

Performing the Archive:
Collective Actions in the 1970s and 1980s

Zimmerli Art Museum,
New Brunswick, NJ

October 25, 2008-April 20, 2009





Performing the Archive

Collective Actions in the 1970s and 1980s

Collective Actions was one of the earliest and longest lasting performance art groups operating in the United States. In an early performance, an audience of thirty watched performance as guided by one member, known as the "curator," March 13, 1970, steps meeting at the appointed spot, the audience is treated to a "curator" stage from a three and present each receive a card with a photograph by the artist. *Apartment*

In the months and years following, Collective Actions went on to stage many other actions to explore the relationship between the artist and the audience. In some actions, members were invited to become participants in their own investigations. At the same time, the group used a range of media, including photography and audio and video recordings, to document their live actions and translated their writings through design, text, essays, and published works.

Over time, the performance structure became more complex as the group investigated its own process of making, exhibiting, and archiving their actions. In the process of performance, and especially the form of what was performed, there emerged a sense of Collective Actions' investigation.

While long ago performance events and actions cannot be recreated in the present, *Performing the Archive* uses the use of the present and archival materials that Collective Actions created at stage a new connection with the artist. In doing so, the group's work in the 1970s and 1980s, a contemporary form that is still relevant today, the artist's work through the opportunity to experience their work and to reflect on it in the present.

© 2010 Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. All rights reserved. For information on the artist's work, visit the artist's website at www.collectiveactions.org. The artist's work is on display at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 2600 Lawrence Avenue, Chicago, IL 60612. The artist's work is on display at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 2600 Lawrence Avenue, Chicago, IL 60612. The artist's work is on display at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 2600 Lawrence Avenue, Chicago, IL 60612.



Performing the Archive

Collective Actions in the 1970s and 1980s



Collective Actions was one of the earliest and longest lasting performance art groups operating in the Soviet Union. In its first performance, an audience of thirty received invitations to gather in an empty Moscow field on Saturday, March 13, 1976. After meeting at the appointed spot, the audience witnessed two figures emerge from a forest and present each viewer a certificate documenting his or her presence at the action, *Appearance*.

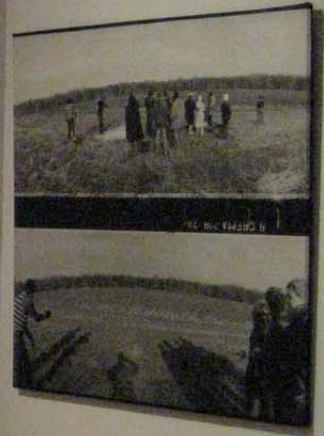
In the months and years following, Collective Actions went on to stage many other actions in nature in which audience members were invited to become participants in diverse metaphysical investigations. At the same time, the group used a range of media, including photography and audio and video recording, to document these live actions and chronicled their activities through descriptive texts, essays, and audience account .

Over time, the performance structures became more complex, as the group incorporated an even greater variety of objects, events, and technologies into their actions. Still, the sense of perception, and especially the limits of what can be perceived, always remained at the center of Collective Actions' investigations.

While long-ago performance events and actions cannot be recreated in the present, *Performing the Archive* uses the vast documentary and textual materials that Collective Actions compiled to stage a new encounter with the archive. Focusing on the group's work in the 1970s and 1980s, a tremendously fertile time in Moscow's cultural life, the exhibition gives viewers the opportunity to experience these events not in real-time action, but in the imagination.

Exhibitions from the Norton and Nancy Dodge Collection of Soviet Nonconformist Art are supported by the Avenir Foundation. The Zimmerli's exhibitions and programs are funded in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts; by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey; and the donors, members, and friends of the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum.

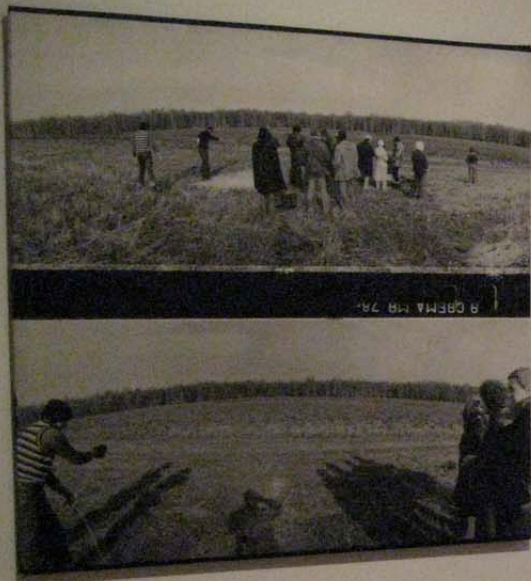






Small text caption for the large photograph on the left wall.

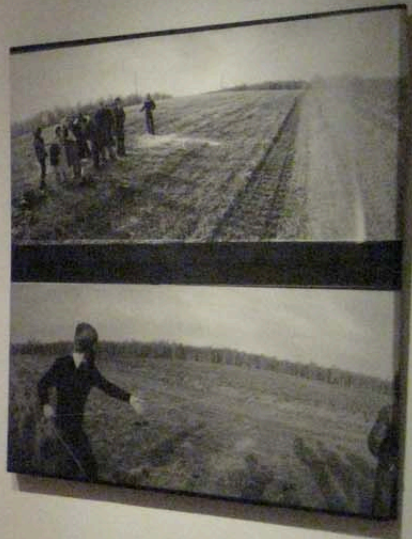




"Starting at 1:30 pm and until 3:00 pm and one half hours, the participants and audience members used water continuously pulling on the rope."

"The rope's end was not attached to the specific and in this way was pulled out of the forest in the course of the action."

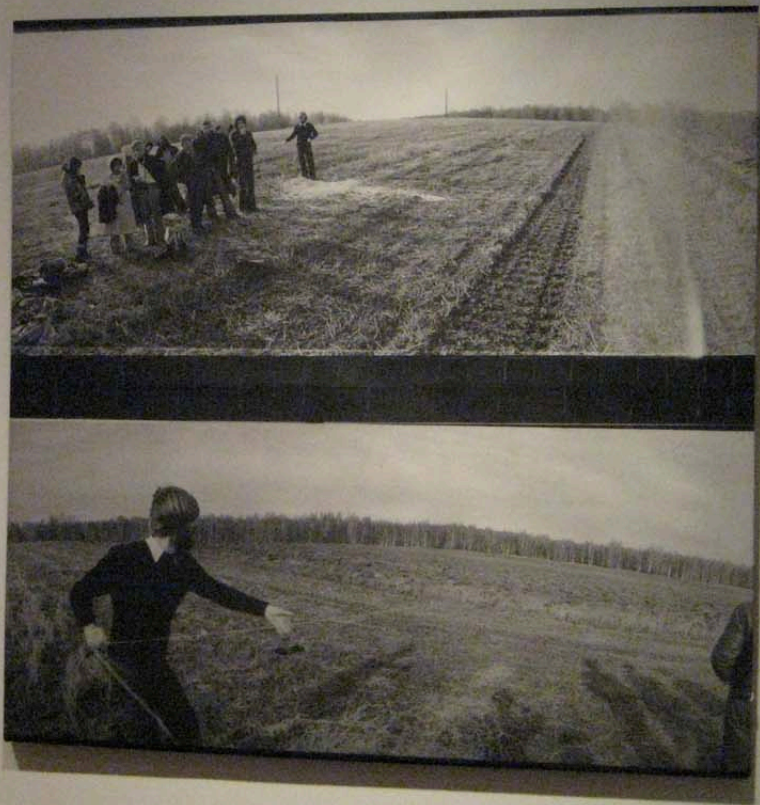
Time of Action
October 13, 1978



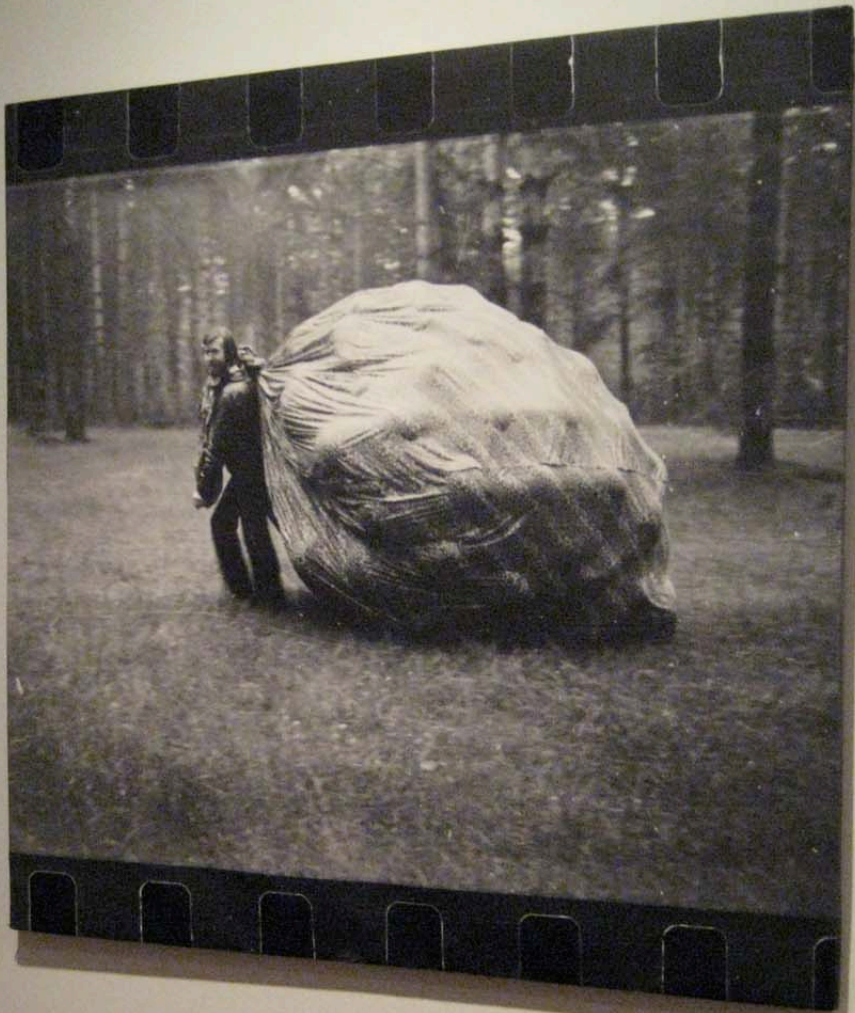
“Starting at 1:30 pm and until 3:00
(one and one half hours), the
participants and audience members
took turns continuously pulling on
the rope...

...the rope's end was not attached to
the spindle, and in this way was pulled
out of the forest in the course of the
action.”

Time of Action
October 15, 1978



Time of Action
October 15, 1978



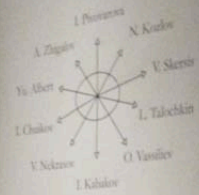
1945-1946, Soviet Union
A person carrying a large, bulky object wrapped in a light-colored tarp, likely a military or industrial supply, in a forest setting. The photograph is presented as a film strip frame.







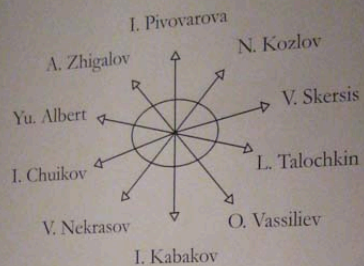
"A schema of the directions by which
the 10 participants left the center of
the field:



..The fact that of the ten possible
appearances only eight took place
is not, in our opinion, a failure of
the action. On the contrary, it only
underscores the aesthetic adequacy of
psychological experience within the
context of the action as a whole.."

Ten Appearances
February 1, 1981

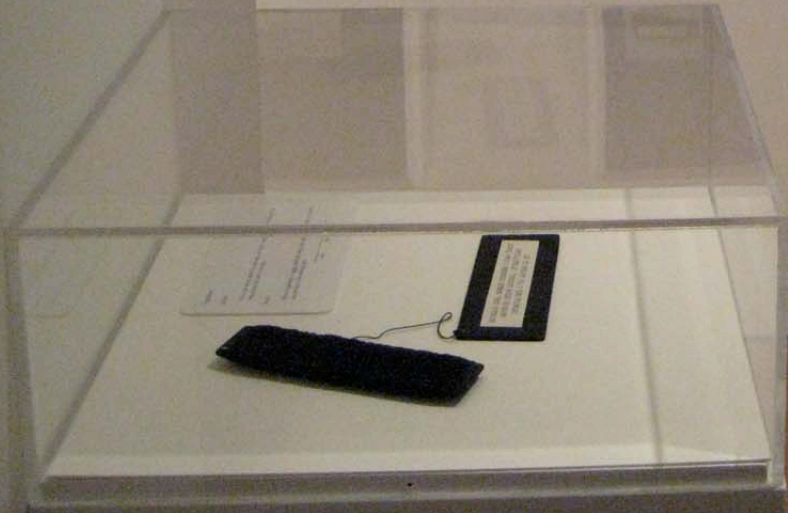
"A schema of the directions by which the 10 participants left the center of the field:



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Ten Appearances
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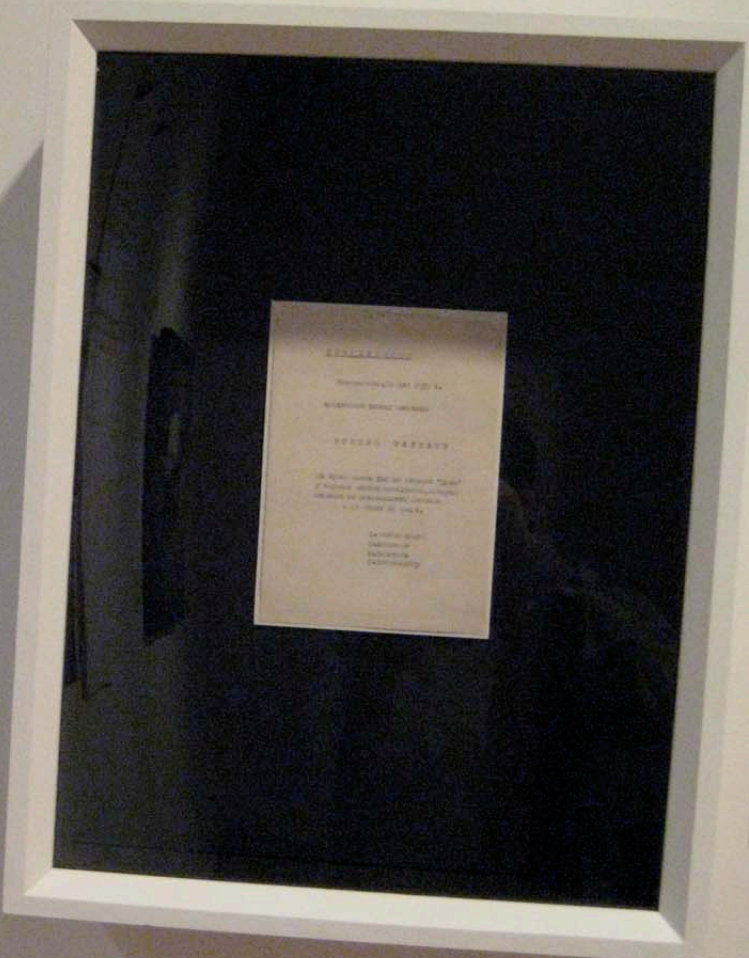
Small informational text panel on the left wall.

Second small informational text panel on the left wall.



COLLECTIVE ACTIONS Group
 (Aisha Mawardi, George Kierulff, Sergei Romanov,
 Nilsa Achaiz, Nilsa Panchon, Elise Dagnier)
Declaration to The 21st Forum
 Human Rights, International Relations, and the role of
 May 28, 1982
 Author: Aisha Mawardi
 Document Number: 1000-1000

DECLARATION
 Buenos Aires, May 28, 1982
 The presence of a representative
 of the 21st Forum
 We will be attending with interest to all the "Topics" in the first year
 of the Forum. We will be attending to the following:
 1. Democracy
 2. Human Rights
 3. International Relations
 4. Culture



COLLECTIVE ACTIONS Group
 (Aisha Mawardi, George Kierulff, Sergei Romanov,
 Nilsa Achaiz, Nilsa Panchon, Elise Dagnier)
Documentary certificate and article from El Financiero, Pamplona Times
 March 26, 1982
 Author: Aisha Mawardi
 Number of the journal: 10
 Corresponding journal from the UN: "Collective Actions" Group

Declaration of Commitment
 Published by C. Romanov
 ENY
 April 20, 1982
 We are grateful for your participation in our realization.
 A. Mawardi, C. Romanov,
 G. Romanov, N. Achaiz, E. Dagnier,
 N. Panchon, S. Romanov
 Declaration of public
 AT THE MEETING, WE AGREE
 "Collective Actions"

COLLECTIVE ACTIONS Group
 (Aisha Mawardi, George Kierulff, Sergei Romanov,
 Nilsa Achaiz, Nilsa Panchon, Elise Dagnier)
Four documentary photographs from El Financiero, Pamplona Times
 March 26, 1982
 Documentary photographs
 Number of the journal: 10
 Corresponding journal from the UN: "Collective Actions" Group

К. П. ПЕТРОВИЧ ПЕТРОВИЧ
"Министерство путей сообщения"

Адрес: Москва, Д. Д. Петров.

Б У Л Д

Москва
21 марта 1902 года
№ 124

Поздравляю вас с успехом в деле строительства.

К. П. Петрови́ч, Д. Д. Петрови́ч,
Л. П. Петрови́ч, М. П. Петрови́ч,
С. П. Петрови́ч, И. П. Петрови́ч.



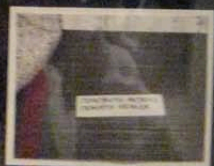
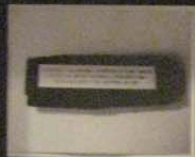
6 февраля 1968 года
в парке "Соловьиный"
в 12 час 56 мин.

произошла "ОСТАНОВКА"

Водители на участке в «В» организации.

А. Цыгановский, И. Алексеев, Г. Киселевичев,
В. Писарев, С. Рыжов, И. Цыганов, В. Волгина.





Index: WFN020710001
From: FBI, Phoenix, from and made in Phoenix
This document is a photograph of the subject, Mustafa
[redacted]

Documentary photograph
Index: WFN020710001

This item is a photograph of the subject, Mustafa [redacted] in a dark hooded garment, sitting at a desk with a computer monitor. This is an identical copy of the original photograph, which was taken and printed by the FBI in Phoenix, Arizona, on 10/20/02. There are other copies of this photograph in the FBI's files. This is a copy of the original photograph of this subject, which was taken and printed by the FBI in Phoenix, Arizona, on 10/20/02.

Index: WFN020710002
From: FBI, Phoenix, from and made in Phoenix
This document is a photograph of the subject, Mustafa [redacted]

Documentary photograph
Index: WFN020710002

This item is a photograph of the subject, Mustafa [redacted] in a dark hooded garment, sitting at a desk with a computer monitor. This is an identical copy of the original photograph, which was taken and printed by the FBI in Phoenix, Arizona, on 10/20/02. There are other copies of this photograph in the FBI's files. This is a copy of the original photograph of this subject, which was taken and printed by the FBI in Phoenix, Arizona, on 10/20/02.

Index: WFN020710003
From: FBI, Phoenix, from and made in Phoenix
This document is a photograph of the subject, Mustafa [redacted]

Documentary photograph
Index: WFN020710003

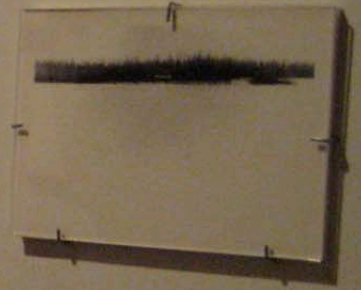
This item is a photograph of the subject, Mustafa [redacted] in a dark hooded garment, sitting at a desk with a computer monitor. This is an identical copy of the original photograph, which was taken and printed by the FBI in Phoenix, Arizona, on 10/20/02. There are other copies of this photograph in the FBI's files. This is a copy of the original photograph of this subject, which was taken and printed by the FBI in Phoenix, Arizona, on 10/20/02.

"The viewers are left before an empty field. But *not*, the emptiness of this field is *not* the same emptiness that was there before the action—it is 'not arbitrary.' The organizers' entire task lies in creating this 'not arbitrary emptiness.'

to return the non-arbitrary quality of this emptiness to the always arbitrary emptiness of space."

—Andrei Monastirsky,
"Seven Photographs"
December, 1980





Small text label or caption, possibly a title or description of the photograph.

"The viewers are left before an empty field. But now, the emptiness of this field is not the same emptiness that was there before the action—it is 'not arbitrary.' The organizers' entire task lies in creating this 'not arbitrary emptiness,'

to return the non-arbitrary quality of this emptiness to the always arbitrary emptiness of space."

—Andrei Monastyrsky,
"Seven Photographs"
December, 1980



Small informational text block on the wall, likely a title or description for the photographs.





"The meaning of this phrase, which is pronounced for a period of 30 seconds and repeated 110 times, may be discovered at the end of the series in the obvious or not so obvious change of intonation or some other unexpected effect inevitably arising from the physical rawness of all the so-called residual phenomena of the empty action in its most direct and nakedly metaphorical sense, reducing the lyric, comic, or tragic sounding of this spoken soundtrack to that level of aesthetic intolerance in which the viewer has no other choice but to shift attention mechanically from one image to the next..."

Barrel
May 31, 1983



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Barrel
May 31, 1985

Small informational text block located below the main text on the left wall.



Small informational text block located to the right of the photograph grid.



Small white label or caption card located below the first photo in the top row.





Small white caption card with illegible text.



Small white caption card with illegible text.

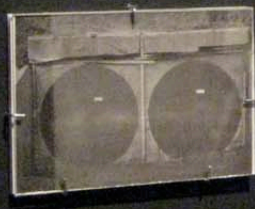
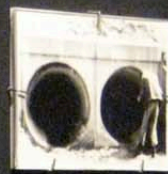


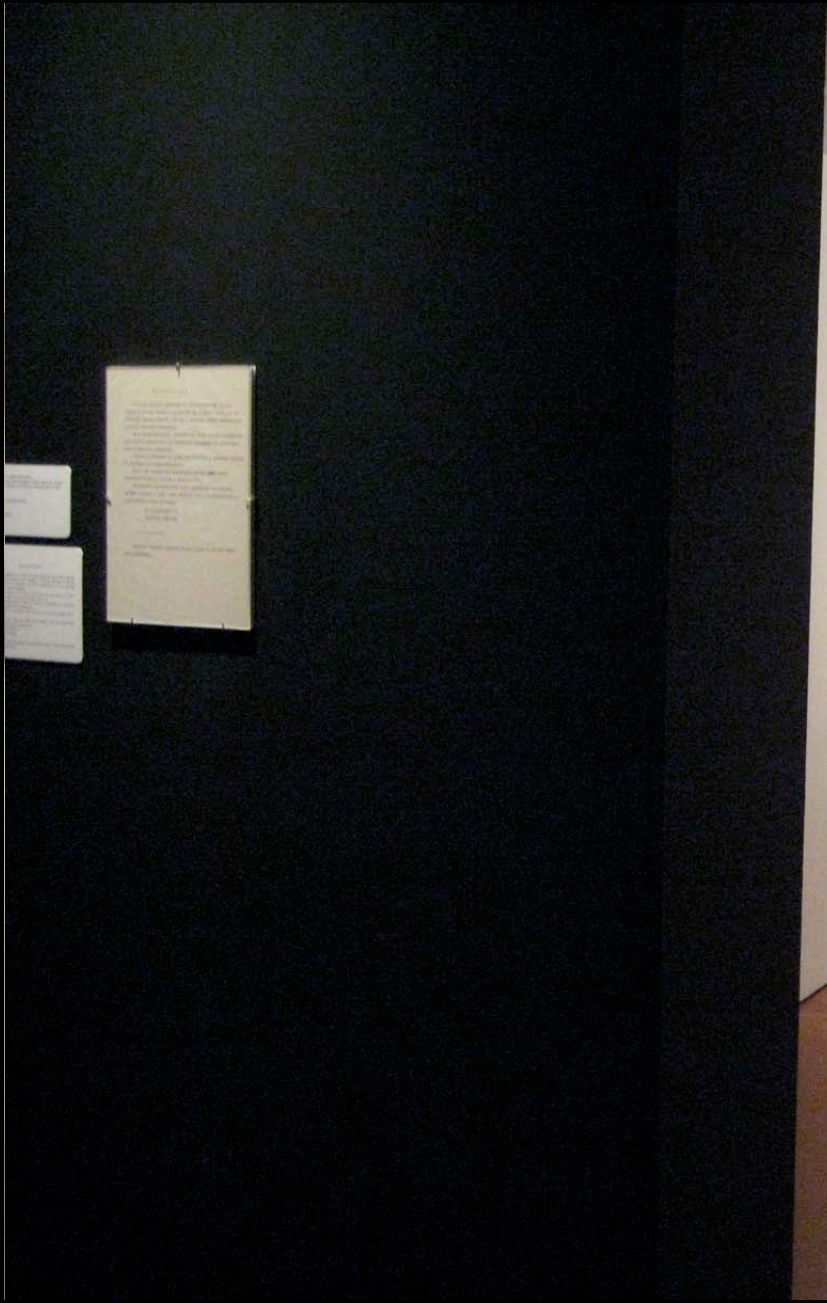
A small white rectangular label positioned to the right of the photograph.

Two small white rectangular labels mounted on the dark wall to the right of the photograph.

A larger white rectangular label with text, mounted on the dark wall to the right of the photograph.











Vertical text panel on the right wall, containing several lines of small, illegible text.





The series of objects consisted of:

- 1) a glove,
- 2) an axhead,
- 3) a walking stick,
- 4) a skull's head,
- 5) a clothes-brush,
- 6) a rolling pin,
- 7) a tin ladder,
- 8) a black package with a cardboard tray inside,
- 9) a folio entitled *The Book of Numburg*.

...A.M. struck the bottle with a stick and black gasoline poured over the white objects. Romashko dropped a lit match, the gasoline blazed up, and the objects and bones caught on fire."

Russian Field
March 17, 1945

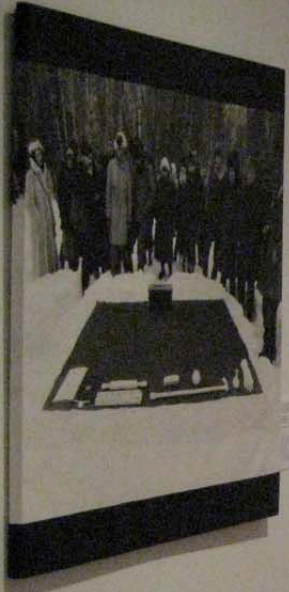


"The series of objects consisted of:

- 1) a glove,
- 2) an enema,
- 3) a walking stick,
- 4) a doll's head,
- 5) a clothes-brush,
- 6) a rolling pin,
- 7) a toy ladder,
- 8) a black package
with a cardboard tray
inside,
- 9) a folio entitled *The
Book of Nonbeing.*

...A.M. struck the bottle with a stick
and black gasoline poured over the
white objects. Romashko dropped a lit
match, the gasoline blazed up, and the
objects and boxes caught on fire..."

Russian World
March 17, 1985



Small white informational card with illegible text.



Small white informational card with illegible text.





Various artists

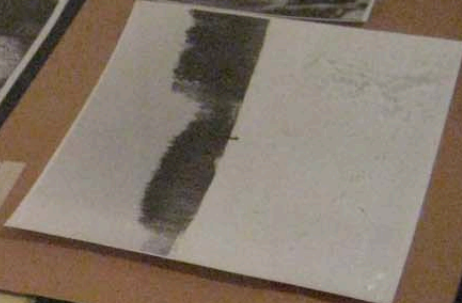
Museum Archive of New Art (MANA) volume 2
Compiled by Yuhua Zhai and Victor Steiner
June 1981

Archival material

MANA 2

The Museum Archive of New Art (MANA) was an international archive founded by Linda Dowling and the late Jay Johnson in 1981 in order to preserve the work of contemporary artists, critics, curators, and poets. Since its inception, MANA has collected and archived a wide range of materials, including photographs, audio and video recordings, and other documents.

In 1998, MANA helped to reconstitute the study class that had been discontinued in a previous project. MANA served as a space to meet and discuss the work of contemporary artists, and to share information with other members of the class.







The Colosseum's Ancient Drama

THE COLOSSEUM
AND THE ROME
OF THE
EMPEROR

THE COLOSSEUM
AND THE ROME
OF THE
EMPEROR