept art, Dick commented succinctly on some recent work saying,

"But that's not concept art. It's nonsense."

Enlightenment is enlightenment in whatever form it comes.

Klee does not become passe. The inborn beauty which is his is not lost with the eclipse of painting. And perhaps, despite commentary to the contrary, painting is not lost.

Tom Marioni says, " You've got to have an eye. Scale is important, even in concept art. " Perhaps even more in concept art !

Of importance is the deep concern. The incredible Emerson's words in his Harvard Divinity School Address ring as true today as in 1838:

" Wherever a man comes, there comes revolution. The old is for slaves. When a man comes, all books are legible, all things transparent, all religions are forms. He is religious. Man is the wonderworker. He is seen amid miracles. "

The concept artist is not necessarily literate in our traditions, versed in our lores, an historian of our arts: he is the person who sees with open eye, who hears sounds beyond the silence, who is guided by an integral understanding of that fabric which is life.

This is the great meaning of such movements as the Aktual movement in Czechoslovakia, which proclaims:

" We are not 'artists', but we are among us plumbers and doctors, young and old, mechanics and photographers. "

This is the message of many, a principle of process. As existence preceeds essence, so life preceeds art and concept art. It may be said in many ways. Ultimately, this is the deep principle by which we live and work.

There is in a certain attitude of fashion in art a sense of hubris. Well we do to remember the last of Oedipus:

Man of Thebes: look upon Oedipus:
This is the King who solved the famous riddle
And towered up most powerful of men,
No mortal eyes but looked on him with envy ...
Yet in the end, ruin swept over him.

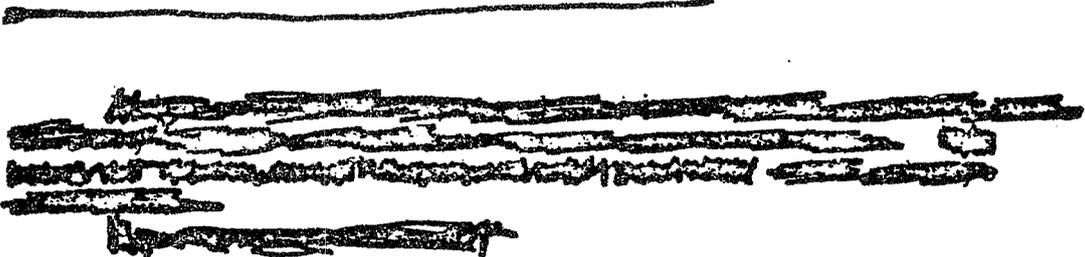
Let every man in mankind's frailty
Look to his lastd day; and let none
Presume on his good fortune,
Until he find life, at his death,
A memory without pain.

The future of art, particularly of concept art, lies in sharing and promoting life and well-being among the peoples of the earth, of striving toward enlightenment.

Ecology, social action, justice, education, the human uses of technology ... these things cannot be foreign to us.

Ultimately, we are all environmental artists: striving to bring new vision to the world, to recreate the world with enlightened perception and creativity. Perhaps an unfashionable statement, but there is a deeper choice to be made than the aesthetic alone. How do you choose ?

We all devote some portion of our lives to the aesthetic. But the servants of the elite cannot be artists, for such servitude breeds vandalism, raising jackals of the spirit. Beyond art, there is something else again, and it is this other which gives deepest meaning and pleasure to that which standing alone is most pure and aesthetic in art, in all the arts.



Ken Friedman
1969

CREATIVITY, CONSCIENCE AND ART

KEN FRIEDMAN

STATEMENT

The artist in the role of an artist has not only professional and commercial relationship to the world about, but a spiritual or cultural relationship. New investigations of these relationships are emerging at last, and new movements toward defining and strengthening the meaning and effect of these relationships both to the artist and to the world at large.

Events over the last year in my life have led me to certain feelings and conclusions. At first, I had hoped to develop these with some Americans working in this vein. The long-awaited convocation of the hoped-for group has failed to take place. Then, I was invited and planned to attend the meetings in Germany for the Community for Action for a Free Art Market initiated by Joseph Beuys, Klaus Staeck and Erwin Heerich. Sadly, my own personal circumstances made my planned presence with a small group of other artists, social scientists, gallery owners and critics impossible.

Thus, I feel it time to present here my own plan of activity and the reasons for my planning which will shed light on the broader issues and make clear my future work. This is to be considered merely my personal statement, though I invite others to think on it and to use it for their own ends as they will. It can, in a sense, be considered my contribution to the current discussions around the world. For me, however, action is the speech of truth, so more than an intellectual presentation, by these statements I will work and live in my future activities as an artist.

1. The Artist

An artist is essentially a communicator. In whatever medium, activities of art are a transmission of one sort or another of experiential or aesthetic data.

The artist is primarily recognized by society in his role as an aesthete, and beyond that as even an aesthetic commodity. This is not entirely accurate. An artist is as well a teacher of experiences, a communications systems, a resource bank, a living statement of the

possibility of vision. As such, the artist is a prophet, a therapist, a teacher, a natural resource and a public servant. In my own case, both by training and inclination, I find myself literally an educator and social scientist, a minister and resource person, literally by way of professional activity. Others, under different career-roles, have similar experiences.

The artist, then, has several sets of rights and responsibilities in these roles. I propose here to discuss these roles, the rights and responsibilities of these roles, and my future relations to them.

2. The Worker

The artist, in his role as a worker, no matter what particular career-identification he may undertake, has the right to work and earn an honest living. The present system of art marketing and access to public realms constrains the right of the art worker in all but a few prominent cases. The artist is treated as a commodity, and thus is dehumanized, denied the right of any working person, and further - even if successful - liable to the merest vagary of fashion or of ill practice at the hands of the marketeer.

I propose that henceforth I will regard myself not as a commodity, but as a professional. As such, rather than selling art works, I will only sell my professional services.

This sale will take place in two dimensions:

1. For those who wish to hire my services on a salaried basis, I am available by fairly negotiated contract. Such a contract would apply to consulting and administrative jobs, to teaching jobs, and to any job taking place over a determined span of time for a particular employer.

2. For those who wish to purchase a certain amount of limited service, such as a lecture, a consultation, or a work of art itself, I will be available on an hourly-fee basis. This will include my research and development time, and the physical expenses of the project or work, but other than this, no fee will be added or charged for the "artistic" value of the work itself. Charges will be made only for time expended and for materials used. If materials are supplied, only time will be charged and nothing else.

In this way, I assert my rights as a worker and my dignity as a human being and a professional person. Further, I believe that if enough artists undertake this mode of activity, the results in the art market will be far-reaching.

If such a system of services come into being, the profiteering inflationary system of art investment will no longer be able to work as it does now. More money will be freed into the system, more artists will be able to earn a living, more work will be exposed. Further, the public will benefit by being able to acquire privately or through public museums more works of art, and more art will be produced because more art workers will have the financial solidarity necessary to full and active professional functioning.

To protect the artist and the public against the possible abuse of these lower costs, all artists should have the right to a fair percentage of works re-sold which increase in value. This will both discourage profiteering and add income to the artist when fair resale does take place. Work on this particular idea is already in progress. I understand such agreements to be available and suggest that anyone interested in this organized endeavour contact those responsible.

3. The Public Servant

The artist is a public servant in the sense that an artist proposes to renew or change the public and the culture. Such change, of course, increases his value as an artist as it leans in his direction, and makes more work available to him, thus enhancing both career and personal enjoyment.

I feel that since this is the case, the artist has a responsibility to the public. Thus I vow that for every art work which I produce for sale or for my private benefit, I will produce an artwork for sale to the benefit of another or for gift. Any work sold to the benefit of another will be subject to different financial arrangements than those above: since works for benefit are best used to gain maximum financial advantage, such works will not be constricted by the time-plus-materials ethic which I will enforce on private sale. Those who benefit from such sale will, however, take the place of the artist as beneficiary of the resale-percentage agreements.

I vow further to make my time available generally to public service or non-profit causes for expenses only on a short-term or emergency basis, or at fees negotiated according to their ability to pay for long-term bases that would conflict with my other possible employment.

4. The Prophet

Art is in a sense a visionary, prophetic or culture-changing activity.

As such, is it subject to the foremost requirements of vision and prophecy: honesty and availability of information.

I vow, therefore, to make all informations about myself and my work or other requested information about work in which I take part fully available to anyone at all times. If such information requires extensive documentation, the requesting party will be obliged only to pay documentary costs. Further, to legitimate causes or non-profit endeavours, I will grant copyright clearance on any work whatsoever for use or reproduction, and bind any recipient of beneficial or gifted works to agree to make such works available in the same way. The only information which may be legitimately excluded from this is work privately owned by private purchase, or publicly purchased but owned outright by another and thus unavailable to my restriction in this matter, or information of a confidential or privileged nature which I come by as an artist, confidant, or in any helping or therapeutic relationship to another.

5. Natural Resource

The artist as a natural resource shares in the responsibilities above mentioned. He has, further, some rights which I feel might be considered by the public and by those in the art professions.

There is no way to define or to enforce these rights, so here I merely suggest some areas of thought.

From other art professionals, a sense of candid discussion of work, principles of activity, and honest feelings are due: between each artist, curator, dealer, publisher, critic, gallery owner, public appreciator, buyer, etc., and between each of these and any of the others. It is the least they owe to each other as human beings.

From the governments, a greater devotion of resources, financial and material, to the arts, benefitting both the artists and their work, and the public which benefits from such work.

Too much dishonesty now prevails between art professionals, too much secrecy, jealousy, underhanded activity, and in general a way of life detrimental to all as humans and professionals. This must be remedied if we are to function fully with and among each other, either as persons or as professionals. I pledge this honesty and candor, and expect it of those with whom I have relationship. I will not participate in denunciations, but will definitely remove myself from any arena in the future in which I am made aware of any dishonesty or unethical activity whatsoever.

Too much ignorance and paltry action prevails on the parts of most governments. We know too well what must be done by way of increased support: I pledge myself to help without stint anyone who needs my assistance in gaining such support, and to be available free of charge to any endeavour of education or information which will lead to the remaking of governmental attitudes toward the arts.

6. The Teacher

The role of the teacher, and of the artist as teacher specifically, should be subject to the ethical demands of education. It is too rarely the case.

I believe that a teacher's duty is to bring to fruition the desires and needs of the student, to encourage and assist the student in entering full professional status, in removing the obstacles and barriers presented to the newcomer in any activity which bear no relationship to quality of work but only of influence or private connection, and to be a true helping person. This, both in the academies, and in other relationships which may be characterized as teaching. This I have always done, and pledge my continued activity to this end.

A true teacher helps the student to eventually surpass his or her own teachings, to move into an individual flowering. It is a great dishonor to allow any concern of dubious nature prevent or hinder this flowering, and a great error for a teacher to fail to listen to what the student has to offer. I always wonder if I am failing in this regard, and - by nature of being human - usually do, to some extent. I expect to be offered advice and criticism in these regards, and require of myself continual introspection that the quality of my own offerings continually improve.

7. The Therapist

Art is at root the deepest form of therapy, of religion, of inner exploration. I am yet unable to define adequately that role, however, and merely try to keep it in mind as I live my way into a definition. Eventually, there will be in the arts a science not of critical studies, but rather an anthropology or psychology of the arts, and to this end I continue to devote thought and research.

In conclusion, I again offer that this is not a manifesto, but simply my course of action. I hope that it will provide to others a guide for their understanding of me and my work. Perhaps some will find it useful in constructing their own guidelines.

Further, while it is basically a personal statement, it is my hope that the reasoning behind it will offer some cogent reflection on the nature of the worlds of the artist, and ways in which we may all emerge from our present crises into a remodeled and more humanistic world.

I am available at all times for criticism or reflection on this presentation, or to discuss it in person or through correspondence. I ask of all my friends and colleagues the candor I hope that they will expect of me. Further, my professional rates and fees are available, are standard as I here pledge, and will be sent to anyone on request.

PARDON MY FORMAL LANGUAGE... THIS IS A PHENOMENOLOGICAL RATHER THAN A POETIC TEXT.

Ken Friedman

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San Diego
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714-583-7935 (Telephone)

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YOU WILL DECIDE THE PRICE OF THE WORK YOU PURCHASE.

THE ENCLOSED LETTER WILL EXPLAIN TO YOU THE REASON THAT THE ARTIST HAS CREATED THIS NEW SYSTEM OF SALE, AND WILL OFFER YOU GUIDELINES IN MAKING YOUR PURCHASE.

YOU ARE RECEIVING THIS LETTER AS AN INFORMATIVE EXAMPLE OF ONE NEW METHOD FOR THE SALE OF ART WORK.

THE LETTER IS BEING USED IN AN EXPERIMENT DEvised BY KEN FRIEDMAN FOR HIS ONE-MAN SHOW AT STARR KING SCHOOL FOR THE MINISTRY IN BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA.

ON THE PURCHASE OF A WORK BY KEN FRIEDMAN

One-man Show, Starr King School, 1971

Dear Friend:

I'm delighted that you are interested in purchasing one of my pieces.

I am deeply disturbed by the way art is handled as a commodity, for several reasons: 1.) the system tends to be inflationary, a spiritual disaster and a financial trauma for most interested parties other than the few who are fortunate enough to benefit from the system as it exists; 2.) I find it difficult to say, "This piece is worth so many dollars," as if love, skill and my background added up to a statistic which further enhanced or detracted from the work before you; 3.) the rich can afford anything, the poor are cut off from all but the cheapest reproductions by the current art system; 4.) the artist and his or her purchaser can only negotiate through a stiff means of transaction, rather than one flexible to both their needs.

Therefore, YOU WILL ESTABLISH THE PRICE YOU WILL PAY FOR THE WORK YOU WISH TO OWN.

HERE ARE SOME GUIDELINES:

1. I hope to raise at least \$3,000 to \$6,000 through the sale of at least 10 works. This gives you a rough range for prices. Please keep in mind that 2/3 of the proceeds from the sale of these works will be to the benefit of Starr King and the Unitarian Universalist Association.
2. Other than the obvious general range, geared ~~to~~ to ten purchasers of healthy but roughly average income, I expect that someone earning perhaps \$30,000.00 a year will pay more, or that a student at the school will pay less. To pay more than you can honestly afford for this work is injurious to us both and re-inforces the negative aspects of art marketeering; to pay less than you can honestly afford ~~to~~ suggests that it is not a work important enough for you to own, and that another work or even the work of another artist would be spiritually more important to you.

I want you to take all the necessary factors into account in the purchase of your work: your income, the meaning of the work to you, the use and result of proceeds from this show, the possible future value of the work.

The final decision which you make regarding the purchase of your work is yours alone. I will respect your decision, and the school will accept your payment at that price and mark the work you choose as sold. There will be at no time any question on your decision or the price you pay.

I will deeply appreciate, if you feel it possible, a note or letter from you telling me why you chose the work you did, what it means to you, what you think about the financial and moral benefits of a new system of selling art such as the one I'm experimenting with here, and the evaluations you made in reaching your decision. It will mean a lot to me to be able to share with you the different aspects of your experience with this show, much as I have tried to share my experience with you through the work and through this letter. I'll be glad to reply to your letters and questions, if you have any.

The root of the whole artistic experience is a spiritual order of communications. It is hard to establish a way to market this process which enables artists to continue to work, while at the same time, does not cheapen the artist or demean the purchaser. This is one way I am trying to solve the dilemma. ~~_____~~

~~_____~~ I am sure that our experiment will provide a clue to the best possible system. ~~_____~~

I expect that your decision regarding the purchase of a work will not only be a rewarding experience for you as an educational and artistic process, but that more than any other way of selling art, it will be fair to both of us.

Sincerely,

Ken Friedman

SHRINE STATEMENT

We live in this age by slogans. Progress is our most important product. Might makes right. Faint heart ne'er won fair maid. Beauty is as beauty does. Who arrives first is foremost.

Even in the arts: like CBW bugs, so much is done or used just because it is there, whether it is necessary or not. And - like most of our technology - too many people feel that a possible technology means or implies that such a technology must be developed and employed.

My favorite TIME magazine article was several years ago when a major Canadian museum purchased an Oldenburg hamburger. Students and faculty at a local art school made a catsup bottle to go with it. When they brought the bottle as a gift to the museum, it was rejected, with a rather odd statement: that Oldenburg's 'burger was a major artwork by an important New York artist, but the bottle by the locals was a mere prank. Do you dig the meaning of that ?

~~_____~~
~~_____~~ So what are these museum directors saying ... ? You know as well as I what they are saying.

I look around and don't see much difference between the goings on in the capitol or the goings on in the culture circles. Not even ~~_____~~ the avant-garde culture circles. Makes me want to puke.

I want things to be made by hand, I want inclusive and passionate statements, I want technology used by great and humble scientists, I want so much ... I want, I want, ... the moon ! (" And if I sleep, who will give me the moon ? " Caligula, by Camus).

The world seems to be run by a bunch of illiterates who mask their ignorance with paltry fables, rather than the vaster literature of myth.

~~_____~~
~~_____~~

Yet, only ... if I could ... if you could ...

It's all been such a waste, and I'm truly sorry about it. I played games I never should have entered, failed in moments when I might have closer touched the center of the world, fallen back when the deeps were offered me. In a vision I once saw my hope, and again last night, I saw the world grow dim and understood how I had failed.

Please, when you approach my shrine, remember that nothing is perfect, that in imperfection delight is so much to be found. That on the rough edge of the rock, there is more piety than by all the smooth stones in paradise.

I will die soon, and you will forget. No matter. But only make each moment a shrine, worship at each shrine, that world without end, the future may be consecrated by the sacred present.

Ken Friedman

THE GENESIS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE GESTALT ESSAY

We are circumscribed in purely verbal communication by the sequential and ordered necessities of language. This process is far removed from the reality of a non-sequential (simultaneous), illogical universe of life-processes. In trying to communicate reality, or a perception of reality, therefore, we stand out of relationship to that which we try to apprehend.

The gift of verbal communication and the related ability to bind time through words is not only a major human achievement, but as well the trap of human consciousness. To bind time is to be caught in the stasis thus created. Human "progress" - as we seem to view it - does not, can not take place in the untimed area of eternity, the infinite "now", but requires a past and a future. Reality offers nothing but now in which to live and work, an infinite progressions of nows, but only the present moment.

In our efforts to communicate with words, we are bound by our words, and can progress only in sequence, using the mind to store bits with which to form a total pattern, or gestalt. This pattern is dictated by the fall and pattern of the words, and usually cannot even begin to approximate the true nature of reality. For example, in a verbal description of a conversation, we can at best have - even through the most perceptive description - only a small sampling of the non-verbal portions of communication. Even given the words accurately, we cannot have the sights, sounds, smells, nuances of tone, physical feeling and gesture, expression, shades of vocal tone, emotional overtones and other aspects of interpersonal interchange. In a report, not only do we miss much, not only are we bound by the reporter's perception and language, but we can not have at all the immediate and all-at-once process of these facts which take place simultaneously. Verbal communications are at best a report only dignified to the status of communication in the full by the personal interaction of communicants.

The acts of speech and writing^{WHICH} are at the root of human achievement become the stumbling-block to the

fullest realization of human potential. In allegory, the word brings order (creation) out of chaos (raw energy), but at the same moment, creates a stasis which, in effect, stops that flow of raw energy which is the absolute fundament of creation. The divine (creator) creates the world (creation) from a portion of itself, but in so doing, that portion of divine energy which becomes the created ceases to be part of the eternal, immaterial realm of spirit, and is made as part of the material, time-bound world. The allegory is paralleled by any act of human creation, wherein some form of internal energy is brought into the physical world as a process or artifact. We are caught in the tension of consciousness thereby, the basic tragic dilemma. It is never fully possible through the word alone to share the modes of being which we attempt to share through such communication.

In an effort to bridge the futile gap between reality and communication, I have chosen here to attempt the creation of a communication structure which will more closely approximate ^{the} reality of that creative energy which is at the root of things than mere ordered discourse can effect.

Consciousness and work arise from an internal universe of sets of thought and feeling. It is not possible through sequential discourse to apprehend that consciousness. It is ~~impossible~~ theoretically possible to create internally a comparable universe of sets, by means of which an approximation of the mode of consciousness from which those sets arise - and to which they give birth - can be apprehended from within.

It is my hope that by presenting the sets (bits, units, pieces, items) comprising my universe of consciousness, the reader can digest them to re-create internally a similiar universe. From that internal simulation, I hope that a mode of consciousness will arise approximating more closely than linear discourse the mode of consciousness in which I work and have my being. Thus the reader will better be able to apprehend my meaning than by more conventional methods.

Obviously, it is not possible to transmit all of the sets in the universe ... they are finite, but so infinite in their finitude that to record the total universe of any individual would require incredibly vast reseahc and publishing facilities. I have chosen certain items - both my own and of others - that are most to-the-point in my present consciousness, and from which a sample universe can be created.

One might expect the process to work in this manner:

Much as the physical universe is comprised of entities and forces moving in time and space relative to one another, exerting physical forces to create and re-create the universe at any given moment, so might the internal universe of consciousness be considered. These things and forces interact, and as they change and move - or as in limited areas of the universe, new forces and transformations are introduced - a new physical reality comes into being. The ingestion of the sets of this partial universe should act as a new force within the universe of the reader. Taken alone - that is, by filtering out the extraneous sets in the reader's universe which do not pertain to the present experiment - they can be expected to create an energy flow akin to gravity which will ultimately result in the creation of a mode of consciousness in the reader approximating that mode of consciousness which arises from this universe acting within me. Of course, it will only be an approximation, and further - since the reader will leave his or her own pertinent sets unfiltered - each reader's mode of consciousness will be different: the present situation, yet still closer than linear transmission of internal data.

I don't know how long the experimental process might take. Most of the sets expressed here have been acting within me for years. Some diligent soul might wish to enhance the process by varied forms of experiments: possibilities might include

The transfer of the sets to file cards to be carried about to be read every now and then, or

To create in a room a physical universe of the sets by placing cards on floor, walls, or ceiling in differing patterns - at first random, then ranked by systems. Such systems might be, for example, placement by ordered value-hierarchies, sets of high agreement close and low agreement at a distance, or the reverse; sets suspended in a passage of internally-logical progressions radiating out from the center of the room, etc. It is up to the reader. Or, perhaps, just to carry the book about, reading passages now and again until the sets are digested and begin to act spontaneously from within.

This experiment is important to me in that process begets content. I write, as does any communicator, to share energy. What I most hope to communicate is the process and spirit of my work. This is a communication of consciousness which should ideally be most pure and which we cannot approach by ordinary means.

Men live and work in sequential time, trapped by the now. But within the now, there is an eternity, a depth standing hidden within our four dimensions of space and time as though it were a fifth dimension. It is in this fifth dimension that the raw energy which gives birth to our known four can be found - it is in this internal universe of out-of-time being that patterns and forms move, flow and congeal to become the insights and processes which mark the great moments in man's creative passage through the physical universe. It is this perpetual, fermenting, turbulent universe which has given birth to the greatest achievements of the human race in the arts, sciences, and in the realms of spirit and psyche.

By undertaking experimental discourse and communication in this realm, rather than in the linear realm, it may be that we can achieve richer and more fruitful experiences of sharing than have been possible before, thus tapping more directly the primal energies in our meetings and work with one another. It is to the possibility of this deeper understanding that this experimental gestalt essay, Creativity, Conscience and Art stands devoted.

If the language in which my theoretical concerns is voiced is too allegoric or poetic, I beg pardon for the personal tendency to such expression. We begin to see through the eyes of science that ultimately there may be seen a unity between the myriad processes of energy-flow, organic, inorganic, electric, psychological, mathematical, and so on. This being an artistic text, rather than an attempt to write a treatise in physics or psychology, I have used the language of my present mood. I hope the point is clear and available to translation into other languages or points-of-view. It is the experiment of the essay itself, in which we try to share a consciousness in toto, rather than the mere particles or facts to which this consciousness gives birth, which is most important.

This universe of consciousness will hopefully make itself and its purpose known to you from within as an internally-guided pilgrimage, rather than an externally delineated passage. An experimental method of communication which places a major responsibility on the reader as co-communicator can be expected to prove more difficult than the usual transmission, but will hopefully offer a clearer and more precise communication and a universe of sets uniquely co-created by the reading participant as most suitable to personal needs and activities.

The following sets are presented in completely random sequence, rather than in any passage-oriented progression, as may be found in other sections of this work:

The Sets:

" We must assume our existence as broadly as we in any way can; everything, even the unheard-of, must be in it. That is at bottom the only courage that is demanded of us: to have courage for the most strange. "

-- Rainer Maria Rilke

" What if Orpheus,
confident in the hard-found mastery,
should go down into Hell ?
Out of the clean light down ?
And then, surrounded
by the closing beasts
and readying his lyre,
should notice, suddenly,
they had no ears ? "

-- Jack Gilbert

" ... one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. "

-- Friedrich Nietzsche

" It is perfectly possible to go to bed one night, of wake up one morning and discover, between inhaling and exhaling, that the self one has sewn together with such effort is all dirty rags, is unusable, is gone; and out of what raw material will we build a self again ? "

-- James Baldwin

in quiet,

and most still
by thee,

that thou hast
sung

the nameless names,
the open-hearted
words,

by rock,
by stones in paradise,

and coursing
to the star
of night,

that thou hast
sung,

wert here,
o thou,
and in thy
presence:

1

-- kf, oct. 28, 1971
mendocino, california

we spirits dance

down west,
down west we dance,
we spirits dance,
we spirits weeping dance.

-- wintu (indian chant)

" ... And what there is to conquer
By strength and submission, has already been discovered,
Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
To emulate - but there is no competition -
There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
For us there is only the trying.
The rest is not our business. "

-- T.S. Eliot

" Many a 'voice in the wilderness' has become the
voice of multitudes and of races in the short span
of written history; indeed, few other voices than those
which were lonely voices at the creative beginning have
ever become the lasting voices of multitudes and races.
Statistical size does not measure social, spiritual,
aesthetic, philosophical potency, value or future.
Structural significance and applicability are the
measures of these things; moral magnitude is their
measure; and relevancy to nature and the necessities
of man in the long run. And statistical smallness
joined with lastingness through time is usually the
precise condition necessary for profound social
achievement which the mass society shall thereafter
appropriate. "

-- John Collier, Sr., from
On The Gleaming Way

" ... in our fine arts, not imitation but creation
is the aim. "

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

" ... Then - leave me, sweetheart. A man of honor
is an animal so rare in the present-day world
that I couldn't bear the sight of one too long.
I must be left alone to relish this unique
experience. "

-- Albert Camus from
Caligula

THE CREATIVE PERSON:

is open to new experiences

abandons conventional problem-solving methods when such methods prove unworkable

needs disorder and accepts chaos

tolerate ambiguity

shifts categories comfortably and at will

has a sharpened need to communicate, and he recognizes that the written and spoken languages are but two media of communication

finds relationships among seemingly unrelated and disparate entities

is casual about the normal conventions (of health, of societal conduct, of dress, of time, etc.). He is not afraid to be thought different

has ready access to his own conscious, and he is unafraid of that which is not conscious

is adventurous. willing to do what he has not done before; he is willing to go out on a limb; and he involves himself with activities which have failure as one of the alive alternatives. He is not afraid to make mistakes. He is not afraid of failure. He is willing to take risks.

is generally troubled or baffled by something or about something

finds the mysterious exciting

is strongly and demonstrably affective

is curious

is an independent and individualistic thinker

is intuitive, and he accepts intuition as a mode of apprehension

tends to be radical

the season of deep night is here - is here
as we are bent
before dark winds,
the prophecy revoked.

From out the yawning
center of the world,
the center of our pain,
the darkest chasm of creation
comes stern warning:

that ~~and~~ at the coldest point of life,
we carve the monument of time,
in hollow epitaph. (lines 1, 2 are reversed)

-- kf, october 1971
san diego, california

" Colonizer, missionary, moralist, crusader for
causes, it is to the hurt of all that you love,
to the defeat of your own purpose and the ruin
of men, if you, plunging toward your aim in
terms of individuals, aggregations of individuals,
or external material results, ignorantly or
impatiently by-pass the society. "

-- John Collier, Sr. in
Indians of the Americas

" ... the thou is never said without the i. "

-- Martin Buber

GEORGE BRECHT: SOMETHING ABOUT FLUXUS, MAY 1964

Now that Fluxus activities are occurring in New York, it's possible for statesiders to get some understanding and, relatively, some misunderstanding of the nature of Fluxus. (A report on last year's Fluxus activities in Europe, Dick Higgins' "Postface", is to be available this summer.) From my point of view the individual understandings of Fluxus have come from placing hands in Ayo's Tactile Boxes, from making a poem with Diter Rot's Poem Machine published in the Fluxus newspaper, from watching Ben Vautier string Alison Knowles-on-the-blue-stool to objects in the room and to the audience in Kosugi's Anima I ...

The misunderstandings seemed to have come with comparing Fluxus with movements or groups whose individuals have had some principle in common, an agreed-upon program. In Fluxus there has never been any attempt to agree on aims or methods; individuals with something innameable in common have simply naturally coalesced to publish and perform their work. Perhaps this common something is a feeling that the bounds of art are much wider than they have conventionally seemed, or that art and certain long-established bounds are no longer useful. At any rate, individuals in Europe, the U.S., and Japan have discovered each other's work and found it nourishing (or something) and have grown objects and events which are original, and often uncategorizable, in a strange new way:

Whether you think that concert halls, theaters, and art galleries are the natural places to present music, performances, and objects, or find these places mummifying, preferring streets, homes, and railway stations, or do not find it useful to distinguish between these two aspects of the world theater, there is someone associated with Fluxus who agrees with you. Artists, anti-artists, non-artists, anartists, the politically committed and the apolitical, poets of non-poetry, non-dancers dancing, doers, undoers, and non-doers, Fluxus encompasses opposites. Consider opposing it, supporting it, ignoring it, changing your mind.

-- George Brecht, 1964

" ...

Of course, the Fluxus group is composed of individuals who differ much in their personality and their work. The general human approach of all, however, is sensibly the same, I think, namely to fight hard against the bottomless stupidity, sadness and mean-ness that keep plaguing our lives; and for a world in which spontaneity, joy, humor, and - why not ? - some sort of higher wisdom (many of us have been influenced by Zen Buddhism), and true social justice and welfare (most of us are politically of the left) would become as common as green are my woman's eyes.

Some program ! I know. I know. Still, we're busy at it. Our main problems are, as I see it, to avoid: -- falling into mere slapstick, or into the trap of anti-art (neo-dadaism); -- being slack in the choice of works, by fear that the bad ~~works~~ (the imitations) should drive out the good (the original contributions); -- becoming prisoners of a 'system'. After all, art is what artists do, and we all write, paint, compose, love, perform, etc....., because we know how. What I mean is, we're not alone. Our aims are fundamentally everyone's. Everyone's defects are also our own. As for me, anyone who at least helps me to fight off the worst is my friend, if he wishes.

... "

--- Robert Filliou

from a letter dated 21-12-63, to the editor of a Danish newspaper.

THE CREATIVE PERSON:

1. Accepts disorder
2. Adventurous
3. Strong affection
4. Altruistic
5. Awareness of others
6. Always baffled by something
7. Attracted to disorder

8. Attracted to mysterious
9. Attempts difficult jobs (sometimes too difficult)
10. Bashful outwardly
11. Constructive in criticism
12. Courageous
13. Deep and conscientious conventions
14. Defies conventions of courtesy
15. Defies conventions of health.
16. Desires to excel
17. Determination
18. Differentiated value-hierarchy
19. Discontented
20. Disturbs organization
21. Dominant (not in power sense)
22. Emotional
23. Emotionally sensitive
24. Energetic
25. A fault-finder
26. Doesn't fear being thought "different"
27. Feels the whole parade is out of step
28. Full of curiosity
29. Appears haughty and self-satisfied at times
30. Likes solitude
31. Independence in judgement
32. Independent in thinking
33. Individualistic
34. Intuitive
35. Industrious
36. Introverted
37. Keeps unusual hours
38. Lacks business ability
39. Makes mistakes
40. Never bored
41. Nonconforming
42. Not hostile or negativistic
43. Not popular
44. Oddities of habit
45. Persistent
46. Becomes preoccupied with a problem
47. Preference for complex ideas
48. Questioning
49. Radical
50. Redemptive to external stimuli
51. Receptive to ideas of others
52. Regresses occasionally
53. Rejection of suppression as a means of impulse control

54. Rejection of repression
55. Reserved
56. Resolute
57. Self-assertive
58. Self-starter
59. Self-aware
60. Self-confident
61. Self-sufficient
62. Sense of destiny
63. Sense of humour
64. Sensitive to beauty
65. Shuns power
66. Sincere
67. Not interested in small details
68. Speculative
69. Spirited in disagreement
70. Strives for distant goals
71. Stubborn
72. Temperamental
73. Tenacious
74. Tender emotions
75. Timid
76. Thorough
77. Unconcerned about power
78. Somewhat uncultured, primitive
79. Unsophisticated
80. Unwilling to accept anything on mere say-so
81. Visionary
82. Versatile
83. Willing to take risks
84. Somewhat withdrawn and quiescent

-- C.W. Scott Hope

" I could no more define poetry than a terrier can define a rat, but we both recognize the object by the symptoms which it provokes in us. "

" If I were obliged, not to define poetry, but to name the class of things to which it belongs, I should call it a secretion. "

-- A.E. Housman

The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are these words out
When a vast image out of spiritus mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in the sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?

-- William Butler Yeats

" They had what the world has lost. They have it now.
What the world has lost, the world must have again,
lest it die. Not many years are left to have or have
not, to recapture the lost ingredient.

This is not merely a passing reference to World
War III or the atom bomb - although the reference
includes these ways of death also. These deaths will
mean an end if they come - racial death, self-inflicted
because we have lost the way, and the power to live
is dead.

^{THE} What, in our human world, is this power to live?
It is ancient, lost reverence and passion for human
personality, joined with the ancient, lost reverence
and passion for the earth and its web of life.

This indivisible reverence and passion is what
the American Indian almost universally had; and
representative groups of them have it still.

They had and have this power for living which our modern world has lost - as world-view and self-view, as tradition and institution, as practical philosophy dominating their society as societies and as an art supremem among all the arts.

...
True, the deep cause of our world agony is that we have lost that passion and reverence for human personality and for the web of life and the earth which the American Indians have tended as a central, sacred fire since before the Stone Age. Our long hope is to renew that sacred fire in us all. It is our only long hope. But the externals we have made our gods are in the saddle now. In our present crisis and out of our inadequacy we must try to sway the immediate event.

...
We must pursue the long hope even while we attempt emergency actions within our cataclysm. Our emergency actions will be stronger if we dwell on the long hope, too. "

-- John Collier, Sr. from
Indians of the Americas

" Truth is mysterious, elusive, ever to be won anew. Liberty is dangerous, as hard to get along with as it is exciting. "

-- Albert Camus

" Thank you God for all these fine incalculable rythms, gifts undeserved and punishments suspended. From the twisting knotted twig of random to my seldom blitzkrieg visions (though usually squandered forgive me). For the change of freedom from incessant briefcase bitching. And for everything that sparkles. It's all yours. Thanks again. "

-- Thad Freeman from
Tales My Grandfather Told His Knee

ars poetica

a poem should be palpable and mute
as a globed fruit

dumb
as old medallions to the thumb

silent as the sleeve-worn stone
of casement ledges where the moss has grown

a poem should be wordless
as the flight of birds

a poem should be motionless in time
as the moon climbs

leaving, as the moon releases
twig by twig the night-entangling trees,

leaving, as the moon behind the winter leaves,
memory by memory the mind -

a poem should be motionless in time
as the moon climbs

a poem should be equal to:
not true

for all the history of grief
an empty doorway and a maple leaf

for love
the leaning grasses and two lights above the sea -

a poem should not mean
but be.

-- archibald macleish

" We climbed to the Taos plateau in a blinding snowstorm, just before Christmas. Then while great snowflakes descended at twilight, we watched the Virgin and Child borne from the Christian church high along an avenue of fires to a vast chanting of pagan song. After two days, the Red Deer Dance began, and the Sacred Mountain which haunts the sky ~~flames~~ north-westward from Taos shuddered, and poured out a cold, flaming cloud to the sun and all the stars. It seemed

that way. And veritably, within its own affirmation, through a multitudinous, stern, impassioned collective outgiving, the tribe's soul appeared to wing into the mountain, even to the Source of Things.

Once before - almost twenty years before - I had been stormshaken as on that Taos day. That was upon my discovery of Walt Whitman during my seventeenth year. I was rocked; it was like an hallucination of earthquake; a sudden dread fear; the time-horizon pushed back in a moment and enormously; and then the rebound from somewhere deep within and great without, and exaltation; and the whole summer forest, viewed from a hilltop, seemed to sway and leap in a rejoicing dance. That solitary experience of "cosmic consciousness" had been mine, that forever solitary translation. But here ~~was~~, at Taos, ~~was~~ a whole race of men, before my eyes, passed into ecstasy through a willed discipline, splendid and fierce, yet structural, an objectively impassioned discipline which was a thousand or ten thousand years old, and as near to the day of first creation as it had been at the prime.

Here was a reaching to the fire-fountain of life through a deliberate social action employing a complexity of many arts. Here was the physical wonder-working we think we find in Greek drama as lived out in Athens four hundred years before Christ. And here it was a whole community which entered into the experience and knew it as a fact. These were unsentimental men who could neither read nor write, poor men who lived by hard work, men who were told every day in all kinds of unsympathetic ways that all they believed in and cared for had to die, and who never answered back. For these men were at one with their gods. "

-- John Collier, Sr. in
Indians of the Americas

I
The song
I walk here

-- A Modoc Singer

" I perform the Beauty Way.
I am over eighty years old.
I have been learning since I was eleven years old.
I want someone to learn what I have been learning. "

-- Dan Yazzie
a medicine man of the Navajo

" The sea rises, the light fails,
lovers cling to each other
and children cling to us.
The moment we cease to hold each other,
the moment we break faith with one another,
the sea engulfs us and the lights go out. "

-- James Baldwin

This: At the End of Time
Stood I, singing to myself,

And left my ~~native~~ native land,
And left the waters,
Naked and alone.

And left my friends,
My family and my work
To walk in silence.

-- kf, 1971

BLACK-TAILED DEER SONG

Down from the houses of magic,
Down from the houses of magic
Blow the winds, and from my antlers
And my ears they stronger gather.

Over there I ran trembling,
Over there I ran trembling,
For bows and arrows pursued me.
Many bows were on my trail.

-- Pima Indian Song

" The universe is ambiguous, simultaneous, ever-changing and reforming. If we approach life expecting order and stasis, we can only view the processes of universal life and evolution with fear or despair. If we approach life expecting change, we find an unparalleled adventure which challenges us to co-create with it our passage through the world.

A distaste for ambiguity and chaos is the mark of this fear.

An appreciation of energy-flow can "freeze" in a moment of impassioned order - such is the order of a sumi-painting, a rock garden or an event - but it bears the mark of universal energy and ambiguity just as iron filings witness the presence of a magnetic field, or cloud-chamber photos reveal the passage of atomic particles.

To work with that which is most creative and energetic, we must come to appreciate the ambiguous and that which flows. "

-- kf

from a sermon at The First Unitarian Church of San Diego
1968

WAR SONG

clear the way
in a sacred manner
I come
the earth
is mine

-- Sioux Indian War Song

DREAM SONG

Where will you and I sleep ?
At the ~~bottom~~ down-turned jagged rim of the sky
You and I will sleep.

-- Wintu Indian Song

The arts are a career of ultimate social responsibility.
If the artist has one duty, it is this:

No matter how she or he speaks, his or her statements
must make it impossible for anyone meeting the work
to come away ignorant, untouched.

The duty of the artist is to make it impossible for a
people ever again to say, wether on issues of war or
of peace,

" We didn't know. "

In the recent past, the German people said, " We
didn't know. " The American people said, " We didn't
know. " The Russian people said, " We didn't know. "

Before there can come truth or justice or the deep
beauty into the world of human beings, there must
come knowledge. It is the treatment of various forms
of knowledge which is the task of the artist.

As long as one person can look back in shame to say,
" I didn't know. ", things will not change. But ~~at~~
that moment when every human being does know, first
the past, then the present, first the physical, then
the spiritual, first the shameful, then the glorious:
at that moment the true roots of our potentiality
will take hold and begin to flourish.

The first step is simple: whether or not we can bring
about direct action or change, a thing always
dependent on circumstance - we can make it difficult
and then impossible for people ever again to say,
" We didn't know. "

-- kf

In cold,
In dark of winter,

Hard
by the shrieking silence
Of this night,

We stand,
are touched,

The marrow
chilled and thickened.

Deep,
So utmost deep,
are touched,

And trembling
at the root,

Behold a blood-pale moon.

-- kf

THEY WILL APPEAR

They will appear - may you behold them !
They will appear - may you behold them !
A horse nation will appear.
A thunder-being nation will appear.
They will appear, behold !
They will appear, behold !

-- Sioux Indian Chant

YOU SHALL LIVE

A thunder-being nation I am, I have said.
A thunder-being nation I am, I have said.
You shall live.
You shall live.
You shall live.
You shall live.

PROPHECY

Many winters ago, our wise ancestors predicted that a great monster, with white eyes, would come from the east and, as he advanced, would consume the land. This monster is the white race, and the prediction is nearing its fulfillment. They advised their children, when they become weak, to plant a tree with four roots, branching to the north, the south, the east, and the west; and then collecting under its shade, to dwell together in unity and harmony. This tree, I propose, shall be this very spot. Here we will gather, here live, and here die.

-- Iro quois Prophecy

" ... so I'm saying to you, that we are all of us together like a tree with lots of roots, lots of branches. Together we can flourish, grow strong, give up bad habits of capitalist greed, racism, be together always. It can be the greatest if we are all working together. Even if most of us are white, maybe we will work hard in peace and justice, and we can share in this prophecy you sent me. "

-- Stein An Der Wald

End of sets.

End card chosen at random. For explanations of why either so many or so few, see THE SACRED JOURNEY.

The Sacred Journey was originally to be a book of my events, artworks, reproductions of pieces and past work, etc. A sort of personal anthology.

But every time a piece was to be included, I looked it over ... maybe it was good, intelligent, had - as art, - the right touch. But it wasn't what I wanted. Eventually, nothing out of all my work was what I wanted. And then I realized what I was doing.

The Sacred Journey is really meant to be a discussion of my pilgrimage. I've talked about other parts in relation to work, ethics, creativity, etc., in the other portions of the book. In the Gestalt Essay, I found toward the end that I had almost said too much, so omitted several hundred more bits which would otherwise be great. Enough is enough. And here, I want to wrap it all up. The other material will wait for an anthology, or another treatise on creativity, or whatever. If you are interested more deeply in some of it, my other completed book, The Stone Forest: An Existential Approach to Education can be acquired by inter-library loan from The Friedman Collection, Mandeville Department of Special Collections, Central Library, University of California at San Diego, as can most of my journals and published or unpublished other works. Later this year, The Oakland Museum will make more material accessible generally with the release of the catalogue to my One-Year, One Man Show. This is just sort of a post-literate, right-now letter about my feelings.

What does the pilgrimage mean to me ?

We come from darkness, attaining form - and too often find that the form we attain limits us rather than freeing us through graceful discipline. The pilgrimage is a path on the road to formless form.

I'm trying through all of my work to keep together with my friends, to expand my knowledge, to have fun, to enjoy the sublimely beautiful and the absurdly ridiculous ... sharing and turning all the while. Everything, great and small, has its place. In my work, rather than a facade of one activity, I act as an intermedialist to find a place for each aspect of self and work.

THE SACRED JOURNEY

KEN FRIEDMAN

It's quite simple really, yet very complex. Take, for example, the new International Contact List just released by Fluxus West, Image Bank and TransCanadian Fluxus, Ltd. It contains 1,500 or so names, through the work of 20 people and over 500 man-hours. It's a tool. But it takes years to make it useful: years in which to know the people, what they do, who is who, etc. Of course, one can simply begin to write around and correspond - and after a few years, the list becomes even for the person who at first knows nobody a useful tool. And that's the beauty of it.

We want to change the world. Changing the world is a difficult task. Why?

In order to change the world, we must change the attitudes and lifestyles of men and women. This means that in reality we don't change men and women, but change situations in order to allow people to choose and be free to choose the changes most suitable for them by themselves. Thus, we change the human situation.

How do we change the human situation? By changing and renovating the culture - the patterns of being and interaction - in which the lives of human beings are rooted and grounded. But this change is slow.

It would seem, at least superficially, that the great technological advances are speeding up the process of culture change. At some levels, and in some ways, this is true. But not at the deep level.

Culture is transmitted primarily from parent to child and peer group to child before the age of 5. This means, to change the lifestyle of the next generation, the lifestyle of this generation must change. And the very nature of the technology which has already locked this generation in prevents this. So ... the task is to create a situation in which at least minimal change can be accomplished, and necessary social change in terms of ecology and justice must be accomplished. Thus, the culture of the world-that-is-to-be will be changed slightly. And then, given this momentum, the world and culture of the generation-next will be changed again. Finally, at the length of a succession of generations, each prior step will have been taken, will become rooted, until at last the generation will come that will grow organically (i.e., preverbally, before the age of 5) into the new culture that we see and feel, but cannot touch nor truly create in more than a model or theoretical form as a physical reality.

All along the way, we must be changing ourselves, experimenting, trying new models, living out new forms and energy flows, correcting what can be corrected now and laying the groundwork for what we cannot accomplish immediately.

At the same moment, doing this progressive deed, we stand rooted in the depth of eternity. It is this chasm in which we find our greatest joy and strength, our deepest dread and sorrow. Here is the raw and divine energy from which we build, translating it out into the patterns of work and living which we are and which we become.

This is the pilgrimage.

I think it is this nameless pilgrimage which is the common bond of Fluxus and of similiar groups ... Image Bank, New York Correspondance School, say in art. Or certain collectives of religious or scholars or scientists. And as we grow to know and work with one another, we lay the ground for that which we can enjoy, even though we cannot hope to live through to the end of our work. The work is great, is the deed of many lifetimes. We have, between never and forever, but one life.

Me, I'm not an artist. Just a pilgrim. Sometimes I do art, sometimes I write, sometimes I'm an observer, sometimes an anthropologist. All this and more. As we all can be. The joy of it is, the message of it is: with a little hard work, a lot of love and something beyond name, we can be it all, experience the depth of all even within this brief time-span.

As these words flow across the page, we are engaged in the big international Keeping Together Manifestation for the sixth year since 1967. It's my biggest religious holiday, every year in March. I'm thinking of Thad Freeman and Susan in Colombia, Steve Abrams in Mendocino, Tom Albright in San Francisco, Connie Burgess in Boston, Bob Kimball in Berkeley, Milan Křižák in Czechoslovakia, Dietrich Albrecht in Stuttgart ... and many more. All the people who have somehow crossed wires and interconnected with one another or with me these last few days by mail or phone or person. That's the joy of it.

Perhaps the most moving lines in Camus' great play, Caligula, appear in Act II, when the Emperor addresses Scipio, saying,

" Loneliness ! What do you know of it ? ... You prate of loneliness, but you don't realize that one is never alone. Always, we are attended by the same load of the future and the past. Those we have killed are always with us. But they are no great trouble. Its those we have loved, those who loved us and whom we did not love; regrets, desires, bitterness and sweetness, whores and gods, the celestial gang ! Always with us ! "

There's a lot to life. The task is to be awake to it all, to the possibilities. For if we sleep, who will give us the moon ?

When we read a book, we expect it to build up, peak and reach a climax toward the end. I try to write in such a way that the meaning is fairly well distributed, the experience continuous. There is no climax ... only the living-out of it. I write short books to make information flow more easily. And beyond that, when enough has been said, the best of all is silence, or music, or dance ... or one of the many things beyond words, of which we talk in books such as this, but which we must do to enjoy.

In a sense, I'm apologizing for bringing you here in the same way we came. It's like a dance, we do it for the pleasure and the re-learning of the experience. I've ~~no~~ doubt that if you've read this, perhaps you must already know it. If you've enjoyed dancing with me, that's the best part.

Next year, I'll be doing something different and it will be your turn to write the book. We all work together, share the labor, share the profits, share the richness of our moments. When your turn comes to write the book, please send me a copy.

And in the meantime, don't sleep !

" In beauty it is finished. "

-- Navajo Night Chant

Keep Together Always !

Ken Friedman

This is the complete edition of THE AESTHETICS, letter-press, mimeo printed and bound at Beau Geste Press during March 1973.

The first edition of 300 copies follows the pre-publication version produced in Canada during Ken Friedman's period as artist in residence at Saskatchewan University's Regina Campus in March 1972. It was to have included an Introduction by Jorge Glusberg, of the Centro de Arte y Comunicacion in Buenos Aires, and a SYMPOSIUM, in which Dietrich Albrecht, Tom Albright, Alison Knowles, Richard Kostelanetz, Lucy Lippard, Michael Morris, George Neubert, Jock Reynolds, Klaus Staeck, and Denis Wheeler were to have taken part. These did not materialize before the publication date.

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