

Gathie Falk, Ann Rosenberg, Aaron Steele / VIEWS & REVIEWS

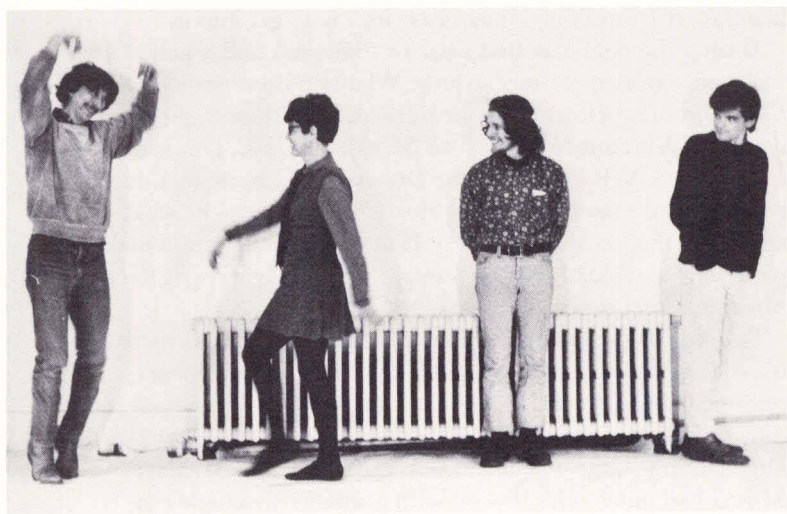
The commentary that begins here is based on an interview conducted at Gathie Falk's house in Kitsilano on Monday, June 21, 1982. It is augmented elsewhere in the text with materials taken from Falk's archives and with fragments from pertinent reviews. The speakers are identified by initials.



GF The invitation to attend Deborah Hay's workshops came to me via Doug Christmas.³ He said, "I want you to be in this workshop with this dancer from New York." I said, "I'm no dancer, I've never danced in my life." He said, "That doesn't matter, and this is the exercise you're to come prepared with." It was to *make a piece that lasted one minute*. But I didn't know what a *piece* was. I knew what a minute was. Of course, I'd heard about happenings, but she didn't call it a happening. What I knew

about happenings was what I saw being done around here — people were collected with many materials of different kinds and they were told to go ahead and use those materials in various original ways, if possible. These events were very boring for the spectator; only of interest to the participants. So when this was called a *piece*, I had to think very hard about what to do.

I thought that if I took a turntable and I put an apple on top of it in the middle and I put something around it in the middle and if I unwound it for one minute by turning my body to make it turn, that would be a piece. Or if I did that for half of the time and then unwound for half a minute, that might be O.K. But I couldn't figure out the logistics. So, I ended up with a turntable alright (it was candy apple red) and with a ceramic apple. I did *something* but it was wrong because it didn't last a



minute. What I did wasn't very interesting. But nobody won in that first round. Bodo Pfeifer, Glenn Lewis, Michael Morris, Anna Gilbert, Helen Goodwin and all her dancers, Evelyn Roth and other visual artists attended. None of us did that first exercise right.

I remember that the next thing Deborah asked us to do was to make a piece that was structurally based on the sound of our

voice. Then I began to have a glimmer about what she wanted. I asked everyone to take off his shoes and put them in a pile. (I knew by then that she wanted to know, "When was the beginning, when was the end?" There was to be no shuffling into the beginning slowly or indecisively.) So, I collected everybody's shoes, put them into a pile and I said, "It begins *now!*" I took one shoe over to a floorboard — we were at Intermedia — I counted ten floorboards and put down the next shoe, and so on.⁴ I could see, I was getting to the wall before I ran out of shoes, so before I got to the wall I turned the corner and pretended I was counting floorboards. But I was petering out then, because the spaces were becoming smaller. Then I went to the far end of the space at the head of all the shoes and I said "The piece is over."

She thought that was wonderful. And I knew that there had to be something interesting about a piece, or unusual, a beginning and an end, some structure. I was launched. Because it was so like the art I was doing, it was easy for me to get into it.

During the period of that week or that week and a half, I used the shoes again, more successfully. What I'd done earlier was just a little bit of a performance piece, not a performance piece by itself. I invented the piece called *Skipping Ropes*. This is how it came about. As it happened, we couldn't use Intermedia that evening, so we met at Michael Morris' old house — he was away. On this occasion Deborah Hay said, I want you to make a piece half of which is told as a story. She usually gave us ten or fifteen minutes to figure it out.

So I walked around the place, opened a drawer and there were some skipping ropes. Then I saw D'Arcy Henderson's ceramic banana. It had fingermarks on it so you could hold it as though it were a musical instrument, a flute. And there was a huge picture frame — one of those wide ones that Michael Morris had made out of metal with a smaller rectangle cut within it. It was dark blue. Then I walked through the kitchen and out the back door and I saw their old Christmas tree — a small one, with all the needles gone. Just a brown Christmas tree. Then I started working on it. I'd had in my mind the night before as I was driving somewhere, the phrase "Name, Age, Sex, Racial Origin." (Sometimes when you're involved in activities like these, little things crop up, but you're not sure how to use them.) So as I was starting, I wasn't entirely sure what I was going to do in the end, it wasn't entirely worked out but it

worked itself out as I did it. I wouldn't normally work this way, but remember, I only had ten minutes.

It went this way, as I recall. I'd given the participants their instructions and told them to wait outside the door of the house until a certain signal. The audience was seated on the living room couch. I'd set the picture frame parallel to the door and I'd suspended the three skipping ropes tied together as a line from the ceiling, slightly diagonally in relation to the frame. I walked to centre stage. I had the banana and the Christmas tree on the floor. I began by telling the story.

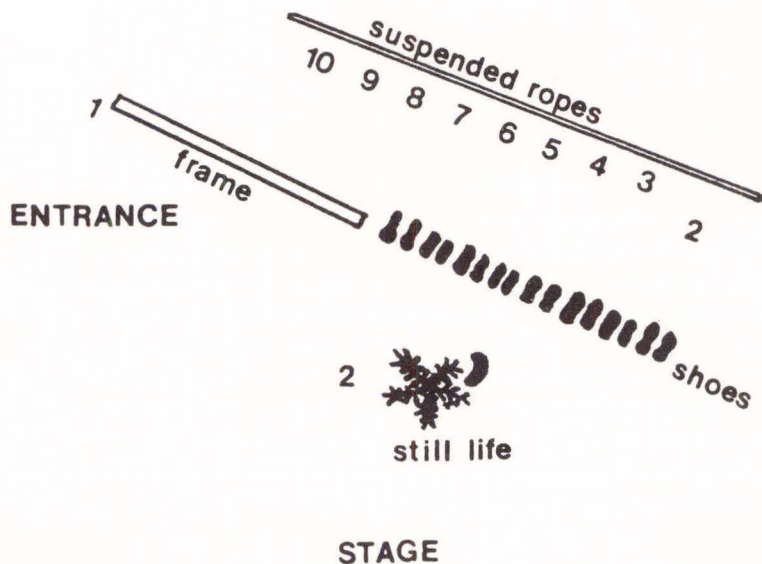
"Everybody is at the bottom of the hill. Slowly they walk up the hill and, at the middle, they meet a man playing on his banana. Each person bows and continues on his way. Later, there is a Christmas tree. Each person takes a needle, puts it between his teeth, continues on his way. Finally, they arrive at the door over there."

Then I stood up and walked to the head of the line, near the skipping ropes. The others came in, singly. Each walked through the frame, removed his shoes, set the shoes in a row beside the frame, took up a position facing me, hanging from the ropes as though they were on the bus. So, you had the line of shoes and the line of the ropes and a line of people. When they were all in, all hanging there, I shouted, "THESE ARE YOUR ORDERS. WHEN YOU HEAR THE GONG SAY YOUR NAME, AGE, SEX, RACIAL ORIGIN; WHEN YOU HEAR THE GONG SAY YOUR NAME, AGE, SEX AND RACIAL ORIGIN! I REPEAT, WHEN YOU HEAR THE GONG GIVE YOUR NAME, AGE, SEX, RACIAL ORIGIN."

Now, this came as a total surprise to the participants as well as to the audience. And, even as I said it, I didn't know what I was going to do for a gong. I just didn't know what I was going to do, but it worked in my mind and just saying it over and over again, it got softer. So I repeated it, repeated it, repeated it until it was a whisper and then it was gone. I stopped, I relaxed, everyone relaxed. Deborah and the others thought the piece was wonderful. Everytime I rehearsed it and even at the performance, she said when I started to shout, her heart was still beating. Of course, the piece that came from this is *Skipping Ropes* and the "name, age, sex, racial origin" phrase became the chant for *Chorus*.

SKIPPING ROPES

3 skipping ropes tied together
plastic fishline to suspend them
a picture frame just large enough to get through
an artificial Christmas tree
a ceramic banana, a real banana or
a piece of ceramic watermelon
1 leader
1 person to hold the frame
5 to 10 people



CAST: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9...12 (*maximum*)

ACTION:

1 enters with a large picture frame. She places it at left centre stage and holds it erect throughout the performance. (It is just big enough to get through without touching it, but one must be careful, crouching a little as one goes through.) Behind the frame the skipping ropes suspended-in-a-line are visible making a diagonal at eye level.

2 enters through the door and moves to centre front stage where there is the still life — the artificial Christmas tree, the real or ceramic banana or the ceramic watermelon slice. She tells this story:

“Everybody is at the bottom of the hill. Slowly they walk up the hill in single file and, at the middle, they meet a man playing on his banana (or watermelon).” *She demonstrates.* “Each person



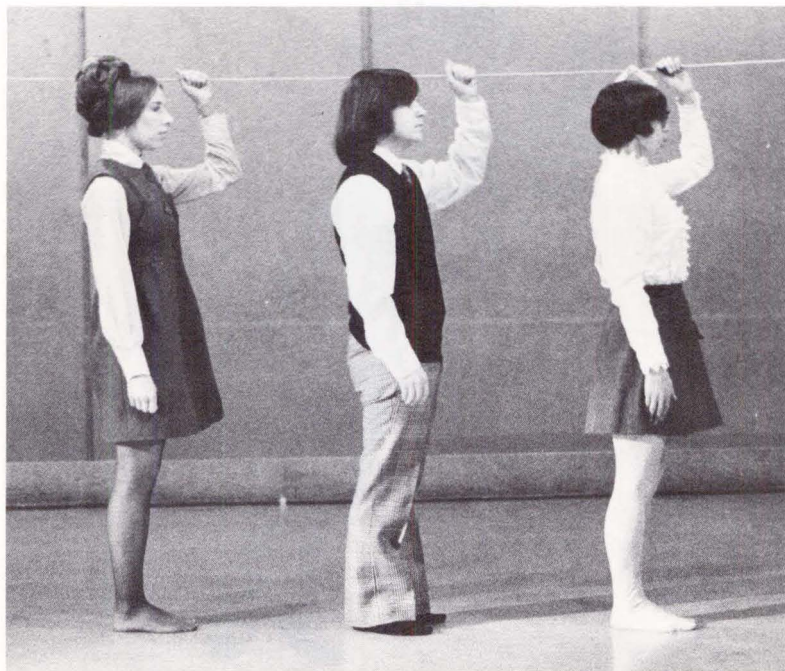
bows and continues up the hill. Later, there is a Christmas tree. Each person takes a needle and puts it between his teeth." *She demonstrates.*

"Finally, they arrive at the door over there." *She points to the entrance to the room.*

2 walks to the end of the skipping ropes, stage right, and stands near them facing the entrance.

The participants who have been standing outside the door enter, singly. 3 comes in, removes his/her shoes and places them neatly at the right edge of the picture frame. 3 walks through the frame, bending carefully so that the frame is not touched. 3 walks over to the ropes and holds a position on them as though he/she were riding a bus, facing 2 who is standing nearby.

4 5 6 7 8 9 etc. enter singly and, having arranged their shoes methodically in a diagonal line beside the first pair proceed to the ropes. They hang there as though on a bus, facing 2.



2 moves from her position near the ropes to the line of shoes to the right of the frame. She silently counts them as though she were a foreman of a factory who is mildly interested in *who is present*. 2 moves back to her position at the head of the skipping rope line, having come through the frame as the others did. Facing the line of people holding the ropes, she yells:

“THESE ARE YOUR ORDERS. WHEN YOU HEAR THE GONG SAY YOUR NAME, AGE, SEX AND RACIAL ORIGIN. I REPEAT, WHEN YOU HEAR THE GONG SAY YOUR NAME, AGE, SEX AND RACIAL ORIGIN.”

She repeats and repeats this order, 15 times or more, getting softer and softer each time (almost imperceptively) until, finally, the phrase which has become a whisper is mouthed inaudibly on her lips.

There is no gong. When 2 has stopped moving her lips, she relaxes. All relax. They exit.

SKIPPING ROPES was first performed at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1968.

/ VIEWS & REVIEWS cont'd

GF When I do this as a performance piece, the number of people varies, I like to have at least five and no more than ten. They wear their ordinary shoes — some may wear rubbers, but they take them off (whatever they are) right there on the stage area, undo their laces . . .

AS There are some political implications there . . .

GF Well, sure there are. In any of my pieces there can be undertones or overtones of various kinds. Political, what's done to us, the orders we get, the forms we have to fill out, the information that has nothing to do with anything, things like that . . .

AS But in a heavier sense, gas chambers . . .

GF Yes, also that.

AS Sending people through, taking their clothes off . . . while somebody else is playing a banana . . .

GF Yes, it starts off so gently with this nice lady telling this gentle story . . .

AS Yes, a real heartbreaker! So if you're not consciously looking for a moral or anything didactic, what are you looking for?

GF I can look, but I can't *put in*. That's the point. I can *get out*, but I can't put in a moral or story . . .

AS So, actually it's a kind of sculpture through time/space?

GF Everything one does has a feeling to it, an emotion. For instance, a pile of apples, it makes a perfect shape, a pyramid shape. It's not a real pyramid, but it reminds me of a pyramid. . . . A calm shape, *perfect*. Every unit is an apple which is a material that can rot, can disintegrate, is emotional in its being not hard, but being soft and undulating, having a soft surface to it hence having all those emotional qualities — even a stem end, a beginning and an end. That's all inherent in this one sculpture — calm things, emotional things. I feel those things when I look at it. You can feel them or feel some of them. But I hadn't really intended to do that when I made the apple pile, I just knew it was a good thing to make. And that's how the performance pieces work.

Different people get different things out of them and some people just get laughs.

And, of course, the row of shoes in *Skipping Ropes* led to the sculpture I did of the 18 pairs of shoes arranged diagonally in a line in the *Single Right Men's Shoes Series* (1971-73).

Each day of the festival something was done. The "score" announced time, place and people involved; the audience occurred at random. One event was only seen by two people, another was walked through and over by noon-hour crowds in the main hall. Two answers in different keys to the question, "What is performance?"

One day Helen Goodwin had a long line of people move slowly along the outside wall of the Student Union Building until it disappeared slowly through the doors. This frieze animated in "slow motion" showed up the arbitrariness of our time sense, as did Glenn Lewis' Rice Krispie piece. Lewis sat at a piano smoking a cigarette, his arms falling on the keys between puffs. This provided timing and orchestration for the emptying of eighteen boxfuls of Rice Krispies over the floor . . .



Gathie Falk's theatre pieces are more elaborate. To describe them fully would take time and do less than justice to their weird dramatic tension and surreal atmosphere. Briefly in one, a ceramic watermelon and a small plastic Christmas tree sat on the floor to be transformed as they became part of a story recited by the artist. Meanwhile about a dozen people came through an empty picture frame behind, took off their shoes and set them in a row.

These people then took up their places, formally and carefully holding onto a suspended skipping rope. Finally Gathie Falk intoned in a shout that became a whisper, "When you hear the gong say your name, age, sex and racial origin," over and over. This piece creates time scale within itself, it also makes a lot of allusions to our experience outside of it using scale, perspective and sound . . .

Charlotte Townsend, "About Art," rev. of *Skipping Ropes*, by Gathie Falk and *Rice Krispie* by Glenn Lewis, *The Vancouver Sun*, 2 July, 1966.

A BIRD IS KNOWN BY HIS FEATHERS ALONE

tape recorder

tape with a canary whistling *O Danny Boy!*

white paper roll, white kitchen table

round wash basin, camera

chair, can of syrup, spoon, mirror with stand

stool

3 lipsticks in different hues

powder & puff, perfume & atomizer

7 artificial Christmas trees in a large box

purse with comb, scissors, mirror, and a reading from *B.C. Teacher*

100 cocktail glasses, 100 maraschino cherries

100 ceramic oranges or orange-painted real oranges

masking tape, tacks

5 people

CAST: 1 2 3 4 5

ACTION:

1 comes on stage carrying a towel, soap, a basin of water. She puts the water and soap on table to right stage and stands behind it, servant fashion, holding the towel over her arm. A tape recording of a canary singing *O Danny Boy!* is turned on off-stage.

2 enters, goes to the table, takes the towel from 1 in order to begin this ritual which is repeated 5 times:

dry face, wet face, pin back hair, soap face, remove glasses, roll up sleeves, rinse off, put glasses back on, roll down sleeves, take pins from hair.

1 folds towel and places it over her arm after each use.



2 moves to chair where mirror, spoon and syrup are placed and sits on the stool behind, facing audience. 2 applies syrup to her face like make-up.



1 moves, as 2 begins, to far left middle stage and faces centre front stage.

2 applies the syrup slowly, with great care to leave no spot on face untouched. *O Danny Boy!* is turned off. 2 takes the syrup can and having walked over to the table stage right, studies the wash basin upon it and begins to make an abstract expressionist painting on it. She throws syrup from the spoon at the basin from each of the four corners of the paper that's under the table. She finishes her work with one dynamic throw over all.



1 approaches the table and picks up the camera beside the wash basin as if to take a picture of the abstract expressionist painting. Instead she advances to the audience and takes a picture of them. 1 & 2 exit (see p. 28).

(This is the first part of A BIRD IS KNOWN BY HIS FEATHERS ALONE performed along with other materials — see VIEWS & REVIEWS below — first at an Intermedia Concert at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1968). It was revised in 1972 for a performance at the Vancouver Art Gallery to include the following parts:

* * *

3 comes on carrying lipstick, powder & puff in his back pockets. He advances to the paper sheet attached to the back wall of the performance space. He makes a large, light drawing of lips and proceeds to fill in the area with colours (3), working very carefully. He smooths out the whole thing into a large, soft-edged circle of red resembling a target. He dusts it over with the powder & puff he has in his pocket. He squirts it with the perfume atomizer and exits.

When 3 is busy with the powder & puff, 2 returns to the stage, clean-faced and with a large box containing 7 artificial Christmas trees and carrying a handbag containing scissors, a mirror, a comb and a reading. 2 makes a circle of the Christmas trees at stage left. 2 sits at the centre, opens purse, takes out the toilet items, cuts her hair while considering the results in the mirror.



2 removes the reading from her purse and in a matter-of-fact voice reads the following passage from the December 1960 issue of *B.C. Teacher*:

"I belong to the 'tie-regardless' group but I am certain you will agree that suitable dress for male teachers extends beyond the wearing of a tie.

"My basic tenet is that teachers belong to a professional group and at all times they should dress like professional people. There are acceptable standards of dress for doctors, lawyers and other professionals and these should be the unquestionable standards for teachers.

"In my opinion, taking them as a group, there are no better dressed men than lawyers, and teachers should be in the same class. By 'better dressed' I am not referring to the price tag of the suit. With a little care a fellow can be just as well dressed in a moderately priced suit as in the most expensive one.

"Thus my first requirement is a well-pressed suit or jacket and slacks combination. And of course, a dress shirt and tie and suitable well-kept shoes. For hot weather there are short sleeved shirts.

"In the hot weather I would permit the neck button of the shirt to be loosened with the tie also loosened but I would insist on a tie being worn. Only in excessively hot weather would I permit coats to be removed.

"There is no place in school for a sports shirt. Never. The open-neck flannel shirt is inexcusable.

"I would set the same standards of dress for out-of-school functions. Some teachers who are always well-dressed at school seem to lower the standard when attending teachers' meetings. I consider such meetings part of the teachers' professional activity and the professional standard of dress should apply. Of course, teachers should be suitably dressed for participation in sports activities but for business gatherings business dress should be worn.

"In my opinion, the principal should set a high standard of dress at all times and should insist that his staff meet these standards, even to the extent of having courteous but frank discussions where these become necessary.

"I have concentrated on the men's dress but I would insist upon similar high standards for the feminine members of the staff. I expect them at all times to wear well-cared-for clothing and suitable shoes. Just as I insist on ties for men for school, I insist that the ladies always wear hose.

"All teachers, male and female, both in and out of school should dress in such a way that they are considered well-groomed."

2 stays on stage, at rest.

* * *

4 comes on stage and lies down to the left of the cocktail glasses. He moves the glasses across the stage with his body, herding them carefully but inevitably leaving some behind as he does, and spilling out cherries as he goes. He remains prone throughout.

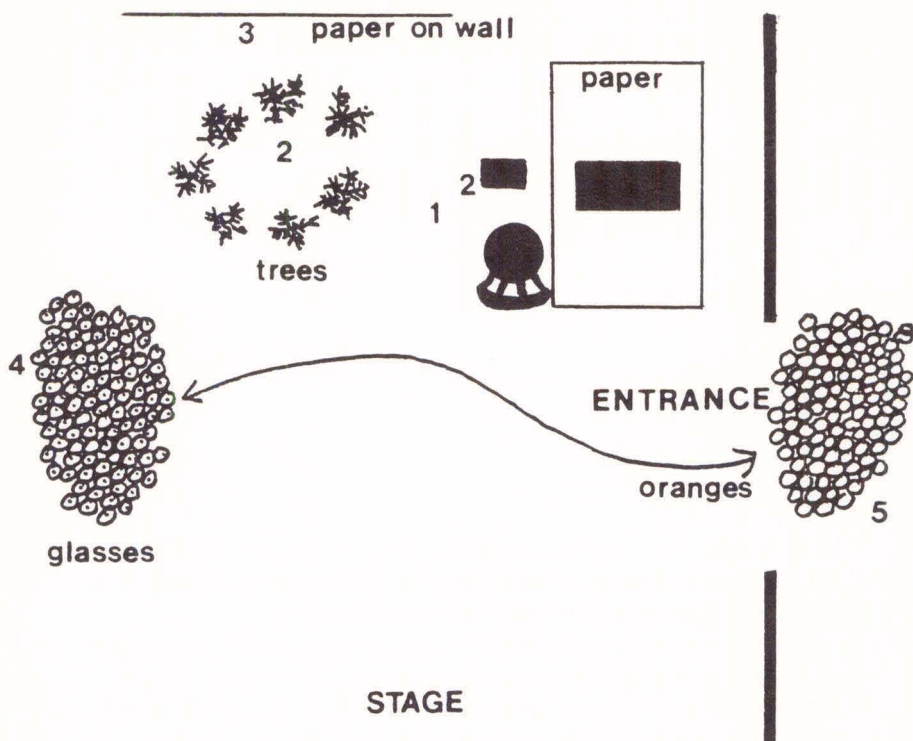
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After 4 begins, 5 — who is outside the room — counts to 20 (silently). She lies down beside the ceramic or painted oranges outside the door and moves them with her body into the gallery space.

As 4 & 5 move slowly and deliberately past each other, each carries away some of the other's wares. Cocktail glasses & cherries mingle with the oranges. When 4 has brought his glasses through the exit to right, when 5 has taken the oranges to the left wall, the piece is finished. All exit.





/ VIEWS & REVIEWS cont'd

GF In later versions of this piece, I removed this camera part, thinking it was too precious.

* * *

In the interview, Falk spoke about the generation of the A BIRD IS KNOWN BY HIS FEATHERS ALONE piece. It occurred soon after the Deborah Hay workshops.

GF About six months later, Intermedia had a night at the Vancouver Art Gallery, and there I did the first version of *A Bird is Known by His Feathers Alone*. The first part was with syrup and washing my face etc.; the second part used the stairs that John Neon had constructed in the gallery as part of an exhibition. He

went East after that. Anyway, these stairs were a musical sculpture that played a scale up one side and down the other. We were asked to use the stairs and so the middle part involved them. The middle part was like a rondo — there were people jumping on the bottom; others jumped on the next stair and so on, so that part was quite musical. And then people came out from a black-shrouded space at the end of the stage, carrying things and going over to the sculpture at different speeds. One of them dragged a hundred pound bag of clay, ‘plunk plunk plunk’ up the stairs, very heavily. Another person raced across them carrying a moose’s head and Glenn Allison had to carry my refrigerator tray full of water very careful not to spill any, and he didn’t. Then I remember that a whole group of people went over it, talking all at once. And I think some people came from one end as others came from the other. And at one point there was a circle of people at the top and they all rolled down.

AR Well, *that* part must have impressed me a lot, because I wrote about it as though it were a sacrifice.

GF Michael Morris thought it was very masochistic of me to do what I did . . .

AR After they had taken their goodies to the top, they got to roll off and kill themselves. It struck me as being heavy.

GF Well, Michael thought so too . . .

AR So this piece started off with the syrup and the musical stairs . . .

GF Then the end happened on the other side. I did up my hair with clay, some curly things made of metal shavings that I stuck into the clay in front of a mirror. There was a cake with alcohol that I lit in the end. There was a large frame near the front of the stage with curtains hung on it. There was a show mirror standing on the floor; somebody used a rotary sander when I was doing my hair. I thought the middle part was very good but, of course, without Neon’s stairs it couldn’t be done again. I didn’t think the last part with the cake and the clay in my hair was very good, so I took those parts out and added the parts published here.

AR Here’s the list of materials for the first performance of the *A Bird is Known* . . . from your archives:

white paper, basin, soap, towel, syrup & spoon, mirror, chair, table, camera, canary tape, six 50 pound bags of clay, a coat, 4 refrigerator trays, a moose head, 4 six foot ladders, a large plastic sheet, a large mirror & stand, a metal box & stand, clay, comb, scissors, a table, metal shavings, sander & paper, pudding & liquor, arch, reading, plastic curtain, black tape, matches

and an excerpt from my review of it which sure leaves a lot of detail out:

Gathie Falk directed the next playlet and again used the stairway as a focus for comment about contemporary life. From under an enormous green plastic tent appeared singly performers who mounted the stairs in various guises. One carried a brimful water-tray; another ran struggling to put on a coat. All appeared several times in the same sequence and also joined in groups to mount the stairs.

But in the end the stairs were transformed by Miss Falk into a more profound symbol. In a rapid sequence they appeared like an Aztec sacrificial altar with kneeling supplicants, then the supplicants tumbled down to apparent destruction . . .

Ann Rosenberg, "It's Happening at Art Gallery," rev. of *A Bird is Known by His Feathers Alone*, by Gathie Falk, *The Vancouver Sun*, 26 October, 1968.

GF Yes, and there's also a review of the piece as I usually perform it:

In *A Bird is Known by His Feathers Alone*, some irony about makeup and dress seems . . . intended. Falk standing in front of a basin of water performs her ablutions backwards. . . . She then dips a big spoon into a can of Rogers' Golden Syrup and ladles it all over her face, licking it appreciatively now and then.

Meanwhile Tom Graff smears a sheet of paper with cold cream, marks it with lipstick and pats on the powder.

This piece ends with a choreography for objects, as participants from the corners of the stage, inching along on their backs, push ceramic oranges and plastic cocktail glasses filled with real cherries towards and past each other. The scattering of oranges, glasses and squashed cherries as they finish is a study in process and randomness. . . .

Joan Lowndes, "But Whose Face Was the Egg on?" rev. of *A Bird is Known by His Feathers Alone*, by Gathie Falk, *The Vancouver Sun*, 9 February, 1972.

GIRL WALKING AROUND SQUARE ROOM IN A GALLERY (Film)

super 8 film loop of girl walking

projector

revolving table on timer

CAST OF FILM: 1 person, an ordinary girl in ordinary clothes

ACTION OF FILM:

In the film, the girl walks in silhouette, constantly. It was shot so that she is perpetually at middle distance in the centre of the frame. The middle part of the sequence was reproduced over and over again so that she moves continuously in the proper way. The projector is mounted on a turntable set up with a timer so that the action looks natural and right. The image is projected above ground level so that she is walking, literally, around the walls of a square room. This film, a performance document, can be a theatre piece in its own right. (Werner Aellen filmed it to Falk's specifications.)

GIRL WALKING AROUND SQUARE ROOM IN A GALLERY (Performance)

super 8 film loop of girl walking

projector

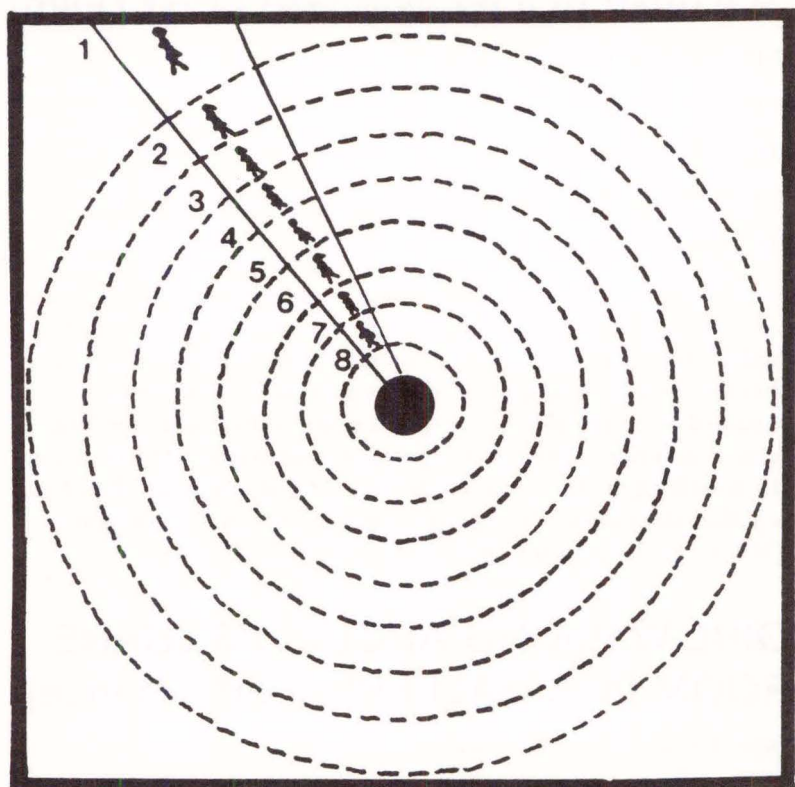
revolving table on timer

many people

CAST OF PERFORMANCE: Girl walking on film, 1 2 3 4 5 etc.

ACTION OF PERFORMANCE:

The film is set in the way described above to project continuously (if necessary) throughout the duration of an exhibition. The performance begins when one person, dressed in his or her ordinary clothes, takes up a position near the wall to walk in step with the filmed woman. After he/she has circuited the room, another person joins the first and walks around the room.



Others join the first two, singly, after each complete circuit with the walking girl. More and more people are added towards the centre. As the performers occupy more and more space within the gallery, the audience has to move to accommodate their movements.

Finally, the line of figures is a constantly turning diagonal moving record-like around a central spindle. At this point, the walkers "fill" the gallery and the spectators have, in a sense, been swept from the room.

GIRL WALKING AROUND SQUARE ROOM IN A GALLERY
(Film & Performance) was shown/performed in an Intermedia Show called Electrical Connection at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1969.

/ VIEWS & REVIEWS cont'd

GF Almost all the people in my pieces, like the girl in the film are ordinary people wearing ordinary clothes . . . I'd tell them to wear their ordinary clothes so they wouldn't come in something outrageous and I usually wore the clothes I always wore when performing. I used to work in a dark red jumper, rather short. . . . I wore men's shirts. What I wore at home, I wore on stage.

AR Just as in your art you use real ordinary objects or make replicas of them, so in your theatre works you use ordinary movements and ordinary structures. There's simple counting systems like zero to twenty or vice versa; the time/space between moves will get shorter or more lengthy. . . . In my mind as I read the scripts, it is clear to me what you are trying to do, but do you think the audience perceived this sense of timing?

GF I have no idea, I've never watched my pieces, except for *Ballet for Bass-Baritone* which I wasn't in. . . .

AR Did Deborah Hay give you any instruction on timing?

GF No, I think my sense of timing came from counting the floorboards in the shoe-piece I described earlier. . . . I'm a practical person. I know it's easier to count than to look at a watch.

SOME ARE EGGER THAN I

hot plate & cooking pot

6 soft-boiled eggs

white paper

red table & red velour cushion

6 golden egg cups with gold eggs

a spoon, knife, white napkin & salt & pepper shakers

1 white egg cup

a small white bowl

a brown paper bag

6 uncooked eggs
2 dozen ceramic eggs in a variety of colours
a broom & a ruler
a white shirt with a frill at bottom for dress
a red tie, white knee socks
black Chinese shoes
a projector
a slide screen
1 person

CAST: 1 person (female)

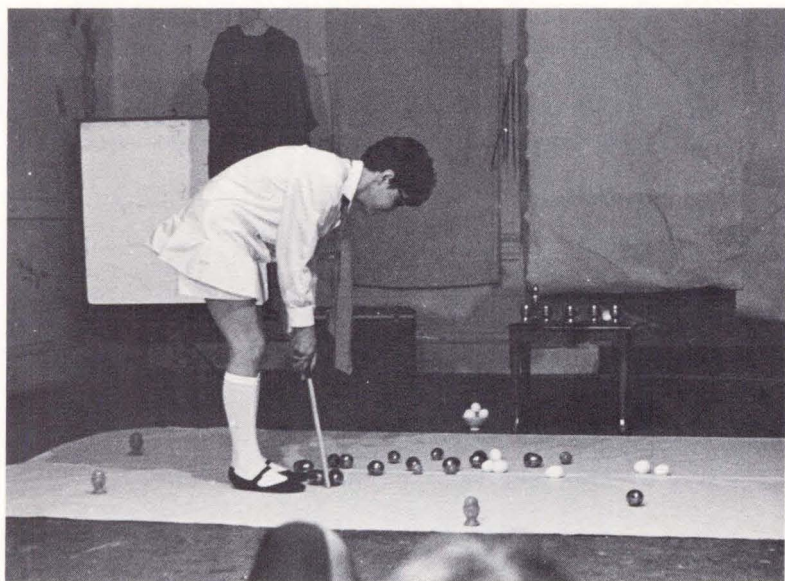
On the floor is a large piece of white paper. Just behind the paper is a candy-apple red, cane-topped low table. Behind the table on the floor is a red velour pillow. On the table at the front in a line are 6 golden ceramic egg cups with gold eggs in them. Behind them is a white egg cup, a knife, a salt shaker, a white napkin. Beside the white paper, leaning against the wall are a broom and a ruler. Near the front of the paper, stage left, is a brown paper bag.

ACTION:

The person enters in a white dress made from a man's shirt, ruffle added to the bottom. She wears a red tie, white knee socks, black Chinese shoes. She is carrying a bowl with six eggs, previously cooked to the soft-boiled stage off-stage. She puts the bowl down near the table. She goes to the brown paper bag and tips it over so that in one gesture the eggs within — a mixture of golden, black, brown and grey ceramic eggs — roll with real uncooked eggs over the paper. This is done carefully so that none break.

Then she sits down behind the red table on the cushion. She takes one of the eggs from the white bowl, cuts off the top with the knife in one stroke, puts salt on it and eats it.

When the 1st egg is finished, she goes to left stage, picks up the ruler and lines up one of the ceramic eggs with one of the real eggs that have rolled from the bag onto the paper. She plays croquet, hitting at the egg as often as is necessary until it is broken. Sometimes the ceramic eggs will rattle over the floor during this action, sounding quite vicious. Sometimes one will hit the wall; sometimes some will roll into the audience.



When an egg has been broken in the game, she replaces the ruler and returns to the table to eat another egg.

When the 2nd egg is consumed, she retrieves the ruler and moves back onto the white paper once more to play croquet, eggs rolling, "mallet" swinging until another uncooked egg is shattered. She replaces the ruler and returns to the table to eat the 3rd egg.

After that, she retrieves the ruler and plays croquet until another egg splatters on the floor. She replaces the ruler once more, returns to the table and takes the 4th egg from the bowl. Instead of eating this egg, she opens it and spoons its contents onto the table top so that the white and the yolk seep through the caning.

She moves to left stage and this time picks up the broom instead of the ruler. She herds the eggs that have strayed off the paper back onto it, as though they were victims she doesn't much care for. She ignores the eggs that have rolled into the audience. She replaces the broom, picks up the ruler and bashes at another egg until it breaks. She returns the ruler.

She sits at the table again and breaks the 5th egg on the table top. She takes up the ruler again and plays croquet until another egg splatters. She replaces the ruler.

She returns to the table, sits down and looks at the golden eggs. She puts out her hand towards the far left cup, pulls it back, as if she's changed her mind. Then she picks up the golden cup to the far right and exchanges it for the one at far left as though she were moving chess pawns. Now she eats the 6th soft-boiled egg, then, swinging her ruler for the last time, she breaks, kills a final egg .



* * *

In the majority of performances of *Some Are Egger than I* slides were projected as background. They show Gathie Falk wearing a long robe and swimming goggles progressively covered with eggs that have been broken against her face and body. She seems to smile, but she is grimacing in pain. She is like a person in front of a firing squad.

SOME ARE EGGER THAN I was first performed at the New Era Social Club in 1969. It was revised after the Eighty Eggs performance at the Ace Gallery (see *VIEWS & REVIEWS* below) to include slides.

/ VIEWS & REVIEWS cont'd

GF I'd already performed *Some Are Egger than I*, when I was asked by Douglas Christmas to be the performer in his theatre piece, *Eighty Eggs*. It happened on the occasion of a Sunday morning opening of a Glenn Lewis show at the Ace Gallery (November 31, 1969).

In the piece, I was standing against the wall as though facing a firing squad. Then one egg was thrown at me, then slowly more and more eggs were thrown until I was covered with eggs.

One might not think that eggs would hurt when they're thrown at you, but they do hurt. And I know that the people that were supposed to be throwing them at me didn't really want to hurt me, so they were trying to throw them *around* my body rather than *at* my body. But Doug said, "Hit her! Hit her!" So they did.

Some of the pictures look as though I'm laughing and Doug said later, "The pictures are good, but you shouldn't have grinned." And I said, "I wasn't smiling, that was a grin of pain." It really did feel like being in front of a firing squad.

In the revised edition, I used the slides as large projections behind me. They are supposed to end as I finish the performance. And once, at a noon-hour concert at the Vancouver Art Gallery, I did something else with the piece (1972). I did everything as indicated in the script here, but at the end of the work I walked out of the room, changed into the red velour robe that I wore during Doug's *Eighty Eggs* piece where the audience couldn't see me. I returned to the gallery having squashed a whole pile of eggs into my hair. I walked through the gallery directly to the washroom to get the eggs off me. I did that only once. Once was enough.

A lot of my work turns out like this. I don't intend it to be violent or pleasant, or romantic or whatever, but it ends up being something like that. . . . But I'm not making a statement . . . the mood, there just happens to be a mood attached to the work of art.

CROCHETED GEODESIC DOME WITH SOUND TRACK BY BUCKMINSTER FULLER

dresser with tall mirror

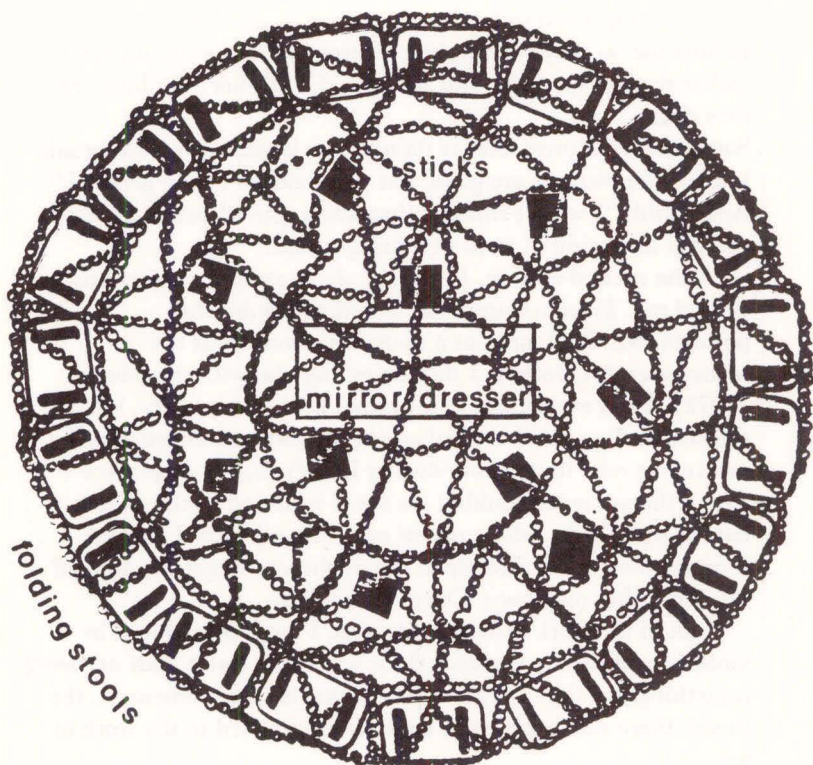
some long sticks as fragile supports

some folding stools

parcel string

tape of Buckminster Fuller talking about the role of the artist

1 person



CAST: 1 person who can crochet using arms and hand as hook.

The tall mirror dresser is the support for the highest part of the dome, the folding stools for the lowest; sticks are used as necessary in the construction of the soft dome that drapes over the area.

ACTION:

The crocheter begins the task at the periphery, using a circle of folding stools as the understructure for the base of the dome. She tucks the system of triangles she crochets with her arm and hands under and over the stools as she goes. Around and around, pulling the system higher and higher supporting parts of it with sticks as it seems necessary until finally it is completed over the highest part of the dresser.

This activity takes three long days beginning sometime in the morning and continuing until late afternoon with people coming and going, watching then leaving. And it feels like a long time because the crocheter is listening to that Buckminster Fuller tape over and over and over again. He's mumbling on about artists being like scientists; he's trying to make them feel good, by saying they're like scientists.

CROCHETED GEODESIC DOME WITH SOUNDTRACK BY BUCKMINSTER FULLER *was first performed at the University of British Columbia's Festival for the Contemporary Arts in 1970.*

ACT I: SCENE 1 & 2 (BEFORE & AFTER)

fur stole

sweater

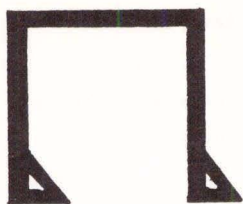
show horn

a volleyball, string bag & rope

36 balls

36 oranges

post & beam construction in 2 x 4's, 90" x 90"



90" x 90" blanket

nails

pins

3 prs. glasses

9 prs. runners for people

9 prs. white ankle socks & shorts for people

10 people

ACT I: SCENE 1 (Before)

CAST: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 & 2 must be of equal height. They cannot reach each other over the frame. 7 has a volleyball fastened at his waist on a rope and held in a string bag when not in use. 8 has a watch. 2 3 4 have glasses in their pockets. 1 is wearing ordinary clothes; 2 . . . 10 wear running shoes, white socks & shorts.

ACTION:

1 stands in front of the blanket-covered frame, back to audience while audience assembles. From the pile of objects to left 1 selects a fur stole as the piece begins.

1 pushes the stole with great difficulty over the frame;

2 pushes back the stole with great difficulty;

1 pushes a child's shoe with great difficulty over the frame;

2 pushes back the child's shoe with great difficulty;

1 pushes a hat with great difficulty over the frame;

(waits 7 seconds);

2 pushes a shoehorn with great difficulty over the frame

(waits 7 seconds);

1 pushes a scarf with great difficulty over the frame

(waits 3 seconds).

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



1

In this part of the piece 1 is visible to the audience. 2's actions are known to the audience but he/she is concealed behind the blanket. 3 4 5 etc. are invisible and unknown to audience. In the interchange of objects described none are thrown over the frame.

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 suddenly throw a lot of balls and oranges over the frame. 1 exits.

3 4 5 6 (still concealed from audience) fold up the blanket from the bottom and fasten it with pins, creating a 1-foot gap at floor level. The feet of 2 . . . 10 are now visible.

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 practice volleyball with the ball 7 has tethered at his waist. The ball is never to hit the ground, but it may be bounced on its rope above the frame. The audience sees the players' ankles below; sometimes hands above. 8 watches the time and after 2 minutes (approximately) he begins wrestling and the others do likewise, always keeping the ball from view.

8 watches the time. After 2 minutes he straightens and the others do likewise. 8 begins to mouth *O Canada*. When all have begun to mouth *O Canada*, 2 walks around to the front of the curtain. 3 follows after 3 seconds to stand behind 2. All follow, forming a square.



8 9 10

5 6 7

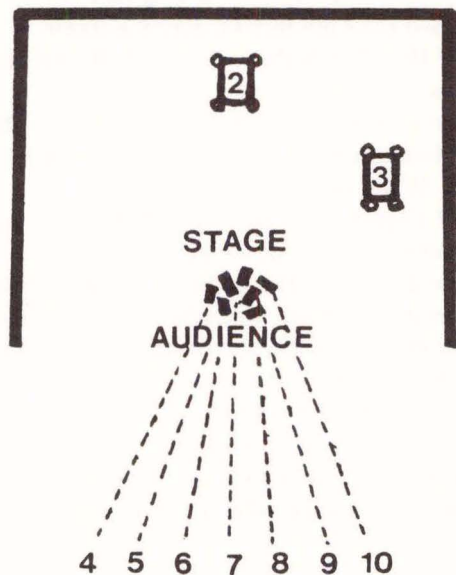
2 3 4

When 2 3 4 have finished *O Canada* (at different times), they wait 3 seconds, pull the glasses from their pockets, put them on casually, then straighten to attention. They stand for five seconds, take off the glasses, relax and hand them back to 5 6 7. (These movements are not simultaneous.) 5 6 7 put on the glasses, straighten to attention, wait 5 seconds, remove glasses, relax, hand them to 8 9 10. 8 9 10

put on glasses, straighten to attention, wait 5 seconds, take off glasses and relax. When 10 relaxes, he waits 5 seconds and casually exits. All exit with him.

Lights out. The frame, oranges and balls are removed.

ACT I: SCENE 2 (After)



CAST: 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 (in ordinary clothes) is not in this part. 2 . . . 10 wear running shoes, white socks & shorts as in previous scene.

ACTION:

2 comes on stage riding on a dolly in a kneeling position. Beside 2 on dolly is a picnic basket containing paper napkin, coke, a glass, a bottle opener and a tie. 2 stops at centre stage, sits cross-legged on the dolly, opens the coke, pours it into a glass, takes out the tie and begins tying. 2 ties it so it will not knot and continues to try to fail throughout performance.

3 enters after 2's second attempt to tie the tie. 2 enters on a dolly in a standing position, using his foot as though on a scooter. Beside him on the dolly is a bag of flyers. 3 stops at the centre of the first wall and throws a flyer newspaperboy-fashion at it. 3 moves on the dolly to the next wall, throws a flyer and so on to the next. 3 continues moving and throwing throughout the piece, always trying for a long trajectory.

After 3's third throw, 2 moves back stage right on his dolly and continues to tie and retie the tie.

After 3's sixth throw, 4 & 10 who have been seated at either corner in the back row of the audience stand up and throw a flyer at centre stage trying for long trajectories. They throw flyers every 20 seconds, but not necessarily together.

After 4 & 10 have thrown 12 flyers, the others who have been sitting in the back row stand up and throw a volley of flyers simultaneously at centre stage. They sit down.

4 & 10 continue to throw flyers at centre stage until they have thrown 15. They sit down.

When 3 has thrown 18 flyers at the wall, he exits on his dolly.

When 3 has gone, 2 turns towards the audience and moves on his dolly to a spot behind the scatter of flyers at centre stage. 2 ties and reties his tie 3 more times, puts the picnic back in the basket and exits.

Lights fade.

ACT 1: SCENE 1 & 2 (Before & After) was first performed at the Intermedia Domes show at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1970.

/ VIEWS & REVIEWS cont'd

GF Every week we'd have a rehearsal at Intermedia for this piece, and it went quite well except that people had a hard time remembering what to do. But I'd written out the instructions quite carefully so they could remember. We rehearsed also at the Vancouver Art Gallery, but we couldn't use the room where the performance was to take place because people were making domes in there. So when we performed it, one of the problems was that the height of the ceiling there was lower than in the rooms we'd practiced in. They couldn't get such a large trajectory and so the flyers fell short and hit people in the front

rows, rather than landing at centre stage as planned, so it was less than perfect. . . .

Now maybe *Act 1: Scene 2* doesn't seem that interesting, but in my mind it was like a sculpture of things that are thrown in a curve, that come down in a straight line — these actions happening against the three walls and, finally, into the centre of the stage. I saw this as a piece of moving sculpture. But it didn't pan out. Even the guy on the dolly didn't do it right, he sort of flung them at the wall, *plunk*. There was no trajectory. The review by Christopher Dafoe indicates that he thought the whole thing was quite awful or, at least, he didn't have the background to appreciate what was going on.

Everybody seemed to be doing his own thing at the Intermedia show at the Vancouver Art Gallery Thursday night.

The special event, part of a week of cultural merry making at the gallery was billed as "Seven Acts: Media Theatrical Performance," and so, being interested in things theatrical, I turned up at the gallery at the appointed hour of eight.

Nothing much happened until close to 8:30. After what seemed like a rather long wait, some people in laundry-bag athletic outfits came out and pushed various objects over a tall screen.

Later balls and fresh fruit came over, hitting some members of the audience. Jolly good fun.

Then, in a richly dramatic episode, a boy with a *Sun* carrier's bag threw rolled up newspapers against a wall. He was pelted with objects from the back of the room. The plot thickened.

We all rose and moved into another room . . . [etc. & finally] . . . I slipped out into the rain, forgetting my umbrella. The program was only half over, but I was replete. All play and no work makes Chris a dull boy.

Christopher Dafoe, "Zap! Fruit in Your Face at Intermedia Happening," rev. of *Act 1: Scene 1 & 2* by Gathie Falk, *The Vancouver Sun*, 23 May, 1970.

GF I wrote this letter that I've still got in my files; it was published in the *Sun*: The middle part is a good explanation of what I had in mind for *Act 1: Scene 1 & 2*.⁵

One thing is certain [in these kinds of performances] there is no plot, no story & no self-conscious movement as in most dance. Movement, however, is very important. There is usually little to look at, so the looking has to be keener. Steve Paxton does a piece which involves a crowd of people standing still for 3-5 minutes at a time & who change their positions very slowly during that time, not self-consciously. . . .

Much of my piece called *Act 1* on Thursday was dance in the same way: completely natural movement of a body against a curtain, trying to push something over it & finding that very difficult. Later, there was movement of

legs & sometimes a ball, then wrestling bodies, then the mouths & then the glasses routine where each person stood at attention while wearing them.

The first scene was tied to the second one by the falling balls & oranges theme. The flyers thrown against the wall made quite circular arcs like the falling balls. The flyers thrown from the back of the room made semi-circular arcs. I had sound in mind here too, the plop of the *Sun* carrier's flyers against the swoosh of the flyers from the back. I did not wish the flyers from the back to hit any of the audience, but hoped to make the audience feel at least slightly threatened by them & definitely surprised by the first ones.

In mood this piece, to me, was both funny and tragic: games . . . (volleyball) changing to a wrangling mass of struggling people, [changing] into a motley crew of regimented people. (No politics intended.) And then the picnic on a dolly island with the poor man unable to tie his tie & the innocuous flyer boy . . . the hand grenade atmosphere later on.

My pieces are mostly structured like traditional music (as is also a lot of dance): Theme A, Theme A, Theme B, Theme C, Theme D, Theme E, Theme A, Theme A, Theme F. In most of my pieces there are fewer themes, but it seemed to me these themes flow into each other quite smoothly; there is always a joining link.

My second piece, *Act VI*, which you missed seeing was also a performance piece, but more in the form of conceptual art. I dare not explain the other events since I did not originate them. . . .

Theatre pieces, or Happenings, have been around for a while. Alan Kaprow did his *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* . . . in 1959. Loosely connected with Intermedia in Vancouver, a group of artists have been doing them for the last 2 years. I am not sorry you attended your first event of this nature last week; I am only sorry that you came ill-prepared. . . . I hope you will become more interested in this form of art & be a front-row viewer quite soon.

GF I believe there was also a reply published by Dafoe.⁶

AR Act VI of the Intermedia evening was the *Cat Piece*.

CAT PIECE

projector

the wall (or walls) of a

room or gallery

1 slide of a cat (full length)

piece of paper or pad

pencil

ruler

masking tape

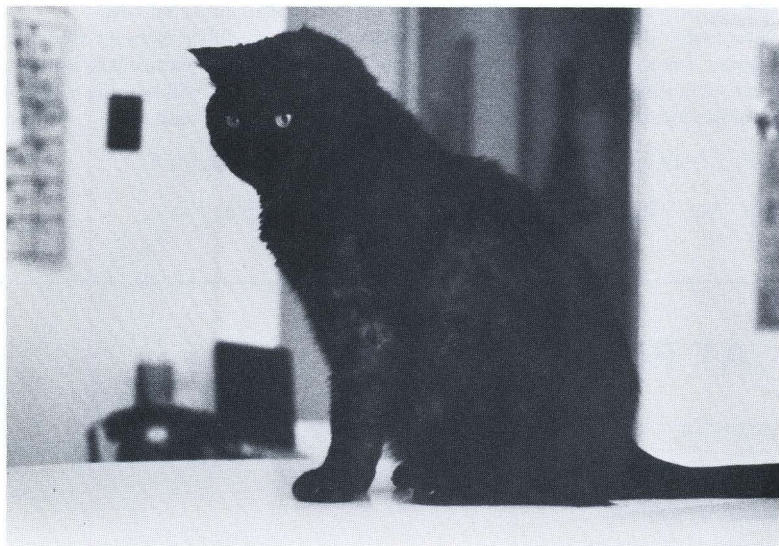
1 person

CAST: 1 person

In this piece the projectionist/measurer must project an image of a cat on the wall five times, so that each time the image has a different dimension. He/she may perform it in one room using one wall or more than one wall or in several rooms.

ACTION:

The projector is moved to the 1st position. The lights are dimmed, the cat image turned on. The projectionist goes to the wall and measures the length of the whiskers of the cat with a ruler and writes those measurements down.



The projector is moved to the 2nd position and the cat image is projected on a different scale. The projectionist makes careful measurements with his ruler and records the length of the cat's tail.

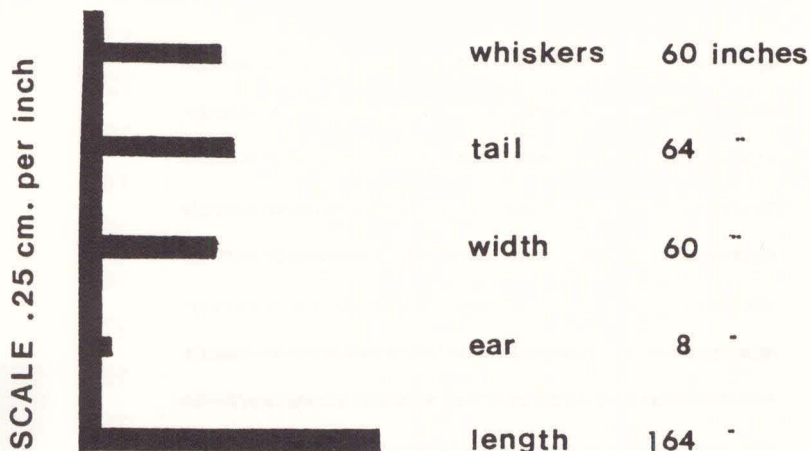
The projector is moved to the 3rd position and the width (fatness) of the cat in this scale is recorded.

The projector is moved to the 4th position and the size of the cat's ear in this scale is recorded.

The projector is moved to the 5th position and the length of the cat in this scale is recorded.

The projectionist then moves to a suitable place — the floor of a gallery — and using his notes and his ruler makes a meticulous bar graph indicating the precise (but absurd) variable measurements of his "cat" with masking tape.

(The graph reproduced is accompanied by measurements made during an actual performance).



**all measurements were
multiplied by four**

CAT PIECE was first performed as *Act VI* at the Intermedia Domes show at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1970.

DRILL

popsicles

plastic flowers

saw

table

aluminum foil

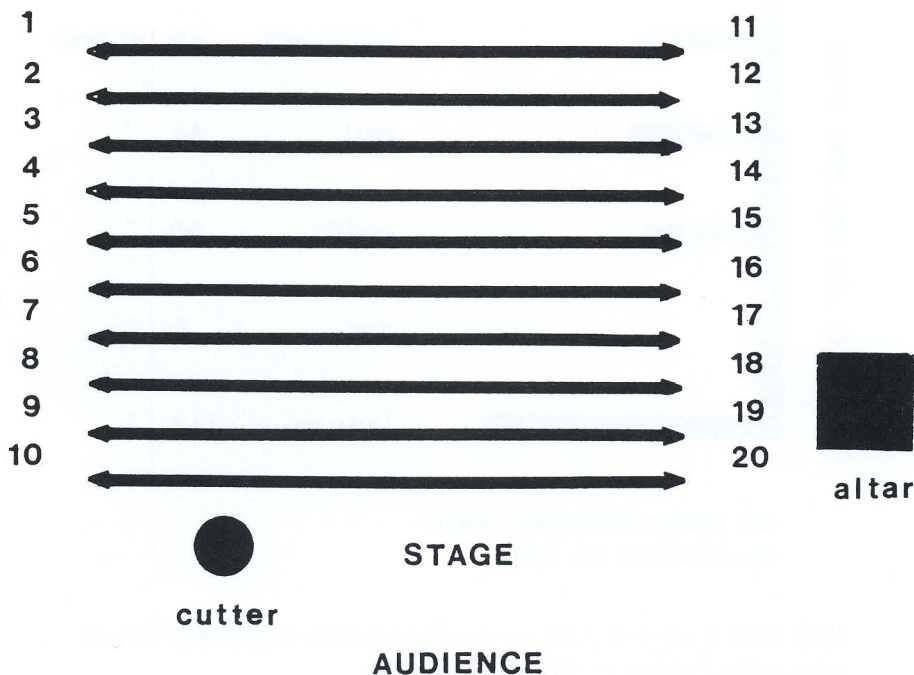
candles

styrofoam

shoe polish

rag

many people



CAST: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 etc; matched by 11 12 13 ... etc.

ACTION:

In part one of this piece, two rows of performers face each other from extreme ends of the stage. They advance towards each other, popsicles in hand like swords, plastic flowers drooping from their hip pockets. They come at each other, but they do not duel as they pass. They repeat this interchange more than once. It is a kind of dance.

When they have reached the sides of the stage a final time, the performers form a single line and approach, singly, a man who cuts their popsicles in half with a saw.



Tall white candles inserted into an aluminum-foil-covered base on an altar-like table are lit by a girl. The participants come singly to the table and insert their popsicles in front of the candles.



In the second part, the participants take off their shoes and put them in a pile. Then they line up in two rows, as though they were a chorus. The leader of the chorus shines their shoes while the chorus members at various times and in various ways say what they had for dinner.

DRILL was performed at the University of British Columbia's Fine Arts Gallery, Summer 1970.

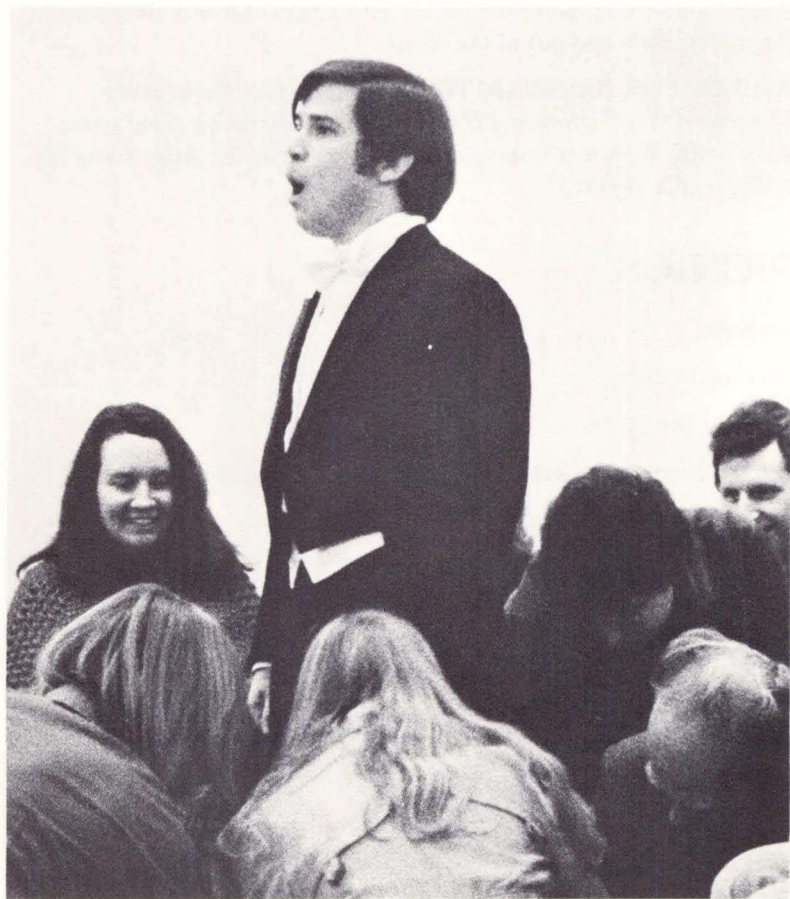
BALLET FOR BASS-BARITONE

CAST:

1 bass baritone, participants with shoe polish and rags

ACTION:

Lights go up. The audience looks at the back of a man dressed in a tuxedo. He is facing the wall. There is the sound of a beautiful aria sung in a bass-baritone voice. The man inches back from the wall, as slowly as he can. It soon becomes clear to the audience that he is the source of the music, that he is the singer.



He continues with his aria and, at a certain stage, a person comes from the audience, kneels beside him and begins to shine his shoes with polish and a rag. Soon he/she is joined by another shoe-shiner, and another. The cluster at his feet resembles flies buzzing, and the shiners follow him, polishing, as the singer backs his way slowly down the middle aisle and out of the room.

BALLET FOR BASS-BARITONE *was first performed at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1971 during a collaboration event with Tom Graff. Tom was singing Stravinsky's Pulcinella, Aria, Scene III, "Allegro alla Breve."*

PICNICS

projector

6 sets of 15 slides

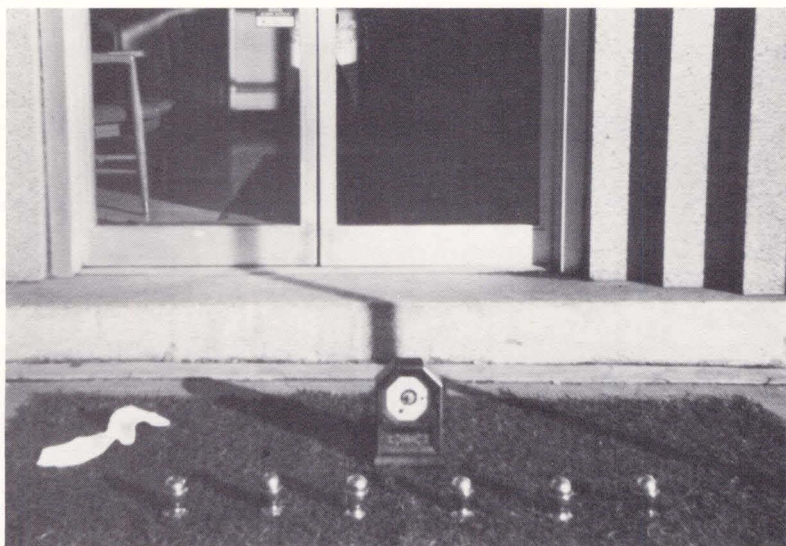
1 person (or 2)

CAST: 1 woman (Gathie Falk); 1 man (Tom Graff)

ACTION:

These materials record picnic/still-life performances at six different sites:

- (1) in an I.G.A. store
- (2) in Gathie's backyard
- (3) in Gathie's livingroom
- (4) on the sidewalk in front of a bank
- (5) in a plastic flower shop
- (6) in the Vancouver Art Gallery in front of Segal's *Execution*



Each of the 15 slides for a set was carefully preconceived. Hence the *Picnic* on each site was as meticulously planned as a performance work and involved the transportation and arrangement of still-life and edible objects, as theatre pieces do. The lists below are the instructions for two of the *Picnics'* slide sequences:

Picnic in Front of Segal's Execution in the Vancouver Art Gallery:

1. Carry in grass & basket. 2. Grass on grass. 3. Tablecloth on grass.
4. 2 people & picnic basket & table cloth on grass. 5. Open Basket.
6. Play violin. 7. Add pop bottles. 8. Add salt & pepper & glasses.
9. Pour pop. 10. Add black olives. 11. Eat Sandwiches. 12. Bring out case. 13. Open case with tulips inside. 14. Look at camera & smile.
15. A still life, without people and rather different than expected is arranged & photographed.

Picnic in a Plastic Flower Shop:

1. Carry in grass & basket. 2. Grass on grass. 3. Tablecloth on grass.
4. 2 people & picnic basket & tablecloth on grass. 5. Open basket.
6. Bring out syrup can. 7. Add pop bottles & sandwiches. 8. Add salt & pepper & glasses & teaspoon. 9. Pour pop. 10. Add black olives.
11. Eat sandwiches. 12. Bring out parchesi board. 13. Play parchesi.
14. Smile. 15. Create Still Life.

These slides may be shown as a performance or they they may also be accompanied by a real picnic/still-life event taking place as they are shown.

PICNICS *was first performed at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1971.*

/ VIEWS & REVIEWS cont'd

The history of the *Picnic Series* (sculpture) goes back to 1970 when I devised a theatre piece that was mainly based on the slide documentation of six picnics, all participated in by the same two people who went through exactly the same ritual [on each site] — points of difference were the strange things that came out of the picnic basket and the fact that each picnic was celebrated in a different location. — G.F.

CAKE WALK ROCOCO (with Tom Graff)

15 footlights with candles
old-fashioned lamp table with shelf below
phonograph turntable & extension cord
tape recorder & tape
a large dresser drawer
a round cake, bowl of icing, a knife & plastic life-sized fruit
a long, pale-blue satin ribbon
a cut-out Chinese garland, or a string of paper dolls
2 suitable peasant Rococo costumes
3 people

CAST: A Rococo peasant couple, a person in the audience

At the front of the stage are 15 footlights arranged in a semi-circle large enough to dance in but small enough to bring illumination to the dancers. Each footlight is made from a tin can, top removed and cut through the centre vertically. The half-bottom in each serves as a resting place for a white candle concealed within. When lit the candles provide the yellow light of Rococo theatre and a romantic mood for the dance.

ACTION:

The footlights have been lit before the action begins.

The dancers enter, the man leading in his partner, arm around her waist. When they reach centre stage they strike a pose like figurines on top of a music box. The woman is turned by the man who at the end of this short sequence drops a handful of artificial leaves upon her hair.

Off-stage, the pre-recorded music begins. The first part is a Minuet-like Adagio by Tellemann. The dancers dance keeping their movements within the semi-circle of lights and, as much as possible, parallel to the audience. There is much curtsying and bowing. The walking is done with toe tapping to the six beats then, heel down to take another step at the end of each bar. These movements are choreographed with great seriousness, but to suit the abilities of non-dancers.

When the Minuet is over, the man brings the lamp table to centre stage close to the drawer that contains the cake and icing. He tucks a string of paper dolls under the phonograph turntable which rests upon the lamp table. He unfurls it gently and stands near the table, stage right. Facing the audience, he strikes this pose: he holds the garland overhead with his right hand; his left hand is on his hip; his left leg is bent so that his left toe rests on his right front calf. He tries to hold this position until the last moments of the performance, resting and repositioning his leg as necessary.

As the man readies the table and poses, the woman finishes her dance. The music changes to a collage of old and new music and the woman moves to the drawer and takes the blue ribbon from it. She places it over the turntable. She removes the round cake from the drawer and places it on top of the turntable over the ribbon. She takes a knife from the drawer and cuts the cake in half, placing the



upper half on the shelf below the lamp table. She brings the bowl of icing and proceeds to ice the lower half of the cake in a domestic manner. She puts the top layer on top and ices it. She returns to the drawer for the plastic fruit and creates a still life arrangement on the cake top using icing, where necessary, as glue. Then, just at the finish of the music when the decorating is complete, she ties the ribbon over top in a grand bow.

The music changes again to something ominous and majestic — the last orchestral moments of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*. The woman, being careful not to disturb the fruit, cuts a piece of cake. She holds the cake in her hand and looks to the audience. The performer in the audience comes forward to accept the slice of cake. The music is glorious.

When the music becomes calmer, the woman turns on the turntable and the cake goes round and round. At the right moment near the end of the tape, the man relaxes. He moves over to the woman and leads her ballet-fashion from the stage.

CAKE WALK ROCOCO was first performed at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1971.

/ VIEWS & REVIEWS cont'd

The several pieces clustered here (*Ballet for Bass-Baritone . . . Cross Campus Croquet*) are works that are associated with Gathie Falk and Tom Graff. *Picnics* and *Ballet for Bass-Baritone* were designed by Falk, the latter with Tom in mind as suitable performer. *Cake Walk Rocooco* is a collaboration piece in which the dance portion is Tom's invention; *Picnics* was a *simultaneous* conception. A favourable review of a collaboration evening described the finale, *Cake Walk Rocooco*, as a "bravura piece of witticism . . . [that] managed to create a double look at the art creation process — spoofing it but taking it quite seriously."

Lloyd Dykk, "Wildly Indulgent Pieces of Theatre," rev. of performances by Gathie Falk and Tom Graff, *The Vancouver Sun*, 4 February, 1971.

While Gathie toured extensively with Tom in 1972 presenting individual and joint works at many centres, she has made no new performance art of her own since that year and has not toured her own work since 1977. Tom, meanwhile, continues creating, in the genre and will take his *O Kanada* to Berlin, Fall 1982.⁷ — A.R.

CROSS CAMPUS CROQUET (with Tom Graff)

a campus

croquet hoops and mallets painted white

a set of croquet balls all white but two

a set of croquet balls in rainbow colours on a tray

a white or multicoloured kitchen table

2 kitchen chairs painted white

many plastic tulips

35 men's ties made of lining silk in 35 colours
a picnic basket containing white & black food & drink
tails for the man's costume
black coat, white stockings, black patent leather strappy
shoes & white silk scarf for the woman's costume
2 people

CAST: 1 man, 1 woman

A croquet game is set up on the grass of a campus. The wickets are placed symmetrically around a white kitchen table and two chairs. Plastic tulips are planted among the wickets and under the table. One of the chairs has 35 silk ties tied to its back that flutter in the wind. A picnic basket containing black and white food (olives, yogurt, milk) is on the table; a tray containing rainbow coloured balls is beside the table.

ACTION:

A man and a woman in formal black and white costume, having arranged all the necessary props on a grassy lawn, begin this special croquet game. They play from left to right non-competitively. When they have reached the table in its first position, they sit down, open the picnic basket and have a bite or two of the food therein. They do not speak to each other. If they need to communicate, a note is passed. When the first picnic is finished, they play from left to right again. At the end of this first game, the man or the woman takes one of the multicoloured balls from the tray and throws it forward from the last wicket to the right to determine the next position for the table, the picnic, and the continuing game. They play this way until they have reached the desired cross-campus goal unless weather prevents this accomplishment.

CROSS CAMPUS CROQUET was performed once at the University of British Columbia in 1971.



RED ANGEL

red buffet

5 tables

5 record players

5 parrots & 5 apples

extension cord with 5-plug adaptor

tape recorder & tape

old washing machine

water

laundry soap

wash basket

stool

wings

belt for wings

white dress

grey dress

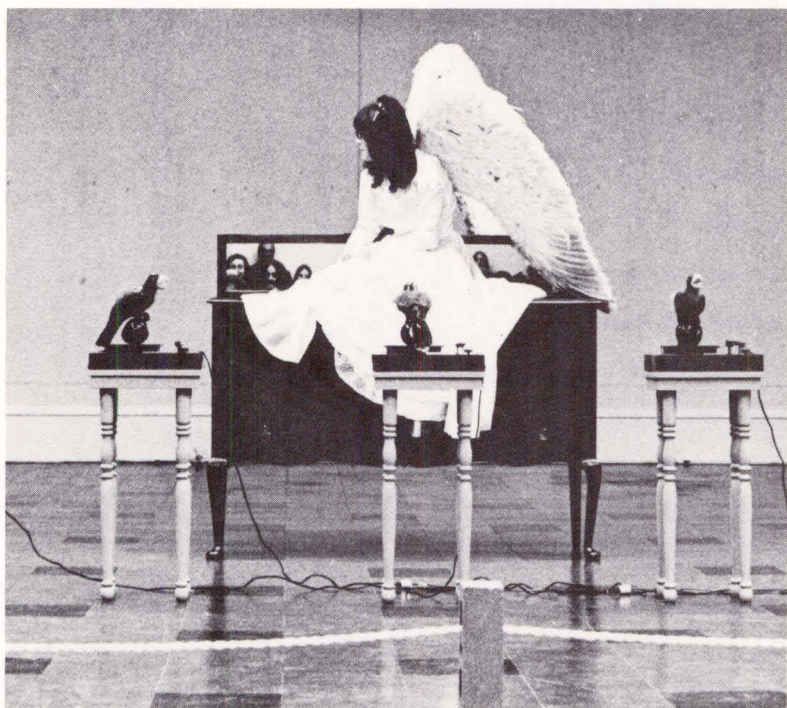
3 people

CAST: 1 person (Gathie Falk), 1 washwoman, 1 technician

ACTION:

Lights turn up to:

white or light-walled stage area in a room or gallery. In the middle of the stage area is a large candy-apple red buffet with a low mirrored back. A woman is seated on the buffet with head and back in profile. She wears a white satin dress with lace down the front skirt. Her bare foot is visible (toes). She is also wearing large wings made of chicken feathers over foam rubber. There are long feathers on the tips and outer edges and finer ones over the rest of the wings.



In front of the buffet is a row of 5 identical grey tables 30 inches high. They stand about 2 feet apart and a yard from the buffet. Exactly fitting the top of each table is a red turntable. On each turntable is a dark red ceramic apple and on that is a red parrot with an open yellow beak. All the parrots face right, as the winged woman does.

Movement begins between 5 and 7 seconds after lights go up.

The first parrot begins to turn on the turntable as he sings *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*. The second parrot turns and sings the second





part of the round, and so on, till all parrots have begun. The winged woman sings the 6th part. As each parrot finishes the song it stops turning.

When she has finished the song she waits 4 seconds and slowly stands on the buffet. The parrots are facing all directions.

She stands tall for a few seconds, then raises her hands to the back of her neck and undoes the buttons of her dress. She slides it down her shoulders. She unbuttons the sleeve buttons and pulls the sleeves off, revealing the top of a shiny grey satin dress down lower. The wings bounce a bit as she steps out of the dress. She hangs the white dress over her left arm and stands tall again in the middle of the buffet, in long grey satin, and white wings.

After about 4 seconds a rumble is heard to stage right and an old-fashioned wringer-washer appears, pushed by a woman wearing an ordinary skirt and blouse. She trundles the washing machine in front of the parrots to stage left (about 15 feet from the buffet). She retraces her steps to her entrance and fetches a wash basket, a carton of soap, and a small white stool. She places the stool and the wash basket behind the wringer, sets down the soap and plugs in the washing machine. She walks over to the buffet, takes the white dress from her arm, returns with it to the washer, puts it in with a dash of soap and starts the washer. She stands quietly, but relaxed, as she washes the dress (a few minutes).

She stops the machine, pulls up the wet dress, and puts it through the wringer. She lets it drop in the basket, picks up the basket and the soap, and leaves walking in front of parrots once more.

The woman in grey satin and wings stands for 4 seconds after the other woman's exit, then slowly sits down in her previous position on the red dresser. Parrot number one begins to turn and sing *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*. Parrot number 2 follows etc., until all 5 parrots and the winged figure have sung the song.

Three seconds and lights out.

RED ANGEL was first performed at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1972.

/ VIEWS & REVIEWS cont'd

The *Red Angel* performance has been published most often and is Falk's most visually arresting theatre piece. The entire script is recorded in a book called *Performance*.⁸ The Western Front Society owns a video production of it.⁹ This video was shown at *Festival 82: A Celebration of Women in the Arts* in the performance area organized by Christina Estable.¹⁰ The visual success of *Red Angel* is alluded to in the criticism that follows, although the review misunderstands the dramatic intent of the artist who is not interested in creating high drama or comedy with performance art. — A.R.

... A tremendous amount of work was involved here in props and costumes, Five stuffed parrots perched on ceramic apples sit on red silk tables. Falk, in a white gown and with wings like those in a Botticelli Annunciation, sits on top of a red sideboard. The parrots whirl around as though each one were singing *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* which Falk completes in the sixth voice.

But this deliciously comic conceit needs to be further developed, either through more repetition, variations in speed or crescendo effect. *Red Angel* never took flight.

Joan Lowndes, "But Whose Face Was the Egg on?" rev. of *Red Angel* by Gathie Falk, *The Vancouver Sun*, 9 February, 1972.

DRINK TO ME ONLY (Film)

super 8 film

projector

tape

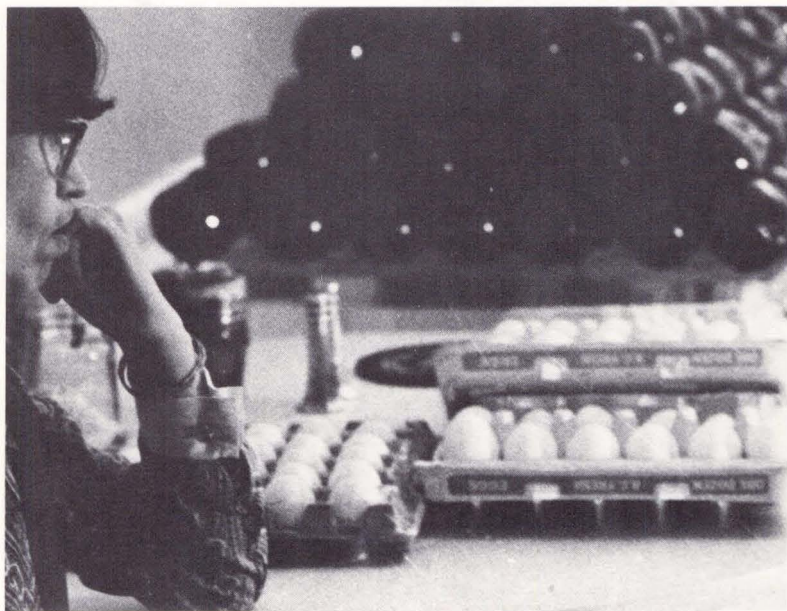
CAST OF FILM: 1 person singing "Drink to me Only" as described.

ACTION:

This is a performance film. The movie camera swivels from the performer (Gathie Falk) to a white chair with a slightly hollow black leather seat. She sings, "Drink to me only with thine eyes and I will pledge with mine." The camera records the empty chair. She sings the same line as the camera records her; the camera moves to the

chair and now on the seat there is one white egg. She repeats the line and when the camera swings to the chair there are two eggs. Another repeat; three eggs. Another repeat; there are four eggs. She sings the next line, "And leave a kiss within the cup, and I'll not ask for wine." The camera swings back to the chair to find five eggs and so on through nine. She sings the next line of the song five times in the same way and every time the camera swings to the chair to find more and more eggs until after the last repeat of the last line the song and egg pile are finished. (Each line of the song is sung on one breath which, from time to time, makes for some bad singing.)

This work is based on repetition and addition of materials. The chair is filmed first empty. One egg is added and so on after each line is repeated. After the addition of the 12th egg, however, numerical honesty ceases and more eggs than one are added at the end of each sung line so that a *nice* pile of eggs on the chair is the final visual.



DRINK TO ME ONLY was first screened at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1972. It was sometimes called *Three Part Invention* or *Home Movie #1*.

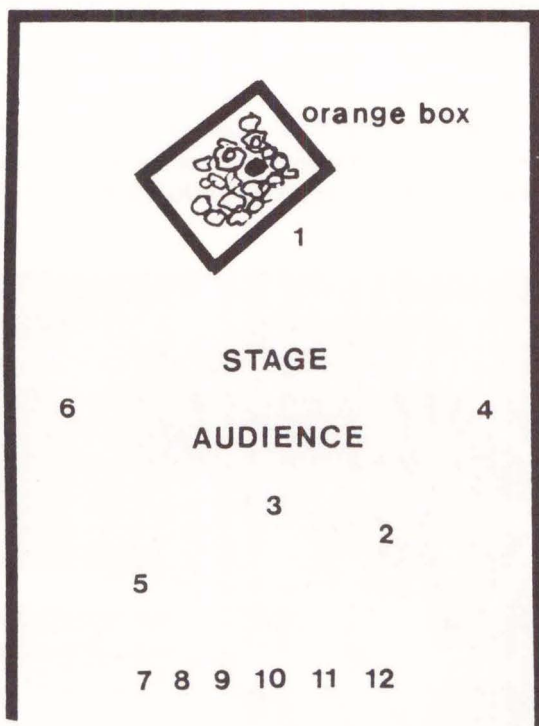
ORANGE PEEL

orange box & orange papers

3 dozen eggs

11 people with cameras & 55 flash bulbs

1 other person



CAST: 1 (subject) 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 (photographers)

ACTION:

At centre stage is a mandarin orange box full of orange papers. A person comes in, carrying 3 dozen eggs. She sits on the floor near the box. She opens the box, wraps an egg carefully and puts it into the box. After the third egg is wrapped:

- 2 kneels in the audience & flashes twice.
- 3 kneels in the audience & flashes twice.
- 4 stands in the audience & flashes once.
- 5 sits & flashes once.
- 6 moves close to the orange box to take many close-ups.

In the back row 7 8 9 10 11 12 stand up & flash simultaneously. They move forward through the audience wherever they can, flashing all the time. All converge on the orange box and use up the rest of the flashes. They exit.

The person on the floor wraps two more eggs, then exits.

ORANGE PEEL *was first performed at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1972.*

/ VIEWS & REVIEWS cont'd

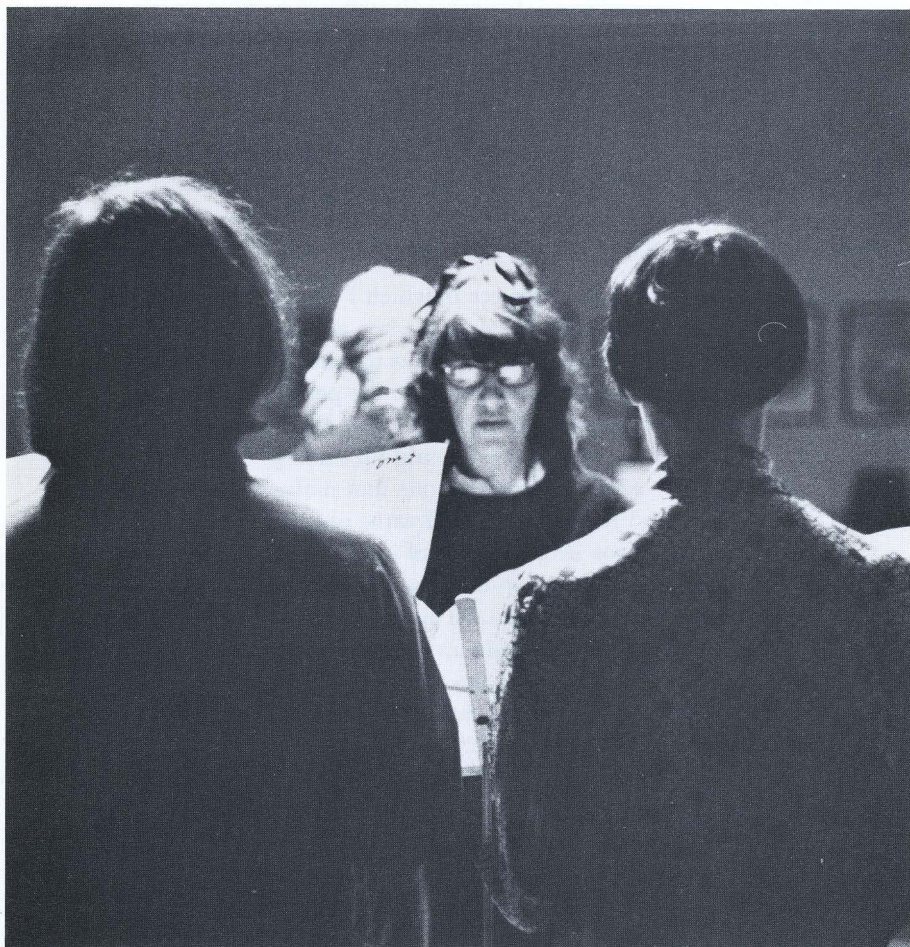
AS Do your pieces ever have a message?

GF There is only one theatre piece in which I was trying to teach a lesson. First of all I should say that when anyone does a performance piece and somebody gets up and takes a picture with a camera, it's very maddening to the performers because everyone's attention swivels from the stage to the person who's using the camera. So I've usually said no cameras during performances except a stationary one that makes no noise, etc. Anyway, when I made this piece, I came onto the stage which had this orange box in the middle of it, bringing with me several boxes of eggs. I sat down on the floor, started wrapping the eggs and after a while someone in the audience got up with an enormous camera, a press camera, and came close to where I was and took a picture, then another person got up and took a picture and so on. One of our friends who was in the audience and knew how I felt about pictures being taken got very worried and wondered what Tom Graff might do — Tom is a person who always does something about things. And this friend kept looking at Tom and wondering why people were being allowed to do this, to take pictures. Tom, of course, wasn't doing anything about it, he just sat there in the back row. And then finally the whole back row of the audience got up with their

Instamatic cameras, walking forward, snapping pictures, then the person knew that it was alright, it was part of the piece.

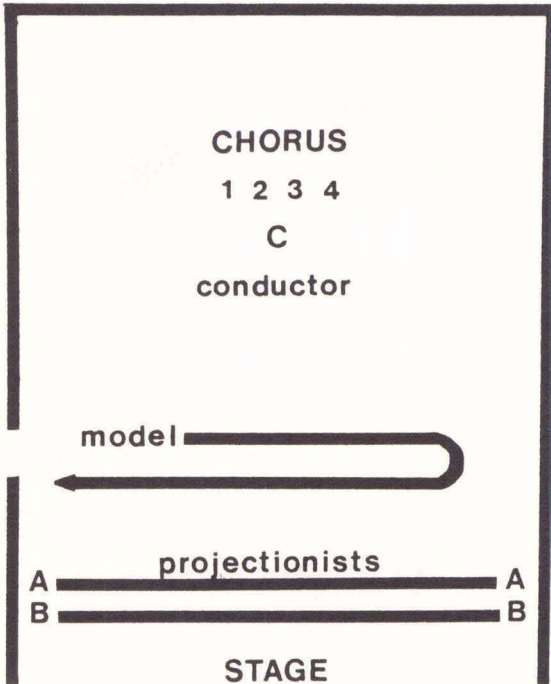
Perhaps at times there is a tendency to satire. The piece called *Orange Peel* is a deadpan comment on the disruption that can be caused by flashlight photos taken during a performance. While Falk . . . wraps [the photographers] advance en masse, enter the performance area, obliterate the performer and take over with their own fast-paced light show. . . .

Joan Lowndes, "But Whose Face Was the Egg on?" rev. of *Orange Peel* by Gathie Falk, *The Vancouver Sun*, 9 February, 1972.



CHORUS

- 20 ordinary costumes
- 10 car & truck slides
- 2 tea carts on wheels
- 2 projectors
- 11 ironing boards
- 12 people



CAST: CHORUS 1 2 3 4; CONDUCTOR C; MODELS (5 people each appearing 4 times = 20); A & B projectionists.

ACTION:

Chorus comes out, takes up positions indicated (1 2 3 4) facing the audience. Conductor follows and, back to audience, leads them in a complicated fugue-like chant using hand for baton. The words are: "NAME, AGE, SEX, RACIAL ORIGIN," said loud or soft, together, in parts, in unison according to this score. There are 4 parts for 4 voices. 1 & 2 are equivalent to soprano & alto; 3 & 4, to tenor & bass. They remain stationary throughout the chant and they leave the stage, conductor following, whenever it is finished.

	mp				mj				p				f		p		p		
1	N	A	SR	O					N	A	SR	O							
2															SR	O			
3																	N	A	
4																			

[illegible]

1		A			N		S		S	R	O	R	O	R	O				N					N	N	N	N	
2							S		S	R	O	R	O	R	O				N						A	A	A	A
3	S				N		A		S		S	R	O	R	O	R	O				N				S	S	S	R
4		N							S		S	R	O	R	O	R	O	R	O	R	O		R	O			N	A

f f quietly f

[illegible]

The models wait backstage. At the count of 20, after the chant has begun,

Model 1 comes out holding a dress to her shoulders, moves to centre right stage doing what models do, sashaying, showing off the detail of a sleeve, etc. At the turn, when her back is to the audience, she swings the garment to her back, then to the front as appropriate, as she returns the way she came. Model 2 comes out and does the same routine.

As model 2 leaves, projectionist A moves a car slide in his projector on the tea wagon past the model. It moves from stage left to right at medium speed. It is projected on the wall behind the Chorus and *on* the Chorus in passing.



Model 3, Model 4 come out and do the model routine.

Projectionist B moves a car slide on his tea wagon from stage right to left at slow speed, coping with the projector cord as he goes.

Model 5, Model 6 come out and do the model routine.

Projectionist B moves car slide from left to right at medium speed.

Model 7, Model 8 come out and do the model routine.

Projectionists A & B move car slides simultaneously from right to left, *fast*.

Model 9, Model 10 come out and do the model routine.

Projectionist B moves car slide from left to right and back to left, *fast*.

Model 11, Model 12 come out and do the model routine.

Projectionists A & B move car slides from left to right, one following the other at medium speed.



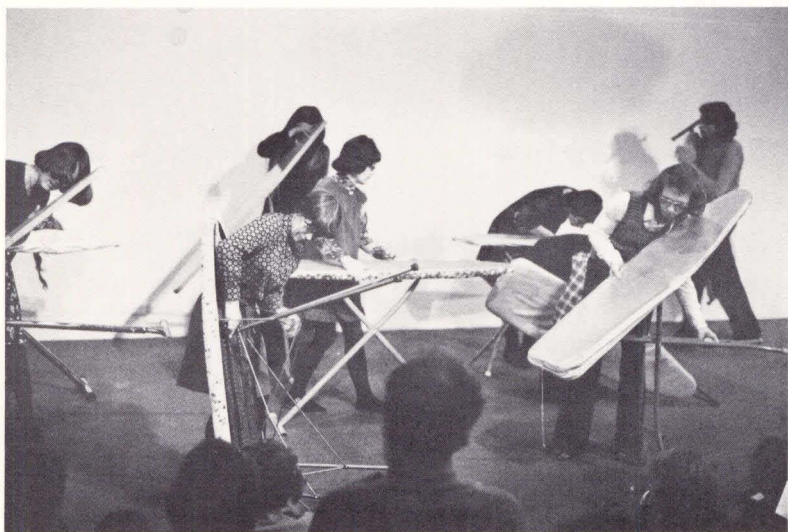
Models 13, 14 & 15 come out simultaneously and model.

Projectionists A & B move car slides from right to left following each other. First one goes slowly; then the second one passes it.

Model 16 is followed by Models 17 18 19 20 coming in, doing the same routine, exiting.

* * *

When stage is clear, 11 people come on with 11 ironing boards. They set them up at right angles to the stage in this pattern.



They leave.

* * *

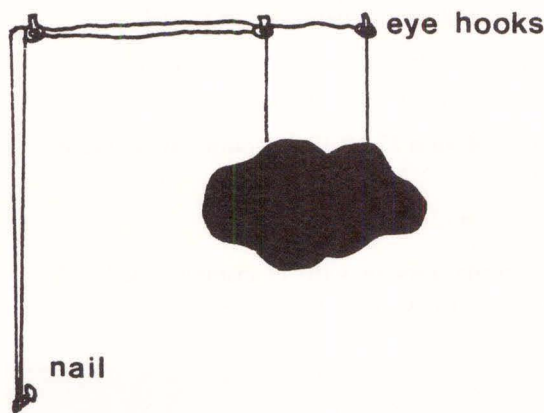
When all 11 are backstage, they wait 8 seconds. They come back. They take down the ironing boards and exit.

CHORUS was first performed at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1972.

LOW CLOUDS

25 clouds

hanging apparatus



plastic fish line

nails, hammer & eye hooks

masking tape

4 office desks & 1 treadle sewing machine

5 chairs

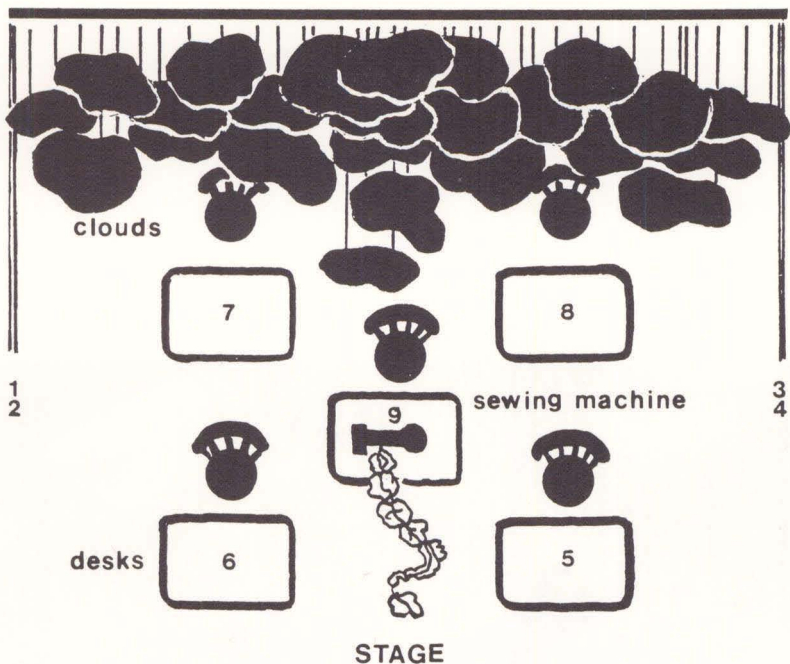
4 books, 4 hard-boiled eggs, 4 knives

1 fresh cabbage (large)

9 people

*CAST: CLOUD PANELISTS 1 & 2 stage left, 3 & 4 stage right;
DESK OCCUPANTS 5 6 7 8; SEWING MACHINE OPERATOR
9.*

Above the 4 desks that will be occupied by 5 6 7 & 8, above the sewing machine that will be used by 9 — hang 24 meticulously painted clouds of different shapes. Panelists 1 2 3 & 4 stand ready to operate the pulleys that will raise and lower the clouds on invisible strings during the cloud ballet. One small grey cloud's pulley is marked so its operator can give it special treatment.



ACTION:

1 2 3 4 lower the clouds from their highest positions, individually from left to right. (After the 5th cloud is lowered to middle position, 5 6 7 & 8 enter. After the 15th cloud is lowered, 9 assumes her place at the sewing machine.)

1 2 3 4 move all the clouds down 2 feet from middle position, simultaneously.

1 & 2 move left half of clouds to top (4 feet) simultaneously.

3 & 4 move right half of clouds to top (4 feet) simultaneously.

1 & 2 move left half of clouds down (4 feet) simultaneously.

3 & 4 move right half of clouds down (4 feet) simultaneously.

1 & 2 move left half of clouds up (2 feet) simultaneously.

3 & 4 move right half of clouds (unexpectedly) down 2 more feet to 6 feet below ceiling, just over desks.

1 2 3 4 bring clouds together at middle position simultaneously.

Panelist in charge of small grey cloud lowers it 2 feet below the rest.

1 2 3 4 spread the clouds out — adjust them individually high, medium, low.

1 2 3 4 bring the lowest clouds up to middle position and exit.



Near the beginning of the action, after the 5th cloud is lowered, 5 6 7 & 8 enter. Each goes to a desk, sits down on the chair provided, opens the drawer to the right. Inside the drawers are directions, a book, a hard-boiled egg and a knife. 5 6 7 8 take out books and directions simultaneously and shut the drawers. All follow 5 as he opens the book, counts (silently) to 20, turns a page, counts (silently) to 19, turns a page, counts (silently) to 18 and so down to zero.

5 6 7 8 open right hand drawers at 5's lead, take out eggs and knives. They peel and slice the eggs carefully, trying to finish when 5 does. They all leave the sliced eggs on the desks, then reach in for the books, first placing there the knives and the shells. Following 5's lead, they open their books at the back, counting 1 (silently) then turning a page, 2 (silently) then turning a page, 3 (silently), etc. until they have reached 20. (These actions are simultaneous.)

5 6 7 8 now exchange desks, books in hand. 5 gets up, moves counterclockwise to desk occupied by 6. 5 takes 6's chair, sits down, counts to 5 (silently) while reading book as 6 moves over to replace 7 in a similar way. This action continues until each reader has occupied every desk. They put away the books, simultaneously, and exit.

* * *

When Cloud 15 was let down as action began, 9 entered carrying a large cabbage. The cabbage must be very fresh, very crisp. She takes up her seat at the old-fashioned, treadle sewing machine. She removes a large leaf and sews it through the middle and without cutting the thread she sews another leaf through the middle, and so on, creating an ever-lengthening garland that trails in front of the machine onto the floor. 9 continues this action after 5 6 7 & 8 have left the stage, stitching on a final two or three leaves. She exits.

LOW CLOUDS was first performed at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1972.

/ VIEWS & REVIEWS cont'd

- AS The whole thing of *happenings* is that they're sort of spontaneous. They're not supposed to be, but when you hear about them . . .
- GF They sound spontaneous, but they aren't that spontaneous. . . . Anyway, my performance is not spontaneous.
- AS Yes, the works may have looked and sounded spontaneous, but they were really contrived.
- GF That's right, *controlled*. . . . You can program these things so that you don't know what will happen exactly, as for example when things are going to happen simultaneously, and if you program the people so that they will do something until it is finished, every time it will be/end a little differently. . . . For instance in *Low Clouds* four people come in, sit down, open their drawers, open the pages simultaneously, and they do practice that so that they can do it together. But it doesn't matter if they have completed their whole program at the same time every time. The clouds are going up and down while the people at the desks are doing what they are doing — two programs operating independently at slightly different rates. They don't have to *mesh in*.
- AR In response to what is seen, there's this nervous laughter, a particular sound like "hmnnn, hnnnt," that you get in theatre events of any kind on occasion, but in theatre pieces this laughter seems to continue sporadically throughout. It's a kind of laughter that makes you think, "what am I doing here and what are these people doing? If this is art, then why am I laughing?" And, of course, some of the things that happen are truly funny. I laughed when you began to sew the cabbage.
- GF Sure, well it's the surprise that makes you laugh . . .
- AR Yes, but when you continued to sew it and made the garland, it's not funny anymore, it's beautiful.
- AS If theatre art is time-space collage sculpture, what part does the audience play?
- GF It plays the same role as an audience for sculpture or painting, except they can only see it once.

