

By Michael Mockingbird  
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# RAFAEL MONTAÑEZ ORTIZ

YEARS OF THE WARRIOR 1960

YEARS OF THE PSYCHE 1988

EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO

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"Destruction has no place in society—it belongs to our dreams; it belongs to art." —Ralph Ortiz

## Introduction

The startling work of Rafael Montañez Ortiz (Ralph Ortiz) demands a response from the viewer. It questions the traditional definitions of art, and encourages argumentation. In fact, from the onset of his artistic career, Ortiz has frequently performed in public, eliciting and incorporating audience participation even when it involved vigorous dissent.

In the galleries, the viewer is confronted with the *Archaeological Finds* in which furniture—often his own, often furniture donated by friends, always in perfect condition—is destroyed by Ortiz. One can also find the remains, and listen to a recording of a *Piano Concert* that the artist has performed with a hatchet in hand. Colorful and festive feather constructions on the floor and walls compel the viewer to imagine rituals of ancient cultures, while the use of audiovisual equipment and electronic media brings the viewer face to face with newly found venues for artistic endeavor.

Rafael Montañez Ortiz's commitment to the interaction with the audience does not end with the creation and presentation of his art, nonetheless. A professional educator, he has taught art in elementary schools, high schools, colleges, and universities. He has been teaching in the university for the last sixteen years. It was in fact while working with the Board of Education in New York City (High School of Music and Art) that Ortiz was appointed as the first director of his proposed cultural project for the Barrio, which he called El Museo del Barrio. It was a project then affiliated with Public School District offices. In an interview published by *Art in America* in 1971 (see the Annotated Bibliography in this catalogue), the museum director/artist explained that he had experienced cultural disenfranchisement which had led him to search for a way to authenticate his ethnic experience. He saw El Museo del Barrio as a "practical alternative to the orthodox museum" which he hoped would facilitate the revival of "living values" and thereby personalize cultural experience.

It is particularly meaningful for this institution, thus, to present a comprehensive exhibition of the work of Rafael Montañez Ortiz. Neither his important contributions to the avant-garde in the sixties and early seventies, when he was known as Ralph Ortiz, nor his more recent artistic production, have been explored in any depth within a public context. It is appropriate for El Museo del Barrio to examine this unconventional body of work within the larger picture of the visual arts in the second half of the twentieth century.

Ortiz, who was extremely prolific through the sixties, early on gained the recognition of both the avant-garde community and the established collectors. Along with many experimental artists, including Al Hansen, Hermann Nitsch, Otto Mühl, Günter Brus, and Wolf Vostell, Ortiz participated in the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS), 1966, held in London. From as early as 1963, his work entered important public and private collections such as the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the de Menil Collection in Texas. In his early work, Ortiz explored violence and destruction as a creative force. He compared art with a dream "that cannot be censored." Throughout his career he has continued to experiment and re-define his role as an artist. He sees the artist as a catalyst, as an educator, as a shaman or medicine-man who can, and should, transform and cure the illnesses in our society.

*Rafael Montañez Ortiz: Years of the Warrior, Years of the Psyche, 1960-1988* would not have been possible without the support of many individuals and organizations. First and foremost, the Museum Aid Program at the New York State Council on the Arts provided the funds for the exhibition and catalogue. Dr. Kristine Stiles not only wrote a comprehensive essay on Mr. Montañez Ortiz's oeuvre, she also compiled a valuable annotated bibliography. Furthermore, she was a generous collaborator, providing us with essential documents and information. Papo Colo, Jeanette Ingberman, and the staff at Exit Art designed and produced this catalogue. Their unique creativity and sensitivity in dealing with nontraditional art, is matched by their unflagging enthusiasm and serious commitment to contemporary art. Visual artist José Morales resolved the difficulties in installing unusual pieces, and assisted the artist in recreating the *Destruction Art Room*.

Rafael Colón-Morales, Curator, and Carlos Ortiz-Chévres, Registrar of El Museo del Barrio organized and coordinated the exhibition with great care and vision. We are particularly grateful to the private and public collections that made their pieces available to our museum. Finally, we are grateful to Rafael Montañez Ortiz, the primary source, and a willing collaborator.

Petra Barreras del Rio  
Executive Director





## RAFAEL MONTAÑEZ ORTIZ by Kristine Stiles

### Introduction

Some thirty-five years ago, Rafael Ortiz began to construct a theory and practice which could account for his belief in the healing potential of imagination and its relationship to physical, psychic, and social pain. A continuous line of development connects his first destructions of found materials (1959-61), his destroyed furniture works, the *Archaeological Finds* (1961-67), with his first of many manifestos *Destruction: A Manifesto* (c. 1962)—his *Destruction Ritual Realizations* (1965-70), and his *Physio-Psycho-Alchemy* (1973 to the present). Already in the late 1950s but before he articulated his theory of "art as behavior" and the artist as "the art material, the work of art in progress," he understood that physical and psychic processes held the key to the creation of an authentic Self and therefore an authentic art of quality and value. In his quest for the authentic, he also confirmed the necessity to conquer the spurious and he identified the phenomena of destruction as a key factor in unlocking the concealed truth of negative traditions which shape public and private behavior and which are masked behind the faces of conventions, morality, and culture.

In this pursuit, Ortiz perceived that the body in its physical and psychic dimensions remained the container of the existential crisis as well as the principle metaphor of the historical suffering threatened by Armageddon. He appreciated that the human body plays a decisive role in the life-decaying character of nihilism but that it also held the potential for a genuine renewal. In this sense, much as in Eastern philosophies, Ortiz conceived of the mind-body unity as an *achievement* rather than an essential relationship. From the beginning, Ortiz appropriated the impendable enigmas of life and death, shaped as they are by *Eros*—the sheer ecstasy of Being—and *Thanatos*—the will to death.

In his early twenties, in the late 1950s, Ortiz deduced that destruction and its synthesis in art had been neglected in the etiology of creation. In precisely the same period and similar to the eminent French philosopher Jacques Derrida who, in philosophy, began to examine the dichotomous structure of polarities which shape Western concepts and patterns of thought, Ortiz, in art, began to examine the obscure and taboo face of creation—destruction. Isolating the instruments of his trade—speech and writing—Derrida explored such polarities as good/evil, being/nothingness, presence/absence, truth/error, identity/difference, mind/matter, man/woman, life/death, nature/culture.<sup>1</sup> As an artist, Ortiz selected the dichotomy of creation/destruction as the structure within which to explore the realities of his experience, an experience that, because of the polarities

which had shaped his life directly—white/black, rich/poor, dominant/minority, mind/body, man/woman—led him to feel unauthentic.

Like Derrida, Ortiz noticed that the second term in each pair had been cast by society as spurious. For Ortiz this meant that black, poor, minority, body, and woman represented the negative, corrupt, and undesirable version of the first; in other words, a fall from the ideal. Oversized (6'5") and lanky, sensual, dark-skinned, and poor, a Puerto Rican raised with all the repressive sexual conflicts inherent in Catholicism, Ortiz sensed himself to be the embodiment of everything that signified the fall from perfection. In the shadows of the glow of white, rich, majority, male presence, of mind over body, Ortiz represented an erotic body, an existence proportionately in error, a distortion of the dominant truths, a defilement of white, a default from rich; man—to be sure—not woman, but man so imperfectly cast in terms of the prevailing values as to be ashamed of the supremacy of that gender in the hierarchy of power. And yet, before the mirror, as if in defiance of social consensus, stood an exigent presence possessing physical beauty and intellect—a contradiction to culture: a man in conflict.

In her unparalleled study, *The Body in Pain* (1985), Elaine Scarry pointed out that "physical pain is exceptional in the whole fabric of psychic, somatic, and perceptual states" for being "the only state that has no object."<sup>2</sup> Ortiz launched an extraordinary effort to objectify pain and to endow suffering with an aesthetic, humanized, and social voice. He collapsed his own social anguish into the work of art to unite the otherwise absent presence of destruction in life with the creative process. His art is *not*, however, a solitary narcissistic struggle. Rather, his work assumed the form of an analysis, a considered discourse and identification of the polemic signifying forces of destruction and creation within personal experience, culture, and society. His heroic effort to clarify destruction in contemporary life through the creative act was matched by a handful of the most controversial, complex, and serious artists throughout the world.<sup>3</sup> Like them, he sought a comprehensive reappraisal of the ability of art to constructively affect social intercourse in the atomic age.

Ortiz began his public career as an artist in the early 1960s and although he has received widespread international attention in the popular media, he has been neglected by historians, vilified by the public, and treated with skepticism by artists. His utilization of the taboo language of violence earned him the neglect awarded most iconoclasts and visionaries. Nevertheless, long before Derrida's deconstructionism became radical chic in academic circles and both establishment and marginal



criticism, years before "picture theory" and its offshoot, "critical photography," exploited French philosophy and Marxism, a decade before neon art signs marketed as "political art and criticism" earned their makers a comfortable living. Ortiz had arrived at an inherently political aesthetic position and was unselfconsciously, and without the support of institutional and peer authorization, investigating the false oppositions, hierarchical orders, and emotional and sexual conflicts which give rise to our current condition. His destruction theory, objects, and rituals are attempts to found a critical diagnosis of the heteronomy and unauthenticity of the Self in contemporary history. They led to his present *Physio-Psycho-Alchemy*, a theory and ritual developed both as a meditation on the hidden ontology of Being and a means by which an integration of Self might be achieved through a phenomenology and philosophy of the Body as the material being of art.<sup>4</sup>

I.

In 1952, Ortiz began to read depth psychology during a contracted episode of pleurisy from which he convalesced for six months when he was eighteen years old. There followed an extensive period of research on Freud's concepts of the unconscious and its effects on behavior which introduced Ortiz to the psychological dimension of destruction and violence in private and public life. A voracious reader, he also explored philosophy and was especially drawn to the combination of radical individualism, commitment to social responsibility, and exploration of the nature of Being represented in the metaphysical and existentialist philosophy of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Sartre. In anthropology the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss stand out in his memory and in sociology he was particularly moved by Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death* (1959) for Brown's interpretation of Freud's speculations on the separation of self and culture. In economic theory, Marx and Engels spoke directly to his experience as a Puerto Rican American. Research, reading, study, and writing have always been key elements in Ortiz's artistic process.

In the late 1950s, in search of alternatives to Western culture, he also spent hours in the New York Museum of Natural History researching the traditional rituals of non-Western societies. The amalgamation of races and ethnic cultures comprising his own Puerto Rican heritage compelled Ortiz the most. They included Arabic roots in North Africa and the Yacai Indians of Mexico as well as northern Spain, Portugal, France, and Ireland.

Painting in an Abstract Expressionist style in the late 1950s, Ortiz remembered probing through layers of surface paint as if to unearth a conscious and unconscious past. Between 1959 and 1961, he jotted down notes for what would eventually solidify as his *Destructivism: A Manifesto*, c. 1961-62, during the period when he also first destroyed furniture and ubiquitously titled these works *Archaeological Finds*. The leap from construction of a painting to destruction of an object occurred—as is often the instance—with the observation of an accident.

After laying a paint brush loaded with pigment on a pile of paint-soaked paper towels, he picked up his brush, stuck with paint, and it pulled away layers of the stack of papers. He could observe the hidden interior of the stack and he acknowledged that his expressive painting had been an historical quotation of Abstract Expressionism but that the excavation of the paper towels held the kernel for a more personal art. In addition, the psycho-sexual imagery and erotic connotations he pursued in his paintings became more direct as he began to work through mounds of the paper towels, which he stapled to large boards. Cleaning his brushes on the surface, he dug in, laid bare, revealed the concealed, and from these ready-made materials, he created what he considered "anti-paintings." Ortiz carefully laid down edge-to-edge in a geometric grid pattern brown paper towels of the variety found in gas stations and high school bathroom vending machines during the early 1960s before richly staining and soaking the surfaces. The resulting works, whose color and material have continued to deteriorate over time, appear as dark mirror images, light absorbing interiorities, of the goldleaf monochrome paintings of Yves Klein done in the same year. The other side of Klein's vision, Ortiz's "anti-paintings" suggest an alchemical swallowing, destruction, and rejection of the glittering, pristine, commercial reflecting surfaces of the Klein monochromes. This action constituted his initial leap into the first phase of his Destruction Art, the construction-destruction phase. The discovery led to a feverish period in which he worked with all kinds of materials, burning through layers of magazines, piling up groups of objects all to be destroyed—paper cups, candles, flower pots, and assemblages of food into which he drove spikes (violent metaphors for the sexual act). He considered these works "experiments" in order to escape the confining demands of "art" and to gain a certain freedom from art as something made—an object constructed.

While sitting on his favorite meditation cushion in his studio, a cushion already in a state of deterioration, Ortiz realized that he might confine his destructive process to a unified form. This way he could avoid assembling multiples and still have a complex object comprised of different materials which retained a kind of animistic history, "the spirit of people," with its continuous and close proximity to the body. The juxtaposition of body and object also animated the sexual connotations he hoped to arouse in his art. The destroyed cushion became the first in the numbered series of *Archaeological Finds* which, he felt, better expressed the chaotic psychic processes of the Id and the erotically charged discord associated with Kali, the Hindu goddess of destruction from whom the kundalini erotic energies issue to become intellectual and/or transcendental capacities. The destruction process then created a bridge between his intellectual sources and his erotic, emotional energies.

During this period, Ortiz read art periodicals voraciously and noticed his affinity for the Nouveaux Réalistes, whose use of urban refuse matched his own



social and philosophical concerns. The destructive elements which Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint Phalle introduced into their constructed assemblages resonated for him, but Cesar's crushed automobiles and Arman's use of destructive process impressed him more for they were created works bereft of the constructive element still present in Tinguely and de Saint Phalle's work. Arman and Cesar had found a more immediate process of destruction/creation, which he sought in his own art. More importantly, all these works supported Ortiz's move away from construction-destruction towards pure destructive process.

By late 1961, early 1962, he had begun to destroy mattresses and chairs—his earliest *Archaeological Finds*—spraying the results of his destructive-action with a fixative resin. Indeed, this attack on the ready-made, his delving into, burrowing through, ripping apart, exposing, and reordering the ready-made represented a personal dialogue with the history of technology and its impact on the arts. By working with the ready-made, Ortiz could also enter the art historical discourse initiated by Marcel Duchamp whose urinal, the *Fountain* (1917), literally attacked the very bowels of art by challenging the sanctity of the unique object. In his dialogue with Duchamp, Ortiz bowed to Duchamp's unprecedented identification of the authority of the mass-produced object over the hand-crafted object in the modern era. But, Ortiz simultaneously asserted his own intellect and willful disordering process upon the ready-made by deconstructing the industrial object in order to divest it of a false unity and thereby reveal the multitude of materials and parts which together form that object. Through his destruction, then, Ortiz affirmed the preeminence of individual creation concealed within the ready-made object—that obscured presence, the anonymous hand, the diligent designer contained within the technology of the ready-made and the industry of the multiple.

Richard Huelsenbeck, former Berlin Dadaist who practiced psychiatry in New York under the pseudonym Dr. Charles Hulbeck, was impressed by Ortiz's *Archaeological Finds*. He had been introduced to Ortiz's work by Peter Selz, then curator of painting and sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art who had visited Ortiz's Coney Island studio. Huelsenbeck wrote that Ortiz's destruction works signified "a new space concept" which expressed an existential dimension of "truth in our time":

Ralph Ortiz ... is fascinated by things that are not or are not yet. Now, to do things that are not yet does not mean that you stop half-ways; it may also mean that you do things first in a completed form and then put them into a shape where they are not or are not yet. This is exactly what Ralph Ortiz does. His sculptures are things that are not anymore, they may have had a completion, a full rounded vitality but as they are presented to us they want to impress us with something entirely different, namely with the experience of destruction. To destroy things means really to create them anew in the sense of space ... by taking some-

thing away from his objects. It is the opposite of the machine completed object, the thing that has lost itself while entering our perception or a thing that was torn up by time or some aggressive forces undefinable. When Ralph Ortiz wants to show us a mattress he does not show a mattress but an object that is torn up by undefinable forces as they worked in time. There is an impact of hostility but also an impact of a new concept of time and space, whether it is a mattress or flower-pots or anything, the material really is not playing any important role. What really plays an important role is the artist's thought of the man behind the mattress who has to fight his way through the jungle of his existence. Ralph Ortiz is an existential sculptor and I think one of the most important ones because he is committed to some truth about ourselves in our time.<sup>6</sup>

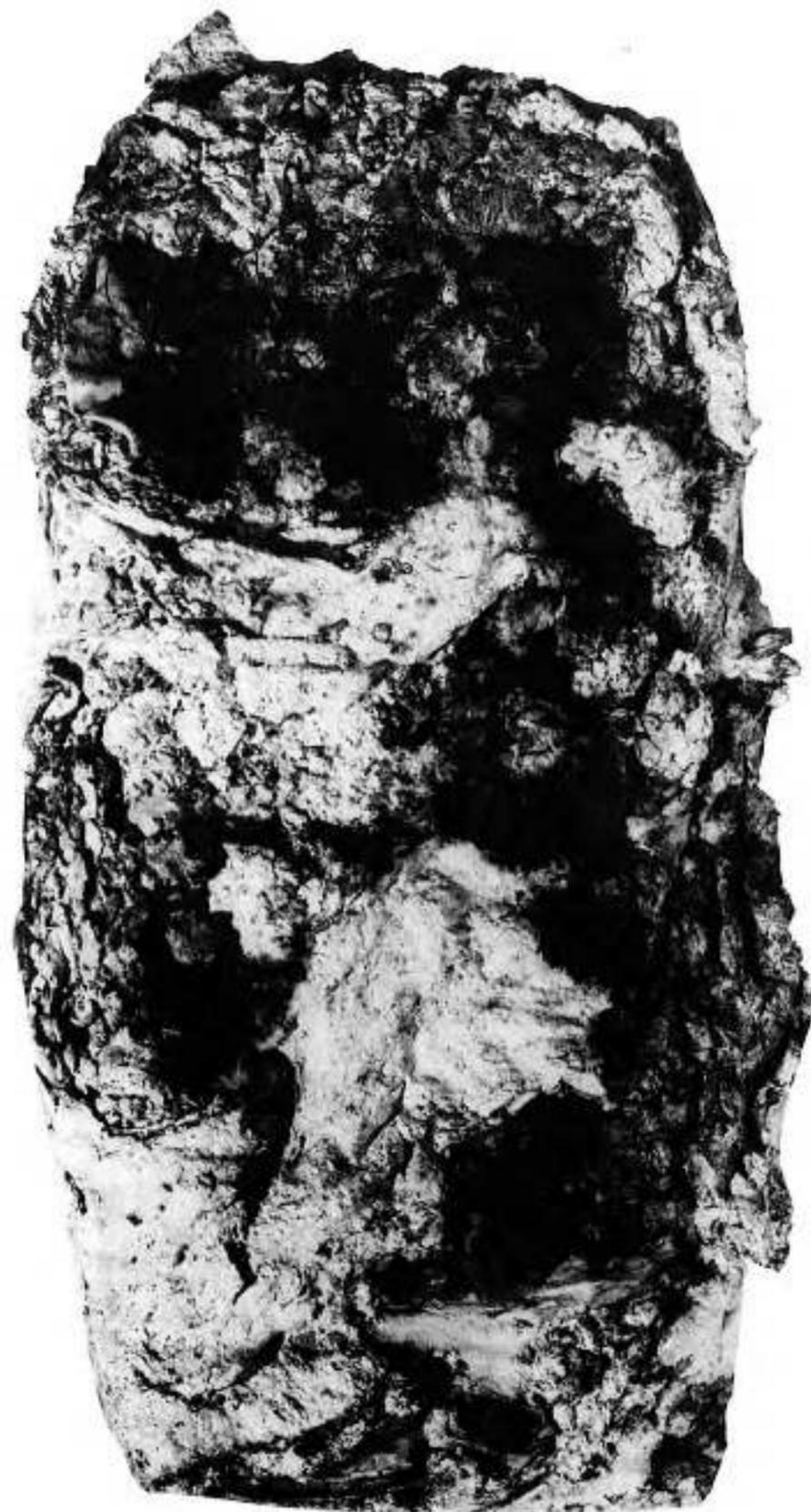
The truth-seeking ceremonies and practices of traditional cultures which Ortiz had researched provided him with an important bridge between his destroyed objects and his Destruction Realizations begun in 1966.<sup>7</sup> He had scrutinized the sacrificial practices of Mesoamericans and studied ancient Greek and Etruscan ritual divination in the early 1960s. At that time, he began to see that the activity of deconstructing the article of furniture was already a performance, for people often gathered at the open door of his studio in Coney Island to watch him at work.

His awareness of the performative aspect of his destructive process converged with his effort to probe into the surface of materials and his desire to unearth and make conscious the unconscious psychological components of experience. The concurrence of these interests coincided with contemporary developments in painting and sculpture about which his friend, Al Hansen, told him. Hansen described his own and other artists' Happening and Fluxus activities and, although Ortiz was extremely interested in the extension of action painting into the event-structure of the Happening and Fluxus works, he concluded that this work failed to address the essential existential issues which it raised. He remembered:

Generally speaking, the people who were involved in Happenings in the late 1950s, didn't really go to the source ... I saw people playing a lot of games in art. The people that were very serious were not in art, they were in the streets. They were protesting wars, all kinds of social injustice, racism, and later sexism. What I am saying is that the artist seemed to be isolated from the realities in the civilization, in the society, and was caught up in the very isolated notion of what art was about, its role, and the role of the artist ... So it became clear to me that ... the artist was playing some kind of weird tragic role like the court jester.

Unwilling to detach himself from social, psychological, racial, and sexual problems, Ortiz remained attentive to the dilemmas of his period, believing that:

The artist has to take responsibility for not taking responsibility, for not recognizing the role of the artist



within the civilization ... within the culture. Art, as it operates in the culture now, simply contributes to the madness that exists, to the inability for people to be sensitive to life.

In the end, his readings in psychology and anthropology, more than the Happenings or Fluxus events of other artists, compelled Ortiz to expand his art into actions. For in action, he might unite his excavatory process in the *Archaeological Finds* with his psychoanalytic probe of the unconscious and his research into exotic rituals.

Once he understood his next step, he struggled to imagine how to construct a sacred ritual space similar to what Octavio Paz later described as the "platform-theater-sanctuary" of the Aztec pyramid in which ceremonial rites of creative destruction—the double face of a single conception—took place.<sup>8</sup> This sacred space signified the symbolic axis of the universe, "the point of convergence of the human world and the divine" where life and death rituals projected the image of the world of human society in life-generating and life-extinguishing sacrificial acts meant to insure the continuity of human and cosmological time. Paz explained that while creation and destruction are antithetical notions in contemporary terms, traditional cultures often experienced them as identical and he pointed out that the Aztecs demonstrated how

The gods create, destroy, and sometimes, destroy themselves. After their self-immolation they re-create the world. The game of the gods is a bloody game culminating in a sacrifice that is the creation of the world. The creative destruction of the gods is the model for man's rites, ceremonies, and fiestas: sacrifice is equal to productive destruction.<sup>9</sup>

Several years elapsed before Ortiz actually created a destruction ritual, although about 1963, while gathering old furniture in a junk yard, he found a piano and destroyed it on the spot. Without considering this action in the context of art, Ortiz was aware, nevertheless, that the sounds which issued from the instrument during its destruction were compelling "lower chakra" sounds evoking powerful emotional and physical responses. That same year, while taking a filmmaking class for his master's degree at Pratt Institute, he made *Henry Penny*, a movie filmed in a chicken slaughterhouse. In the spring of 1966, he received an invitation to attend the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) in London where he actually created his first public Destruction Realizations.<sup>10</sup> Prior to his participation in DIAS, Ortiz had never created a public event and his 1965 *Chair Destruction* had been staged solely for the purpose of creating a photographic image.

Once in London, in the heady atmosphere of an international gathering of artists, poets, musicians, and psychologists, where the media exploited the artists' every action with unabashed glee, Ortiz responded as if he had entered the Olympics, competing with fervor "to win the gold." Within the space of a month and although he had never created public actions, he realized no less than seven events: two *Chair Destruction Rituals*, one *Mat-*

*tress Destruction Ritual*, two *Piano Destruction Concerts*, two *Paper Bag Destruction Concerts*, a *Self-Destruction* realization. In addition, he screened his chicken slaughterhouse film, *Henry Penny*, as well as several Destruction Films which he had earlier shown in New York. (Among these is a film of found-footage into which he punched holes so that when the film looped through the screening apparatus an exceedingly disturbing flicker sensation of broken images could be experienced.)

His first action took place just following the first DIAS press conference at St. Bride's Institute, August 31, 1966. Leading the press and the other artists into the social club, Ortiz approached a member of the club who was sitting in a chair, reading. He informed the man that he needed the chair and that the chair belonged to him. When the manager of the club confirmed Ortiz's ownership (he had purchased it a day earlier from the manager), the man left the chair and Ortiz instantaneously leapt upon it and, with his bare hands, began to systematically tear it to shreds. The shock and simultaneous thrill of Ortiz's action was recorded that night and the following morning in newspapers all over London which screamed such headlines as: "For Art's Sake, A Chair Is Smashed," and "Chicken-Killer Says Ban Won't Deter Him."

At the press conference Ortiz had announced that he would create a Chicken Destruction Ritual. When the DIAS Honorary Committee (Gustav Metzger, John Sharkey, Bob Cobbing, Wolf Vostell, among others) decided that DIAS would not sponsor events in which live animals were used, Ortiz, respecting their decision, demurred. But the seeds for what would become his most controversial rituals had already taken root.

While the *Chair Destructions* he realized in London were solitary acts, his *Paper Bag Destruction Concerts* prepared individuals to participate in his rituals. The public was invited to blow up, heartily crack, hang, and break through the bags. This fun—with all its huffing and puffing, noise, laughter, and innocent merriment—was strategically designed to shatter taboo layers of expression separating childish (unselfconscious) behavior from adult behavior, public from private proprieties, reserve from spontaneous emotion, play from work. In addition, the action of blowing up and exploding the bag caused an intensification of breathing and the participant might experience a greater activation of energy enabling him/her to become more involved in the event, literally more energized through actual cellular and muscular changes. Ortiz's attention to breathing and the cellular reconstruction and transformations resulting from breathing, which he first introduced in the *Paper Bag Destruction Concerts*, represent the nascent beginnings of the central role breathing would play in his *Physio-Psycho-Alchemy*.

The first *Piano Destruction Concert* he realized in London took place at the request of the BBC and was performed together with Anna Lockwood, a concert pianist from Iceland, and Harvey Matusow, a controversial American, then director of the London Filmmakers Cooperative, both of whom Ortiz met in London. The

*Piano Destruction Concert* began with a selection of classical music played by Lockwood, Ortiz began slowly "working" the piano with small axes while Lockwood continued to play. When he passed her an axe, she moved from playing the piano to destroying it with the axe. At this point Matusow, with a small axe, joined Lockwood at the keys. For a few moments the three artists worked at different tempos, levels of exertion, force, and rhythm, shattering the piano. Ortiz remembered:

The piano keys shattered off, plink, plink, plong. When I started hacking with the axe, it got frightening. Harvey didn't move far enough away and I swung the axe back. Fortunately, I was working with the axe end forward and he was hit in the chest with the flat part and got thrown back. It was after that event that I became very conscious of how careful I needed to be. It didn't frighten me so much as make me feel how stupid I was that I hadn't been conscious of the danger ... There is a difference between exploring the aesthetics of frenzy and being in a frenzy. The piano was carefully destroyed. It wasn't slow but it wasn't frenzied.

When the destruction of the piano was complete, the BBC staff informed Ortiz that he had mistakenly demolished the wrong piano, indeed, a valuable and perfectly tuned instrument. This did not concern Ortiz. On the contrary, he explained:

I was delighted because it affirmed the preciousness of the object. In our culture objects are more important than people. No one ran out and said anything about Harvey. It was the piano that concerned everyone.

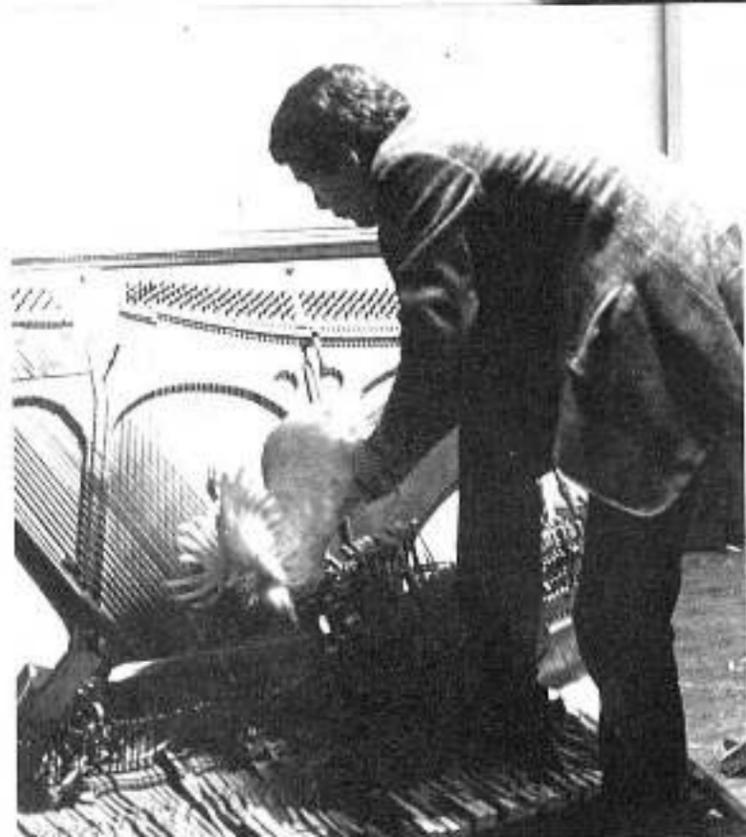
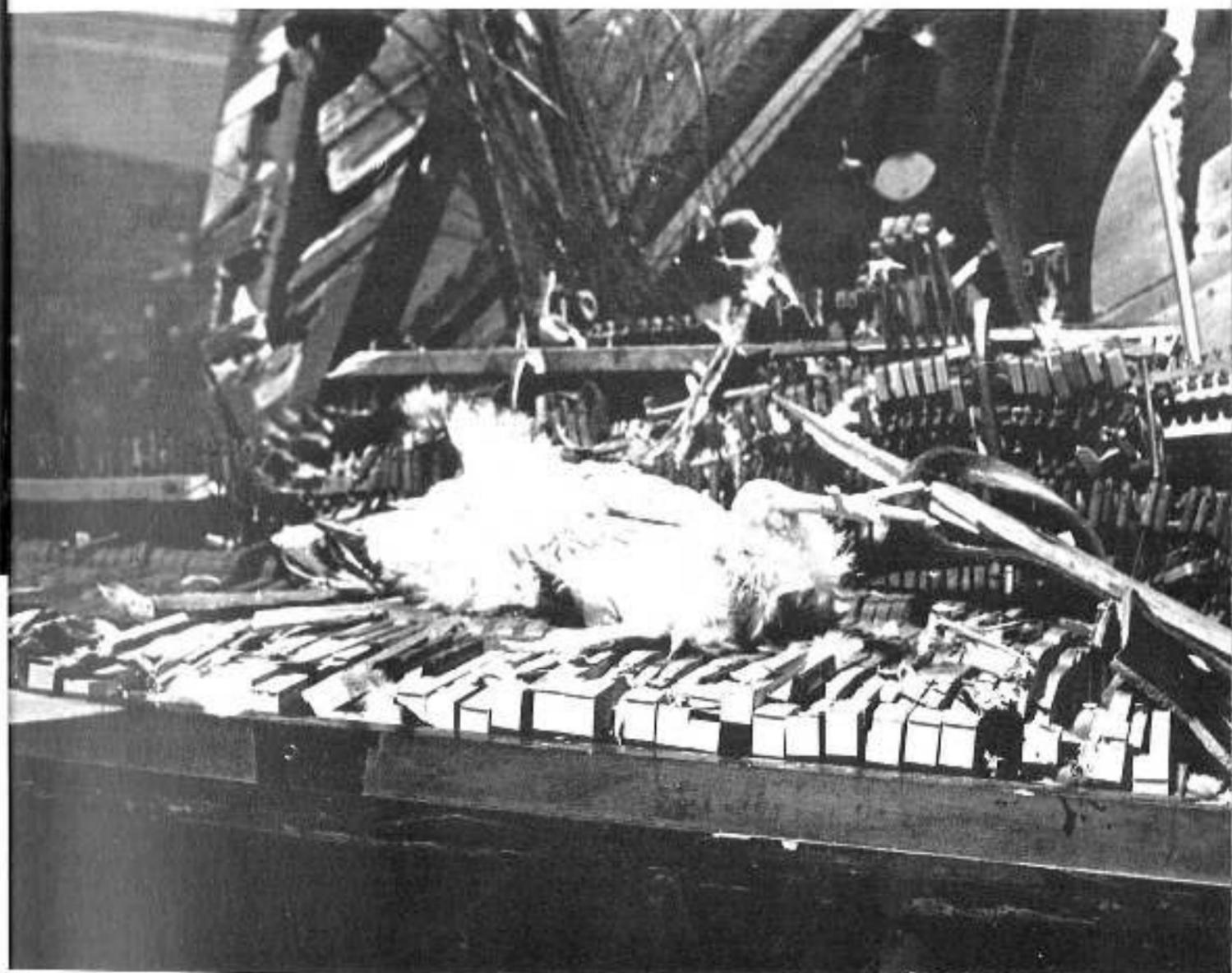
What troubled him enormously, however, was his momentary lapse of attention to his "art process," a lapse in which he had breached the boundary he had forbidden himself to cross in his art and he had moved into the taboo territory of "life." Unlike artists such as Allan Kaprow, whose Happenings aimed to break the barrier between art and life, Ortiz recognized the importance of retaining the sacred element of the ritual and not allowing it to be confused with life. Furthermore, he clearly understood that symbolic destruction must be contained or run the possibility of becoming the same kind of destruction in life which it was designed to neutralize. He reflected:

Every now and then art and life overlap, like hitting Harvey with the axe. Of course that is not what Destruction Art is about. On the contrary, Destruction Art presents a revelation that neutralizes that kind of thing ... So I learned that I still had to pay attention ... I said to myself, "Jerk! Here you think you understand so much but you're just a jerk." I think artists should be responsible for their art process as a process of Being.

Of the many actions Ortiz created in London, his *Self-Destruction* at the Mercury Theatre, September 22, had the most profound repercussions. Without precedent at the time, 1966, this art action remains today among the most daring and precocious events, incorrectly and ubiquitously labeled Performance Art. Prior to the action, he had selectively cut the middle-class business suit he was wearing so that it would easily tear away from his

body. He then entered the space already set with milk bottles, a large rubber duck toy, a diaper, and a large talcum powder cannister. Ortiz's own description of *Self-Destruction* vividly brings to life the force, personal violence, anger, spiritual hunger, childlike fear, confusion, desire, and need which his large, brooding, smoldering personality would have conveyed:

I came in from the backstage calling for my mother. "Mother, mother, I am home, Ralphie is here." Moving in dramatically saying only "mother" but implying, "Mother, I'm home, your son is here." Then changing the tone to anxious and angry, shouting, "Mother! Mother!" I start throwing the books as though I am home from school and then I start tearing my clothes and screaming for my mother. Angry and stamping sort of emotionally as if to say, "Where are you? You've deserted me again. You are not here, I am deserted. My mother is gone. She is gone out of my life. I can't live without my mother." I rip my clothes off hysterically trying to fit all those meanings into the one word "Mother." I start blubbering, getting childish, "Mommy, mommy, mommy, ma, ma, ma, ma." Regressing, I go from very rational stable to unstable, hysterical regression moving from the traditional logic to the more paleo-logic of Id kind of process, to the whole destruction of a personality and character, I am blubbering and I grab the talcum powder and shake it all over me, "Ma, ma, ma, ma, ma, ma." Feeling better, I am making contact with Mommy. I get down and put the diaper on and crawl over to the big duck. It goes, "Quack." "Mommy." "Quack." Then I go "Daddy." Bump! I give it a little wallop. Then I say, "Mommy, ma, ma, ma." "Quack, quack, quack." "Daddy, Daddy, da, da, da, da." I get real hysterical because my father took my mother away from me, that's why my mother isn't around. My father took her away. He came between me and mommy. I am bushing the duck, "dada, dada, dada." The whole thing breaks. But what was funny about it was that there was this big phallic form inside that made the quack sound. So I grab it, "dada, dada, dada," banging the big phallic form. I go through the whole thing again and throw it across the room. Then I see the milk. "Mommy, mommy." That's the milk! Symbolic again. I sat down and I guzzle the milk and just as I am out of it and it's sort of pouring over me and I am guzzling it, I go, "Ma, ma." You know how you can hardly breathe and I grab another bottle. I guzzle it and pour it all over me: there is Mommy. There is mommy's presence right there in all the milk. Then I finish all the milk and when it's all gone, Mommy is gone. Then I say, "Mommy, mommy." And I start banging the bottle sort of like this big phallic gong. Wong! Wong! "Daddy, daddy, daddy." I just do that for about five minutes and I get real hysterical again and I throw up. I reject Mommy. Mommy rejected me, I am going to reject her. I throw up, first spontaneously, then deliberately sticking my finger down my throat, vomiting up about two pints of



milk. I then slap the puddle of vomit angrily over and over calling, "Mommy, Mommy." Accepting the puddle of milk as symbolic of Mommy, I calm down. Then I crawl off. "Mommy, ma."

Many people who witnessed Ortiz's actions in London were repulsed. He presented the quintessential "ugly," brash, arrogant, and undisciplined American, acting out personal neuroses. Ortiz cultivated these perceptions and admitted that he "sometimes co-operated in the ... more sensational language of the media," even "pandering to people's fantasies" in order to whip up attention to his work and, in the process, reveal the very phenomena he was metaphorically describing in his work. He had read Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964) and he realized that:

One's Being is defined by one's behavior. The whole idea of cultural ritual and the football game that McLuhan put his finger on, all early cultures were fully aware of.

The superficial coarseness of Ortiz's action did not alienate everyone who witnessed his *Self-Destruction*. The British artist, Graham Stevens, one of the youngest participants in DIAS who later became an international authority on air and water structures, founding member of the British International Solar Energy Society in 1974, and energy and solar consultant to such countries as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Uganda, recalled Ortiz's *Self-Destruction* and considered it an important expression. Stevens vividly remembered being "amazed rather than shocked." He continued:

I was amazed by the practical ability to perform and vomit. The ability to do the event. I wasn't horrified at what he was doing. I didn't think it was morally wrong. In fact, it was a valid expression.<sup>11</sup>

Four years after Ortiz's *Self-Destruction*, Arthur Janov, a psychologist and psychiatric social worker, published his "Primal Scream"<sup>12</sup> theory. He opened his introduction with an account that a patient had given him of Ortiz's London action. His patient had demanded Janov's help in reenacting critical early experiences much in the manner Ortiz had enacted primary oedipal experiences. Janov explained that the story of Ortiz's action "changed the course of my professional life."

Janov's theory of Primal Scream popularized Otto Rank's notion of the birth trauma (*The Trauma of Birth*, 1929) and Jacob Moreno's work on psychodrama (*Who Shall Survive*, 1953). Ortiz had familiarized himself with both Rank and Moreno's work in the late 1950s. When asked about the popularization of his artistic action, Ortiz expressed pleasure at the direct connection to pop-psychology. He pointed out that his art sought to expose the pervasive presence of emotional problems in society and that the basic popularity of Janov's theory provided a social vindication of the hypothetical and theoretical underpinnings of his art action. "Pop-psychology explains more about society than art does," Ortiz observed, and concluded that his research into psychology and shamanism—the priest-doctor who uses magic to cure the

sick, to divine the hidden, and to control events that affect the welfare of the people—had come full circle.

Ortiz believed that he had "trained" as a shaman in order to become the one who understands the mysteries and leads the initiates. His training had taken place during long hours of research and experimentation in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Perhaps more important than the intellectual work he had undertaken, his experience in American society had prepared him best to understand the complex, damaging, and enlightening physical and psychological ritual dimensions hidden in culture. As a child he had served as an altar boy, first in the Catholic church and later in the high Episcopal church. He had served as a "shabus" boy responsible for turning on the lights in an Orthodox Jewish temple where he had watched rehearsals for high services and listened to the cantering with fascination. Also as a boy, he led other children in symbolic burials of dead pets, painting and decorating empty Velveeta cheese boxes as caskets and making and painting miniature crosses. In pre-adolescence he had been one of the leading members of a social group, the El Rays, a group of Irish and Italian youths on the Lower East Side of Manhattan who had jackets made with their club name on the back and who together mastered the rites of adolescence: shooting pool, talking to girls, dancing, playing basketball, and being a regular "guy." Ortiz was also the school "artist" with a crew of helpers charged with decorating the blackboards and bulletin boards each holiday with turkeys, rabbits, pictures of George Washington, and the like. His summers were spent with his cousin in East Harlem and there he witnessed the rough and violent gang-action of such groups as the Comanches and the Turbans, whose gang names he recalled vividly because he remembered "running for his life."

Another important experience in his "training" as shaman occurred during the late 1950s when he was still a student of architecture. At that time, as research for a speech on Indian peyote cults in Mexico which he prepared for a class in rhetoric, Ortiz experimented with peyote—then still a legal substance. He experienced Gods, Devils, Visions, and exposed himself to a radically different pattern of imagining which never left him, although he never returned to the use of drugs. Most importantly, the peyote experience inducted him into the actual world of the shaman and lived states of the dream. Thereafter, he sought to find a means to make conscious the dreaming state. Later, the function of the dream, along with breathing, became fundamental aspects of his *Physio-Psycho-Alchemy*.

I have written elsewhere that the traditional notion of "shaman" must be re-analyzed in contemporary terms according to the needs of society.<sup>13</sup> I have also noted that the best artists working in events have proven repeatedly that the physical, psychic, and emotional tenor of the artist's individual character are as much a part of the art of action as paint, canvas, stone, metal, or wood are in painting and sculpture. *Who that person is—his or her very Being—fundamentally dictates the quality of the art ac-*





tion. In other words, *who the artist has become as a human being in the world, his/her personal growth and power to create, express, and convey symbolic information, are the evidence of the shaman today.* The quality of the artist's very Being is the evidence of his/her knowledge of the mysteries of the baffling, cacaphonic present in which the struggle for authentic identity takes place in a sea of media images, an ocean of conflicting information, a clash of values, and a general reevaluation of all values. In order for the concept and function of shamanism to have relevant contemporary meaning, one must examine what social, ethnic, racial, cultural, and political circumstances have contributed to a certain individual's ability to accrue fluent and powerful communicative capabilities—especially in electronically mediated Western society where few persons invest belief in the individual and at the same time hold up the individual as the ideal. This is precisely what Ortiz had done.

Following DIAS, Ortiz returned to the United States and there began a series of Destruction Realizations. Among these, several stand out: *The Life and Death of White Henry*, 1967; *Henny Penny Piano Destruction Concert with Paper Bag Destruction Concert*, 1967; and two *Destruction Rituals*, 1969 and 1970.

*The Life and Death of Henny Penny* took place in New York at the Ecce Homo Gallery run by Ferdy Buonanano. A woman, dressed and coiffed to Ortiz's concept of an "upper-class debutante type," stood in the space draped in a bedspread resembling a long gown.<sup>12</sup> She softly uttered "Daddy" in various tones and modulations. Ortiz was positioned under the bedspread with an air pump attached to a contact microphone. As the woman continued to softly and expressively repeat the word "Daddy," Ortiz began to blow up a balloon which had been attached to her dress at the belly so that as it expanded, she appeared to become pregnant. When the balloon reached its maximum expansion, it exploded and the pumping sound and explosion, amplified by the microphones, ceased. Ortiz emerged slowly from under her drape holding a chicken representing the birth. He ritualistically showed the chicken to the gathered public and walked to a slight platform in the room (a platform-theater-sanctuary) where he tied the chicken by the feet and began to slowly swing it over the audience and out into the room. As the swinging increased, he picked up shears and pushed the swinging bird with the shears. Suddenly, as the bird swung back to him, he snipped the neck and the bird's head fell to the floor. During this entire sequence, he continued the single word uttered by the woman: "Daddy." But his pronouncements were angry, hostile, and aggressive, not seductive as hers had been. He then picked up the bloodied, dead chicken carcass, and beat to shreds a Flamenco guitar which had been placed on the stage. During the guitar smashing and destruction, he uttered the word "Mommy." He then picked up the head, slipped it into his fly where he had previously fastened a plastic bag to hold it, and walked out of the space.

In *Henny Penny Piano Destruction Concert with*

*Paper Bag Destruction Concert*, which took place in his studio (148 West 23rd Street, New York) in 1967, Ortiz used the principle elements he had used in *The Life and Death of White Henry*: the chicken destruction and an instrument (this time a piano). The use of the valuable musical instrument, whether piano or Flamenco guitar (recalling his father's ancestry in Spain) was for Ortiz a vehicle for empathically expressing, in an explosive way, "the crisis of life." He recalled the moving, emotional sounds evoking feelings of anguish, desire, pain, and sorrow, when he had destroyed the piano in the junk yard during the early 1960s. He remembered the wailing sounds of the Orthodox Jews' chanting. His Piano Destruction Concerts were created to resonate, through waves of sound, the physical sensations and mental vibrations of sorrow at destruction, of pity at psychic suffering, of adversity, blight, disaster, and affliction, of collapse and failure, or the intense aching endurance of the denied, the abandoned, the forgotten, the neglected, the anxiety-ridden, the heartbroken and tormented, and finally the ruin that accompanies all destruction.

*Henny Penny Piano Destruction Concert with Paper Bag Destruction* began with people gathered and seated amidst Ortiz's *Archaeological Finds*. Each person was given about fifty paper bags to blow up and explode, thereby exciting the nervous system. During the general delirium of this part of the event, a chicken was passed among the audience to fondle. When the people began throwing the bags at one another and a gentle pandemonium reigned, Ortiz collected the chicken and corn was handed out to the participants. Ortiz began to carefully and gently clean the piano with the live chicken whose body, when brushed along the keys, began the piano segment of the Destruction Concert, made even more poignant by the clucking chicken. Once the piano was cleaned, the chicken was again handed back to the participants who, realizing that the moment had come for the chicken to be sacrificed, began to debate the demise of the animal. Ortiz once again took possession of the chicken and, with a single blow against the piano, snapped its neck. When the beast was dead, he began his piano destruction with an axe. At a certain point, he put the axe down, picked up the chicken carcass, and continued the destruction with the chicken, beating it against the harp of the piano. He completed the destruction ritual to the end with the axe.

In his search for a profound means by which to communicate the physical and psychological brutality of destruction and for a "more visceral way to relate to art," Ortiz introduced the destruction of chickens into several of his rituals. The chicken has always been associated with folk culture, upon whose traditions and myths Ortiz drew heavily. He had witnessed his grandmother, during a natural part of the domestic process, kill chickens for food. He also laboriously studied Mexican Indian ritual chicken sacrifices. Because he wanted the destructive act to be emphasized over the killing of an animal, he selected an animal common to ritual sacrifice, folk tales, and folk



traditions, an animal which may be quickly killed and eaten, and which has been slaughtered by millions for millennia. Indeed, as a boy of eleven, Ortiz had worked in a chicken slaughterhouse under the Manhattan Bridge delivering the chickens to wholesale distribution houses. When criticized for using the chicken in the manner of ancient sacrificial ritual no longer meaningful in contemporary culture, Ortiz explained that he hoped to make "amazing bridges" to knowledge and understanding, to introduce "contradictions" to logic and contemporary custom, and to not simply remain a documentarian or a notarian of the prevailing mores. "An artist must realize the existential dialogue," Ortiz continued. "Mine was a nihilist dialogue with the most powerful means and existential drama in the nihilist sense."

Ortiz's aesthetic decision to use organic material in his art resembled aesthetic choices made by other artists working with destruction in art—significantly artists who had been, like Ortiz, brought up in the Catholic faith and/or who had suffered directly the actual destruction and violence of the holocaust and the atomic bomb. It is no coincidence that as the victim of violent racism in the United States, Ortiz shared with them the actual experience of destruction and the desire to reflect and combat the psychic and physical experience of that violation. In Austria, Hermann Nitsch began using the bloody, skinned carcass of a lamb in his *Orgies Mysteries Theatre*. As the crucified symbol of the origins of the mythical, like Ortiz, Nitsch intended to reveal the sublimations and repressions underpinning the violence of Western intellectual and spiritual traditions: the savage crucifixion of Christ; the legend of the ferocious, erotic, and paroxysmal Dionysian rites and mysteries; and the mixture of wounding, suffering, and sexual taboo in the collective guise of the Oedipus legend which informs Freudian psychoanalysis. Otto Mühl used foodstuff in his *Materialaktionen* (Material Actions) to represent both the excesses of commodity culture and human sexual and psychic abuse. In Japan, the artist Yoshio Shirakawa, a member of Hi Red Center, wrote:

In 1960, we no longer dream of creation. An atom bomb will come to resolve everything. The *corrida* of Picasso rouses us less than the blood of a cat being run over. The excited earth in the 20th century destroys serious artistic work. The only way to be spared from the massacre is to side with the assassins.<sup>10</sup>

In all of Ortiz's rituals, he layered very specific themes: physical pain (the memory of a traumatic childhood puncture, the pain of which he felt only when he discovered his foot drenched in blood); the psychic pain of familial arguments and racial discrimination; childhood discipline, sometimes excessive and irrational; childhood sexuality and the discovery of physical taboos; adult sexual conflicts over oral and anal intercourse, seduction, and masturbation; states of anxiety—fighting, hostilities, aggression, depression, regressions, sublimations, psychosomatic disorders, catatonia. In all his Destruction Realizations, Ortiz sought to make transparent, to un-

mask, and to help dissolve unconscious repressions—the anger of the son against the father, the incest, adultery, and infanticide of Western myth—to exorcise the Oedipus and Electra of current experience.

In this pursuit, his violently disturbing destructions functioned similarly to the *privileged instant* identified by Georges Bataille in his reflections on the nature of the sacred.<sup>11</sup> The *privileged instant*, Bataille has explained, is the act of making concrete a random moment. That moment which is insubstantial, suddenly appears substantial. Its ephemeral incandescence is held captive—privileged—a fleeting moment become infinite. In traditional painting, sculpture, literature, poetry, and musical notation, objects preside over the transient. The fleeting appears as an evocative, continuous substantiation. In the attempt "to attain the *sacred instant* by its own resources," Bataille observed, traditional art stabilized the *privileged instant*, enslaved the sacred, and inevitably lead to the disenchantment, misery, and ultimate death of art; for traditional art "did not have the force to attain the *sacred instant* by its own resources" precisely because it rendered the ungraspable substantial.<sup>12</sup> The sacred resides in the *privileged instant*, which is only a moment of convulsive communication. In the sacred, the spirit may break free but such a space may well be a field of violence in which no limitations can be conceded and the person stands "alone":

He suddenly has at his disposal all possible human convulsions, and he cannot flee from this heritage of divine power . . . nor can he try to know if this heritage will *consume* and *destroy* the one it *consecrates*. But he refuses now to surrender "what possesses him" to the standards of salesmen, to which art has conformed.<sup>13</sup>

Images of Ortiz's Destruction Art, retrospectively viewed, stabilize the *privileged instant* of his symbolic actions and appear to render objective and timeless that which was undertaken in very specific historical time. The sacred element in his work derived specifically from the insubstantial context and force of values and emotions in which they were experienced. So too, the shudder of brutality in his rituals is erased or submerged in our false sophistication, a pastiche of tolerance nursed by time. Together the sacred and cruel elements in the Destruction Rituals are dispossessed of the savage belief belonging to his ancestors—Rimbaud, Isidore Ducasse, Van Gogh, and Artaud—whose passionate, fearless commitment gave breath to convulsive communication ordinarily stifled. Paradoxically, historical distance now assumes the role aesthetic distance once played in art. Our distance from his work removes us from the emergency of the historical moment in which Ortiz's actions took place, and from the unconscionable brutalities of the Vietnam War, televised nightly throughout the world.

However, in the account of his *Destruction Ritual: Sung Me My Lie*, the most ambitious of all his actions, we are returned to the historical urgency of the My Lai massacre of civilians by United States armed forces. *Sung*

*Me My Lie* was performed with the aid of several "initiators," among them Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche, and it took place at Temple University, Thomlinson Theater, as part of the American Educational Theater Association's regional meeting, January 17, 1970. Prior to the day of the performance, Ortiz and others distributed a color poster around the campus with an illustration of bloodied Vietnamese women and children, victims of the My Lai massacre.

The performance took place simultaneously on a stage before an audience and in a room adjacent to the auditorium. The two rooms were connected by a small space through which the audience had to pass a battery of interrogators in order to move into the interior room where the main actions took place. For those in the auditorium unwilling to be interrogated, the actions in the interior room were videotaped and the audience could watch them on the monitors from the safety of their seats.

The performance began when a man cloaked in raw meat (which appeared to be bloodied flesh), tied with bags of blood which he broke from time to time, and moaning with pain, was carried in and dropped on the stage before an audience and before a stage set for Marat Sade. Throughout the ritual, he cried with pain and called for help. His cries, moans, and calls became so convincing that finally someone in the audience eventually called an ambulance, but not before they realized that there might be a connection between his suffering and the activities taking place in the interior room appearing on the monitor.

The interior room had been set up in two sections, a balcony and lower space. The room below appeared as an ordinary living area with book shelves, articles of furniture, etc. Separate areas were established: ironing boards were placed for initiates to iron and burn clothes; there was a piano destruction area and a mouse destruction area in which initiates were harangued by the initiators to kill and sacrifice a mouse; there were clothes to be torn, and blood to be hurled. People who entered from the interrogation room (where they had to identify themselves in the usual institutional way: Driver's License, Social Security Number, etc.) were each given an egg—symbolic of an enemy foetus to be sacrificed and killed. There were slides being shown of a throbbing heart and brain into which the initiates could slice. The initiators led the group around to the various destruction activities they might perform and chants were begun to "Mutilate the enemy," "Kill the enemy." Initiators began to chant "Calley" (after William J. Calley, the First Lieutenant tried for the My Lai massacre), pronounced Kali, the Indian god of destruction. The taunts became more aggressive and sexual: "Fuck the enemy!" "Knock up the enemy!"

During this screaming and taunting phase, the space above was activated by Ortiz. There a simulated pregnancy and birth took place in the same manner as the birth simulated with contact microphones in *The Life and Death of White Henry*. An air pump was set up in the middle of the space below and Ortiz began pumping up

the balloon hidden under the woman's clothing. She gave birth with a bang to a chicken. Ortiz approached the woman and took possession of the chicken to cries of "Kill the enemy." A *Chicken Destruction Ritual* was about to begin when suddenly a group of initiates who had entered the space with the intention of saving the life of the chicken (without the foreknowledge of Ortiz) seized their opportunity to rescue the animal. A struggle ensued for the chicken between the initiators, who were pledged to the realization of the ritual and the sacrifice of the chicken, and those who had come to save the chicken.

Realizing that some people had taken the responsibility to save the life of the animal and were willing to disturb the performance in order to maintain their convictions, Ortiz decided to alter his behavior and fight with the intruders for the life of the chicken. Holding the animal, he ran out of the room, through the theater, out onto the campus in the snow and a chase commenced. Ortiz, followed by his interlopers who at this point did not realize that the chicken was to be saved, in turn followed by the initiators willing to sacrifice the animal, ran for his life and that of the animal. The experience ended nearly a half an hour later when Ortiz, exhausted, returned to the theater with the life of the chicken spared.

Ortiz's *Destruction Theater Ritual* in Hollywood at the Ace Gallery in 1970 was a performance framed in a similar political context and utilizing similar elements: ten slaughtered chickens with feathers and heads intact, 250 live white mice, 250 baited mouse traps, ten gallons of blood, one thousand paper bags, one upright fully playable piano, a phonograph, a long playing recording of Spanish classical piano, ten pairs of scissors, thirty people, one long-handled single-blade four-pound axe, 400 paper cups. The space was divided into four twenty-foot-square performance areas and the piano and phonograph were painted white and placed in the central area. The mousetraps were placed in a twelve-by-twelve foot, eighteen-inch-high fenced area in the rear center of the gallery. There were screens lowered for the projection of a brain lobotomy operation. There was a "laboratory" set up for the burning of clothing, another space for the smashing of chicken parts, ritual blood throwing, and clothes tearing. All areas except the lobotomy area were brightly lit.

Again the audience became initiates and Ortiz selected six initiators to work with him in the destruction. The initiates were given blood and told to throw it at the initiators performing destructions. Each person admitted to the room was forced to accept a live white mouse which s/he could allow to live or die by releasing into the mouse trap area. The ritual began with loud nonverbal yelling: AAAAAHHHH. Ortiz, hostile and yelling angrily, began tearing feathers from chickens, throwing the feathers, and he and the initiators attacked each other with the chicken flesh. The smell of chicken flesh permeated the air in a mayhem of dismemberment, blood, mice, and screaming. Walls and clothes were covered with blood thrown by Ortiz, the initiators, and initiates, who had been joined by



Kurt von Meier, an art critic and art historian then working in Los Angeles. At a certain point, a cue was given to begin to kick, bang, and pound the walls for two minutes until another cue, given by Ortiz, signaled a quiet, a "catatonic stance." Ortiz wrote:

We took grotesque anguished poses blood dripping from my torn clothing. I left the ragged bloody statues. As I made my way through the crowd of initiates, I thought of the difficulty the initiators would have holding the grotesque poses till I completed the *Piano Destruction Concert* and returned to them with the live white mice for the *Mouse Trap Event*. As I passed the *Sheet Burning* I realized it was a failure. I couldn't smell the burning of fabric ... I shouted "Make a fire god damn it." The *Lobotomy* was moving along well, lobe after bloody lobe fell away under the cutting hands of the initiate surgeon. The slide projection of the human brain was in bloody living color, an awesome huge convoluted myth of a brain being slowly sliced to the floor ...<sup>19</sup>

As Ortiz passed the phonograph with the Spanish piano music playing, he picked up an axe on his way to the piano and smashed the phonograph, and then began to work on the piano. Blood was thrown on the piano, "sanctifying the carnage." Ortiz followed this action by picking up a box of the live mice, handing them to his initiators, and together they let the mice free in the mouse trap arena. Crying and slapping their hands on the walls, clapping, they frightened the mice which ran in all directions and into the traps, some of which had already been snapped by mice set in the area by initiators who had earlier entered the space. A man jumped into the area and began rescuing the mice with both hands, at the same time setting off as many of the lethal traps as possible with his feet, and the *Destruction Ritual* came to an end in the "murder, blood, gore, and cruelty" Ortiz had intended.

Considerable creative energy during recent years has been devoted to the healing function of art in society and many intellectuals have arrived at positions not dissimilar to the aims Ortiz outlined for his Destruction Art in the mid-1960s. For example, in 1983, writing on what he identified as the "unconscious trend toward nuclear war," the social psychologist Steven Kull described the tendency in Western culture to literalize psychological needs in actual conflicts. This need to enact conflicts in real social events, such as war, stands in contrast to societies, Kull explained, where highly developed mythic and ritual practices present primary contexts for addressing psychological needs. Kull attributed the need to actualize psychic conflict to materialism and the overriding secularization of the West. He urged the "deliteralization" of destructive enactment in order to move beyond the death instinct replayed in a technological society which insures apocalyptic self-destruction. Kull also argued for the "disidentification with such established structures and a reorientation to personal identity as process" which includes ongoing and/or periodic transformation. He urged the development of "archetypical" myths and rituals

(similar to those created by Ortiz in the late 1960s) which "act out" extreme destruction and violent, aggressive behavior—the "by-products" of powerful development processes which have gained "the capacity to override the age-old motives for survival."

## II.

As violence is part of human communication, so is it also an easy and magical way to achieve power and prestige. Violence and its threat are the primary tools of state power and all hegemonic structures operating on micro- and macroscopic levels of communication. After 1970, Ortiz abandoned his use of destruction in the literal sense. He was exhausted from the concentration, dedication, and care demanded to remain "authentic" and he acknowledged the contradiction of some of his actions (especially the *Chicken Destruction Ritual*) with his theory of a healing art. He also realized that by using chickens and mice his ritual crossed into life and he could no longer sanction his own actual killing of life. Furthermore, he no longer wanted to spend his energy as the shaman of a cult of sacrifice which so easily was dismissed as an abuse of power rather than the healing ritual Ortiz hoped it might be.

Like many individuals of his generation, during the 1970s, he became interested in the human potential movement. He began to concentrate on finishing his doctorate, and entered a period of intense study (similar to the period which preceded the *Archaeological Finds*) in which he explored Tantric studies, Bio-Energetics, and Macro Biotics. In 1978, he traveled to Arizona to study psychic healing and then to the top of a mountain in California to study Sufi. His pilgrimage continued to Colorado where he studied rebirthing, graduating from the Rocky Mountain Healing Arts Institute. By 1979 he was fully engaged in developing a process for "inner visioning" that led to his *Physio-Psycho-Alchemy* and a doctorate in 1982.

The inner visioning work drew upon his early interest in the dream. As the dream translates imagery into ideas, it reveals not conceals, clarifies not obscures, and in its task as confessor, the dream divulges and breathes authentic resolutions and insights. Dreamers (conscious or unconscious) symbolically dramatize their emotionally charged symptoms and reconcile the relativity of the physical universe to the observer. As the source for the discovery of "residues of conflict" such as childhood experiences, socially compromised individuality, and the lack of cultural outlets for repressed experience, the dream, especially as it is enacted by the conscious mind, might work through impulses of the auxiliary ego in psychodramas which manifest the latent content of the unconscious dreamer, the associative elements, representations, and the instrumentalism which translates drives and conflicts into neurotic symptoms. As early as about 1963 in a theoretical paper, "A New Philosophy of Art," Ortiz wrote:

The artist ... who struggles to resolve this dilemma, is always in search of a means to give play to his uncon-



It is because the dream is our primal authenticating link to the magic of our mind, body and spirit, to all our processes of imagination that I perceive it to be the key to all processes of art. By accepting the premise that our art is the dream of the awake state, as our dream is the art of our sleep state, we are able to immediately recognize how solutions in one are extensions of and are relevant to solutions in the other. As art emerged with our first dream, so the first artists emerged with the first who remembered their dream mythic creations.

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scious. The artist is an artist because he is aware that our everyday activities cannot in any sense allow for the necessary symbolic resolutions of our unconscious. The dream is the finest example of man's ability to achieve essential symbolic resolutions. The dream is a transformative process during which distortions, displacement and condensations occur. Its most essential aspect is its sense of reality ... If art is to be as essential an experience as the dream, if it is to be more than a superficial activity, it must utilize processes comparable to the dream.<sup>20</sup>

In *Physio-Psycho-Alchemy*, the initiate lies down, quietly holding a plastic beach ball between his/her knees. The initiate is instructed by Ortiz (still in the shamanic role) to breath deeply and quietly but to maintain a steady pressure between the knees on the ball. As the initiate continues to breath and squeeze, the body begins to warm with the breathing exercise. A tension of the muscles throughout the body causes the initiate to glow and begin to flex, a flexing motion that, if the initiate is able to sustain the squeezing, breathing action, sets the body in an arching, flexing motion not unlike the physical responses experienced during sexual intercourse and orgasm.

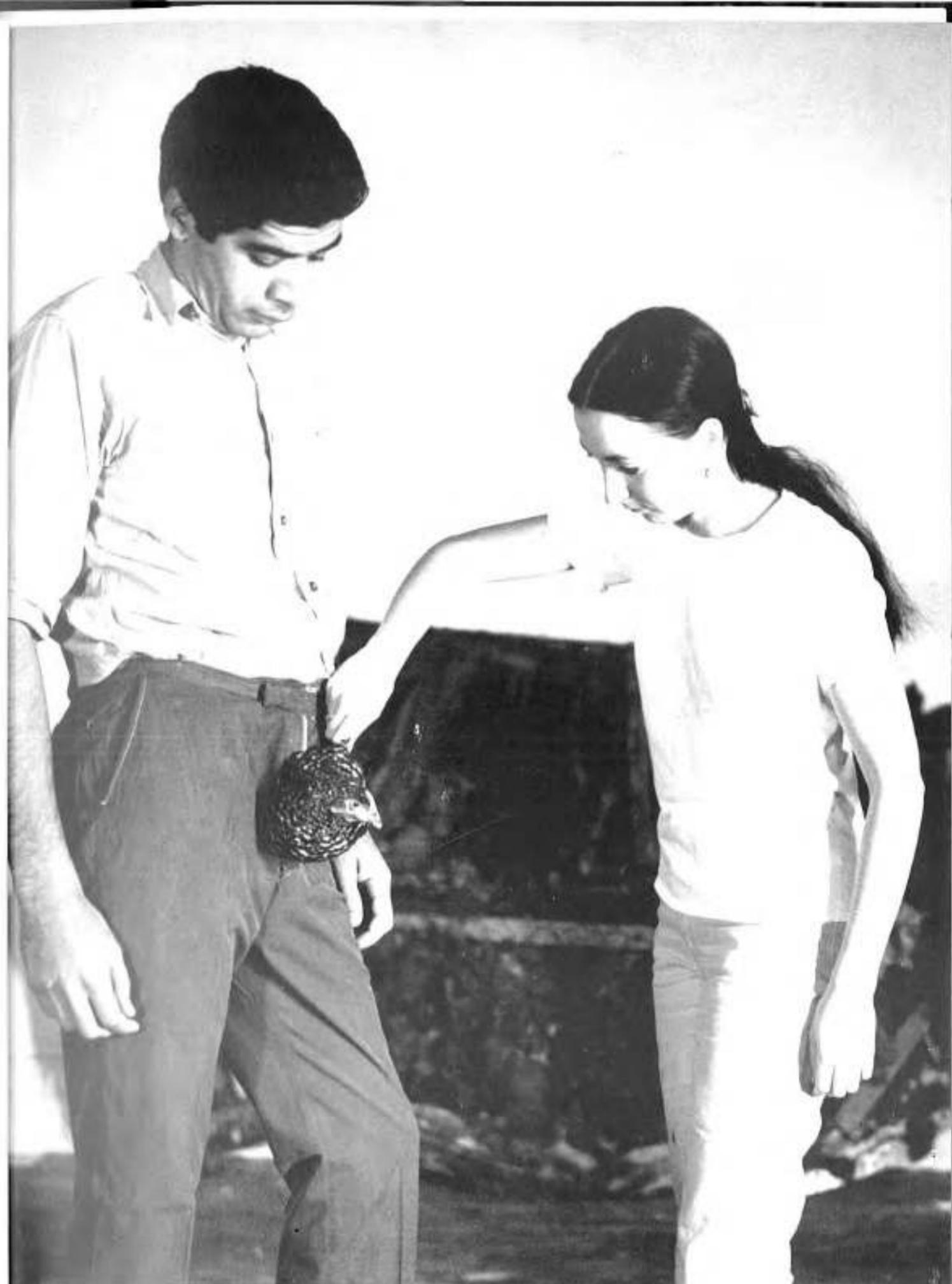
During this ritual, Ortiz quietly instructs the person to begin the inner visioning process. The resulting conscious dream state is augmented by the breathing, squeezing, warmth of tension and release of the action. In the conscious dreaming state, the images created are understood by Ortiz as states of creative Being. These may be understood metaphorically as lives in which the initiate, turned artist, recalls experiences, visions, emotions once possessed, now regained, or these visions may be the reenactments of conflicts or joys that animate the present condition of the person. Ortiz has written that in *Physio-Psycho-Alchemy* the participant becomes an artist, an artist who is him or herself the "art material, the work of art in progress, an art which is transmutive" and serves "ancient traditions of rebirth and a genuine authenticating communion of our mind, body, and spirit-of our past, present, and future."<sup>21</sup> In this process, he cites the body as the "primal authenticating link to the magic" of mind, body, and spirit. Alchemy is considered a "special kind of symbolic formation [as] an extension of collective unconscious processes, the dynamics of which are also basic to folklore, fantasies, mythology, dreams, art, and the mystery religions of antiquity." He presents *Physio-Psycho-Alchemy* as a "process wherein one releases one's mind to one's cellular consciousness, so that the mind may know it and co-operate in its evolution."

Process Theology has situated philosophic metaphysical speculation within the discourse of modern science and mathematical practice since the 1920s when it became associated with Sir William Rowan's theory of "Action Principle," a fundamental principle of electrodynamics, relativity quantum theory, quantum mechanics, and quantum field theory. In *Process and Reality* (1929), the British philosopher Alfred North Whitehead drew on Bergson, Bradley, and William James to shape his notion

that the empirical world is framed by a cosmology. Within this rational and metaphysical condition, events and entities transmit qualities to each other through "feelings" that are genuinely reenacted from one entity to another in a sequence of mutual "becoming." Consciousness is the formation of a rare sentience arising from and within overlapping experiences. Whitehead's philosophical perspective paralleled Einstein's theory of relativity and the unifying principle of "process" is the phenomena that links Whitehead to principles of action in physics and mathematics and equally draws the philosophic speculations of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre into its frame. The interdisciplinary attention to action and process caused otherwise widely divergent investigations to cross in both the precise mathematical equations of quantum physics and in the imprecise writing on the floor of a group therapy session, as did "Danny" enacting Arthur Janov's Primal Scream. In art, Ortiz's attention to the processes of authentication draws action and event into the regions of aesthetics where individual attention to healing processes holds the key to regenerative communicative capabilities of the authenticating Self. Through the alchemy of psychological and physical action, Ortiz hoped to destroy the conscious Ego in order to return the "knowing" unconscious Id to itself. His *Physio-Psycho-Alchemy*, in art and aesthetics, is as contemporary, complex, and interwoven into the fabric of intellectual investigation as are advances in science, philosophy, and psychology to which Ortiz is both indebted and to which he has contributed.

### III.

Destruction Art and *Physio-Psycho-Alchemy* represent Ortiz's contribution to the discourse of contemporary art history. Destruction Art took place during the period when formalist criticism and Minimal Art reached an apex of international influence in the arts. The values for which Ortiz stood and the art which he produced remain unacknowledged as a formidable opposition to the hegemonic aesthetic ideology which shaped that period and which, transformed as "postmodernist" criticism, remains dominant today. The significant resistance Ortiz launched against such self-absorptive, socially disengaged art accounts, in no small part, for the absence of Ortiz from most art historical accounts of the period. An examination of Ortiz's omission (more a repression of Destruction Art in general) from art historical accounts of the period would collapse the linear system of art history which continues, even in the guise of partisan employment of aspects of critical theory, to reaffirm exclusionary canons of art. Trivialized as derivative and "neo-dada," his work nevertheless is pivotal in the transformation and continuation of the basic tenets of Modernism (its contingency, insufficiency, and lack of transcendence).<sup>22</sup> Destruction Art demonstrated its contingency to social and cultural conditions of the period at the same time as it proved insufficient to transcend the destructive patterns which it sought to redress.



A critical aspect of the continuity of Ortiz's Destruction Art with Modernism resides in the persistent spiritual metaphors in his work—the trinity of "Physio-Psycho-Alchemy," or the unity of body and mind transmuted through spirit. Such ideas stand apart from the desiccated secularism of late 1960s and 1970s formalism. Ortiz also remains removed and skeptical of the current fashionable cynicism, the "new technology of irony," articulated by critics bred on art which they then defend as "obscene existential superfluity (both terminal and nascent)" and who believe themselves to have "objectified the darker side of the discourse of the commodity culture" by participating in it.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Ortiz proclaims today, even more than two decades ago, the gravity, salience, and urgency of the existential necessity, and he continues to search for an artistic means by which to reveal and heal what he identifies as the "existential crisis." In his insatiable quest for the "authentic" versus the "spurious," Ortiz explained:

Art is the mythic core. We artists claim to be devoted to investigating that realm but artists have all been bribed, bought out. So we have art that has no relationship to what is really going on on this planet. The Titanic is sinking and the band plays on. No one questions these old ideas about beauty, even if beauty is seen as the urinal-like Beauty looking down at its privates—even [Duchamp's] urinal wasn't enough to shake up the consciousness that contributed to dehumanization. I was involved in the destruction process in art as it became the primary process of Destruction Ritual.

*Stiles:* So in a way truth was destruction? Or rather, the Beauty of truth was the destruction of lies?

*Ortiz:* Exactly, because if the role of art, authentically speaking, was to civilize, if art represented the highest achievement of a civilization that one can assume, which I don't believe, perhaps the sewage engineers are more important [than the artist]. My whole relationship to art, to creativity, is to bringing about and introducing into the art process ways of doing art that would serve to humanize a person, to civilize a person. My feeling is that there is and I want to be very careful now, that there are attachments to that kind of very visceral, cathartic order in which one may release all of this anger, all of this distorted anger. This is the role of process in art and it must be looked at. . . . The role of art is to heal the hysterical. The question is now: "What must I do as an artist with my art that it might serve to reveal to me and others this numbing cultural stance?"

The language of legitimization, whether presented in the guise of a subcultural or mainstream discourse, is always transparent and my essay is no exception. Yet, despite the authenticating function of the museum exhibition and the catalogue essay, Ortiz's work has rarely been understood as "art" either within the conventional frame of that term or within the permissions granted "experimental" art. Nevertheless, he always situated his art and discourse squarely within the context of traditional institutions

whose highest honors he has earned. For example, his *Archaeological Finds* entered the collections of the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney in the early 1960s. In his desire to establish Puerto Rican and other Third World cultures within the mainstream, he established a museum, not an alternative space, in the late 1960s and early 1970s when he served as the first director of El Museo del Barrio. He earned a doctorate from Columbia and has devoted himself to university and college teaching for nearly three decades.

Ortiz's art and life have always been involved in paradox. His Destruction Art and his *Physio-Psycho-Alchemy* have avoided appropriation by consumer culture, whether by the establishment or by special interest groups such as the commercial avant-garde and/or subculture. More surprisingly, the very culture which renders even the banal as spectacle has been unable to co-opt his work, despite his deliberate seduction of the media and the sensational aspects of his rituals. Why? On the one hand, the very language of Destruction Art and *Physio-Psycho-Alchemy* is so embedded in social and cultural discourse that the apparent familiarity of his visual production and theoretical position is nullified by the illusion of a facile accessibility. Repression surfaces to maintain the appearance of the status quo. On the other hand, his language appears foreign because of his recontextualization of the obvious. In this most important sense, his art escapes the idealization process of the retrospective and the summation of the text because neither format is able to strip his art of its mysterious component and lay it bare. Rafael Ortiz's art is generically radical for he has consistently produced art which cannot be imitated and which defies, even as it embraces, categorization.



## Footnotes

1. See Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. with an introduction and additional notes by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), and Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. with an introduction and additional notes by Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

2. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 1.

3. Among the artists and their work who should be counted are the *dé-collage* Happenings of Wolf Vostell in Germany, the "Auto-Destructive and Auto-Creative Art" of the stateless Gustav Metzger, the Time Base Event structures of John Latham in England, the "Demonstrations" of Milan Knizak in Czechoslovakia, the Concrete Poetry of Henri Chopin (France) and Bob Cobbing (England), the destruction action-music of Juan Hidalgo and the ZAJ Group in Spain, the erotic Happenings of Carolee Schneemann, the ontological music and video of Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman, the Happenings of Al Hansen and the Guerrilla Art Action Group of Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche in the United States, the *Arte Destructivo* exhibition and works of Kenneth Kernble and other artists in Buenos Aires in 1961, the political agitation, Festivals of Free Expression, and Polyphonia of Jean-Jacques Lebel in France, and in Vienna the Orgies Mysteries Theatre of Hermann Nitsch, the existential body actions of Günter Brus, the *Materialaktionen* and Reality Art of Otto Mühl and his commune in Friedrichshof, Austria, the psycho-sexual tableaux of the late Rudolf Schwarzkogler, and the explosive tableaux of Ivor Davies in Wales.

4. There have been a number of excellent studies published in recent years in which the authors have come to similar conclusions as those reached by Ortiz many years ago in his art. See particularly David Michael Levin's *The Body's Recollection of Being: Phenomenological Psychology and the Deconstruction of Nihilism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) and Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain*.

5. All quotes unless otherwise noted are from conversations between Ortiz and myself since 1982.

6. Richard Huelsenbeck, untitled, unpublished signed text, c. 1965, in my Rafael Montañez Ortiz Archive.

7. Ortiz has used the terms Destruction Realization, Destruction Ritual, and Destruction Theater Ritual interchangeably.

8. Octavio Paz, *The Other Mexico: Critique of the Pyramid* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), p. 81.

9. *Ibid.*

10. DIAS was organized by Gustav Metzger in London, September 1966. Over one hundred artists, poets, musicians, and several psychologists either sent work to

DIAS or participated in the month of activities and three-day symposium. See my essay, "Synopsis of the Destruction in Art Symposium and Its Theoretical Significance," *The Act 1* (Spring 1987): 22-33.

11. Graham Stevens interview with me October 20, 1985, London.

12. See Arthur Janov's *The Primal Scream: Primal Therapy, the Cure for Neurosis* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), pp. 9-11.

13. See my "Rodforce: Thoughts on the Art of Sherman Flening," *High Performance 10* (Fall 1987).

14. Ortiz could not recall the name of the woman who participated in this ritual.

15. Yoshio Shirakawa, "On the Side of the Assassin," special issue on the Gutai, *Lightworks* (New York, 1984).

16. See Georges Bataille, "The Sacred," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. and with an introduction by Allan Stockl, trans. Allan Stockl with Carol R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie, Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).

17. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 242, 245.

19. Rafael Ortiz, unpublished "Diary of a Ritual," 1969, in my Rafael Montañez Ortiz Archive.

20. See Rafael Ortiz, unpublished "A New Philosophy of Art," c. 1963, in my Rafael Montañez Ortiz Archive.

21. See Rafael Ortiz, "Physio-Psycho-Alchemy," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia Teachers College, 1982.

22. For a fine definition and discussion of Modernism see Thomas Crow's "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," in *Modernism and Modernity: The Vancouver Conference Papers*, ed. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Serge Guilbaut, and David Solkin (Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), pp. 215-264.

23. See Tricia Collins and Richard Milazzo's *Media Post Media* (New York: Scott Hanson Gallery, 1988), n.p.





## Selected Annotated Bibliography

By Kristine Stiles

### Abbreviations

DIAS: The Destruction in Art Symposium, London, September 1966  
KS: Kristine Stiles Archive

### Writings by the Artist

"Destructivism: A Manifesto," c. 1962. Unpublished, undated manifesto, KS. Ortiz's first manifesto on Destruction Art. He described artists who work with destruction as "destroyers, materialists, and sensualists dealing with process directly" and he identified a "desperate need" for those who utilize destruction in art to "retain conscious integrity" in the symbolic, sacrificial action "which releases and raises one to the heights."

"A New Philosophy of Art," c. 1963. Unpublished, undated theoretical essay, KS. Art should become as fundamental as the dream in which one acts out emotional conflicts of the conscious and unconscious, thereby achieving symbolic resolutions. He continued, the artist is distinctive in his/her aim to transform and transcend physical and emotional life-energies, to decipher and evaluate experience, and to uncover and exploit "the underlying process-progressions and regressions which characterize ... behavior."

"The Science of Art Education," c. 1964. Unpublished, undated manuscript, KS. Concerned with the relationship of transformations in dynamic systems, Ortiz compared cybernetics and mechanical communication to the symbolic, synthetic methods by which the "artist transforms and projects his inner (conscious and unconscious) life." He stated that art education should concern itself with self-transforming behavioral systems.

"Science and Art," c. 1965. Unpublished, undated theoretical essay, KS. Art, like magic, has different aims than science—a rational construct which cannot produce art because of a necessity to organize the "unconscious distortions, gross ambiguity, and chaotic obscurities," to which artists must remain sensitive, into logical systems.

"A Hierarchy of Transforming Systems," c. 1965. Unpublished, undated theory, KS. Ortiz described three interlocking and dynamic transforming systems to which the artist must resolve his/her relationship: "disordering," which provides for the discharge of enormous energy, tension, or pain released as pleasure and satisfaction (or) catharsis; "ordering," the harmonic compromise characteristic of traditional systems; and "extremely ordering," the "striving for perfection." He hypothesized, "There is no reason to believe that the energy system which is the work of art, is essentially different from the energy system which is the artist." He concluded, "The art object energy" represents the continual transformation of "life processes" and the quality of an artist's art is only "deter-

mined by the way the artist transforms and distributes his life-energies ..."

Letter to Mario Amaya, editor of *Art and Artists*, with statements accompanying the illustrations of *Chair Destruction*, 1965. Special issue on "Auto-Destructive Art," *Art and Artists* 1 (August 1966). Recalling philosophical meditations by Kant and Sartre regarding the nature of appearances and things-in-themselves, Ortiz wrote: "Each ax swing takes me away from the chairness of the chair to the transcending complexity internal in all things. Each ax swing unmakes this made thing called upholstered chair; each destruction unmakes my made relationship to it."

"Destructivism: Second Manifesto, London 1966," excerpted in *Studio International* 172 (December 1966). Two-page, mimeographed tract which Ortiz handed out and read at DIAS, September 11, 1966. Ortiz enumerated biological and natural aspects of destruction that serve no apparent "survival or stabilizing purpose," i.e., cancer, volcanic eruptions, tornadoes. "Evolution is a destructive adjustment" and "survival is an abstraction made possible through psychological evolution." Within this framework "destructivist art gives our destructive instinct its essential expression while coming to terms with destruction's most primitive maladaptive aspects. ... By bridging the gap between the good and the evil, art absorbs the evolutionary limitations of our species without threatening its biological or psychological survival."

"To the Fist Fighting Pacifist," 1966. Unpublished rebuttal responding to criticism of DIAS in an article written by Roger Barnard, editor of *Peace News*, "DIAS: Playing with Fire," *Peace News* (London) 7 (October 1966). KS. Ortiz compared Destruction Art to the dream which "cannot be censored," whose content is "neither inherently good or bad." Ortiz claimed, that "as Freud spoke of the sexuality of mankind," so "the destructivist artists speak of the destructiveness of man today."

"Recollections of DIAS," 1966. Unpublished daily chronology of DIAS events including descriptions of his own and other participating artists' actions. KS.

"For Art's Sake Destroy," *East Village Other* (New York) 2 (December 1-15, 1966). Ortiz drew upon but altered Marx's belief that "Religion is the opiate of the people." In a criticism of artists who failed to come to terms with destruction art and thereby get "their consciousness dirty," he wrote: "Art is the opiate." Art, he explained, belongs to the categories of ritual games, sports, and play where "emotional life is realized, educated and secured—where our urges, especially the maladaptive ones, get their play."

"Destruction Theater Manifesto," February 1967. KS. Destruction Theater. Ortiz wrote, addressed aggres-



sive urges allowing art to achieve a "responsible" role "in civilization" and to evolve cultural rituals which might "absorb urges" that "nakedly threaten survival."

*Destruction Theater Manifesto—Destruction Realizations*, Part I and II. Insert in the exhibition catalogue for *12 Evenings of Manipulations*, October 1967, a white envelope 7-1/4" x 10-1/2", cover design by Ortiz, KS. An elaborated version of Ortiz's Destructivism Manifesto including scores for his *Destruction Room* and *Brainwash* created during "12 Evenings of Manipulations." Judson Church, October 1967.

*Destructions Past & Present*. New York: Fordham University, 1967. A pamphlet accompanying the exhibition, November 10-28, 1967, of nine *Archaeological Finds*: chairs, mattresses, and a piano and a *Destruction Ritual* by Ortiz. Also included are quotes on Ortiz's work by John Canaday, Stuart Preston, Jay Landesman, Richard Huelsenbeck, and Maurice Blanc, as well as a text by Ortiz: "Destruction has no place in society—it belongs to our dreams; it belongs to art."

"Judson Publications Manifesto," December 1967, reprinted in *GAAG: The Guerrilla Art Action Group, 1969-1976, A Selection* (New York: Printed Matter, Inc., 1978). Manifesto signed by Ortiz, Al Hansen, Jon Hendricks, Lil Picard, and Jean Toche. A rhetorical manifesto criticizing the "profiteering proselytizers of culture," and promising to "subvert culture" and respond to the social "screams of crises."

"Technological Proposal," 1967. Unpublished proposal to E.A.T. (Experiments in Art and Technology), KS. Ortiz described art as a "primary process experience probing the probability that links our physiological state with our mind states." In such a state, the individual will no longer "worship ... primitive concretization" but seek an immediate "energy exchange between primary body states and primary mind states." Through the technological manipulation of physiology, individuals will be placed in a "regressive primary state within which we will experience ... a discharge of memory."

"If Theater is Food for the Spirit, Is Spinach a Desert?" c. 1967-68. Unpublished, undated term paper written for a history of theater class at Columbia University, KS. In this important document of Ortiz's influences and the origins of his "Physio-Psycho-Alchemy" theory, he utilized an ironic food metaphor (ingestion and digestion) to summarize and compare the aesthetic theories of many authors writing on art and the theater, among them Kant, Croce, Jung, Tolstoy, Freud, Rieff, Brecht, Meyerhold, Stanislavsky, Pavlov, Durkheim, and Berke. Highly critical of authors who valued "pure mind" over "base body" in the aesthetic act (i.e., Plato, Kant, Croce), Ortiz remained skeptical but more accepting of aesthetic theories which accounted for the unconscious, neurotic, and id processes (Herbert Read) or the representative qualities and values that integrate experience (John Dewey). Impressed with the distinction drawn by Adolphe Appia between presentational art ("defining emotional meaning") and representational art ("defining intellectual

meaning"), Ortiz contrasted Antonin Artaud's theatrical intent to create an "hysterical conversion" with Appia's definitions and described Artaud as a revolutionary of the "mythical," intent to subvert repressive fantasies.

"DIAS—U.S.A.—'68 Preview Statement," 1968. Unpublished, handwritten single-page manifesto, KS. Ortiz described Destruction Art as "the symbolic artistic realization of all the hostile destructive urges" and an art which touches obsessive secrets and "threatens to personalize" which is depersonalized: To hell with your hard edge."

"Survival Manual for Blood and Flesh Guerrilla Theater," c. 1968. Unpublished, undated manifesto probably written in collaboration with Richard Schechner, then an editor of the *Tulane Drama Review*. Guerrilla theater emphasizes irrational emotional responses, is a confrontation with death and atrocities, crises-oriented, enacted on the street, and discourages arrest and incarceration.

Untitled open letter co-authored by Jon Hendricks, April 6, 1968, reprinted in *GAAG: The Guerrilla Art Action Group, 1969-1976, A Selection*. New York: Printed Matter, Inc., 1978. The artists announced the cancellation of *DIAS: U.S.A.*, at the Judson Memorial Church, in deference to the "spirit of the beautiful soul Dr. Martin Luther King" who had been assassinated.

"Diary of a Ritual," 1969. Unpublished account of Ortiz's Destruction Theater performed at the Ace Gallery in Hollywood, California, KS. Includes a detailed description of his *Destruction Ritual* and an account of the audience reaction to the event.

"International Cultural Revolutionary Forces," May 20, 1970. Unpublished manifesto co-authored with Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche, KS. Attacking artists for succumbing to the "Horatio-Alger Fantasy" of success and power, the authors condemned complicity with "oppressive and racist institutions" and called for artists to cease making objects and become activists struggling for "cultural and social liberation."

"Culture and the People," *Art in America* 59 (May/June 1971). As a Puerto Rican, Ortiz explained that he had experienced cultural disenfranchisement which led him to search for a way to authenticate his ethnic experience and to the founding of El Museo del Barrio, a "practical alternative to the orthodox museum" which he hoped would facilitate the revival of "living values" and thereby personalize cultural experience.

"Drawings," c. 1972. Undated brief description of Ortiz's concern for the psychological impact of scale in figure drawings, KS.

Untitled, unpublished paper presented at the Western Regional Conference on Prison Cultural Experience held at the Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, KS. Art either serves to authenticate or dehumanize experience through "cultural elitism, unrealistic profit, and fame, chauvinism, bigotry, and classism. ... To imagine art as a corrector ... of inmates and not speak to the need to use art to correct and change society as a whole ... is to

ignore the cause of the prison, the insane asylum, and the death penalty," Ortiz explained. He added, "If society does not drive us bad, it drives us mad." The body and its senses are the primary material of art through which symbolic realization—the self as art—is born," he continued and the aim of all art education should be what he called "psychotronics," the humanization and development of our extra-sensory processes as the "final phase of art as a correctional process."

"Physio-Psycho-Alchemy: Towards an Authenticating Art." unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia Teachers College, 1982. Treatise describing Ortiz's theory of art as behavior: the artist is the "art material, the work of art in progress, an art which is transmutative" serving "ancient traditions of rebirth as a genuine authenticating communion of our mind, body, and spirit—of our past, present, and future." The dream is cited as the "primal authenticating link to the magic" of mind, body, and spirit and alchemy is considered a "special kind of symbol formation [as] an extension of collective unconscious processes, the dynamics of which are also basic to folklore, fantasies, mythology, dreams, art, and the mystery religions of antiquity." "Physio-Psycho-Alchemy" is presented as "a process wherein one releases one's mind to one's cellular consciousness, so that the mind may know it and co-operate in its evolution." The dissertation includes Ortiz's principle theoretical sources, his intent for such an art, and descriptions of the actions which he created to augment such psychic and psychological alchemical transformations.

"Introduction," to *Marcos Dimas: The Voyager*, November 6, 1981–February 5, 1982, El Museo del Barrio. Introducing the artist's work, Ortiz first described his artistic perspective: "I perceive art in all our cultural behavior in the symbolic consecrations of our everyday activities, what we call reality, and in the consecrations of our fantasies and dreams."

"The Computer and Art," September 1982. Unpublished essay, KS. Ortiz identified the computer as an "alchemical means to art" interfacing with organic and inorganic phenomena, i.e., brain waves and the central nervous system. Because of his "techno-phobia," Ortiz wrote, he had until the 1980s neglected the computer in his "commitment to bring all things to art and art to all things."

"Computer-Laser-Video," *Digital Media & the Arts*. Maastricht, The Netherlands: Stichting Moora Studio, State University of Limburg, 1985. Discussion of Ortiz's video-laser-discs.

"Nihilism, Annihilation and Art: The Nihilist Aesthetic," 1985-87. Unpublished essay, KS. The earliest version of this essay was first given at the 73rd College Art Association, February 14, 1985, for a panel organized by Kristine Stiles entitled "Nihilism in Post-1945 Art." In this important retrospective account of his intentions, Ortiz described several of his early destruction actions, his goal to create Destruction Art, and his theoretical position at mid-life. He identified nihilism as a phenom-

ena, a "rite of passage" in the individual's choice to affirm or deny life for a "higher or lower purpose." Distinguishing between passive and active nihilism, he explained his intent to move art from "What Kierkegaard called sickness unto death, to wellness unto life."

"Physio-Psycho-Alchemy." *Arte Sella*. Trento, Italy: Sella di Borgo Valsugana, 1986. Brief statements on "Physio-Psycho-Alchemy."

"Art and the Invisible-Reality: A Manifesto," written in collaboration with Peter F. Strauss, June 1987, in preparation for "PSI-ART: An International Symposium on Art and PSI" organized by Ortiz and Strauss to take place in Munich, June 1988, KS. The authors describe the "invisible-reality" as a "dimension beyond all our subjectivity ... the complex web of resonating energy of matter and its objects." They call upon artists to "attune themselves to and make visible as the content of their art that spiritual, atomic, and subatomic resonating reality ... by extra-sensory perception, by such spiritual technologies as the divining rod, numerology, astrology, resonating shapes, the crystal ball, the tarot, the paranormal voice recorder, the pendulum, the I-Ching, the Kiralean camera, and Cleve Backster's bio-feedback plant technologies."

## Books Including the Artist

Al Hansen, *Happenings: A Primer of Time & Space Art*. New York: Something Else Press, 1965. Includes citations of Ortiz's work in New York.

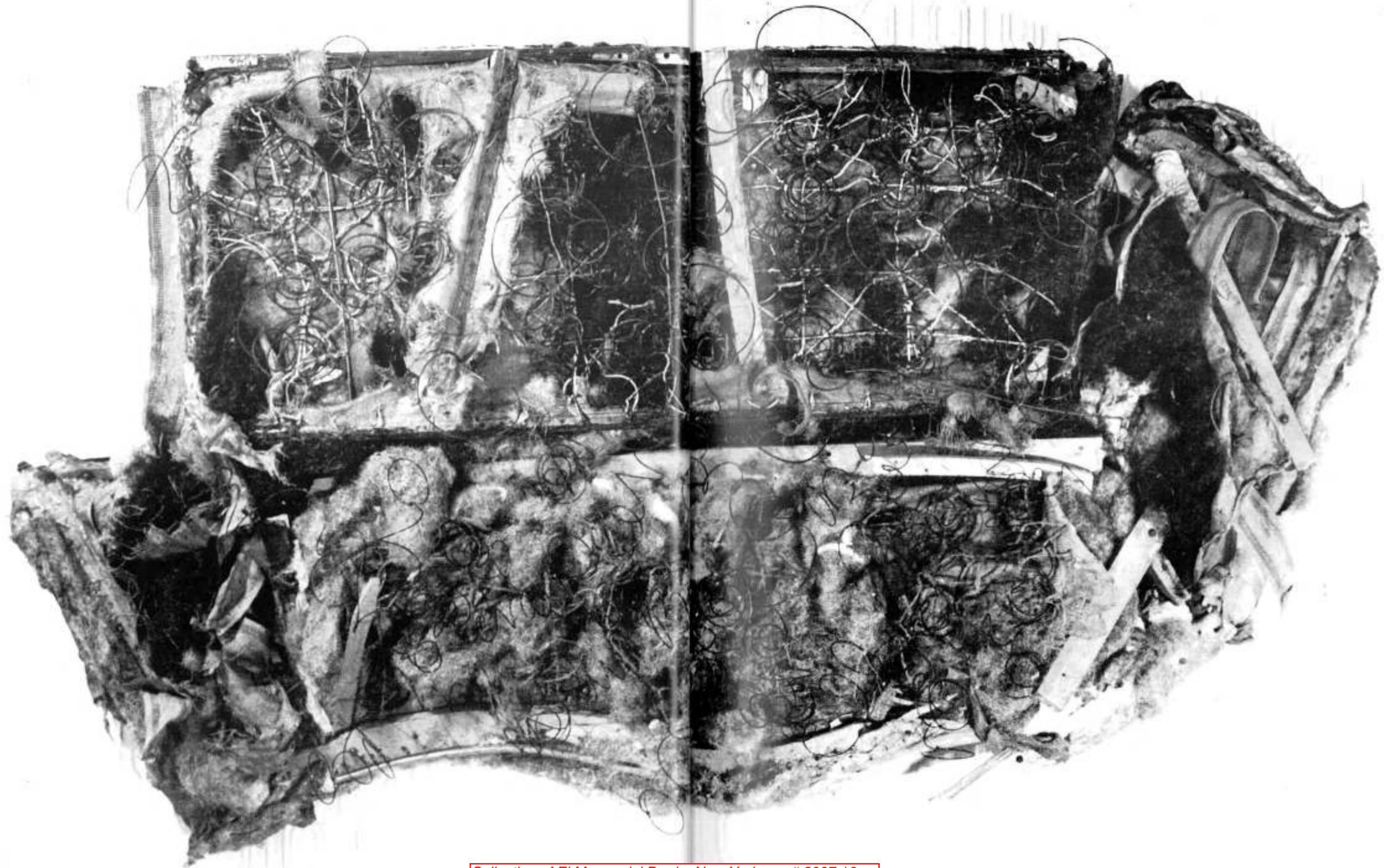
*Happenings and Fluxus*. Edited by Hanns Sohm. Cologne: Kunstverein, 1970. Includes citations of Ortiz's participation in DIAS.

Arthur Janov, *The Primal Scream: Primal Therapy, the Cure for Neurosis*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970. Psychologist and psychiatric social worker Arthur Janov credits a story told to him by a patient under his care of Ortiz's DIAS *Self-Destruction* action at the Mercury Theatre, September 22, 1966, as the catalyst for his formulation of "primal scream" psychotherapy, a technique in which Janov encouraged his patients to experience a moment of release by expelling a blood-chilling scream. Janov argued that a regressive reexperience of core moments in infancy and childhood such as Ortiz had performed in his destruction action might lead the patient to a psychological catharsis.

Adrian Henri, *Environments and Happenings*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1974. Color photograph of Ortiz's *Choir Destruction*, 1965, misdated 1966.

*GAAG: The Guerrilla Art Action Group, 1969-1976, A Selection*. New York: Printed Matter, Inc., 1978. A chronology of the development and actions of the Guerrilla Art Action Group, the book includes manifestos signed by Ortiz, Jon Hendricks, and Jean Toche before Hendricks and Toche founded GAAG. Although Ortiz never participated in GAAG, both artists had been influenced by his theory and practice.

Jacinto Quirarte, *Mexican American Artists*. Austin



Collection of El Museo del Barrio, New York: acc# 2007.16

& London: University of Texas Press, 1976.

*Informal VI*. Edited by Hank Bull & Veruschka Body. Cologne: A Western Front Video Production, 1987.

### Forthcoming Books On or Including the Artist

*Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*. Edited by Peter Selz and Kristine Stiles. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, third volume in a series beginning with Herschel B. Chipp, Peter Selz, and Joshua C. Taylor's *Theories of Modern Art* (1968) and Joshua C. Taylor's *Theories of Nineteenth Century Art* (1988). Compilation of international theories and writings, since 1945, by artists and critics, including writings by Ortiz.

Kristine Stiles, *Rafael Montañez Ortiz: The Art of Physio-Psycho-Alchemy*. Monograph on the artist.

Kristine Stiles, *DIAS: The History of Destruction in Art*. A history of the visual artists, poets, musicians, and psychologists who worked with destruction as a creative means in art and a reconstruction of the principle exhibitions devoted to destruction in art: *Arte Destructivo*, Buenos Aires, 1961; *The Destruction in Art Symposium* (DIAS), London, 1966; *12 Evenings of Manipulations*, New York, 1967; *DIAS: U.S.A.*, New York, 1968; *Destruction Art*, Finch College Museum, New York, 1968.

### Forthcoming Writings On or Including the Artist

Richard Huelsenbeck, "Ralph Ortiz," c. 1966. Unpublished, one-page typewritten statement by the psychiatrist and former Berlin Dadaist on Ortiz, KS. "Ortiz ... is fascinated by things which are not or are not yet. Now, to do things that are not yet does not mean that you stop half-ways ... To destroy things means to create them anew in the sense of space ... a new concept of time and space ... Ralph Ortiz is an existential sculptor and I think one of the most important ones because he is committed to some truth about ourselves in our time."

\_\_\_\_\_, "Interview with Ortiz," c. mid-1970s. Unpublished, undated interview, KS. Discussion of the evolution of Ortiz's destruction concepts and the nature of violence in art and life.

Kristine Stiles, "Interview with Rafael Ortiz," February 27 and May 4, 1982, Piscataway, New Jersey. Unpublished interview, KS. An extensive interview covering Ortiz's biographical and artistic development as well as his participation in *DIAS*, London, *DIAS: U.S.A.*, *12 Evenings of Manipulations*, and other destruction actions throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, as well as Ortiz's philosophical and aesthetic views.

Kristine Stiles, "The Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS): The Radical Cultural Project of Event-Structured Art," University of California, Berkeley, May

1987. An historical reconstruction and analysis of the art historical and social significance and implications of DIAS and the work of the principle participating artists, among them Rafael Ortiz, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Hermann Nitsch, Günter Brus, Otto Mühl, Peter Weibel, Kurt Kren, John Latham, Robin Page, Wolf Vostell, Ivor Davies, John Sharkey, Henri Chopin, and Yoko Ono. The text also includes the first biography, aesthetic philosophy, and theory of Gustav Metzger, founder of DIAS, and the concept of "Auto-Destructive Art" (1959).

### Exhibition Pamphlets and Catalogues Including the Artist

*Young America 1965: Thirty Artists Under Thirty-Five*. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1965. Cites work by Ortiz in the Whitney collection.

*The Object Transformed*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966. Includes an illustration of *Archaeological Find* no. 3, 1961, in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art.

Gustav Metzger, *DIAS Preliminary Report*. London: DIAS, February 1967, reprinted in *Fluxus and Happenings* (Cologne: Kunstverein, 1970). A chronological listing of DIAS participants' actions and papers.

*12 Evenings of Manipulations*. New York: A Judson Publication, 1967. Envelope designed by Ortiz containing manifestos and scores from Ortiz, Bici Hendricks, Jean Toche, Allan Kaprow, Al Hansen, Geoffrey Hendricks, Malcolm Goldstein, Steve Rose, Carolee Schneemann, Lil Picard, Jud Yalkut, Ken Jacobs, and Charlotte Moorman.

*The 1960s*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967. Includes a citation of Ortiz's *Archaeological Find* no. 3, 1961.

*Destruction Art: Destroy to Create*. Finch College Museum of Art, New York, May 10-June 20, 1968. Catalogue features brief biography of Ortiz, illustration of *Archaeological Find* no. 9, 1964, and a quote: "Our culture and its rituals must evolve to absorb urges which not only interfere with ours and civilization's evolution but nakedly threaten survival."

*Human Concern/Personal Torment: The Grotesque in American Art*. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1969. Includes citation of Ortiz's *Archaeological Find* in the collection of the Whitney.

*Eastern States Lecture Service, Inc.*, c. 1969-70. A pamphlet featuring brief biographical sketches and photographs of individuals who the lecture service represented. Included with Ortiz were Henry Etzkowitz (sociologist and author of *Ghetto Crisis*), Jon Murdy (United Methodist minister and instructor in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at the New School for Social Research), and David Watmough (Canadian poet, critic, and playwright).

*The 5th National Latino Film and Video Festival*. New York: El Museo del Barrio, 1975. Includes citations

of Ortiz's video work.

*Digital Media & the Arts*. Maastricht, The Netherlands: Stichting Moora Studio, State University at Limburg, 1985. Includes Ortiz's text "Computer-Laser-Video" describing his interactive computer programmed manipulation of one or more laser-video film sequences.

*Digitale Beelden*. Maastricht, The Netherlands: Bonnetanten Museum, 1986. Includes citation of Ortiz's video-laser works.

*Arte Sella*. Sella di Borgo Valsugana, Trento, Italy, 1986. Includes quotes from Ortiz's theory of "Physio-Psycho-Alchemy."

*Latin American Presence in the United States: 1920-1970*. New York: Bronx Museum, 1988. Includes discussion of Ortiz's actions as well as disassemblage works: the *Archaeological Finds*.

### Periodicals Including the Artist

Valerie Petersen, "New York Exhibitions: In the Galleries," *Art News* 62 (Summer 1963). Review of contemporary sculptors at the Riverside Museum including Ortiz's *Archaeological Finds*.

Donald Judd, "Reviews," *Arts Magazine* 37 (September 1963). Review of exhibition at the Riverside Museum including a description of Ortiz's *Archaeological Finds* as "unusual, strong, direct, and powerful."

Arthur Moysc, "Manifesto of the Dead," *Freedom* (London), September 17, 1966. A highly critical review of DIAS including an account of Ortiz's "piano-smashing act" by the editor of *Freedom* who explained that those who are allowed to advance their political, social, or aesthetic theories do so "only to the limitations that the tolerance of their particular society will allow them."

\_\_\_\_\_, "Museums," *Time*, 1965. Citation of Ortiz's *Archaeological Find* no. 9 in the collection of the Whitney.

\_\_\_\_\_, "DIAS," *Art and Artists* 1 (October 1966). Includes photographs with captions taken during DIAS of Ortiz and others.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Great Britain: 'Beautiful, Jean-Jacques,'" *Time*, September 23, 1966. A sensationalizing review of DIAS in which the author incorrectly cites the Spanish artist Juan Hidalgo (of the ZAJ Group) as specializing in "cutting the heads off chickens and flinging them at the audience."

Roger Barnard, "DIAS: Playing with Fire," *Peace News* (London), October 7, 1966. Critical of both the philosophy and actions represented at the Destruction in Art Symposium, writing in the tradition of liberal humanism, the editor of *Peace News* hypothesized that destruction in art might produce violent and destructive results as well as actually undermine its own philosophical aims by encouraging unconscious or latent tendencies toward such behavior.

Mario Amaya, "Destruction in Art," *London Life*, October 8, 1966. Review of DIAS with brief commentary

on Ortiz's work.

J.-J. Leveque, "Créer à coups de fusil," *Du* (October 11, 1966). The author described Destruction Art as a new movement with antecedents in the art of Salvador Dali and the Surrealists' explorations of chance. Reviewing DIAS, Leveque cited the Nouveaux Réalistes, Jean Tinguely, Niki de Saint Phalle, and Jacques de la Villégle, as well as Gustav Metzger, Wolf Vostell, Marla Minujin, John Latham, Cesar, and Ortiz as examples of artists working in this mode. Leveque included quotes from Ortiz's *Second Manifesto* delivered at DIAS.

Jasia Reichart, "Destruction in Art," *Architectural Review* 36 (December 1966). Review of DIAS in which the author defended Ortiz's DIAS actions and explained that his intentions were misrepresented by the press. Ortiz sought a delicate balance between art, destruction, and vandalism, she wrote, and pointed out that his thesis, while extreme, may have psychological and sociological importance.

Brenda Jordan, "DIAS," *Resurgence* (London) 1 (November-December 1966). Review of DIAS including a detailed description of Ortiz's *Self-Destruction*, Mercury Theatre, September 22, 1966, and long excerpts from his *Second Manifesto* presented at DIAS. The author cautioned that the public must be educated to understand the context and import of Destruction Art.

Barry Farrell, "The Other Culture," *Life* 62 (February 17, 1967). An article devoted to identifying the "underground," the "network," or the "movement," all terms used to describe the international "vast mosaic" connecting experimental artists who formed the "Other Culture" on the fringe in New York, London, Tokyo, and Paris who were best exemplified by those who participated in DIAS. Among them the author included: Jean-Jacques Lebel, French creator of the Festivals of Free Expression in Paris, British poet and author Alexander Trocchi, Ivor Davies, Welsh artist using explosives in Destruction Actions, Japanese Happening artist Kato of the Zero Dimension Group, William Burroughs, author of cult novels like *Naked Lunch*, American poets Allen Ginsberg and Ed Sanders, and Ortiz, featured in an illustration of his DIAS *Piano Destruction*.

Lil Picard, "No Blood in the Finch Museum," *New York*, May 6, 1968. Essay by one of the principle artists and critics of Destruction Art in New York, on various Destruction Art exhibitions including the Finch College Museum *Destruction Art*, *12 Evenings of Manipulations* at the Judson Memorial Church, and Hermann Nitsch's Orgies Mysteries Theatre first performed in the United States (with the help of Ortiz, Al Hansen, Jon Hendricks, and others) at the New York Filmmakers Cinematheque. The article includes substantial quotes from Ortiz, and Picard cited Bruno Bettelheim, C. G. Jung, Sigmund Freud, and Charles Frazer as his sources.

John Lalr, "Critique: Memo for an Audience Uprising," Special issue on "America: War & Sex Etc." *Arts Magazine* 41 (Summer 1967). The article features an illustration of Ortiz's *The Life and Death of White Henny*,

a chicken destruction realization performed at Ecco Homo Gallery. Labr called for a new theater audience able to respond, criticize, and take responsibility for rejecting and confronting artistic assault, by such artists as Ortiz, rather than an audience which passively accepted events with awe and appreciation.

Lil Picard, "Kill For Peace," *Arts Magazine* 41 (March 1967). A review of Ortiz's *The Life and Death of White Henry*, which Picard called a "Happening of Cruelty," at the Ecco Homo Gallery. Picard quoted Ortiz: "The artist must give warning, his struggle must make a noise, it must be a signal ... When I destroy in art, I release myself and mankind from the guilt and dilemma that comes from the destruction in everyday life, whether it be a war or an ulcer."

John Nathan, "Notes from the Underground," *Evergreen* 11 (April 1967). Nathan described Ortiz's DIAS *Self-Destruction* (September 22, 1966) and quoted Ortiz extensively on the nature, social purpose, and import of destruction utilized in and confined to art.

Kurt von Meier, "Violence, Art & The American Way!" *ArtsCanada* 116/117 (April 1968). Von Meier described several rituals by Ortiz and situated them within the context of American cultural violence, citing television as the source for conveying violence in everything from football ("the national folk religion") to demolition derbys and mass murderers.

John Gruen, "Vogue's Spotlight: The Underground," *Vogue*, April 15, 1968. Review of Ortiz's "Destruction Room" during *12 Evenings of Manipulations*, Judson Church, October 1967, in which the author describes Ortiz as the leader of The Destructionists and quotes him: "Destruction theater is the symbolic realization of those subtle and extreme destructions which play such a dominant role in our everyday lives, from our headaches and aches to our murders and suicides ..."

Lil Picard, "DIAS U.S.A. 68," *Arts Magazine* 42 (April 1968). Picard validated Destruction Art as a late twentieth-century cultural response to contemporary social events: the war in Vietnam, racial riots, youth rebellion, and the prevailing threat of the Atomic Bomb.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Time*, May 24, 1968. Review of *Destruction Art* at Finch College Museum of Art as "provocative." The author compared artists using destruction with Dadaists but called Ortiz's theoretical underpinnings psychopathological "pop-psych" and explained that Freud's concepts of Eros and Thanatos were more socially productive.

David L. Shirey, "The Destroyers," *Newsweek*, May 27, 1968. Review of the Finch College Museum *Destruction Art* exhibition featuring a photograph of Ortiz, Jon Hendricks, and Jean Toche in a destruction action and quoting Ortiz's aesthetic theoretical position.

Charlotte Willard, "Violence and Art," *Art in America* 57 (January-February 1969). Willard noted that violence in culture (movies, comics, television, and theater), society (pollution, racial strife, suicide, assassination, and war), and nature (storms, floods, volcanoes) are some of

the events leading to a pervasive social impotence, dehumanization, and repression. Citing Kierkegaard, Freud, Robert Ardrey (*The Territorial Imperative*), Konrad Lorenz (*On Aggression*), Desmond Morris (*The Naked Ape*), among others, and naming many artists who included violent and destructive aspects in their work, she described Ortiz as a "leading figure" in the destruction movement and noted that his *The Life and Death of Henry Penny* (1967) aesthetically described and addressed psychological conflicts.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Explode this Bag," *Bijutsu Teicho* (Tokyo) 21 (December 1969). An important issue of the monthly Japanese art periodical devoted to Destruction Art including photographs of Ortiz's *The Life and Death of White Henry*, 1967, and his *Ace Gallery Destruction Ritual*, 1969. One of the white bags which Ortiz printed for DIAS with images from the media was bound into every issue of the magazine for the reader to pull out and explode. The issue included illustrations of other important action artists such as Hermann Nitsch, Otto Mühl, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Wolf Vostell, Lil Picard, Milan Knizak, and artists such as Andy Warhol, Stan Brakhage, and others.

Janet L. Harris, "Letters," *Psychology Today* 5 (May 1972). Letter written by the assistant director of the New York State Commission on Cultural Resources describing Ortiz as one "among a unique class of fine artists" exploring theater ritual and an artist who had developed "destruction-regression art actions ... to afford the individual an opportunity to act out, work through, and restructure his personality, releasing his sensitive being."

Peter Frank, "De elektronische media bieden de beeldende kunst," *Observant* 7 (November 1985). Review of video exhibition including mention of Ortiz's video-laser works.

Ugo Bossi, "Kunst: Museums Wald Lasst Die Kunst ins Freie," *Cosmopolitan* (Cologne) 12 (1986). Review of recent video art including mention of Ortiz's video-laser work.

Kristine Stiles, "Synopsis of The Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) and Its Theoretical Significance," *The Art* 1 (Spring 1987). Historical overview of DIAS including an account of several Destruction Rituals Ortiz realized at DIAS.

Friedemann Malsch, "Video Festival," *Artscribe International* (March/April 1987). Mention of Ortiz's video-laser work.

#### Newspaper Articles Including the Artist

\_\_\_\_\_, "Off the Beaten Track," *New York Herald Tribune*, April 13, 1963. Description of Ortiz's destroyed furniture at the Riverside Museum as "ravaged sofas."

John Gruen, "A Wealth of Odd Shapes," *New York Herald Tribune*, April 14, 1963. Comparison of Ortiz's *Archaeological Finds* to the "mad acrobatics of the Dadaists."



Stuart Preston, "Art: Acquisitions of Modern Museum," *New York Times*, February 17, 1965. Description of Ortiz's *Archaeological Find* as possessing a "wonderfully repellent force."

Stuart Preston, "The Novel and the New," *New York Times*, February 21, 1965. Review of recent acquisitions at the Museum of Modern Art describing Ortiz's *Archaeological Find* as a "disgust object."

\_\_\_\_\_, "Art in Candy," *Provincetown* (Provincetown, Rhode Island), August 19, 1965. Review of Ortiz's candy assemblages contrasting their benign qualities with his destructivist works.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Title of Piece," *Provincetown* (Provincetown, Rhode Island), August 26, 1965. Illustration of Ortiz's Barrett's Candy Store assemblages using candy as an organic, self-destructing object.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Londoner's Diary: For Art's Sake, A Chair is Smashed," *Evening Standard* (London), August 31, 1966. Review of the first DIAS press conference, quoting Ortiz and describing his *Chair Destruction* ritual.

John London, "The Artist—1966," *Evening News* (London), August 31, 1966. Review and illustration of Ortiz's *Chair Destruction* at the opening DIAS press conference, August 31, 1966.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Mr. Ortiz, The Armchair Critic," *Daily Mirror*, September 1, 1966. Review and photograph of Ortiz's *Chair Destruction*.

Ann Shearer, "Art Deformed," *The Guardian* (London), September 1, 1966. Review of DIAS opening press conference, including a description of Ortiz's *Chair Destruction* and quotes from Ortiz.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Chicken-Killer Says Ban Won't Deter

Him," *New York Times International Edition*, September 2, 1966. Brief report that DIAS would not sponsor the killing of animals and that Ortiz would realize his *Chicken Destruction Realization* outside the context of DIAS.

Edward Lucie-Smith, "Things Seen: Perplexities of an Art Critic," *The Times* (London), September 13, 1966. Reviewing DIAS, Lucie-Smith explored the problematic task of criticizing new and difficult art. He concluded that the art critic must remain "sympathetic, tentative, and very reluctant" to arrive at negative conclusions about unfamiliar art.

Peter Schjeldahl, "Another Season," *Village Voice*, September 15, 1966. Review of DIAS citing various participants, among them Ortiz, and criticizing artists practicing Destruction Art for being "naive moralists who value good intentions."

\_\_\_\_\_, "Scenes," *Village Voice*, October 27, 1966. Review of Ortiz's *Self-Destruction* realization at DIAS.

Jay Landesman, "Creating Destruction as an Art Form," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 6, 1966. Review of DIAS describing Ortiz's *Chair Destruction* and other actions at DIAS.

Jay Landesman, "Two Views of DIAS," *International Times* (London), October 14-27, 1966. Review of DIAS with descriptions of several Ortiz rituals.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Twecety-Pie Award," *Week End Telegram* (London), December 16, 1966. Notice announcing that Ralph Ortiz had received the "Twecety-Pie Award" from the magazine for causing the best "aesthetic conflicts of 1966."

\_\_\_\_\_, "Scenes," *Village Voice*, January 26, 1967. A detailed description and sarcastic review of



Ortiz's *The Life and Death of White Henny*, at Ecce Homo Gallery at 727 Sixth Avenue.

John Crosby, "Take me to your Old Master," *Observer Review* (London), March 5, 1967. The author discussed the market value of art masterpieces, quoting sales prices at Sotheby's of such works as Gainsborough's *The Blue Boy*. Describing Ortiz's smashed piano and ripped mattress (then in the possession of Jay Landesman), Crosby hypothesized that in fifty years it might bring £100,000 at Sotheby's.

Jud Yalkut, "Conversations with Ralph Ortiz," *Westside News*, September 28, 1967. Essay on Ortiz with long quotes by the artist in which Ortiz cited Silvano Arieti, director of the William Allison White Institute of Psychotherapy and researcher in concepts of schizophrenia, as a primary source for his exploration into the visceral, primitive, paleological systems associated with "early brain" development and their relationship to "late brain" development in logical, Aristotelian systems as a means to address the complex phenomena of individual destructive and creative impulses.

Howard Smith, "Scenes," *Village Voice*, October 5, 1967. Announcement of *12 Evenings of Manipulations* including Ortiz's public invitation to destroy psychologically provocative material, "a picture of your mother-in-law."

Leticia Kent, "Almost Freaking Out on the Staten Is. Ferry," *Village Voice*, October 5, 1967. Review of the Fifth Annual New York Avant Garde Festival, a twenty-four-hour Happening organized by Charlotte Moorman on the Staten Island Ferry including a description of Ortiz's work.

Maurice Blanc, "Local Art ... Amazements," *The Villager* (New York), October 12, 1967. Review of *12 Evenings of Manipulations* in which the author described Ortiz's *Destruction Room* as "A landscape beyond Artaud's theories into the crazed chambers of Artaud's, Sade's, Nero's Mind." The author concluded: "*Destruction Room* is one step away from a return to human sacrifice. That [Ortiz's] piece made vivid to me the agony of what napalm death is like does not mean that I condone permissive art."

\_\_\_\_\_, "Piano smashing will highlight today's 'concert,'" *Fordham Ram* (New York), November 10, 1967. Brief announcement of Ortiz's "Destructive Realization," citing Ortiz, "When I destroy in art, I release myself."

Ralph Marcello, "Ortiz swings at piano smash-in," *Fordham Ram* (New York), November 14, 1967. Review and illustration of Ortiz's destruction ritual at Fordham filmed by ABC television.

Jürgen Claus, "Der Apparat und seine Opposition," *Feuilleton* (Frankfurt), December 15, 1967. Review of Destruction Art mentioning Ortiz as a central figure in the movement.

Lil Picard, "Art," *East Village Other* 3 (January 5, 1968). Review of Ortiz's exhibition of several *Archaeological Finds* and his Destruction Realization Concert at Fordham University. Picard described Ortiz as the most "attacked, hated, and discussed Avant-gardist in New York," who is an "educator and teacher" and an "extremely aware, daring, and powerful" artist provoking thinking and inquiry into the use of art as a field to transform aggression.

\_\_\_\_\_ "The Fun Side of Fun City," *Village Voice*, March 7, 1968. Article on Hermann Nitsche's Orgies Mysteries Theatre at the New York Filmmakers Cinematheque including a photograph of Ortiz in Nitsche's action.

Joseph Feurey and Jay Levin, "Hippies Put on a Museum Show," *New York Post*, March 26, 1968. A review of a protest by Ortiz and Jon Hendricks against the Museum of Modern Art on the occasion of the opening of an exhibition on Marcel Duchamp which they felt sanitized Duchamp's work.

Jill Johnson, "Dance Journal: Over His Dead Body," *Village Voice*, March 28, 1968. A considered reflection on events at the Judson Church during the DIAS: Preview when Charlotte Moorman smashed Saul Gottlieb over the head with her violin after he interfered with her art and "right" to smash her violin during a destruction action. The incident had extensive ramifications, Johnson wrote, and Destruction Art provided a forum for examining broad political and interpersonal questions.

Jean-Jacques Lebel, "An Artist with Balls is Worth Two in the Gallery," *East Village Other* 3 (March 22-28, 1968). Lebel, an early French Happening artist, poet, painter, and political activist who participated in DIAS, wrote an "open letter" to the organizers of the Destruction in Art Symposium in New York (Ortiz and Jon Hendricks) and the participants in the then forthcoming Finch College Museum exhibition on Destructive Art. Lebel criticized the artists for allowing their authentic art-energy to be absorbed by what he described as the "culture and entertainment industry" which was none other than the same power structure "making napalm" and other "cultural products." Lebel advocated "going underground," cutting all ties with official representatives of "culture" (galleries, alternative and traditional museums), and setting off "5 pounds of TNT" in the Finch College Museum. His letter closed with "warm love" to Jud Yalkut, Ralph Ortiz, Charlotte Moorman, Al Hansen, and the other DIAS participants, and explained: ART IS SHIT.

Lil Picard, "An Artist With Balls is Worth Two in the Gallery/Round Two," *East Village Other* 3 (March 29-April 4, 1968). Writing in defense of Destruction Art, Picard rebutted Jean-Jacques Lebel's letter (see above) and included statements written by Charlotte Moorman, Jon Hendricks, and Ortiz. In response to Lebel's suggestion to blow up the Finch College Museum, Ortiz urged the critical importance for artists to distinguish between and separate violent actions undertaken symbolically within the strict confines of aesthetic boundaries and violent actions undertaken in life, which he abhorred.

Gregory Battcock, "Art: Charlotte Moorman Does Not Advocate Destroying All Violins," *New York Free Press*, April 4, 1968. Invoking Ad Reinhardt's dictum that "Art is Art," Battcock argued that although Destruction Art was grounded in Dada and Surrealism, art is not destruction but a confusion of art with therapy and finally that: "Destruction is Destruction."

Saul Gottlieb, "Yesterday Whitehall Tomorrow the Finch Museum," *East Village Other*, April 5-11, 1968. A passionate defense of Jean-Jacques Lebel by Gottlieb who authenticated Lebel's position as a socially radical artist against Lil Picard's insinuations that Lebel was a revolutionary dilettante. Gottlieb criticized Ortiz for sawing off branches of a tree in the Judson Church courtyard and challenged those involved in Destruction Art to a debate on the issues raised by their work. He also threatened violence against anyone who attempted to blow up Lebel's letter to the *East Village Other* (March 22-28, 1968).

Lil Picard, "From Lil with Love," *East Village Other*, April 12-18, 1968. The second in a theoretical debate between Picard, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Saul Gottlieb, Charlotte Moorman, Jon Hendricks, and Ortiz on the nature and purpose of Destruction Art. Picard situated her personal experience of destruction in the context of both World War I and II and defended Ortiz as an artist of the caliber of Wolf Vostell, creator of *dé-collage* Happenings in Germany, and Hermann Nitsch, Günter Brus, and Otto Mühl, founders of *Wiener Aktionismus* in Vienna.

Lil Picard, "Schreckenskabinett der Kunst," *Die Welt* 91 (April 1968). Situating Destruction Art in the tradition of Dada and Surrealism, Picard reviewed exhibitions on Destruction Art at the Judson Memorial Church and the New York Filmmakers Cinematheque including a citation of Ortiz's Destruction Realizations.

Lil Picard, "Cutting at Finch College Museums," *East Village Other* 3 (May 17, 1968). Reviewing *Destruction Art* at Finch College Museum, Picard described the exhibition as an educational and important experience for those "who still exist at the end of this Century of terror and destruction."

Hilton Kramer, "Sculpture: Talent Above the Fashions," *New York Times*, May 18, 1968. In reviewing *Destruction Art* at Finch College Museum, Kramer found the exhibition "ineffably pompier" (pretentious) and "a group show of mixed talents."

Charlotte Willard, "The Destructive Impulse," *New York Post*, May 18, 1968. A review of *Destruction Art* at Finch College Museum in which the author described Ortiz as the "chief guru of the destructive art movement" and referred to Konrad Lorenz's book *On Aggression* as a primary source for art which seems to allay aggression with cathartic means.

Barbara Gold, "Destruction Art at Finch," *The Sun* (Baltimore), May 19, 1968. Review of *Destruction Art* at Finch College Museum.

John Perreault, "Gutsy," *Village Voice*, May 23, 1968: 15. A review of *Destruction Art* at Finch College Museum and destruction events at the Judson Memorial Church Gallery. Perreault argued that while these exhibitions were "worth seeing" and "destruction in art is to be preferred to destruction in real life," events like those of Ortiz and Hermann Nitsche "border on cultism and pseudo-religion and pseudo-psychiatry" and raise further questions related to brutality, insensitivity, and the nature



and value of purgative events.

Christopher Andrea, "'Destruction Art': sometimes gentle," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 1, 1968. Review of *Destruction Art* at Finch College Museum citing Ortiz's theory that the use of destruction in art is an intent to redirect aggressive instincts.

Candace Burke Block, "Destructionist Art, Biblically Featured at the Museum," *Finch News*, June 3, 1968. Review of *Destruction Art* at Finch College Museum with a quote by Ortiz: "Western art wants to make everyone sane. With Destructionist Art everyone can, as they should, find and understand their own insanity. One must educate oneself to one's madness ..."

Joan Lowndes, "Art: Destruction theatre—a shock spectacle with moral motive," *The Province* (Vancouver, B.C.), August 28, 1968. A sympathetic review of Ortiz's ritual at the Douglas Gallery in Vancouver featuring several passages from Ortiz's "Destruction Theater" Manifesto.

\_\_\_\_\_, "For an encore, shoot the audience ..." *The Province* (Vancouver, B.C.), August 29, 1968. Satirical review of Ortiz's *Piano Destruction Concert* in Vancouver.

Ed Ginher cartoon in the *New Yorker*, November 16, 1968, featuring a drawing of a stage performance of a man beating a piano with a baseball before a well-heeled audience. One member of the audience turns to his partner and complains: "I don't like this tampering with the score. He should be using an axe."

Jill Johnson, "Dance Journal: Tell Me the Weather," *Village Voice*, January 2, 1969. Johnson described Ortiz's Vancouver Destruction Ritual and labeled Ortiz a "socially concerned artist."

Gene Youngblood, "Meat Science Essay," *Los Angeles Free Press*, January 31, 1969. Sympathetic review and extensive description of Ortiz's *Piano Destruction Concert* and *Chicken Destruction Realization* at the Ace Gallery, Beverly Hills, including quotes from Ortiz and two illustrations.

Joseph Modzelewski, "Wards Becomes the Isle of Kook," *Daily News* (New York), September 29, 1969. Brief review of the *Avant-Garde Festival* of New York organized by Charlotte Moorman including mention of Ortiz.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Piano facing doom in Cornell Concert?" *Times-Republican* (Marshalltown, Iowa), October 15, 1969. Review of the Cornell College Art Department *Destruction Concert* by Ortiz.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Destruction Co.," *Herald* (Clinton, Iowa), October 17, 1969. Review of Ortiz's Cornell College Art Department *Destruction Concert*.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Better Hide the Chickens," *Morning Register* (Des Moines, Iowa), October 19, 1969. Review of Ortiz's *Destruction Concert* at Cornell College with quotes from the artist.

William Simbro, "Crazy concert on Cornell campus," *Des Moines Sunday Register Picture*, November 9, 1969. A review, description, and four excellent illustrations of

Ortiz's *Destruction Concert* at Cornell College.

Martin Gottfried, "The Theater," *Women's Wear Daily*, January 21, 1970. Review of Ortiz's *Destruction Ritual* in Philadelphia at the American Educational Theater Association, January 17, in which the author described the event as "naive" and "essentially degenerate" and objected to the "ethical motivations" of "middle class, educated, young theater people" who sat down after the performance to "intelligently discuss a savagery committed by some nice middle class, educated young theater people."

\_\_\_\_\_, "At Ritual Theater: 'Slaughter' is Avoided," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 18, 1970. Review of the destruction action performed by Ortiz at Temple University Thimlinson Theater during the American Educational Theater Association regional meeting. Ortiz refused to grant an interview and was quoted as retorting, "Go interview Calley [William L. Calley, Jr., then awaiting court-martial for the alleged killing of civilians in Vietnam] if you want to learn about destruction."

\_\_\_\_\_, "Animal Stars Face Stage Slaughter," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 17, 1970. Review of Ortiz's "Theater of Destruction" at Temple University.

Henry R. Darling, "'Destruct Theater' Explodes into Mayhem on 13th St.," *Sunday Bulletin* (Philadelphia), January 18, 1970. The author sarcastically described the actions of participants in Ortiz's *Destruction Theater Ritual* as "temper tantrums" and summarily dismissed the symbolic associations with Vietnam as "obvious."

David Gelber, "Twilight of Demonstrations, Dawn of the General Strike," *Village Voice*, May 14, 1970. A review of the enormous Washington Protest of May 9 in which over a hundred thousand protestors gathered on the Washington Mall before the Lincoln Memorial to protest the war in Vietnam. The article features a photograph of a participant in Ortiz's *Guerrilla Destruction Ritual* who sits holding the bloodied head of a dead skinned lamb.

Antonio Gil de Lamadrid, "El Museo del Barrio Apuntala Cultura Boricua," *El Diario* (New York), July 28, 1970. Article introducing and discussing the foundation of El Museo del Barrio featuring quotes by Ortiz, then director of the museum.

Grace Glueck, "Barrio Museum: Hope Si, Home No," *New York Times*, July 30, 1970. Article citing El Museo del Barrio as New York's first museum of Puerto Rican culture. Glueck included several quotes by Ortiz and an illustration of him as the museum's first director: "I want El Museo del Barrio to be ... a working thing that will give folk culture as much value as fine culture ... What we want are the folk tales of the elders, the music played and the poetry read at festive occasions, the games, the food ... There's a tendency to overlook our powerful African and Indian roots."

\_\_\_\_\_, "Museum Exhibit on Puerto Rico," *New York Post*, February 24, 1971. Review of *Boricua—Aquí y Allí*, citing the exhibition organized and directed by Ortiz on Puerto Rican culture at the American Museum of Natural History as the first exhibition of Puerto Rican art

in a major American museum. The show included a twenty-minute color slide show of some 486 slides, 4,000 photographs, live tapes, recordings, and a script written by Ortiz.

Penelope McMullan, "Pride of an exhibit: Puerto Rican Life," *Newsday* (Garden City, New York), March 2, 1971. Review of *Boricua—Aquí y Allí* with a quote from Ortiz who explained his intent to prevent the oppressed Puerto Rican from escaping into the melting-pot and to help the Puerto Rican "define himself."

Alfonso A. Narvaez, "Exhibit on Puerto Ricans Opens," *New York Times*, March 3, 1971. Review of *Boricua—Aquí y Allí*, citing Ortiz: "I wanted to point out the agony we are going through in New York."

\_\_\_\_\_, "Puerto Rican Exhibit Set in New York Museum," *Hudson Dispatch* (Union City, New Jersey), March 3, 1971. Review of *Boricua—Aquí y Allí*, including quotes by Ortiz.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Puerto Rican Exhibition," *Commercial and Financial Chronicle* (New York), March 4, 1971. Review of *Boricua—Aquí y Allí*, including quotes from Ortiz.

Grace Glueck, "Art Group Disrupts Museum Parley," *New York Times*, June 1970. Review of the protest Ortiz and others launched during the American Association of Museums meeting when they criticized such institutions for attending to private rather than public interests and called for museums to become more responsive to the public.



Grace Glueck, "In Puerto Rican Artists' Show, a Goul," *New York Times*, January 18, 1972. Review of an exhibition of nine Puerto Rican artists at the New York headquarters of the Associated Council of the Arts, including Ortiz, Jose Antonio Bechara, Gustavo Candefas, Felipe Dante, Benedict J. Fernandez, Angel Franco, Miguel Guzman, Martin Rubio, and Geno Rodriguez.

Meriemil Rodriguez, "Gallery to Show Works of Puerto Rican Artists," *Sunday News* (New York), January 9, 1972. Review of exhibition at the Associated Council of the Arts.

Luigi Serravalli, "Fluxus torna a Merano," *Cultura e Società*, August 26, 1986. Review of Ortiz's *Piano Destruction* commissioned by the Italian collector Francesco Conz.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Arte-natura," *Adige Terza*, September 17, 1986. Review of *Arte Sella*, including mention of Ortiz's work.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Il rapporto tra arte e natura con quadri e composizioni nei boschi e nei prati di Sella," *Cronache della Provincia* (Merano, Italy), September 30, 1986. Review of exhibition and actions at *Arte Sella*, including mention of Ortiz.

## Destructivism: A Manifesto by Rafael Montañez Ortiz, 1962

There are today throughout the world a handful of artists working in a way which is truly unique in art history. Theirs is an art which separates the makers from the unmakers, the assemblers from the disassemblers, the constructors from the destructors. These artists are destroyers, materialists, and sensualists dealing with process directly. These artists are destructivists and do not pretend to play at God's happy game of creation; on the contrary, theirs is a response to the pervading will to kill. It is not the trauma of birth which concerns the destructivist. He understands that there is no need for magic in living. It is one's sense of death which needs the life-giving nourishment of transcendental ritual.

We who use the process of destruction understand above all the desperate need to retain unconscious integrity. We point to ourselves and confess, shouting the revelation, that anger and anguish which hide behind the quiet face is in service of death, a death which is more than spiritual. The artist must give warning, his struggle must make a noise, it must be a signal. Our screams of anguish and anger will contort our faces and bodies, our shouts will be "to hell with death," our actions will make a noise that will shake the heavens and hell. Of this stuff our art will be, that which is made will be unmade, that which is assembled will be disassembled, that which is constructed will be destroyed. The artist will cease to be the lackey, his process will cease to be burdened by a morality which only has meaning in reality. The artist's sense of destruction will no longer be turned inward in fear. The art that utilizes the destructive processes will purge, for as it gives death, so it will give to life.

Transcendence is for the living, not for the dead. It is the symbolic sacrifice that releases one from the weight of guilt, fear, and anguish. It is the sacrificial action which releases and raises one to the heights. The sacrificial process in art is one in which a symbolic act is performed with symbolic objects for symbolic purposes, initiated by the need to maintain unconscious integrity.

The dynamics of our unconscious integrity is fantastic. It arranges content in terms of a thousand eyes for an eye, boils death and destruction for the trespasser, maybe not now, maybe not today, but some day, by God, we'll get even, even if it means headaches, allergies, ulcers, heart attacks, or a jump off a roof. Just you wait and see. Someday we'll all get even. "Every dog has his day," and when the real dog has his real day, what will he really do? Will he push a button and annihilate 200 million people, push an old lady down the stairs, join the Ku Klux Klan, expose his privates in public, or simply walk the dog to defecate on the neighbor's lawn? When the need for unconscious integrity is actually worked out in the actual world with actual people, actual things occur. There is actual conflict and actual destruction. The real moving car driven by the real driver who does not really see the real child who in turn does not really see the real car while crossing the real street, is really killed, really dead. The police cover him with a real white sheet and draw a white chalk line around him. I didn't do anything. I just watched. I didn't even get sick. I didn't even throw up. I just got really afraid. The car was big and made of steel, but I'll get even some day. There are other real possibilities, less drastic ones, possibilities which have a more essential displacement, a greater distance. The real car might have run over a real puppy or with still greater symbolic distance, a real cardboard box. The real child might have simply bumped into a parked car, bruising himself slightly, or crashed his toy car into one of his toy dolls.

Just as displacement and distance are an essential and necessary artistic means which enable the artist to submerge himself in the chaos of his destructive internal life and achieve an artistic experience, so too it is essential that the encounter between the artist and his material be close and direct. The artist must utilize processes which are inherent in the deep unconscious life, processes which will necessarily produce a regression into chaos and destruction.

A displacement and parallel process exists between man and the objects he makes. Man, like the objects he makes, is himself a result of transforming processes. It is therefore not difficult to comprehend how as a mattress or other man-made object is released from and transcends its logically determined form through destruction, an artist, led by associations and experiences resulting from his destruction of the man-made objects, is also released from and transcends his logical self.



## Computer-Laser-Video, by Rafael Montañez Ortiz, 1984

Through my computer programming, I interactively determine not only which laser-video disc frames occur and record on the videotape, but in what numbers, sequence, and speed they occur. It is a process in which I disassemble and reassemble any and all parts of a storyline, directly restructuring the time space and expectation in continuity of events of the film and video footage on the Laser-Disc. It is a structural reorganizing and/or disorganizing of the existing logic of visual and language cues.

In all this free fall of fractured time, space, sounds, and images of my work, special attention is paid to language and the emotional impact of its sound; words fractured into phonemes become, in a free association of phonemes, a Rorschach imaging of words, a Rorschach imaging of meaning. By releasing language and gesture from their Platonic and Aristotelian logic, I release language and gesture to its visceral, to its paleo-logic exaggerated meaning and meaninglessness.

In my video work, I seek to suspend time, to magnify beyond all proportion the fantasy, dream, or nightmare I glimpse in even the most realistic straightforward documentary footage, in even the most innocent storyline.

Technologically, the one to ten seconds of appropriated film segments that are the source of my works become editorially available after I transfer them to a Laser-Disc to which I create frame structure interactive access through a computer interface to Laser-Disc player. All sound is manipulated through wave form generators, while titles are voiced by a vocatrix synthesizer.

Each of the video works on my tape is created from *only one* carefully selected segment of appropriated footage. It is that single segment that is expanded by disassembling and reassembling the frame structure from its original seconds of an event, to however many minutes of that event are necessary to reveal its submerged secret, its concealed crime, as in *PUSHANN PUSHANN*, or sexual violence, as in *BEACH UMBRELLA*, or outrageous eroticism, as in *BACK BACK BACK BACK*, or alienation and anger, as in the work entitled *YOU BUST YOUR BUNNS*.

In only one of the segments of appropriated footage, a ten-second piece I disassembled and reassembled to a length of nine minutes entitled *WHAT IS THIS*, did I add a frame, an image of Clark Gable from another source, to contribute to the revealing of the danger of blossoming sexual curiosity submerged in the sequence.

*BRIDGE GAME* was an opportunity to surface the nightmare and terror of Armageddon we all struggle to contain.

Politically and aesthetically my concerns are not in any sense the realistic or the sociologically/politically obvious. This does not mean I am not aware of the reality of what I aesthetically do or that my work, however aesthetically symbolic, Futurist, Surreal, or Neo-Dada, is not political in its deeper psychological or existential implications. My video works speak of and magnify the more obscure, more psychological, surreal politics of our unconscious, of our Id.

## Rafael Montañez Ortiz

Born: January 30, 1934  
Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A

### Academic Degrees

- 1982 Ed.D. Doctorate—Columbia University Teachers College, New York
- 1975 Ed.M. Master's—Columbia University Teachers College, New York
- 1964 M.F.A.—Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, N.Y.
- 1964 B.S. Art Education—Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, N.Y.

### Museum Collections

- 1988 Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Computer-Laser-Video Dance Works
- 1987 Musée d'Art Moderne, Brussels, Computer-Laser-Video Dance Works 1-6
- 1986 Friedrichshof Museum, Zumdorf, Austria, Computer-Laser-Video
- 1985 Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, N.Y., Computer-Laser-Video
- El Museo del Barrio, New York, Computer-Laser-Video
- 1982 El Museo del Barrio, New York, Sculpture
- 1972 Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, N.Y., Sculpture
- 1968 Finch College Museum of Art, New York, Sculptures
- 1965 Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Va., Sculpture
- Menil Collection, Houston, Tex., Sculpture and Film
- 1964 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Sculpture
- 1963 Museum of Modern Art, New York, Sculpture

### Computer-Laser-Video Exhibitions

- 1987 Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne
- Montevideo, Holland Distribution contract for computer-laser-video, Amsterdam
- Videofestival Geneva
- Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster
- "Monitor '87" Festival, Frinland/S, Sweden
- Offensive Video, Dortmund, West Germany
- Kossuth Klub, Budapest
- Filmfest, Hong Kong
- Video-Biennale, Barcelona
- Experimental Workshop, Osnabrück, West Germany
- Volkshochschule, Wuppertal, West Germany
- Saw Gallery, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
- Filmfest, Moscow
- Tamatn Marzuki, Djakarta
- Filmwerkstaedt, Aarhus, Denmark
- Finnish Filmstitut, Helsinki-Turku
- Artspace, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada
- Westwerk, Hamburg
- P.R.I.M., Montreal
- Video Pool, Winnipeg
- Monitor North, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada
- EM media, Calgary
- Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn
- Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, B.C.
- LACE., Los Angeles
- Obscure, Quebec
- Galerie d'art de Matane, Matane, Quebec, Canada
- 911, Seattle, Wash.
- Open Space, Victoria, B.C.
- Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff, Alberta, Canada

- Berlin Film Festival
- A Space, Toronto
- The Kitchen, New York
- Experimental Film Festival, Osnabrück, West Germany
- Rheinisches Musikfest, Cologne
- No Budget Festival, Hamburg
- Stadtgarten, Cologne
- Vorgestellt auf der Documenta 8, Kassel, West Germany
- 1986 Montevideo Archives, Amsterdam
- Time Based Arts Archives, Amsterdam
- Electronic Arts Intermix Archives, New York
- The Kitchen Video Archives, New York
- London Video Arts Ltd. Video Archives
- Kijkhuis Video Archives, The Hague, The Netherlands
- Infermental Video Archives, Cologne
- Distributions Contract of Computer-Laser-Video, Cologne
- Palais des Beaux Arts, Charleroi, Belgium
- 50 Null Null, Cologne
- 707 E.V., Frankfurt
- Kommunales Kino, Dortmund, West Germany
- Image and Sound Festival, The Hague, The Netherlands
- Molheim Museum, West Germany
- Ekkstein's, Cologne
- Bonnefonten Museum, Maastricht, The Netherlands
- Theater Flech Bizzel, Dortmund, West Germany
- Cafe Fritz-HenBler-Haus, Dortmund, West Germany
- Offensive Video Kunst and Kommunales Kino, Dortmund, West Germany
- E.A.L., New York and Videonale, Bonn
- 1985 Union College Tomasulo Gallery, Cranford, N.J.
- 1984 Public Theater, New York
- 1983 Fashion Institute of Technology, New York
- Paul Robeson Gallery, Newark, N.J.
- 1982 Clancy Paul, Princeton, N.J.
- Rutgers University Faculty Exhibition, New Brunswick, N.J.

### Performances

- 1987 Physio-Psycho-Alchemy, Völkerkunde Museum, Gallery of the Artists, Munich
- 1986 Physio-Psycho-Alchemy, Prato di Casa Strobele, Borgo Valsugana, Italy
- Duck for Roast, Francesco Conz, Verona, Italy
- Wine Cabinet, Francesco Conz, Merano-Velau, Italy
- Piano Concert, Francesco Conz, Merano-Velau, Italy
- "Otto Weininger," Friedrichshof Museum, Zumdorf, Austria
- 1985 Physio-Psycho-Alchemy, University of Southern California, Los Angeles
- Physio-Psycho-Alchemy, Twin Palms Gallery, San Francisco
- 1982 Physio-Psycho-Alchemy, San Francisco Art Institute
- 1980 Rebirth I and II, 15th Annual New York Avant Garde Festival
- 1976 Mime Theater, New York
- 1975 Theater Ritual, Judson Church, New York
- 1974 Video Improvisation, Space for Creative Innovation, New York
- 1973 Paper Bag Concert, Fine Arts Center at Russell Sage College, Troy, N.Y.
- 1972 Annual New York Avant Garde Film Festival
- 1971 Annual New York Avant Garde Film Festival
- War and Peace I, Street Theater, New York
- Civil Rights and Lefts, Street Theater, New York
- War and Peace II, Street Theater, New York
- 1970 Theater Ritual, A.E.T.A. Conference, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pa.
- Rev Up Ritual Marathon Game, Studio, New York

- Performance, TV, Johnny Carson, New York  
Theater Ritual, Cornell College, Mount Vernon, Iowa
- 1968 Ritual, DIAS: U.S.A., Judson Church, New York  
Performance, TV, Johnny Carson, New York  
Theater Ritual, Douglas Gallery, Vancouver, B.C.  
Performance, TV, Allan Burke, New York  
Piano-Destruct Concert, West German TV  
Piano-Destruct Concert, Riverside Radio, New York
- 1967 Ritual Performance, Fordham University, New York  
Piano-Destruct Concert, WBAI Radio, New York  
Piano-Destruct Concert, Pacifica Radio, San Francisco  
Performance, TV, Bitter End Cafe, New York  
Studio Performance, New York  
Eros-Thantos Ritual, Youth Pavillion, Exposition 1967, Montreal  
Annual New York Avant Garde Festival  
*Henny Penny Daddy*, Ecce Homo Gallery, New York
- 1966 *Mommy Daddy*, BBC TV piano concert, London  
Mercury Theatre, London

#### Museum Group Exhibitions: Performance

- 1987 Physio-Psycho-Alchemy, Völkerkunde Museum, Gallery of the Artists, Munich

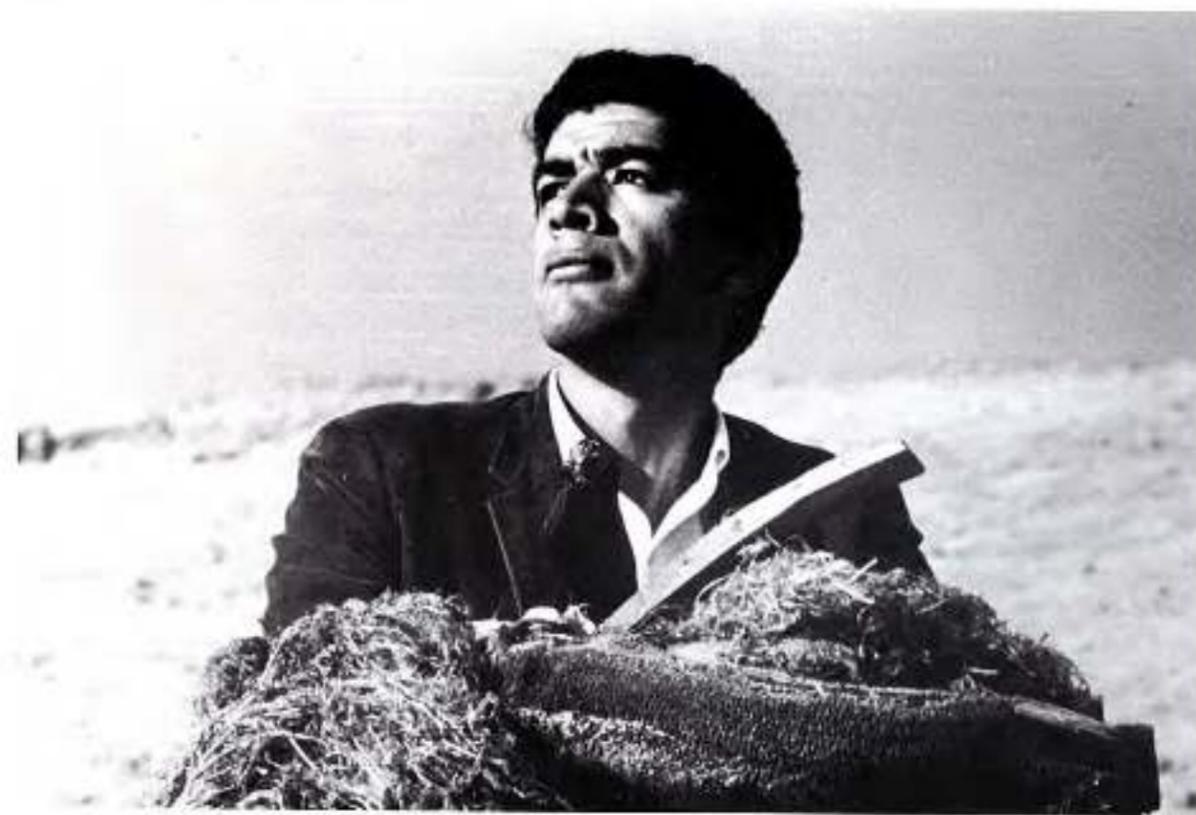
#### Museum Group Exhibitions

- 1982 El Museo del Barrio, New York
- 1980-81 "Ancient Roots and New Visions," Palacio de Minería, Mexico City
- 1979 Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, N.Y.  
San Antonio Museum Association, San Antonio, Tex.  
Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art
- 1978 Albuquerque Museum, Albuquerque, N.M.  
El Paso Museum of Art, El Paso, Tex.
- 1977 El Museo del Barrio, New York  
Tucson Museum of Art, Tucson, Ariz.  
National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C.
- 1976 Museum of Modern Art, New York  
El Museo del Barrio, New York
- 1973 Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, N.Y.
- 1968 Performance and Exhibition, Finch College Museum of Art, New York
- 1967 "Art of the 1960s," Museum of Modern Art, New York
- 1966 Film Preview, *Henny Penny*, Museum of Modern Art, New York  
"The Object Transformed," Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Exhibition, Chrysler Art Museum, Provincetown, Mass.
- 1965 New Acquisitions, Museum of Modern Art, New York  
"Young America 1965," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York  
New Acquisitions, Chrysler Art Museum, Provincetown, Mass.
- 1964 CORE Invitational, Brooklyn Museum of Arts
- 1963 Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal  
Andrew Dickson White Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.  
Traveling Assemblage Show, U.S.A. and Canada, Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Isaac Delgado Museum of Art, New Orleans

#### Group Exhibitions

- 1987 Documentation of "Arte Sella 86," Munich
- 1986 Francesco Conz Archival Gallery  
1. Wine Cabinet, Verona, Italy  
2. Piano, Merano-Velau, Italy  
3. Piano Stool and Sheet Music, Merano, Italy

4. Hammer of Thor, Merano, Italy
- 1980 "Reliquaries and Icons," Fondo del Sol Visual Arts and Media Center, Washington, D.C.  
"Esculturas Escondidas," Fondo del Sol Visual Arts and Media Center, Washington, D.C.
- 1978 Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery  
Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston  
Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, Colorado Springs, Colo.  
Colorado College, Colorado Springs, Colo.
- 1977 Fondo del Sol Visual Arts and Media Center, Washington, D.C.
- 1976 Collection of Gallery, Fondo del Sol Visual Arts and Media Center, Washington, D.C.
- 1975 Drawings, Columbia University, New York
- 1972 "Three Photographers," Fine Arts Center, Castleton, Vt.  
"9 Hispanic Artists," Association of the Arts Council, New York
- 1971 "Different Traffic," Long Island University, New York
- 1967 Sculpture, Fordham University, New York
- 1966 CORE Invitational, Grippe & Waddell, New York  
DIAS, Art Symposium Exhibition, Africa Center and Better Books, London
- 1965 Penny Candy and Fudge Assemblage, Barrett's Candy Store, Provincetown, Mass.
- 1964 Park Palace Gallery, New York  
Contemporary Sculpture Show, Welfare Island, N.Y.  
San Francisco State College  
Detroit Institute of Arts  
University of South Florida, Tampa
- 1963 Hackley Art Gallery, Muskegon, Mich.  
Tucson Art Center, Tucson, Ariz.  
Washington University, St. Louis, Mo.  
Indiana University, Bloomington
- 1962 "Five from New York," Boston Museum of Fine Art School  
East and West Coast Landscape Shows, Bolles Gallery, New York  
New York Sculpture and Painting, Bolles Gallery, New York
- 1961 Artist Gallery, New York



## Works in the Exhibition

### Sculpture

#### Sunburst, 1960

Construction destruction, paper towel, staples, oil paint on cardboard  
60" x 40"

Collection of the artist

#### Archaeological Find #3, 1961

Burnt Mattress Destruction on wooden backing  
6' 2-7/8" x 41-1/4" x 9-3/4"

Collection of the Museum of Modern Art  
Gift of Constance Kane, 1963

#### Monument to Buchenwald, 1961

Paper, earth, shoes, mixed media on wood destruction  
29-7/8" x 28" x 6-7/8"

Collection of Menil Collection  
Houston, Texas

#### Archaeological Find #21, 1961

Destroyed sofa, wood, cotton, wire, vegetable fiber, and glue on wooden backing  
84" x 54" x 24"

Collection of the artist

#### Archaeological Find #22, 1961

Destroyed upholstered sofa, synthetic fiber, cotton, wire, glue on wooden backing  
108" x 54" x 20"

Collection of the artist

Collection of El Museo del Barrio, NY:  
acc# 2007.16

#### Water Lilies I, 1961

Hammered and burnt toilet paper, oil paint, wire on wooden backing  
24" x 33" x 6"

Collection of George and Lillian Schwartz

#### Cloud Burst, 1961

Construction destruction, staples, paper towel, lacquer paint on cardboard  
43" x 64" x 6"

Collection of George and Lillian Schwartz

#### Water Lilies II, 1961

Construction destruction, staples, paper towel, lacquer paint on cardboard  
43" x 33"

Collection of George and Lillian Schwartz

#### Cups, 1961

Construction destruction, paper cups, cardboard, oil paint on wooden frame  
48" x 30" x 6"

Collection of George and Lillian Schwartz

#### Nailed Marshmallows, 1962

Marshmallows, nails on 1/2" cardboard backing  
16" x 14" x 5"

Collection of Rita Sue Siegel

#### Petrified Forest, 1962

Steel nails, dried prunes on 1/2" cardboard backing  
13" x 14-1/2" x 5"

Collection of Ms. Simon Swan

#### Children of Treblinka, 1962

Paper, earth, burnt shoes, black paint on wooden backing  
17" x 13" x 6"

Collection of Dr. Robert Schwartz

Collection of El Museo del Barrio, NY:  
acc# S93.184

#### Moctezuma (Exploding Chair), 1963

Destroyed upholstered sofa on wooden backing  
60" x 63" x 24"

Collection of the Everson Museum  
Syracuse, New York

#### Archaeological Find #9, 1964

Destroyed upholstered sofa, cotton, wire, horseshair, resin, glue  
77" x 64" x 23"

New Line Collection  
Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art

Gift of George and Lillian Schwartz

#### Sacrifice to Truro, 1965

Destroyed upholstered chair, resin on wooden backing construction  
68" x 30" x 20"

Collection of the Chrysler Museum  
Norfolk, Virginia

#### Maya Zemi I, 1975

Colored feathers, fur and glue on 1/2" cardboard  
38-1/2" x 31" x 30" x 17"

Collection of El Museo del Barrio

Collection of El Museo del Barrio, NY:  
acc# S93.185.2

Gift of the artist

#### Maya Zemi II, 1975

Colored feathers, fur and glue on 1/2" cardboard  
33" x 30" x 18"

Collection of El Museo del Barrio

Collection of El Museo del Barrio, NY:  
acc# S93.185.1

Gift of the artist

#### Maya Zemi III, 1976

Colored feathers, fur, wool, beads, bird heads and claws, synthetic snakeskin and bells on 1/2" cardboard  
39" x 32-7/8" x 16-1/2"

Collection of Fondo del Sol Visual Arts and Media Center,  
Washington, D.C.

### Installations

#### Homage to Huelsenbeck, 1988

Re-enactment of Piano Destruction from the 1960s  
24' 8" x 15' 3" x 22' 6" x 8' 5"

#### Destruction Room, 1988

Destruction of furniture and sundry objects with audience participation

Re-enactment of Destruction Rituals from the 1960s  
7' 8" x 9' 8" x 14' 5"

#### Physio-Psycho-Alchemy Ritual No. 333, 1988

Video monitors, chairs, mat, and audience participation  
48' x 60' x 72' x 60' x 32'

### Video Works

#### Music Restruction, 1988

##### Installation

Computer-Laser-Video, 3 monitors, 30 min. Recycle continuous play

Collection of the artist

#### Early works transferred to video, 1961-79

1 monitor, 50 min. 5 sec.

Collection of the artist

#### Computer generated graphics and sound transferred to video, 1982-84

1 monitor, 45 min.

Collection of the artist

#### Computer-Laser-Video, 1985-86

1 monitor, 46 min. 49 sec.

Collection of the artist

### Documentation of Performances, 1965-87

#### Black-and-White Color Photographs

##### Sacrifice to Truro Beach, Long Island, N.Y., 1965

Photographs from the Archive of Kristine Stiles  
(Refer to Work No. 15, *Sacrifice to Truro*, on exhibit in the West Gallery)

##### Duncan Terrace Piano Destruction Concert, London, England, 1966

Photographer: John Prosser

From the Archive of Kristine Stiles

##### Chair Destruction for Charlie Casher, London, England, 1966

Photographer: John Prosser

From the Archive of Kristine Stiles

##### Chicken Destruction (with Julie Abeles), New York City, 1966

Photographs from the Archive of Kristine Stiles

##### Destruction Room, "12 Evenings of Manipulations," Judson Memorial Church, New York City, 1967

Photographs from the Archive of Kristine Stiles

##### Piano Destruction, Fordham University, New York City, 1967

Photograph from the Archive of Kristine Stiles

(Refer to Installation No. 19, *Homage to Huelsenbeck*, on exhibit in the West Gallery)

##### The Birth and Death of White Henny and Black Penny Destruction in Art Symposium—U.S.A., 1968, Judson Memorial Church, New York City

Photographs from the Archive of Kristine Stiles

##### Piano Concert Destruction Ritual, 1987 Merano-Velau, Italy

Photographs from the Archive of Kristine Stiles

(Refer to Installation No. 19, *Homage to Huelsenbeck*, on exhibit in the West Gallery)



## Photo Captions

- Front cover** Chair Destruction, 1965 Truro Beach, Cape Cod, MA  
From the Archive of Kristine Stiles
- Inside front cover** Destruction Theater, 1969  
Hollywood, CA, at Ace Gallery  
Photo: Irwin Glaser  
From the Archive of Kristine Stiles
- Title page** Duncan Terrace Mattress Destruction for DIAS, 1966 London, England  
Collection of Jay Landesman  
Photo: John Prosser
- Page 5** Archaeological Find #33, 1965  
Mommy Mattress on wooden backing  
Collection of the Artist
- Page 6** Moctezuma (Exploding Chair), 1963  
Destroyed upholstered sofa on wooden backing  
Collection of the Everson Museum, Syracuse, NY
- Page 7** Archaeological Find #9, 1964  
Destroyed upholstered furniture, plastic, glass, glues, steel  
77" x 64" x 23"  
New Line Collection, Collection of Whitney Museum of American Art  
Gift of George and Lillian Schwartz
- Page 9** Henny Penny Piano Destruction, 1967  
Studio Invitational, New York City
- Page 11** Monument to Buchenwald, 1961  
Burned shoes and mixed media on wood  
29-7/8" x 28" x 6-7/8"
- Page 13** Archaeological Find #3, 1961  
Burnt Mattress Destruction on wooden backing  
6'3" x 41-1/4" x 9-3/4"  
Collection, Museum of Modern Art  
Gift of Constance Kane, 1963
- Pages 16-17** Henny Penny Piano Destruction, 1967
- Page 19** Chair Destruction for Charlie Casher, London, 1966.  
Photo: John Prosser  
From the Archive of Kristine Stiles
- Pages 20-21** The Birth and Death of White Henny, 1967. Ecco Homo Gallery  
From the Archive of Kristine Stiles
- Page 23** The Birth and Death of White Henny, 1967. Ecco Homo Gallery  
From the Archive of Kristine Stiles
- Pages 26-27** Artist Worker's Coalition Demonstration, 1970-71  
Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Photo: Jan Van Raay
- Page 29** Physio-Psycho-Alchemy Arte Sella, 1987 Borga Valsugana, Italy
- Page 31** Chicken Destruction (with Julie Abeles), New York, 1966  
From the Archive of Kristine Stiles
- Page 34** Chair Destruction, 1965 Truro Beach, Cape Cod, MA  
From the Archive of Kristine Stiles
- Page 35** Archaeological Find, 1964  
Chrysler Museum  
From the Archive of Kristine Stiles
- Page 37** Destruction Theater, 1969  
Ace Gallery, Los Angeles  
Photo: Irwin Glaser  
Courtesy of Ace Gallery
- Pages 40-41** Archaeological Find # 21, 1961  
Destruction. Spring sofa, wood, cotton, wire,  
vegetable fiber and glue on wooden backing  
84" x 54" x 24"  
Collection of the artist
- Page 45** Destruction Theater, 1969  
Ace Gallery, Los Angeles  
Photo: Irwin Glaser  
Courtesy of Ace Gallery
- Page 46** Computer-Laser-Video, 1984  
Photo: Leah Lauffer
- Page 47** Computer-Laser-Video Bridge Game, 11 mins. 45 sec., 1985
- Page 49** Computer-Laser-Video Pushann Pushann, 1984  
Photo: Leah Lauffer
- Page 51** The Death of White Henny and Black Penny, 1968 DIAS  
Judson Memorial Church, New York

- Page 53** Computer-Laser-Video What is This? (opera), 10 min., 1985  
Photo: Leah Lauffer
- Page 57** Chair Destruction, 1965 Truro Beach, Cape Cod, MA  
From the Archive of Kristine Stiles
- Page 61** Archaeological Find, 1962  
From the Archive of Kristine Stiles
- Page 62** Artist Worker's Coalition Demonstration, 1970-71  
Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Photo: Jan Van Raay

### Inside back cover

- Participants in the Destruction in Art Symposium, London, 1966  
Top row, left to right: Susan Cahn, John Sexton, Rafael M. Ortiz, Kurt Kren, Ener Donagh, Peter Weibel, Bryant Patterson.  
Second row left to right: Werner Schreib, Graham Stevens, Ivor Davies, John Latham, Wolf Vostell, Robin Page, Otto Mühl.  
Front row left to right: Henri Chopin, Jean Toche, Gustav Metzger, Herman Nitsch (holding poster), Juan Hidalgo (kneeling).  
Photo: John Prosser  
From the Archive of Kristine Stiles

Incorrect caption: the artwork pictured measures approx. 54" h x 110" x 24"; artwork with closest dimension is listed as "Archaeological Find #22" on p.58 of this publication.



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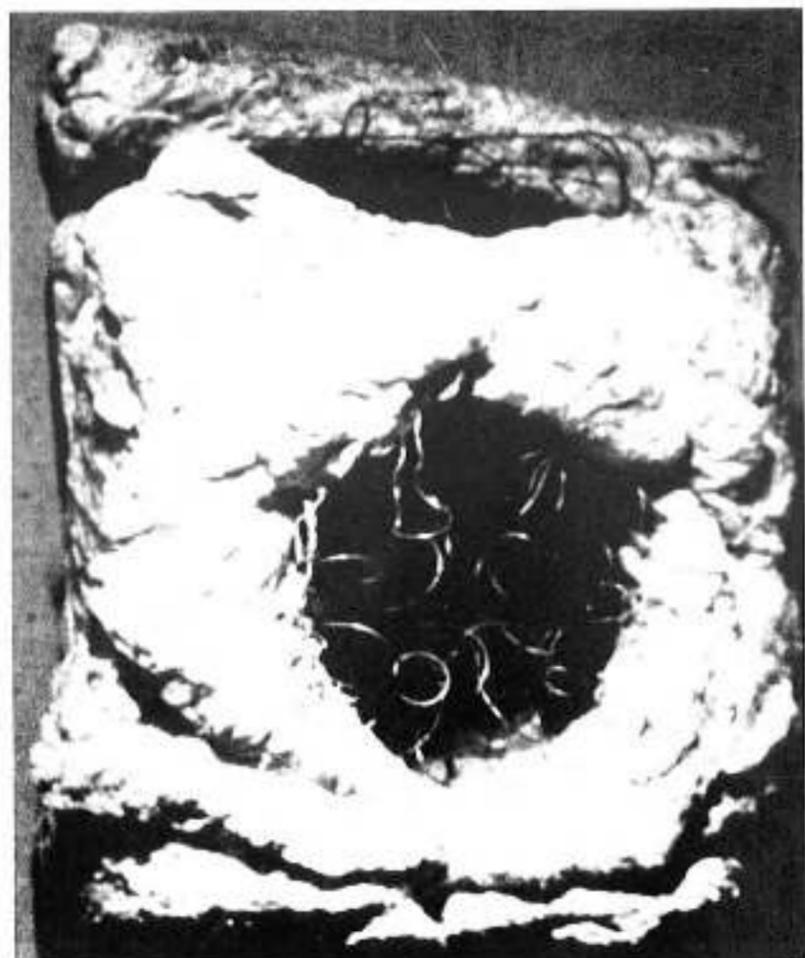
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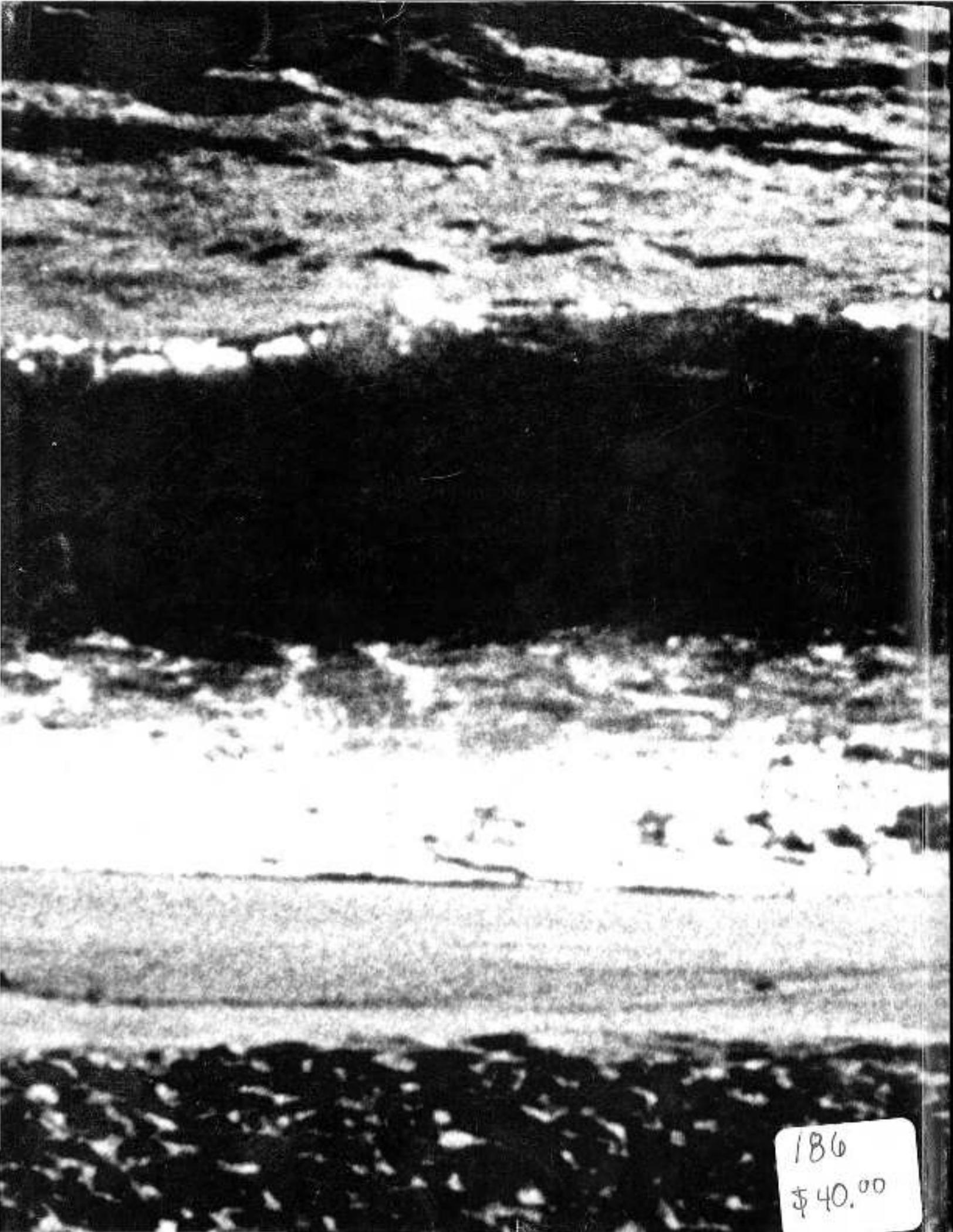
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