

FROM MORE THAN MEAT JOY

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FROM THE NOTEBOOKS

1958–1963

I assume the senses crave sources of maximum information; that the eye benefits by exercise, stretch, and expansion towards materials of complexity and substance; that conditions which alert the total sensibility – cast it almost in stress – extend insight and response, the basic responsive range of empathetic-kinesthetic vitality.

If a performance work is an extension of the formal-metaphorical activity possible within a painting or construction, the viewers' sorting of responses and interpretation of the forms of performance will still be equilibrated with all their past visual experiences. The various forms of my works – collage, assemblage, concretion – present equal potentialities for sensate involvement.

I have the sense that in learning, our best developments grow from works which initially strike us as "too much"; those which are intriguing, demanding, that lead us to experiences which we feel we cannot encompass, but which simultaneously provoke and encourage our efforts. Such works have the effect of containing more than we can assimilate; they maintain attraction and stimulation for our continuing attention. We persevere with that strange joy and agitation by which we sense unpredictable rewards from our relationship to them. These "rewards" put to question – as they enlarge and enrich – correspondences we have already discovered between what we deeply feel and how our expressive life finds structure.

Anything I perceive is active to my eye. The energy implicit in an area of paint (or cloth, paper, wood, glass . . .) is defined in terms of the time which it takes for the eye to journey through the implicit motion and direction of this area. The eye follows the building of forms . . . no matter what materials are used to establish the forms. Such "reading" of a two-dimensional or three-dimensional area implies *duration* and this duration is determined by the force of total visual parameters in action. Instance:

the smallest unit variation from stroke to stroke in a painting by Velasquez or Monet; by extension the larger scale of rhythms directing the eye in a painting by Pollock – this which is shaped by a mesh of individualized strokes, streaks, smudges, and marks. The tactile activity of paint itself prepares us for the increased dimensionality of collage and construction: the literal dimensionality of paint seen close-on as raised surface . . . as a geology of lumps, ridges, lines, and seams. Ambiguous by-plays of dimension-in-action open our eyes to the metaphorical life of materials themselves. Such ambiguity joins in the free paradox of our pleasure with “traditional subject matter” where we might see “abstract” fields of paint activity before we discover the image of King Philip II astride his horse (Velasquez) . . . or a rush of dark arcade concavities from which we learn, by his flying robes, that a saint is in ascension (El Greco).

The fundamental life of any material I use is concretized in that material’s gesture: gesticulation, gestation – source of compression (measure of tension and expansion), resistance – developing force of visual action. Manifest in space, any particular gesture acts on the eye as a unit of time. Performers or glass, fabric, wood . . . all are potent as variable gesture units: color, light, and sound will contrast or enforce the quality of a particular gesture’s area of action and its emotional texture.

Environments, Happenings – concretions – are an extension of my painting-constructions which often have moving (motorized) sections. The essential difference between concretions and painting-constructions involves the materials used and their function as “scale,” both physical and psychological. The force of a performance is necessarily more aggressive and immediate in its effect – *it* is projective. The steady exploration and repeated viewing which the eye is required to make with my painting-constructions is reversed in the performance situation where the spectator is overwhelmed with changing recognitions, carried emotionally by a flux of evocative actions, and led or held by the specified time sequence which marks the duration of a performance.

In this way the audience is actually, *visually* more *passive* than when confronting a work which requires *projective vision*, i.e., the internalized adaptation to a variable time process by which a “still” work is perceived – the reading from surface to depth, from shape to form, from static to gestural action, and from unit gesture to larger overall structures of rhythms and masses. With paintings, constructions, and sculptures the viewers are able to carry out repeated examinations of the work, to select and vary viewing positions (to walk with the eye), to touch surfaces and to freely indulge responses to areas of color and texture at their chosen speed.

During a theatre piece the audience may become more active

physically than when viewing a painting or assemblage; their physical reactions will tend to manifest *actual* scale – relating to motions, mobilities the body does make in a *specific* environment. They may have to act, to do things, to assist some activity, to get out of the way, to dodge or catch falling objects. They enlarge their kinesthetic field of participation; their attention is required by a varied span of actions, some of which may threaten to encroach on the integrity of their positions in space. Before they can “reason” they may find their bodies performing on the basis of immediate visual circumstances: the eye will be receiving information at unpredictable and changing rates of density and duration. At the same time their senses are heightened by the presence of human forms in action and by the temporality of the actions themselves.

My shaping of the action of visual elements is centered on their parametric capacities in space. In performance the structural functions of light, for instance, take form by its multiple alterations as color – diffuse, centralized, (spot and spill) mixture, intensity, duration in time, thresholds of visible/invisible. The movements of performers are explored through gesture, position and grouping in space (density, mass), color, and their own physical proportion.

The body itself is considered as potential units of movement: face, fingers, hands, toes, feet, arms, legs – the entire articulating range of the overall form and its parts.

The performers’ voices are instruments of articulation: noises, sounds, singing, crying, commentary on or against their movements may be spoken; word-sound formations are carried forth which relate to, grow from the effect on the vocal cords of a particular physical effort they experience. The voice expresses pressures of the total musculature so that we may discover unique sounds possible only during specific physical actions and which provide an implicit extension and intensification of the actions themselves.

The distribution of the performers in space evolves the phrasing of a time sequence: levels of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal or the need for larger rhythms carried visually by an independent figure which moves in relationship to the overall environment – shifting dimensions, layers, levels. Every element contributes to the image. The active qualities of any one element (body, light, sound, paper, cloth, glass) find their necessary relation to all other elements and, through conjunction and juxtaposition, the kinetic energy is released.

My exploration of an image-in-movement means only that its realization supersedes (or coincides with) my evocation of it. This is *not* a predictable, predetermined process: in the pressure to externalize a particular sensation or quality of form other circumstances or “attributes” may be discovered which are so clear and exact that the function of the

original impulse is understood as touchstone and guide to the unexpected. "Chance" becomes one aspect of a process in which I come to recognize a necessity – the way to unpredictable, incalculable advances within my own conscious intent.

1962/63

Vertical table legs pound into horizontal tops; supporting planes, stable leverage – or search out their pressure on the floor – definition of ground and grounding always a beginning again, against. How a strip of wood plays recession and a plane-of-advance to its adjacent surface, being active with minute variations ... light, marks, smudge, streak. The body moves through eyes recall, claim and disposition of its own measure (journey) in space.

**GESTURE IS BOTH IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT ACTION:
STRUCTURAL FORM AND ACTUAL ACTIVITY.**

Gesture is the envelope of unity; contains the impulse uniting various parts of an object or scene; assumes the dominant rhythmic forces. Gesture is three-dimensional in quality; it is neuromuscular: remembrance and recognition are linked to basic kinesthetic identification. Gesture is in the spine; it is intangible and cannot be grasped without feeling it. First we feel the gesture of an object, then we may describe it.

1963

1963–1966

Our lives themselves as material, stuff for our art or our lives as art containers/or life the way we shape or discover it being a form of art, the Happening an intensification of our actions in life. The distinctions here swinging between intellection/perception/action.

It is not a part-time, compartmentalized (studio) activity: it is as if we are launched in some wondrous banal boat whose very motion transforms the landscape it moves through.

Notice this insistence on Motion. We cannot capture, hold a moment (Impressionism), repeat the moment's verbal content (theatre), capture the action itself (Futurism): we intensify the perceptions of change, flux, and release them in juxtapositions which grind in on the senses.

It is intimate and intense. Happenings: raw, direct, no intermediate crafting, fabricating. Kaprow's works stream mythic, socially edged by ritual process; Oldenburg's are netted in private memory as environment

through which we refocus, discover strands of our own past time-relations; strong cultural and nostalgic roughness. Whitman's performances the most interiorized, tactile, plastic-poetic, evolving a less specific time-space than Oldenburg's. Whitman leaves the audience as discrete, perceiving agents; Kaprow physically engages them, moves them in a mass of linear participation. While Oldenburg uses the audience as physical material, packed in around, surrounding, holding the frame on an irregular rectangular performance-environment. Hansen's Happenings are loose, rangy, arbitrary, open to impulse; the audience hangs raggedly to anticipations, shifting conjunctions. (And Dine the first man to use explicitly personal material – his psychoanalytic tape, uncensored self-exposure ... just the voice in the dark. The audience didn't approve of that much actuality! A turning point for me. He had stripped it all down to bare desire, anger, the lived life. Audience didn't get it or couldn't stand it.)

Image – Whitman

Atmosphere – Oldenburg

Concordance – Kaprow (audience/participant must agree to his procedures)

Restraint, slowed durations, collectivity – Dewey

Social action, aggression, attack – Lebel

Comic strip, populist Americana – Grooms, Gross

Guilt and transfiguration – Vostell

Sensation and memory is tactile, plastic, palpable for painters – not verbal, musical, or conceptual. Sensation and memory evade the grasp of traditional media.

Note for *Fuses*: cut Greek white seduction into turning backside. ...

"The trouble with Yoko Ono's pieces is that she wants to make you feel what she felt, to feel like her, and I don't think I want to do that," said Higgins tonight.

December 1965

from Diary 1965: Memoranda

Lively irony that I developed theatre to do for me in moments, what I wanted words to do infinitely: to provide compression, springboard to senses. ... Very complicated ... evades statement ... being surprising to me, but I know the experience I sought to *hold* with words I now use gesture-action to release ... where vision can move most freely.

A despair with language re-enforced by its social-sexual action. When I am saying what I see, men find it difficult to hear that *I* say it – they take it away, use my words as their own because a female source of illumination registers negatively ... (not so with Jim, of course), but very often *they need what I say* but not from me – a peculiar withdrawal, (absence) or aggressive twisting to what is most possibly fine and fat as interchange – two people speaking *to* (not “at” or away from) one another. To some extent this also occurs in regard to my Happenings, Kinetic Theatre pieces. So – definitely – in its brief new life here – a man’s enterprise, that I get a sort of wavery regard, as if my work is a vagary, dismissable, *because* my aggressions, anxieties are not those the male community recognizes, prizes.

1965

BE PREPARED:

to have your brain picked
 to have the pickings misunderstood
 to be mistreated whether your success increases or decreases
 to have detraction move with admiration – in step
 to have your time wasted
 your intentions distorted
 the simplest relationships in your thoughts twisted
 to be USED and MISUSED
 to be “copy” to be copied to want to cope out cop out pull in and away
 if you are a woman (and things are not utterly changed)
 they will almost never believe you really did it
 (what you did do)
 they will worship you they will ignore you they will malign
 you they will pamper you
 they will try to take what you did as their own
 (a woman doesn’t understand her best discoveries after all)
 they will patronize you humor you
 try to sleep with you want you to transform them with your energy
 they will berate your energy they will try to be part of your
 sexuality they will deny your sexuality/or your work they
 will depend on you for information for generosity they will
 forget whatever help you give they will try to be heroic for
 you they will not help you when they might they will bring
 problems they will ignore your problems a few will appreciate
 deeply they will be loving you as what you do as what you
 are loving how you are being they will of course be strong in
 themselves and clear they will NOT be married to quiet

tame drones they will not say what a great mother you would be or do you like to cook and where you might expect understanding and appreciation you must expect NOTHING then enjoy whatever gives-to-you as long as it does and however and NEVER justify yourself just do what you feel carry it strongly yourself

1966

MEAT JOY

Excerpt from *Meat Joy* notes on prolog

[...]

MEAT & PAINT

painting of sex of each other by couple (interlude section

	myself bandaged head		cut up the chicken
	stand over it	on my lap	between my
legs	matter of factly)		build to amore-paint inun-
dation		close focus inward /	mirror behind

this feels better
 for my right hand now
 it may be alright from from
 or this is better is this better I get more turn or pace
 why it is better I don't know but it is better than this is
 try this
 a fine point is dreadful
 a gold point is rigid
 after a couple hours

cela est certaine *Lisa est-elle belle* *cela n'est pas certain*

from certain sequences marked new york march 1964

couple painting exchange	mixture	figures charg-
ing thru alley aisles	slipping	

1. woman hacking plucking throwing the bird

2. tearing hair / painting self / falling running rocking

poissons policier polisson pollen

group 3	the fish banging smashing follow a body's flight
wild pig meat	slapping caressing rising falling
between heaps of debris	naked bodies all wash in bowls
drying each other	closely packed dull light banging on

<i>jai mon idée de beauté</i>	<i>se moucher</i>	<i>il a son idée de</i>
garbage lids	hammock	painted figures painted

beauté nos idée de beauté ne sont pas sûres miroir mouchoir
at water guns begin clothing stapling to floor

mouvement Lisa est-elle belle il n'a pas de mesure pour
la beauté sourire de femme mouvement est-ce que la
femme est belle cela n'est pas certain les plaisirs et la

**NAKED MATERIALS TEARING INSTRUMENTS – POWER
 TOOLS CONSTRUCTION – BUILT IN PERFORMANCE: GLUE
 PAPERS DOWN INTO STANDING PANELS: RUB ON THEM RUB-
 BINGS GLUING PAPERS & RUBBING: BLOOD / SEX CON-
 CRETELY: THE CITY / THE BODY SUCKING PULLING IN
 GRAB HOLD**

douleur sont des sensations voilà des plaisirs voici des
plaisirs ensuite la balle il est au bord de la mer il est
couché sur le sable il entend le bruit de la vague et il regarde
la mer voilà des plaisirs il prend un bain simple
simplement impresse nager plaisir

MEAT JOY (certain instructions)

The images are realized by a process which unites visual obses-
et un concombre sans encombrement encombrer concombre cul
 sions and spontaneous physical action.
encombrer

The sequence developed by my partner and me will be counter-
 thrust in their relation to actions of the other performers. We
 should provide a focus which brings to *extremes* the qualities
 of the other performers – extremes of intensity, in the range of
 speeds and actions – from dream frame slow motion for virtual
 frenzy, and in concentrated presence.

essai établie étalon le plaisir et la douleur sont des sensations
étaler le plaisir le plaisir et la douleur

The focus is never on the self, but on the materials, gestures
 & actions which involve us. Sense that we become what we
 see, what we touch. A certain tenderness (or empathy) is per-
 vasive – even to the most violent actions: say, cutting, chopping,
 throwing chickens.

apprends on pose le doigt sur un objet on a des sensations
on a une sensation de toucher de chaleur et de froid cet
homme touche un morceau de bois avec ses doigts attirer

Series

upper torso evolutionary naked covered with dark paint

ce bois est sec

ce bois est dur

smeared lower torso work pants rolled up shave legs

FEET FOCUS under curtain or plastic

3. debris pile on which I perform eye/body

les objets ne font pas plaisir

4. spreading of clothing

5. meat/running/slapping against self & objects

6. kissing rolling couples to exhaustion

7. sewing & being costumed

8. leg choreography in débris

fleuves

nous font plaisir

un attrait

cet attrait nous

9. sponge drench

attire

cet attrait nous plaît

nous ne cherchons pas plus

10. running tray of objects falling involvement slow

motion

random juggling

loin

nos désirs peuvent nous changer

11. painting wrapping then the painted ones roll together

12. blowing bubbles

13. bouncing balls

14. from the balcony lowering cloths & materials plastic

15. the love paint exchange

16. the chickens / hacking / plucking / tearing hair /

painting self / rooms / falls

17. naked bodies all washed in bowls drying each other

18. banging on garbage-can lids

19. crawling

20. hammock bed figures / jumping / painting at /

water guns

21. the fish dance on the self / or / the nude follow-

ing contours

22. performers behind plastic staccato touching

23. group under within plastic rising falling angular

musculature

24. figures wrapped in plastic like presents rolling &

effréné effrénées ce regard égarer égayer égide églantier silence

jumping running

silencée

à demain

église

mais nos désirs peuvent

25. reclining lovers

the independent space

nous changer

il y a certains désirs qui sont plus forts que d'autres

26. women on boards

[...]

**From a letter to Jean-Jacques Lebel, February 1964,
responding to an invitation to create a "Happening" for Lebel's
Festival of Free Expression:**

There are now several works moving in mindseye ... tentatively identified as *Meat Joy*, and *Divisions and Rubble*; ... *Meat Joy* shifting now, relating to Artaud, McClure, and French butcher shops – carcass as paint (it dripped right through Soutine's floor) ... flesh jubilation ... extremes of this sense ... may involve quantities of dark fabric and paint drawn from performance area outward into audience to become inundation of all available space – action and viewing space interchanged, broken through. Smell, feel of meat ... chickens, fish, sausages? I see several women whose gestures develop from tactile, bodily relationships to individual men and a mass of meat slices. Specific sequence of collision and embrace ... a rising, falling counterpoint to bodies ... very dark (very bright). Hand-held lights spotting color cover movements.

My work can take substance from the materials I find ... this means that any particular space, any debris unique to Paris and any "found" performers ... would be potential structural elements for the piece. I've been working a great deal with the Judson dancers for love of their nondance movement and their aggressive, expansive interest in changing the very physical traditions which have given their bodies extraordinary scope and strength; and my pieces impose space relations for them, provoke personal responses which will work inclusively with any chosen or found environment. I do not require or want any specially predetermined "set-up." What I find will be what I need.

Editor's note: Meat Joy was first performed at Lebel's First Festival of Free Expression, 25–30 May 1964, at the American Center in Paris. The first U.S. production was at the Judson Church in New York, 16–18 November 1964.

Cast

CENTRAL MAN and CENTRAL WOMAN: hold the focus, are the main energy source.

TWO LATERAL MEN and TWO LATERAL WOMEN: perform as complements/doubles.

INDEPENDENT WOMAN: sets up a private world on her mattress at perimeter of action; she joins the others during "men lighting women under plastic."

INDEPENDENT MAN: joins Independent Woman from audience.

SERVING MAID: functions throughout as a stage-manager-in-the-open, wandering in and out of the performance area to care for practical details (gathering discarded clothing, spreading plastic sheeting, distributing props, allocating fish and chickens, etc.). Her matter-of-fact actions are deceptive, since cues and coordination of material and sequences often depend upon her.

Clothing color is coordinated with lighting. Independent Man arrives dressed in street clothes over bikini pants. Other men wear work clothes over bikini pants. The women wear bikini pants and bras covered with stringy, colored feathers. Central Woman enters dressed in blouse and skirt. Independent Woman wears a kimono over a bikini covered with scrappy tiger fur.

Score

As the audience is seated, the performers enter carrying a long table, chairs, trays with makeup, cups, brandy, water, etc. The table is set facing the audience, close to the entrance-exit area. They wear old shirts and robes over their costumes; they face the makeup mirror, their backs to the audience. The "Notes as Prolog" tape recording continues for twenty minutes during which the performers sit casually at the table, completing their makeup, sewing last feathers on, smoking, drinking. *The tape ends.* The audience is restless. The table is carried away. **BLACK OUT.**

Lateral Men climb to balcony. Lateral Women lie down in audience area.

Narrow spot from balcony to floor below. *Rock'n'roll Rue de Seine tape at full volume. "Blue Suede Shoes."*

From the balcony Lateral Men drop crumpled lengths of paper into central spotlight. Slow fall of paper mounts to crescendo making the central pyre five feet high. *Music begins when first paper has fallen.*

Low light fans into center. *"Tutti Frutti." Street Sounds.*

Lateral Men slide down rope from balcony, cross floor to find their partners (lying in audience area). They pull them out by their feet, lift and carry them to positions in front and to sides of central paper pile.

Central Man and Woman enter from under balcony, begin Undressing Walk – slow motion. **Soft spot, following.** She walks backward: no more than a few paces apart, their eyes on one another. Undressing occurs as

a series of rhythmic exchange motions, one after the other, a pause in between. Only one hand at a time is used in a clear, sustained, slow reaching to the clothing of the other. If the action of undoing a button or pulling a skirt free takes more than a few moments, the action is left uncompleted; the other takes a turn. As they walk each article of clothing removed is dropped slowly, clearly.

Side lights to Lateral Men beginning Body Packages. The women rest on their backs where they have been carried; their arms remain free as the men slowly walk into the paper pile, select a few large sheets, and place them on the torsos of the women. *Street Sounds*. They pile up a fat mound of paper and tuck it around the hips, some vertically up over their shoulders. "*From Me to You*." When the Body Package is sufficient each calls to the Serving Maid: "Rope!" A length is brought for each, and they tie the papers at the women's waists. Each man walks away, breaks into long, circling runs of approaches/feints to his Body Package.

Dull amber-gold light.

Independent Woman walks in from the audience several times, bringing her mattress, tea set, pillows, books, cakes, and oranges, and sets up her space at the edge of the audience (their feet nearly in her bed).

After several feints. Lateral Men skid at top speed by Body Packages (like skidding into first base), gather the women in their arms and in unbroken motion begin Body Roll. "*Baby Love*." Their actions are not precisely coordinated; each pair has a particular speed and direction to their rolls (one cutting space laterally, fast; the other with short, slower rolls in eddying circles). *Street Sounds*. If they roll into each other or the Undressing Walk or the audience, they stop, rest, shift directions.

"*Where Did Our Love Go*." (Cue.) When they wish, each man stops, raises his partner to her feet. Papers flutter and spread; he adjusts the papers attentively, goes down and takes her on top of himself, begins the rolls again. *Street Sounds*. Or he may rise onto his knees and lift her to hers: they stretch arms out slowly and exchange slow pushes, bending back as far as the push propels them. They embrace and roll.

Central Man and Woman, now undressed, exit. **Brief BLACKOUT.**

Enter Central Woman, who hides in center paper pile completely covered. *Street Sounds*. Serving Maid with flashlight walks about gathering discarded clothing. Independent Woman continues to eat, pour tea, shift things about her space. "*That's the Way Boys Are*." Central Man sits in audience on the floor opposite the pyre. Lateral Couples lie where they were at BLACKOUT, resting.

Diffuse gold light.

Lateral Men carry women forward close to the pyre. (The women are acquiescent, relaxed.) The women are placed on their backs, their legs tucked up against their chests. **Brightening light.** The men then run to and from the central pyre carrying armfuls of papers, which they drop and spread over the women. They are brisk and conscientious (and do not expose the Central Woman).

Street Sounds. Independent Man comes from the audience; he walks slowly to the Independent Woman and speaks, asking if he may join her on the mattress. "*Baby Love.*"

He carefully removes his jacket, shoes, and pants, and settles onto the mattress. She offers him tea and cake. They read something, talk, play a game of bouncing oranges on their stomachs and then exchanging them by bounces.

When the Lateral Women are completely covered with papers, the Lateral Men rush to the central pyre; rummaging, they find the Central Woman's feet, which they seize pulling her straight up into the air.

"*From Me to You.*" Raised on her hips beneath the paper, she immediately begins Leg Choreography – legs moving as if dancing upright, walking, pedaling a bicycle, etc. *Street Sounds.* The Lateral Men quickly pack the loose papers down around her hips to expose the legs; they run around the pile punching and hitting loose papers into the center. They return to their own partners, repeating these actions, and then crouch down to watch the three pairs of legs they have set off.

Flickering amber beam follows Central Man. Central Man comes slowly, deliberately from the audience, across floor to central pyre. He seizes moving legs of Central Woman and drags her out of the pyre, papers streaming behind her. He lifts her into an Awkward Hold, moving across the floor.

Lateral Men slip off their outer pants and jump into the pile of papers; they lie flat on their backs, hips raised, buttocks touching the women's buttocks. They scoop and scatter papers over their heads and torsos until only their legs show: Leg Mixture.

Central man comes parallel to the paint table, suddenly drops Central Woman. "*Anyone Who Had a Heart.*" *Street Sounds.* They freeze, look at each other. She raises her arms slightly. He grasps her hands and jerks her up as high in the air as he can, taking her weight against his chest. He shakes her long and violently until they fall over onto the paint table. He has fallen on his back, she on top of him. **Soft spotlight on paint**

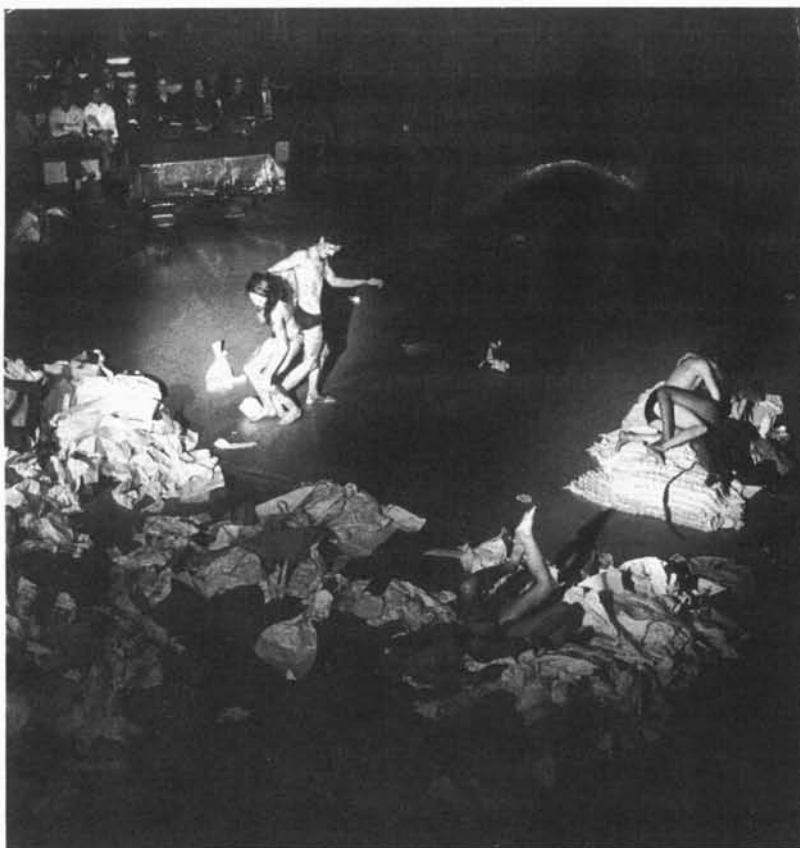
table. Very slowly she slips off him, crouching to reach under the table with one hand, and pulls out brushes and paint bowls. She rises, moves toward his head, and begins Love-Paint-Exchange. Slowly painting his face, chest, arms, thighs, sex, feet, legs, she moves around in back of the table.

"Wishin' and Hopin'." Lateral Men stand up, begin running jumps across floor and back into the pile. They then leap over the women, between short circular bursts of running. *Street Sounds.* The women, still with their legs in the air slowly swiveling, complicate the hurdle they make.

As the Central Woman comes around the table painting his legs, the Central Man sits up, reaches for the paintbrush in her hand. He drops his legs over the side and begins gently painting her face; then, slowly standing, painting her body. *"My Guy."* She takes another brush and bowl to exchange body painting. *Street Sounds.* *"That's the Way Boys Are."* Gathering speed across the floor (where the Lateral Men still run), they drop brushes and bowls, mix wet paint on their bodies directly, surface against surface, twisting, turning, faster and faster. Exit. **BLACKOUT.**

(Lateral Couple exits. Serving Maid hands out plastic sheets to the women; flashlights attached to cords are given to the men. She then enters bringing one plastic sheet to the Independent Couple, and gathers up brushes, bowls, and clothing. Lateral Women and Central Woman enter performance area. There each covers herself with a sheet, arranging themselves into a roughly triangular formation. The Independent Couple cover themselves, remaining seated.)

Silence. Flashlights only. The men gradually release the flashlights into widening arcs. This proceeds into very large slow patterns of movement. The lights are red and blue. The men coordinate directions and rhythms as they stalk in wide circles: faster light arcs; variations of vertical, horizontal, diagonal patterns; as high as possible, over heads of audience, as low as possible, with sudden shifts of light shafts back toward the center. They come closer together – staccato light as they pull in the cords; drop quickly to their knees, fanning into Alarm (starfish) Positions. Wrist movement light. The Women begin slow, angular movements, shaping plastic with elbows, knees, feet. Independent Couple perform a variation of this together. Rustling in the dark – men move to crouch and light fragments or details of moving forms. Abruptly, back and forth. Movement subsiding as women slowly move under sheets into the center of the floor; men crawling on their stomachs, closing in, flickering lights on/off into the plastic. All figures are now



Meat Joy was first performed in Paris at the First Festival of Free Expression in May 1964. Shown here, a November 1964 performance at Judson Memorial Church. (Photo by Peter Moore.)

grouped closely together. They lie still.

"Non Ho L'Eta." **Slow central lights.** From this pile the performers call for "Rosette" – the Intractable Rosette: a sequence of attempts to form the women into sculptural shapes which can move as a unit. *Street Sounds.* Men gather the women into a circular formation, back to back. All improvise. *"Non Ho L'Eta."* *Street Sounds.* Women link arms and legs; the men may tie their legs with rope, arrange them lying down, sitting up, spread-eagled, rolled in a ball, and then try to move them as if one solid structure (star, wheel, flower, crystal). *"Maybe I Know."* *Street Sounds.* Each time the "unit" fails and falls apart: all shout instructions, suggestions, advice, complaints. *"My Guy."* *Street Sounds.* But each time the women are set and the men begin to move them, they roll apart, lose balance, fall over. The men may choose The Tree as the

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

Full light. "*Non Ho L'Eta.*" Serving Maid enters, carrying a huge tray of raw chickens, mackerel, strings of hot dogs. *Street Sounds.* Slowly, extravagantly she strews fish, chickens and hot dogs all over the bodies. "*My Boy Lollipop.*" *Street Sounds.* Wet fish, heavy chickens, bouncing hot dogs – bodies respond sporadically; twitching, pulling back, hands reaching, touching, groans, giggles. "*Where Did Our Love Go.*" They sit up to examine their situation. "*Baby Love.*" *Street Sounds.* Individual rules are evolved: slips, flops, flips, jumps, throwing and catching, drawing, falling, running, slapping, exchanging, stroking. Tenderly, then wildly. All are finally inundated with fish, chickens, hot dogs.

"*Bread and Butter.*" *Street Sounds.* A call goes out for "hats." Women again are propped in a circle, back to back. Serving Maid brings plastic scarves and hairpins. Each man makes a secure but wild hat for a woman. "*Any One Who Had a Heart.*" *Street Sounds.* A call goes out for "paint." Serving Maid hurries back with large green and orange buckets full of colored paints, brushes, sponges – these she distributes among the men. "*That's the Way Boys Are.*" *Street Sounds.* Deliberately, with care, each man paints a brilliant linear face on a woman (in the Egyptian style). Then each man thoughtfully paints a woman's body; faster and faster, through three thousand years of techniques, they continue to cover them with paint: stroked, streaked, thrown, hurled. The women may smile amused at first. "*I Only Want to Be with You.*" They watch the movement of the paint until finally they are yelling, howling, twisting, turning, trying to rise slipping and falling on the splattered plastic flooring. They retaliate, throwing buckets of paint over the men. Each man grabs up a woman and carries her out over the littered floor into the paper pile where everyone buries everyone else as the Central Woman yells, "Enough, enough!" **BLACKOUT.**

Time: 60–80 minutes.

SNOWS

Editor's note: The technical elements of *Snows* are not detailed in the performance text that follows. Schneemann described the projections, sound, lighting, and electronic cuing system in the performance notes written for *More Than Meat Joy*. The film that began the performance (*The Red-Newsreel* in the text) is a five-minute silent newsreel from 1947 showing a series of catastrophes: a ship exploding, "red" Chinese being shot by nationalist guards, the Pope blessing crowds, a volcanic eruption in Bolivia, an American Legion parade in a snowstorm, car crashes, explosions, etc. Coincidentally, Schneemann had shot a still of one of the film's images from a book for *Viet-Flakes*. This film had been made by shooting newspaper and magazine photos of Vietnam, using a "close-up lens and magnifying glasses to 'travel' within the photographs, giving the effect of rough animation." *Viet-Flakes* appears near the end of the performance text. The accompanying sound collage by James Tenney combined fragments – so short they were only recognizable cumulatively – from both classical and top-forty popular music, as well as Vietnamese, Laotian, and Chinese folk songs. During early action sequences of the performance, *Snow Speed* and *Winter Sports* – both films of Bavarian winter sports shot during World War II – were projected on the ceiling and side walls. Later, the text describes a film of a snowstorm being projected on the torsos of three women; flashing overhead are "images from a winter diary": winter scenes shot by Schneemann in New York City and the upstate countryside.

According to Schneemann's notes: "Although sequences were fixed, durations were determined in performance: light cues for partnered actions and group convergences were always varied, made unpredictable by audience-activated electronic systems." The "electronic systems" were contact microphones, wired to spectators' seats, that fed into a switching system connected to the small motors that drove sculptor Larry Warshaw's revolving light machine as well as other sound and lighting mechanisms.

Snows was performed on 21, 22, 27–29 January and 3–5 February 1967 at the Martinique Theater, New York City.

SNOWS: to concretize and elucidate the genocidal compulsions of a vicious disjunctive technocracy gone berserk against an integral, essentially rural culture. The grotesque fulfillment of the Western split between matter and spirit, mind and body, individualized "man" against cosmic natural unities. Destruction so vast as to become randomized, constant as weather. Snowing . . . purification, clarification, homogenization.

"The large arena stage of the Martinique Theater is covered in silver and plastic sheeting. Bare white branches hang down from overhead. The rear wall is flaked with large ragged sheets of white paper. Even the seats are festooned with white plastic scallopings; unoccupied, they look in the dark like receiving ranges of snowy mountains. The lighting is icy: chill greens, blues, lavenders, with sometimes a flash of fire or sunlight. Two movies of skaters, skiers and related scenery are projected here and there on the set. At the rear is a large double construction; up to eight or ten feet, white outlined squares of varicolored plastic and open space on top; and a revolving light sculpture by Laurence Warshaw – flickering, reflecting, moving, shading colors and intensities within striations of plastic. It is very beautiful and surprisingly not at all cold."

Michael Smith, *Village Voice*

Score

The audience has been led into the theatre through the backstage door. In the dark they squeeze through two floor-to-ceiling foam rubber "mouths" and crawl over and under two long planks which stretch from the stage to the rear wall (across aisles and over the seats). Technicians rest on these silver planks – assisting the audience or not. The performers, wearing gray shirts and work pants, are sitting in a basic Oriental rest position, (squatting).

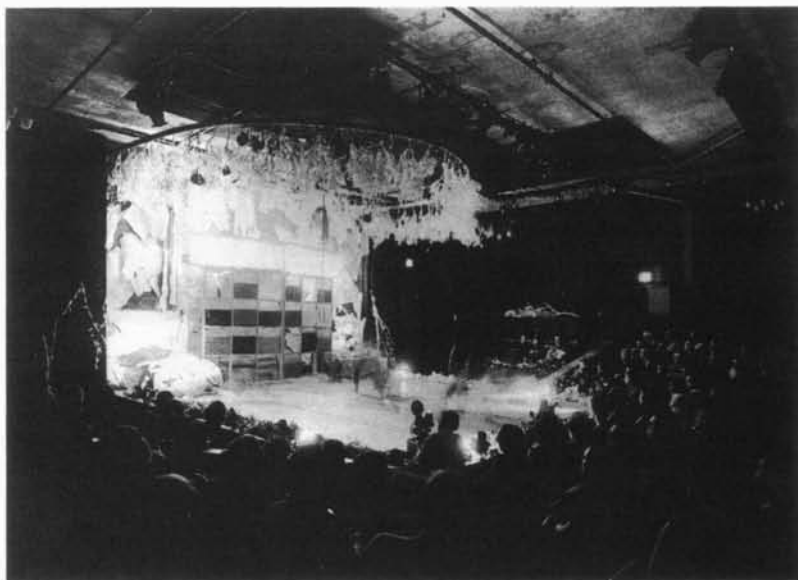
The Red-Newsreel begins. *"Train & Orgasm sound-collage.* A woman sweeps snow debris along the stage. The performers watch the film; when it is over they disappear behind the water-lens.

The light machine flickers dimly. Silhouettes of the performers appear – shifting shadows – behind the water-lens construction. They crawl or fall through empty apertures, and begin a slow animal-intense crawl toward the audience, some partly onto the planks. Turning back, they meet in the center of the stage and form a knot, crawling in, through, and out of one another's bodies.

Blue floor lights. *Snow Speed and Winter Sports* are projected across the ceiling, then center on side walls at varying levels.

The performers move apart. Crouching, staring at one another, they begin *Grabs & Falls*. Bodies thunder onto the stage; instantaneous collisions, a giving over of weight and impulse upon impact.

After an unspecified series of alternating encounters, a man about to enact a *grab* with a woman instead lifts her. The two other men stand, leaving their partners where they have fallen in snow, foil, foam rubber debris. *Passing Woman:* in clumsy walks and holds, the men pass and



According to Schneemann: "Snows was built out of my anger, outrage, fury, and sorrow for the Vietnamese." The revolving light sculpture was designed by Laurence Warshaw, the environment for the Martinique Theater by Schneemann. (Photo by Peter Moore.)

carry the body until one of the men at last places it on the white horizontal disk.

After *passing* the remaining two women, all are seated on the disk and begin *Creation of Faces* **BLACKOUT. Strobe begins. T & O tape.**

In pairs determined by the preceding sequence, each partner begins to cover the other's face with clown-white, silently responding to the other in a series of exchanges. When both faces are covered, one partner begins to *shape* the other's face, which takes on whatever aspect is pushed and prodded into the musculature – a transformation inducing a corresponding but unpredictable emotion. The created face turns toward the audience until the muscles relax by themselves and the expression fades.

Simultaneous overlappings of faces among the six are caught in the **flashing strobe.**

After an unspecified series of face-creations, one person will begin to move another (not necessarily the face partner) into *Body Sculpture*.

As the audience shifts, settles, they trigger the **lights overhead which slowly brighten. T & O tape. Films.**

Initially the men shape the women, who accept and hold whatever position they are given. Suddenly one of the women being sculpted will

grasp the hand shaping her: the shaper freezes his action and becomes the one to be sculpted.

After the series of *Body Sculptures* the men center the women on the white disk; they are gradually sculpted onto the floor. Here they hold the positions, immobile.

Having raised the white disk vertically the men carry the women and prop them against it. A **color film** of a snow storm outside the theatre is projected against their torsos. Lying on the stage, one of the men watches the film; the other two climb onto the water lens. On signal from the watcher, they slowly spill piles of "snow" over the women, who sink into a heap.

Audience motions are monitored and **the sculpture lights flicker sharply. Then flashing blue side lights.** Scrambling across the floor, two performers fall and roll, choose to be the "body balls"; two standing become the "pushers"; the two remaining are "watchers." The *Body Ball* is pushed, rolled, and shoved in an uncertain journey by the Pusher, who may not use hands.

Quickly, they begin *Crawl & Capture*: body balls become "victims," watchers become "pursuers," pushers become "interference."

Flat on the floor the Victim crawls to escape the Pursuer, while the Interference hangs onto the Pursuer's ankles. When the Pursuer catches the Victim, the Interference moves suddenly to grab from the other end: a tug of war. (Usually each victim can gather enough force to leap from the grips of both tormentors: the leap and cry stops any movement of the other two.) Audience reaction triggers **sudden flashes of blue floor lights.**

Victim now chooses between pursuer and interference, one of whom becomes the *Dragged Body* (to be dragged and then hung from the looped rope). Gathering foil, two persons completely cover the first body hung; two others cover the second Drugged Body.

These bodies will become the two *Silver Walkers*. The remaining four become two Cocoon and a Double Cocoon (the last two unwrapped performers cover each other as one form, falling together when wrapped).

The fallen cocoons slowly, slowly twist from their silver wrappings without using their hands. *Silence* but for the crackling foil. The silver walkers, nearly blind in their wrappings, walk out onto the planks into the audience area; projectionists with blue flashlights guide them. The planks are slippery and slope upward – the walkers precariously make



*The Dragged Body is hung and then wrapped in foil in *Snows* (1967). (Photo by Charlotte Victoria.)*

their way to the end, where they sink into the sitting position.

The first freed cocoons become *Rescuers*.

As *Viet-Flakes* begins against the white disk, a rescuer – sensing danger – crawls up the plank, and drags a walker down.

The walkers are corpse-like, nearly unmoveable. The other freed cocoons

wait prone at the end of the planks to assist the rescues. Together in desperate struggle and clumsy haste they gather in a pile, collapsing under the film projection. The snow machine begins – snow falling, filling eyes and ears, covering all.