




VM503
AESTHETICS AND HISTORY
OF NEW MEDIA

WEEK 3 CLASS 2

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Happenings ... Allan Kaprow

- 1959 -1961
- **Interactivity, participation, or collaboration?** (sometimes no audience; often called *environments/events*, more like immersive paintings/installations).
- No structured beginning, middle or end = **open, fluid** (the audience often didn't know when they had ended).
- No separation between event and audience.*
- Critiques art world (white walls, polite conversation): "It is unaware."

Kaprow continued....

- Are **dirty**, like *life*; 'dirt' makes us grow.
- Are **generated** in *action*.
- **Improvisatory**, like jazz.
- **Chance** determines structure (implies risk/fear/willingness to fail); **spontaneous** thereafter.
- **Impermanence**.

Kaprow continued....

- Element of **surprise**.
- “If I call it art, it is because I wish to avoid the endless arguments some ... would bring forth.”
- “The only success occurred when there was lack of it.”
- “The glaring truth ... is that nearly all artists ... who have made their mark as innovators ... have capitulated to the interests of good taste.”

Kaprow continued....


- “To all intents and purposes, they are dead and they are famous.”
- Happenings can be **supported**, not sold.
- To the extent that it is **not a commodity**, it may become *a state of mind* (like Fluxus).



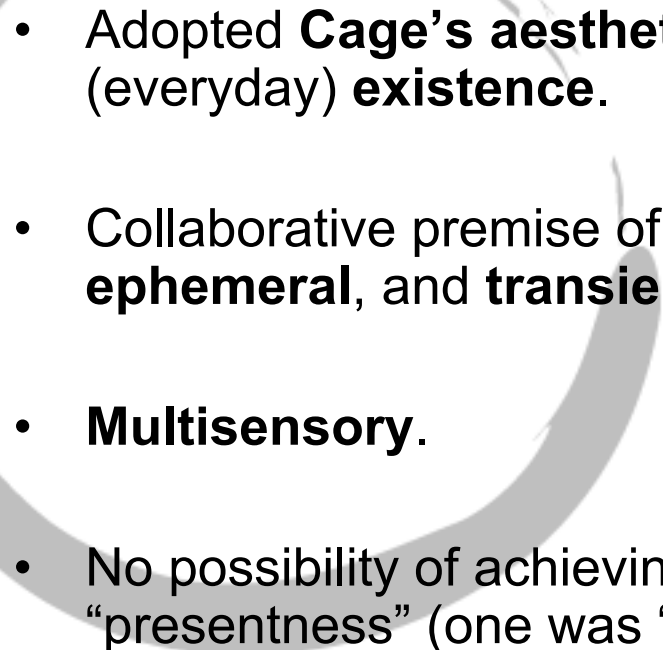

Collaboration without Object(s) in the Early Happenings

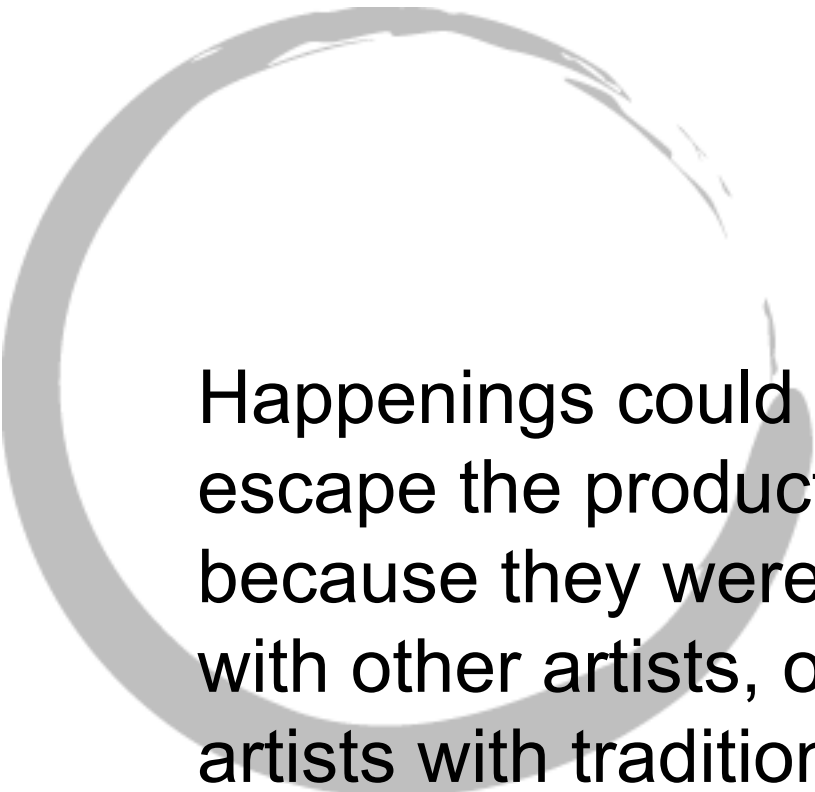
by
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- Non-Object, Non-Product (refusal of materialism, **rejection of signature, originality, authorship**).
- Events and activities that blurred the line between **audience/performer; artist/nonartist**.
- As collaborations, they were **relations among individuals**.
- Despite Kaprow's renunciation of the art-world, *they were art-world events*.
- Subverted the **formalist aesthetic** (pure art).

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- Adopted **Cage's aesthetic** which foregrounded **ordinary** (everyday) **existence**.
 - Collaborative premise of Happenings was **performative, ephemeral, and transient**.
 - **Multisensory**.
 - No possibility of achieving a state of “grace” through “presentness” (one was “physically interfered with”).
 - No hierarchical clarity/material distinction.
 - A means not an end.*
 - Resistance in the form of **not making objects**.




Happenings could escape objectification, escape the productive link with objects, because they were **collaborations** -- of the self with other artists, of artists with audience, of artists with traditions immediate and more long-lived, and of the art world with the world in which its role had been defined in formal object-oriented terms.



The Medium is the Medium

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Hello - Allan Kaprow (1969)

- A “**telehappening**”.
- 5 TV cameras, 27 monitors, 4 remote locations over a CCTV network.
- Groups of people dispatched with instructions *hello, I see you.*
- Resulted from Kaprow’s interest in “*communications media as non-communications.*”
- Emphasized “**oneself in connection to someone else**”.

Hole in Space (1980)

Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz

- A **public communication sculpture**.
- Lincoln Center (**NYC**), and The Broadway department store (**LA**).
- An evening of **discovery**, an evening of **intentional word-of-mouth** rendezvous, followed by a **mass migration** of families and trans-continental loved ones, some of which had not seen each other for over twenty years.
- **Severed the distance** between both cities and created an “outrageous pedestrian intersection”.



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