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"The pattern, so far, had been that artists' political actions followed other leftist anti-bomb, anti-war, anti-establishment protests across the country. Once again, in 1969, there were dramatic examples for the artists to follow." The second article in a continuing series on art and politics retraces the course of artists' activism from the 1968 Democratic Convention, through the formation of Museum and the Studio Museum in Harlem, and into the first battles of the Art Workers Coalition.

James Rosenquist's poster for "Richard J. Daley," the protest show organized by the Feigen Gallery, Chicago, after the Democratic Convention of August 1968.



The Politicalization of the Avant-Garde, II

THERESE SCHWARTZ

In August 1968, about two hundred thousand young people arrived in Chicago to demonstrate against the Democratic Party's Nominating Convention then in session. Determined to show their disillusion and anger at what they termed the "hypocrisy and deceit" of the convened politicians, they massed in the streets and parks of the city. Disobeying police orders to disperse, the young protestors were clubbed, kicked and tear-gassed in what an investigating commission later termed a "police riot." Since the city was filled with network TV cameras, the occasion was televised for the whole nation to see. The scenes on TV could not be denied or minimized, and the country was shocked. The mayor of Chicago, Richard J. Daley, was solidly behind the police, defending his position on TV. Delegates at the convention who were honestly outraged, drew his mockery and scorn.

Among the TV viewers were two artists who were prompted to action—Hedda Sterne, the New York artist and Jesse Reichek, the painter and art-history professor at Berkeley. Telephoning artists all over the country, they proposed an art boycott of Chicago to run until 1970, the year Daley's term as mayor would end. On September 5, the Sterne and Reichek boycott statement appeared in a story in the *New York Times*: "The recent actions by Chicago police, directed and supported by Mayor Daley and not repudiated by the people of Chicago, have marked that city as being unfit for membership in a civilized society. As painters and sculptors we know that art cannot exist where repression and brutality are tolerated. As citizens we have seen art lose its value when police power is allowed to go unchallenged. Silence condones: We have not forgotten Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. We express our disgust and revulsion by refusing to make available any of our work for exhibition in Chicago, at public or private galleries, for the next two years. It is our hope that by then the people of Chicago will have discarded their present political leadership and will have restored that city as a fitting environment for our work."

The boycott was soon supported by about fifty artists, among them Adolph Gottlieb, Barnett Newman, Robert Motherwell, Philip Guston, Mark Rothko, James Rosenquist, Roy Lichtenstein, Saul Steinberg, Tony Smith, Balcomb Greene, Elsworth Kelly, Kenneth Noland and Larry Poons.

On September 5, the same day the boycott statement appeared in the *Times*, Claes Oldenburg, whose show was scheduled for October at Richard Feigen's Chicago Gallery, wrote to Feigen asking that his show be postponed, saying that "... in Chicago, I like so many others ran head-on into the model American police state. I was tossed to the ground by six swearing troopers who kicked and clubbed me and called me a Communist ... A gentle one-man show about pleasure seems a bit obscene in the present context ..."

The postponement left a blank in the exhibition program of the gallery, so Feigen proposed a group protest show instead. It would be called "Richard J. Daley" and would, as far as possible, contain new protest-propaganda art. However, the boycott had already been endorsed by many artists, as they told Feigen when he invited them to show. Although Oldenburg's decision to postpone his show was not mentioned in any newspaper accounts before September 5, Feigen says that



Left: After the encounter between demonstrators and Chicago police at the Democratic Convention. Photo, Burton Berinsky. Below: Police enforcing the 11:00 P.M. curfew in Lincoln Park on August 25, 1968. UPI Telephoto.

Oldenburg suggested the postponement at the end of August, right after the close of the convention, before the boycott was announced, and that the September 5 letter suggesting postponement was written at Feigen's own request—the reason being that he wished to use the letter as advance publicity for the "Richard J. Daley" show.

Hedda Sterne, who says that Feigen called her several times to argue the advantages of a protest show over a boycott, says: "Mr. Feigen no doubt thought his idea was better; I didn't agree. When we acted by proposing the boycott, we thought for one time at least this boycott would bring artists together, and it lasted about a second

I don't think political art is ever effective as protest if you are political you act it out in everything you do. . . . When Courbet wanted to protest he didn't put up pictures, he went out and tore them down. I did this boycott action for the health of my soul, and I am glad, for in most of my life I am not political, I do my work. But I have found that after a political act that you believe in, your work goes better."

In Chicago, two museum directors also disagreed with the boycott; Charles Cunningham of the Art Institute telegraphed Reichek to say the boycott was "grossly unfair," and in a letter to the *Times* Jan van der Marck of the Museum of Contemporary Art wrote, "Rather than be silent, let's make art an ally in combatting inertia, hostility and moral confusion."

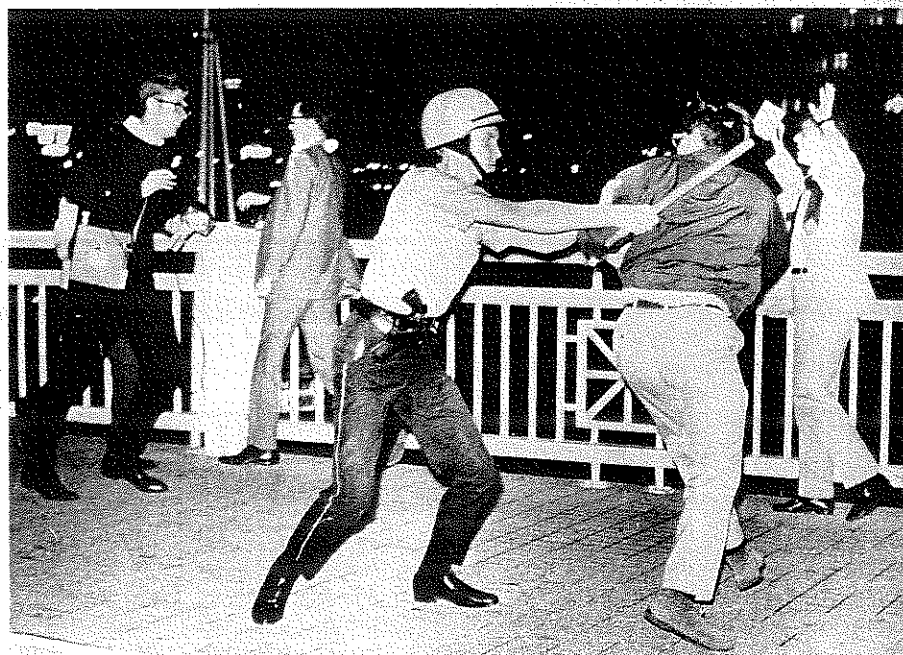
In mid-September, Feigen came to New York to talk to more artists, to collect work and to argue the greater importance of the protest show over the boycott. More than fifty artists, many of whom had signed the boycott statement, agreed to exhibit. Some, like Barnett Newman, began work on a specific protest piece for the show—the point being that a specifically designed protest work would have more effect than a work in the artist's usual style (a concept harking back to the

"politically useful art" tried out in the thirties). Newman's piece was a barbed-wire grid, splattered with red paint; Rosenquist's portrait of the mayor was made of slashed plastic ribbon; Oldenburg showed drawings of Daley's head on a platter and also red-painted hydrocal fireplugs. Some of the artists—Helen Frankenthaler, Gottlieb and Richard Smith—sent examples of their usual style, as did Robert Motherwell, with the comment that his work could not be political, but that his protest would be registered by his presence in the show.

When the "Richard J. Daley" show opened on October

There is a certain kind of art which I belong to. It can no more make a direct political comment than chamber music can. But by exhibiting with these artists who can, and with the theme of the exhibit, we are showing our support.

—Robert Motherwell, quoted in *Newsweek*, November 4, 1968





At the Feigen Gallery's "group protest" show, Barnett Newman's contribution, *Lace Curtain for Mayor Daley*, was a sculpture crisscrossed with barbed wire and spattered with red paint. James Rosenquist's *Tattered Image* was a pink-and-white-plastic Daley slashed into ribbons and meant to be punched.

Originally, when I heard about the boycott, I canceled my show scheduled at the Chicago Arts Club. But then Feigen organized his show, and the people who had drawn up the boycott statement in the first place began to cancel out and join the show. I felt that no exhibiting means no exhibiting, even a protest show. It doesn't matter what you call it.

Also, several of the painters who had originally signed the boycott statement had works in the Dada-Surrealism show that had been at the Modern and was coming to Chicago. When they realized that they would have to withdraw their works, most of them canceled out of the boycott. By this time the whole point of the boycott was lost, so I decided to have my show after all. I'm against visual protests anyway; I know they don't work.

—Jimmy Ernst, 1971

23, it was, after all, just a show. An installation photograph reveals nothing shocking, and for an incomprehensible reason the protest pieces were so crowded together that they almost canceled each other out. Soon other Chicago galleries followed with their protest exhibitions, and thus the unprecedented action of the boycott was lost. After the Daley show, art in Chicago went on as usual.

In the second half of 1968, artists began to focus increased attention on their immediate, local problems. The post-World War II baby boom had hit the art world by 1968 in the form of an enormously expanded population of students and artists. But the opportunities to exhibit, to participate in the gallery-museum world, had not expanded to accommodate this new crowd. As unknown artists they generally had not been involved even in the large protest shows, which were invited events. In the lull after Chicago, the younger artists, some of whom had been politically active as students, recognized their common problem—there was no place to show their work.

A group of eight young artists (Arthur Hughes, Gary Smith, Sharon Brant, Robert Resnick, Robert Harris, Steve Phillips, Bruce Brown and Claire Frank) sat down together to consider this in the summer of 1968. Although members of the group had varied and sometimes contradictory ideas and philosophies, "Museum, a Project of Living Artists" was the result.

Smith, also a founder of Millennium, a film cooperative, says that an even earlier group had met in August 1967 to discuss a version of Museum involving group exhibitions at first. But soon this project became a plan for a materials-buying cooperative which, it was hoped, would promote other communal activities. A



meeting called in November 1967 brought 180 people who listened to these plans with some interest and a little suspicion. On the whole the idea was thought possible—but, some artists asked, if the cooperative made any money, who would rip off the profits? The materials-buying commune idea was put aside for a while.

After the 1968 meeting, the group of eight grew to about forty. The plans for Museum were developed and, with the gift of \$5,000 from an anonymous donor, took concrete form at the end of 1968. A large loft was rented at 729 Broadway. In January 1969, a widely pre-publicized meeting brought three hundred people, even though a heavy snowfall had tied up traffic. Many ideas were tossed around. Smith again suggested his cooperative materials-buying idea, but it was clear by the end of the evening that what almost all the artists wanted was a program for the display of their art.

A plan was worked out in detail; according to its projections, Museum would be an association of small independent artist groups, each exhibiting in turn in the large (5,000 square feet), high-ceilinged loft at 729 Broadway. Each group would choose its shows from among its own members. Artists of similar style would be encouraged to form a group, and a new artist would choose the group whose style was most like his or her own. A kind of peer-judging would be practiced; an applicant to a group had to submit his or her work, and the group could accept or reject. For one-man shows, each group would choose its best or "most ready" member. Other plans included a permanent file of artists, containing information and slides, to be kept at Museum, but this was never put into operation.

The membership grew, but no exhibition was held since groups were slow to form. So in May 1969 Smith with a few others set up a "found objects" show

and Museum had its first exhibition. Attendance was good, and with this encouragement the first organized group show opened in October. By this time Museum members were a mixed bunch. Many were older artists, some with a great deal of political experience. James E. Gahagan, a painter, and past president of the Artists Tenants Union (active in the mid-sixties), was the main organizer of the first group exhibition. After one more show, conflict between the several clashing philosophies among Museum members surfaced. Some members wanted an organized art association with a set schedule of exhibitions, forums and similar activities. Others, generally older and more conservative, wanted Museum to be an exhibition hall *only*, with its doors open for scheduled periods and locked the rest of the time. Another younger group saw Museum as an "artists space" to be used in any way, open at all times, and even serving as a temporary crash pad for the homeless. Signs of the eventual abandonment of the original idea were apparent.

To head off a split, and destruction of Museum, a Membership Convention was called in March 1970. The chairman, Gahagan, believed in scheduled shows and some security arrangements to prevent thefts of exhibited work, and with his wife, Patricia di Gogorza, a sculptor, worked to have a formal disciplined structure adopted to guide them for the future. This attempt failed. The more radical members broke up the meeting and, taking several others with them, walked out. However, before the split, a Steering Committee was elected, made up of Joseph Catuccio, painter, Paul Liebgott, painter, Alan Bermowitz, sculptor, Doris O'Kane, painter, Lynne Mayo, sculptor, Jim Juthstrom, painter, Arthur Hughes, painter, and Farman, an Iranian artist-poet. All these are still in office, except Farman, who resigned. Barry Schwartz, a writer who was added later, has also resigned.

After the convention, the Steering Committee cleaned house, discouraged the crashers, and applied

A view of the New York loft where Museum, a Project of Living Artists, staged the "Aim of the Revolutionary Movement" show during November 1969—LNS Newsreel, RAT and I.KON Books being among the participants.

Photo, Mehdi Khonsari.



to the New York State Council on the Arts for a grant, eventually receiving \$17,000. Those who had wanted no organization at all were disgusted with what they considered reactionary activity and disappeared.

The Steering Committee governs Museum. The plan of an association of independent groups was abandoned, and Museum became an art-event center. It is used as a one-time exhibition space by artist groups, as a meeting hall (Art Workers Coalition, Women Artists in Revolution, Women in Art, convene there regularly);

I think a boycott is self-defeating . . . But I don't think the "Richard J. Daley" show was effective either, I doubt if any show of socialist-realist propaganda work ever is. That kind of art is about the worst kind of propaganda there is. In the old days, artists agreed to be in protest shows because they wanted a place to show, and since they had no galleries, such shows were a place to exhibit, at least. Artists as artists have no political strength. It's nice that they think they do, and that they make such protests, but they are always ineffective.

—Adolph Gottlieb, 1971

Chicago is known as the Second City. Many of us felt it could have been the First City. Somehow the climate has been right for creative activity.

Chicago revolutionized architecture, jazz, literature, political humor and art. But something drove the revolutionaries away. Chicago became an incredible incubator that could not sustain mature life.

The mature artist is a political creature. He cares about inhumanity, poverty, war, and wrong. When he sees wrong he wants to set it right.

He can engage in dialogue with those who disagree. But he cannot tolerate a vacuum in which there are no political alternatives nor a forum for dissent. He will not stay awake on Election Night when the results are pre-ordained, and he cannot sleep.

One of Chicago's famous exiles came back to make a happy exhibition and was mauled by the police. So now there is an angry exhibition instead.

We do not believe in futile protest. This "Richard J. Daley" exhibition has an objective. It is to stress that Chicago's Democratic Machine is now the world's problem, not just Chicago's.

The Machine has not only shocked the world by steam-rolling the Democratic Convention and mauling innocent dissenters, delegates, newsmen and bystanders. It has so stifled political dialogue that Cook County's voting power can be delivered as a personal gift from one man to whatever candidates he chooses.

It is not only the intellectuals who are disenfranchised, nor even the black 1st Congressional District, but the Gold Coast as well.

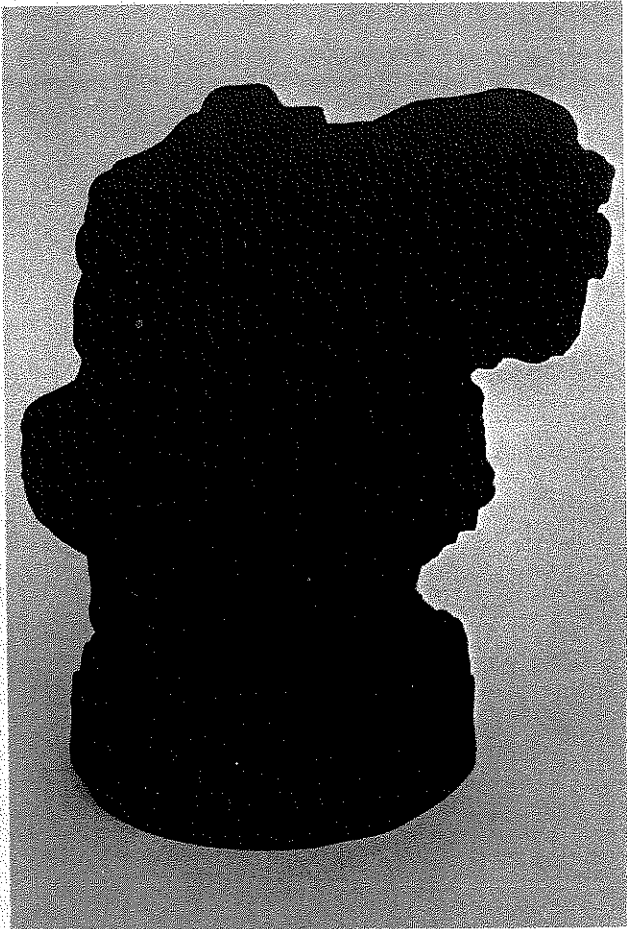
The week of August 25th exposed the new class struggle. It is no longer the poor class against the rich or Democrat against Republican. It is the educated against the uneducated, the courageous against the terrified, young against old—thinking against non-thinking.

The exhibition and statement by the undersigned artists is directed at widening the new chinks in Mayor Daley's armor. They call Chicago's thinking citizens to solidarity with the artists, the educated, the courageous and the young; to stimulate dialogue, a reform movement, the opening of political options; to break the compact made with the Machine by Democrats and Republicans alike; to temper enthusiasm for low taxes and good highways with concern, if not for the exiled artists, then for the neglected black ghetto, the cynical patronage—for the world's image of Chicago since August 25th.

—Statement issued by the Feigen Gallery, Chicago, to announce the "Richard J. Daley" exhibition, October 23—November 23, 1968. The "undersigned artists" refers to the fifty-three participants in the show, including Gottlieb, Lindner, Morris, Motherwell, Newman, Noland, Oldenburg, Rauschenberg, Rosenquist and Stella.

That same fall the Museum of Contemporary Art made its contribution to the coverage of Chicago's bloody summer, although in a more oblique way. Accompanied by a catalogue that looked like a scandal sheet, "Violence in Recent American Art" dealt with subjects that ranged from race riots to the war in Vietnam and from assassination to civil insurrection. Mayor Daley and his police force were featured by the Chicago participants in this exhibition. The city's political establishment showed the same scorn for the Museum of Contemporary Art as it did for the Feigen Gallery, full well realizing that both shows had been prompted by what happened at the Convention.

—Jan van der Marck, 1971



Fire Plug Souvenir, Chicago, 1968, was Claes Oldenburg's entry in the Feigen Gallery's protest show after the Democratic Convention.

MUSEUM is a new force in the art world. It comes into existence in response to a widely felt need for a more alive connection between art and society, without the dissipation of force and quality occurring so frequently in the current art establishment. It is a museum governed by artists.

A system of selection of artists by artists will allow artists to rise by virtue of quality, in contrast to the current, all too frequent means of elevation through social and political maneuvering. The openness of this system will also bypass "trend-setting" by the commercial establishment—a policy which has left high and dry many quality artists not working in the current trends.

—From statement of objectives in Museum brochure, 1968

it houses sketch classes, a print workshop, and is available for screenings, dance recitals, theater, forums, etc. The Steering Committee books shows, allots space, organizes sketch classes, handles all finance and sees to the housekeeping and security. Requirements for exhibition are simple: all shows must be group shows; there must be at least four exhibitors in a group; they are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis; the cost per group is about \$17 a week, the cost of the electricity used; no quality standards are invoked. "Actually," says Catuccio, "we have no criteria; we don't judge quality, we never even see the work in advance, we have only human criteria."

There is no permanent dues-paying membership now. According to Lynne Mayo, everyone who participates in an activity at Museum is considered a member; interpreted this way, the membership comes to about four hundred. The organization recently moved into new quarters at 133-35 Greene Street.

Museum is the only such art center in New York. It is busy—used and enjoyed by the whole art community. That the original plan was abandoned, and that it did not become an alternative to the private-gallery system, may be taken as another indication that most artists, while willing to try alternatives at some time in their careers, still consider the establishment pattern of galleries and museums the most useful system for exhibiting.

When the idea of the Studio Museum in Harlem was conceived in 1966, it was not concerned with artists or their problems. As Betty Blayton, an artist and one of the founders, says, "Artists were not heavy in the scene at first." Blayton, and Frank Donnelly, a social worker, saw the museum as a good thing for Harlem. When working on a Haryou project, they escorted some teen-agers to the Museum of Modern Art as part of a series of art-appreciation lectures. But the work they saw at the Modern was of little interest or relevance to black youth, and there was almost nothing by black artists to be seen. When asked "Where are the black artists?" the sponsors had no answer, and while they were thinking that over, they realized that there was no place to see art of any kind in Harlem. Harlemites had to go into neighborhoods that were essentially alien if they wanted to look at art, and when they did go they saw the work of white artists almost exclusively. So Blayton and Donnelly at first thought of providing a place which would house art appropriate for the Harlem audience.

In the next two years, the organizing structure for the Studio Museum was developed. The organizers included both blacks and figures from the white establishment. Along with Blayton and Donnelly, they consisted of Charles Cowles, publisher of *Artforum*; Kynaston McShine, associate curator at Museum of Modern Art; J. Frederic Byers III, of the Bykert Gallery, and Theodore Gunn, a Harlem artist. Carter Burden, New York City Councilman, was the first president; Eleanor Holmes Norton, then a lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union, was vice-president. Thomas Hoving, Metropolitan Museum director, and Bates Lowry, then MOMA director, were on the advisory board.

When the project was halfway finished and space had been rented in a building at 2033 Fifth Avenue, at 125th Street, the organizers began to see that the plight of unrecognized and unexhibited black artists was the real issue. Even Blayton admits that "none of us knew how great was their need of exposure, none of us knew how many there were." And so the plan became more artist-oriented than had originally been conceived. Charles Inniss, a young Dun & Bradstreet executive, left his job to become the museum's first director. The gallery was opened to the public on September 26, 1968, with a show of geometric electric-light constructions by Tom Lloyd.

At the opening there was feeling that the exhibit had a "downtown art brought uptown" complexion and that it was not appropriate to the original concept of a Harlem museum. Some black artists were of the opinion that white styles and standards were being transplanted to the new Harlem museum, and that a statement made by Inniss before the opening reflected this: "We hope to provide a place for good black artists to exhibit, where black people can see their work. But more than that we want to be a ground where the black and white art worlds can really meet..."

A month after the opening Inniss resigned in a disagreement over policy. Theodore Gunn, who was acting director in February 1969, said, at that time, that an art relevant to Studio Museum and its community should present black subject matter; black children coming to the museum should see themselves as subjects of art since their previous viewing experience had been

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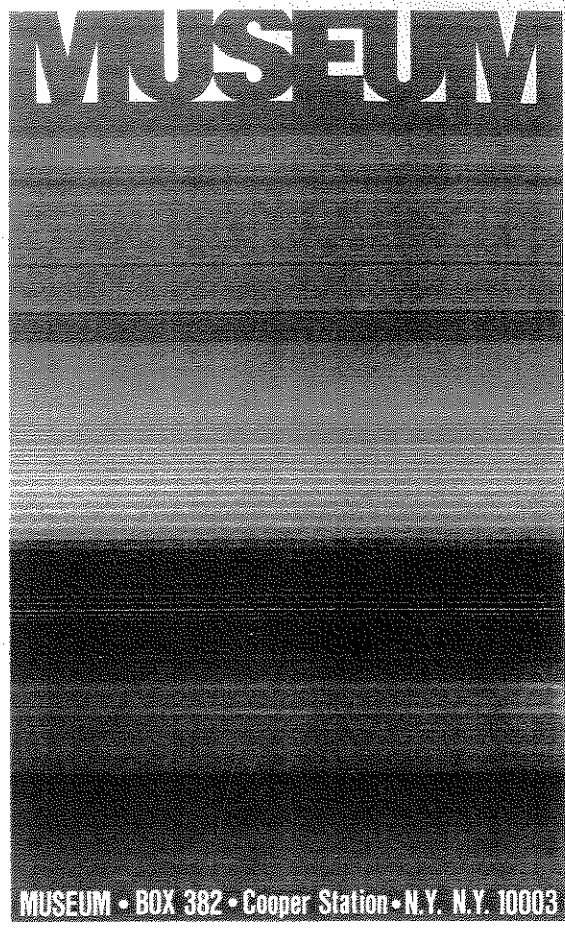
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confined to white subjects by white artists. Given the limitations of time and space, it was never possible for Studio Museum to show more than the work of black artists. Commenting on the changes in thinking around this time, Blayton says, "We had hoped to show all kinds of art, there was just not the time or space . . . we would have liked to show some European art, but why should we show a German artist, for instance, when there are so many black artists still unshown?"

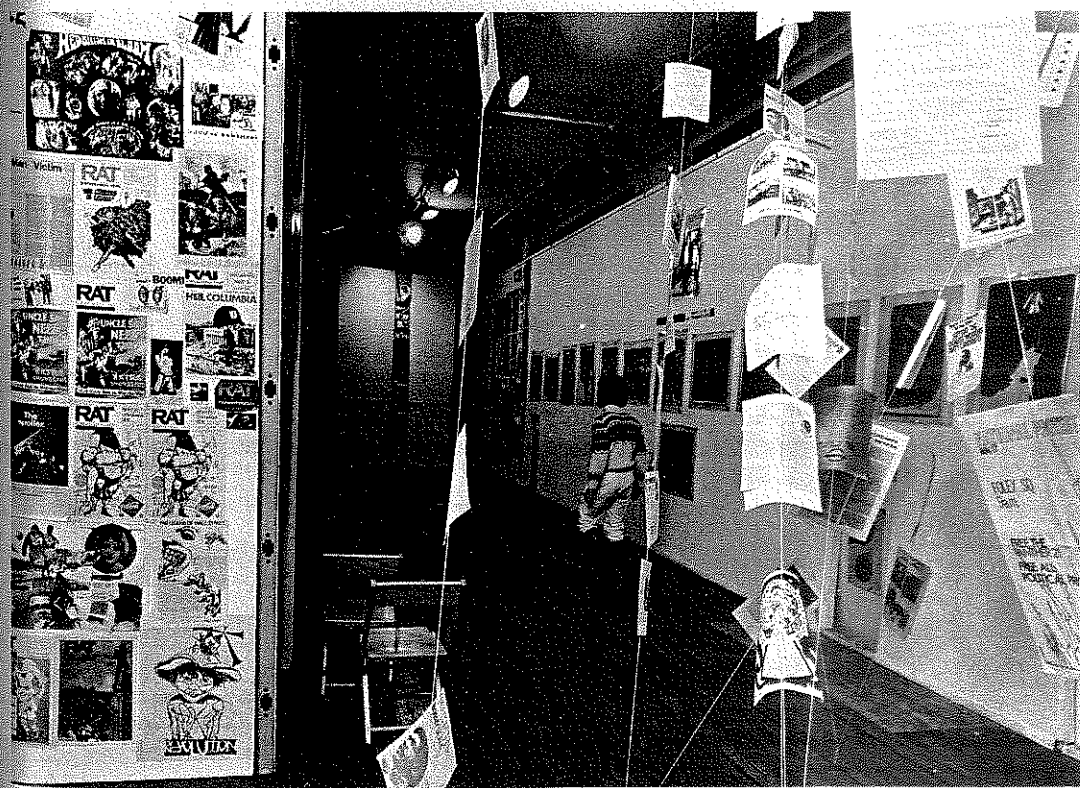
In July 1969, a California artist, Edward S. Spriggs, was appointed director, bringing to the job a thorough knowledge of the deprived status of black artists. He knew that no other institution was involved in contemporary black art, that there were black artists lacking attention in every section of the country, and that, in common with their white colleagues, they all wanted to show in New York. For most blacks, showing in New York, with the advent of Studio Museum, meant showing in Harlem, considered almost universally as the black spiritual capital. Spriggs' aim was to provide "a sympathetic environment for black artists" and a place where the best of them could exhibit. The word spread rapidly, and artists from all over the country began sending slides, photographs and biographical material with the hope of being selected for a show. Spriggs estimates that since his arrival there have been applications from some four hundred artists. But not content to leave it at that, he uses scouts outside New York to look at work, and to recommend and refer artists. The museum's scope has become national. As Spriggs puts it, "We couldn't have remained a Harlem Museum if the need was broader than that."



Cover of brochure sent out in late 1968 to announce the formation of Museum, a Project of Living Artists.

Below: Installation shot of the "Revolutionary Movement" exhibition at Museum, a Project of Living Artists, New York, November 1969. Photo, Mehdi Khonsari.

MUSEUM • BOX 382 • Cooper Station • N.Y. N.Y. 10003



Museum was an alternative to an unworkable situation that didn't work.

—Gary Smith, 1971

Museum is the first important attempt in recent artists' movements to set up a parallel institution to circumvent the grip of those who rule the art scene. It corresponds, on a higher level, to the co-op gallery movement of the fifties, and to some extent, to the free university movement among left radicals.

—Arthur Hughes, New York Element, June 1969

Before our grant, in our urgency to find groups to schedule so that we could meet our expenses at Museum, we were about touching bottom and booking "Sunday" and amateur painters. Now we don't have to search frantically, and the amateur groups don't turn up; they don't seem to know about us. Somehow the groups that do apply are serious and easily fall within the very loose requirements.

—Lynne Mayo, 1971



Opening night at the Studio Museum in Harlem (September 24, 1968); left to right: Eleanor Holmes Norton, Carter Burden, Charles Inniss, Campbell Wyllly, Betty Blayton Taylor and Frank Donnelly. Photo, Jill Kremenz.

Below: In this gallery tour of the Studio Museum's "Impact Africa" exhibition, museum director Edward S. Spriggs is speaking to the group. Photo, Doug Harris.

Africobra is a Chicago-based cooperative group that—from their perspective as African-american—is going about the righteous business of identifying and making use of the styles and rhythm qualities, both the apparent and actual, that finds expression in the lives of black people everywhere. We see in Africobra's concepts and philosophy the emergence of an honestly real-world and people-oriented body of creations. For them the Black aesthetic is not only a possibility, but is in continuous evolution in the lives of peoples of African ancestry. It functions daily in their every mode of expression.

—Edward S. Spriggs, catalogue for "Africobra II" exhibition, Studio Museum in Harlem, 1971

Not only is the museum limited to black artists, but under Spriggs it also has a commitment to show art which represents a black esthetic, reflecting a different point of view because it is black. He is interested in work that is "based on the life styles current in the black community . . . on Africanisms, which might be termed by others, *Negro-American*." He points out that color, for instance, is used differently by blacks in their everyday lives, in clothes, and so it will naturally be used differently by black artists. He knows that some black artists use the standards manufactured by Madison Avenue, but he finds that the ones who do not are more exciting "because they are creating a redefinition of things."

The artists Spriggs uses as "scouts" around the country think much the same way he does about the future of black art. Jeff Donaldson, head of the art department at Howard University in Washington, D.C., finds and recommends artists for Studio Museum, and he is also a member of Africobra (African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists), a Chicago-based group which has exhibited twice at the museum. In an essay in the catalogue of their November 1971 show at Studio Museum, Donaldson wrote: "It's NATION TIME and we are searching. Our guidelines are our people—the whole family of African people, the African family tree. And in this spirit of familyhood, we have carefully examined our roots and searched our branches for those visual qualities that are most expressive of our people/art. We strive for images inspired by African people/experience and images which African people can relate to directly without formal art training and/or experience. Art for people and not for critics whose peopleness is questionable . . ."

Shows are chosen mainly by Spriggs, in association

with different members of the Board of Trustees. Charles Cowles, Campbell Wyllly, Theodore Gunn and Betty Blayton have been among those on the selection committee. With few exceptions, New York black artists have not played a prominent part in Studio Museum, although Benny Andrews, who showed there in April 1971, and Al Hollingsworth are now associated. Earlier, Norman Lewis, Jacob Lawrence, Charles Alston, Felrath Hines and Vincent Smith were also involved, according to Blayton.

To fulfill its other function, that of a community facility, the museum has an artist-in-residence program. On the basis of need, it provides, for one year, free studios in the museum building to four black artists. In return, these studios are accessible to museum visitors who want to see how artists work. (The hours for the visits coincide with those of the museum, which is open six days a week, some days until nine o'clock.) One of the four artists is also a paid coordinator of community programs, arranging shows elsewhere (for instance, a union headquarters) or organizing and executing street murals. Printmaking is taught in a workshop conducted by the resident artists, and the presses are available, free of charge, to any artist.

Studio Museum has received some monies from the New York State Council on the Arts. It also gets contributions from private supporters, and there is now a New York Council for Studio Museum. Composed most-

*Board of Trustees: Russell Goings, stockbroker; Charles Cowles; Janet Carter, housewife; Eleanor Holmes Norton; James Henton, filmmaker; Frank Donnelly; Russ Morrison, publisher; Carter Burden; J. Frederic Byers III; Charles Hobson, TV producer; Raymond Hulén, businessman; Olatunji, musician; George Corrin; Wendell Wray; and Kynaston McShine.



ly of young black professional women, it has pledged itself to keep the museum alive.

How many black artists will opt for a frankly separate scene of working, exhibiting and existing professionally is not yet known—but for those who will, the Studio Museum in Harlem is an alternative that is working.

It is said that revolution comes out of the middle class; in 1969 it was the establishment (middle-class) artist who made a small revolution in a New York museum. Alternatives could be tested by young and unknown artists, but the establishment artist, because he was so close to the museum's life, could act directly against it when he felt oppressed. The pattern, so far, had been that artists' political actions followed other leftist anti-bomb, anti-war, anti-establishment protests across the country. Once again, in 1969, there were dramatic examples for the artists to follow. The SDS was still strong, the Black Panthers were at the height of their unity, and disillusion with the establishment was widespread—among the young, the artists and the intellectuals. The artist-student protests at the Venice Biennale, the Milan Triennale, and the Kassel Documenta in Germany had occurred only six months before.

Vassilakis Takis, a Greek sculptor and one of the first art-and-technology artists, had lived in Paris during the student rebellions of May 1968 and had also taken part in the Venice and Kassel protests. Early in January 1969, after his appointment as a fellow at the MIT Center for Advanced Visual Studies, he was staying in New York at the Chelsea Hotel on 23rd Street. At this time "The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age," the featured exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, included a piece by Takis. As he and Farman, the Iranian artist-poet, who also lived at the Chelsea Hotel, were discussing the show, Takis expressed his anger at the way he was represented. As he told it, the guest organizer of the show, Dr. Pontus Hultén of the Moderna Museet, Stockholm, had first chosen a large recent work, and then in June 1968 decided to substitute *Tele-Sculpture*, a small 1960 piece which was already in the Modern's collection. Takis objected, and for months he and Hultén carried on a correspondence—with Takis protesting the substitution and Hultén saying that he was giving the matter every consideration. When the show opened, the 1960 piece was the one included.

Farman, who says "I throw the I Ching every New Year," told Takis that he had just turned up "Revolution." Takis, who was then absorbed in the *Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung* (the Little Red Book), decided that there was a telling coincidence here and that they should plan an action guided by the Maoist principle of contradiction. They decided to remove Takis' work from the show; in doing so, since it belonged to the museum, they would also be tampering with museum property. They called Willoughby Sharp, the critic, and also took into their confidence Elizabeth Béar and a woman artist known as "Do," a friend of Takis.

Plans were made swiftly—the piece was to be removed from the exhibition on January 3, at exactly four o'clock. Farman and Takis made a preliminary study of the particular gallery and the position of the guards. After Takis bought a pair of insulated pliers, they went back to the Chelsea to write and run off a leaflet explaining their action and "to stir up some revolutionary spirit

among artists." The text prepared for the leaflet listed four complaints: (1) the exhibition of living artists without their express consent; (2) the degree of control exercised by museums, galleries and private collectors over the works of living artists; (3) the lack of consultation between museum authorities and artists, particularly with regard to the maintenance and installation of work; (4) the unauthorized use of photographs and other material for publicity purposes.

Sharp and Farman tried to round up ten or fifteen artists to accompany them, but none they called would come. Takis also called John Perreault, art critic of the *Village Voice*, who promised to be there and "offered his encouragement."

The abduction was meticulously timed: at 3:55 Do was to call the director, Bates Lowry, and tell him what was happening. At exactly 4:00 Farman and a friend—Grenier, an artist-poet—would stand in front of each guard, blocking his view of the sculpture, and also hand out leaflets. At the same instant, Takis would cut the wires, and he and Sharp would carry the sculpture out to the garden.

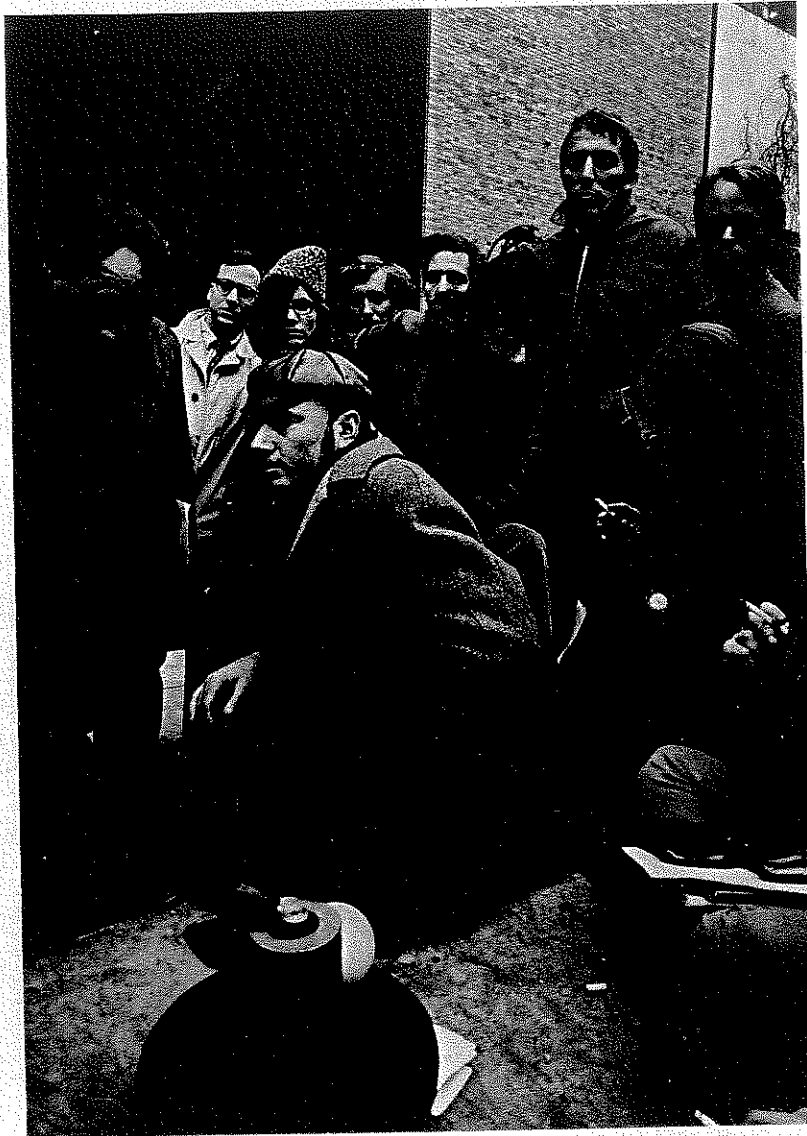
The plan worked exactly as laid out: at 3:45 the company—Takis, Farman, Elizabeth Béar, Do, Grenier and Perreault—sembled. Takis recalls that "Perreault was a little ill at ease, but smiled encouragement at us." Do was in the telephone booth at 3:56, the guards were distracted with the leaflets, and at 4:00 Farman and Sharp shielded the sculpture from view while Takis cut the wires and carried it out to the garden. The action was done in thirty seconds, and was so unexpected that the guards stood fixed and speechless. No one called the police. The rest of the group joined Takis, Farman and Sharp in the garden, and soon representatives of the museum came out to talk to them. At first, they tried to frighten the artists by calling the action "theft," but the group declared the garden "neutral



Takis removing his *Tele-Sculpture* from its stand in the Museum of Modern Art, shielded from view by the co-conspirators whose precise timing made the abduction possible. At left, Willoughby Sharp and Elizabeth Béar; at front right, Grenier; and in the rear, back to camera, Farman. Time: 4:00 P.M., January 3, 1969. This and photos on next two pages, by Mehdi Khonsari.

Sindrofoi:
Let's hope that our unanimous decision January 1st 1969 to remove my work from the Machine exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art will be just the first in a series of acts against the stagnant policies of art museums all over the world. Let us unite, artists with scientists, students with workers, to change these anachronistic situations into information centers for all artistic activities, and in this way create a time when art can be enjoyed freely by each individual.

—Takis
New York
January 3, 1969



A museum security officer, left, is outnumbered by friends of Takis, who took his sculpture into the Modern's garden—declared "neutral territory" by the group. Farman and "Do" are to the right of Takis; Grenier stands nearby, directly behind them.

The so-called "13 Demands" were in fact a reworking of the so-called 10 points which I published in the *East Village Other* on January 17, 1969. Without these 10 points, the weak "4 points" comprising the group's original statement would never have blossomed into a movement.

—Alex Gross, 1971

territory" and gave assurance that the piece would not be harmed. The museum people then adopted a more conciliatory tone.

Takis and the group stated their demands: that the piece be removed from the show and never shown again without the artist's consent, and that an open meeting be held at the museum on the subject of the relationship between artist and museum.

Finally Takis met with Bates Lowry in his office, where he got a verbal agreement that his sculpture would not be returned to the show and a promise that Lowry would seriously consider the public hearing.

On January 5 the group—now augmented by Gregory Battcock, Hans Haacke and Tsai—met at Willoughby Sharp's apartment. The same day they issued their first formal statement, reiterating the four complaints which had appeared on the leaflet handed out by Farman at the removal of the sculpture.

Farman and others in the group began calling artists, and the next meeting, held at artist Bob Bornstein's loft on La Guardia Place, brought forty people, who

13 DEMANDS

submitted to Mr. Bates Lowry, Director of the Museum of Modern Art, by a group of artists and critics on January 28, 1969.

1. The Museum should hold a public hearing during February on the topic "The Museum's Relationship to Artists and to Society," which should conform to the recognized rules of procedure for public hearings.
2. A section of the Museum, under the direction of black artists, should be devoted to showing the accomplishments of black artists.
3. The Museum's activities should be extended into the Black, Spanish and other communities. It should also encourage exhibits with which these groups can identify.
4. A committee of artists with curatorial responsibilities should be set up annually to arrange exhibits.
5. The Museum should be open on two evenings until midnight and admission should be free at all times.
6. Artists should be paid a rental fee for the exhibition of their works.
7. The Museum should recognize an artist's right to refuse showing a work owned by the Museum in any exhibition other than one of the Museum's permanent collection.
8. The Museum should declare its position on copyright legislation and the proposed arts proceeds act. It should also take active steps to inform artists of their legal rights.
9. A registry of artists should be instituted at the Museum. Artists who wish to be registered should supply the Museum with documentation of their work, in the form of photographs, news clippings, etc., and this material should be added to the existing artists' files.
10. The Museum should exhibit experimental works requiring unique environmental conditions at locations outside the Museum.
11. A section of the Museum should be permanently devoted to showing the works of artists without galleries.
12. The Museum should include among its staff persons qualified to handle the installation and maintenance of technological works.
13. The Museum should appoint a responsible person to handle any grievances arising from its dealings with artists.

—From *Documents 1*,
Art Workers Coalition, 1969

were asked to join in another attack on the Modern if Bates Lowry did not grant the open hearing. Meetings were then held every few days, and the group added Les Levine, Van Saun, Bob Breer, Jean Dupuy, Lil Picard and Alex Gross. The artists indicated their willingness to stage a sit-in at the Modern, if necessary.

The first meeting with Lowry was scheduled to take place at the museum on January 24. On January 14 Elizabeth Béar wrote a letter to Lowry telling him who was planning to attend, but received no answer. On the morning of the meeting, Elizabeth Shaw, the museum's director of public relations, called to say that Lowry did not wish to meet with the critics in the group. By this time it was too late to get in touch with the critics separately, and all went to the museum as planned, where they were told by Elizabeth Shaw that Lowry would meet with the artists but not the critics. (In a memo to the staff of the museum over a month later, the director gave the reason for his refusal as: "On January 24 so many more than six artist-representatives arrived that I felt that a discussion was not possible.")

At the start of the Art Workers Coalition, artists believed that it would be possible to demand structural changes from museums, in order to make these institutions viable and contemporary places; open forums where a full range of artistic and political dialogues would exist between artists, art historians and the public.

We wanted artists and museumgoers to have a voice in museum policy-making.

We wanted to change museums from the hierarchic, oppressive and top-down institutions that they are, into community-controlled and democratically run centers, flexible and aware of the needs of all social classes, rather than catering to a handful of conservative trustees.

However, the existence of the AWC became an occasion for art workers to learn some harsh lessons about the art establishment.

First of all, we were to face delaying techniques by museum representatives, who hoped that the Art Workers Coalition would soon run out of steam. Vain hopes on their part. We kept meeting, mounting demonstrations and repeating our demands.

Secondly, we had to deal with the hypocrisy and prevarications of a succession of museum directors and curators who, under the disguise of being concerned for our welfare, and displaying the attitude that they ought to know better what was good for us, gave us talks! promises! decisions are pending! promises! talks! studies will be made of the situation! etc. No one believed all this smoke-screening.

Thirdly, the art establishment co-opts us with tokenism; one demand out of the thirteen demands of the AWC was partially and temporarily accepted. This

amounted to the short-lived free Mondays at the Museum of Modern Art.

The worst is yet to come!

Having understood that the coalition presented a potential threat to its cultural hegemony, the art establishment (through the ubiquitous N.Y. State Council of the Arts) spent seventy-five thousand dollars in grants, buying off some key figures in the AWC.

It worked!

With those opportunists inside the coalition, the downfall was quick. Meetings were constantly sabotaged, splits were irrevocably deepened, contradictory motions were brought in to divide people—the AWC ceased to be an effective organization.

Thus, in two and a half years of activity, the Art Workers Coalition succeeded only in bringing to the surface the underlying antagonism that exists between artists and the corrupt art establishment. An establishment that sees artists as its social lackeys, maneuvers consistently to deny artists a voice in the institutions and policies that shape their lives, and confines them to the position of being amusing hustlers for the capitalist class.

Perhaps there is a conclusion to draw from the experiences of the AWC.

Since the art establishment is so completely resistant to meaningful basic changes, it will be necessary to reject it entirely, and build an independent system of relationships for the arts, starting from the grass roots; a people's art that will speak to and for all the social classes, eliminating with its growth every aspect of today's elitism and racism.

—Farman, 1971

I remember Elizabeth Shaw took Gregory and me aside and asked us why didn't we just go watch the movie showing elsewhere in the museum. She didn't think it was right that critics were there. On the other hand, Takis and Tsai wanted us there. The museum handled it very badly, perhaps because they hadn't had anything like this happen before. They probably thought they could get the artists aside and make some sort of deal with them without having anything bad written about the museum.

—John Perreault, 1971

As I remember [the January 28 meeting], a few people made short speeches—Tom Lloyd, for instance, presented the case for having a separate wing devoted to black artists.

The question of the public hearing was brought up, but there was no concrete discussion of the demands, and the meeting did not develop into a proper working session.

—Elizabeth Béar, 1971

The group did not want to exclude the critics, but agreed to return on January 28 with only six representatives, to meet with six representatives from the Modern.

During the next few days the artists and critics compiled the "13 Demands," which expanded their disagreements with the museum and their demands for a better deal. (Of these thirteen only one was directly connected with the original four points that had appeared in their statement of January 5.) It was around these "13 Demands" that the soon-to-be-named Art Workers Coalition was formed.

On January 28, the group sent Takis, Tsai, Hans Haacke, John Perreault, Gregory Battcock, and Wiloughby Sharp—three artists and three critics—to the Modern. Elizabeth Béar acted as recorder, and Tom Lloyd went along as a representative of black artists. An earlier attempt had been made to reach black artists, but they were busy with their own concerns that January. The Black Emergency Cultural Coalition, led by Benny Andrews, Henri Ghent and Edward Taylor, was organizing a demonstration against the "Harlem on My Mind" show which opened at the Metropolitan Museum on January 16.

The representatives for the museum were, besides Bates Lowry, Arthur Drexler, Wilder Green, William S. Lieberman, Elizabeth Shaw and John Szarkowski. The AWC presented their "13 Demands," the first of which called for an open hearing at the museum. The museum offered a counter-proposal: that it create a small committee for artist relations. The AWC refused the offer, termed "typical public relations stuff" by Takis, saying that a public hearing was necessary so that every interested artist could be heard.

Further discussions got nowhere and the meeting ended in complete disagreement.



Left: A close up of Farman, "Do" and Takis.

Below: One of two museum guards (center) takes notes as Takis and his companions huddle around the Tele-Sculpture in the MOMA garden.



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