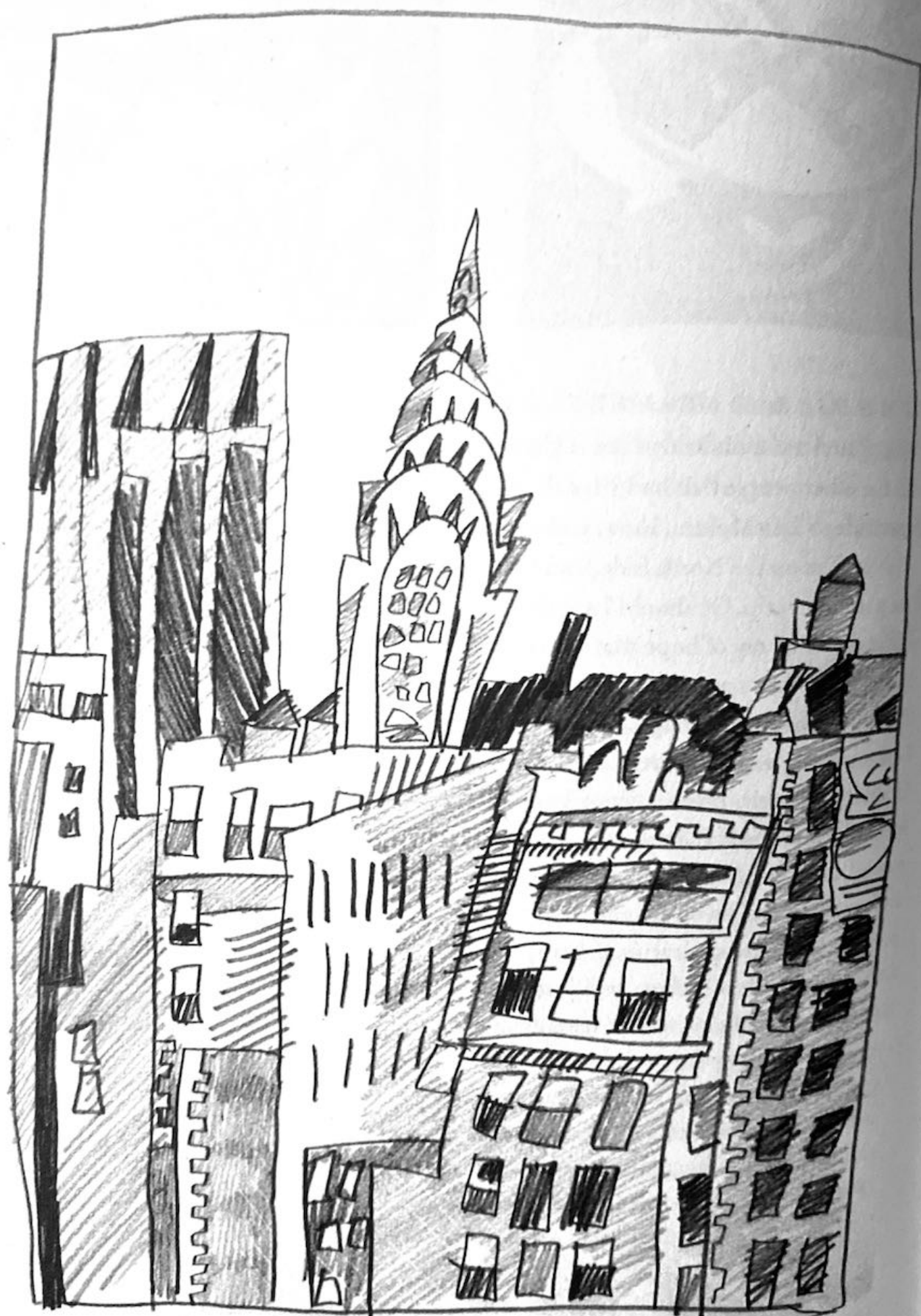


# KEITH HARING JOURNALS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY *Robert Farris Thompson*

PREFACE BY *David Hockney*

V I K I N G



# 1978

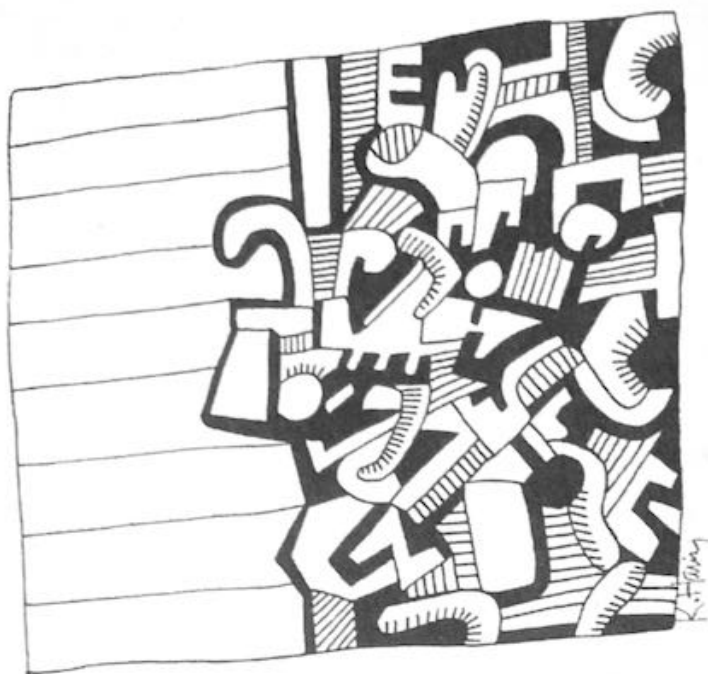
**OCTOBER 14, 1978**

As I sit here and write I feel comfortable. It is somewhat unusual to feel comfortable in Washington Square Park. There are so many different ways to experience the phenomena of the city. A given situation can have an unlimited number of different effects on a person's thoughts, depending on the state of mind and attitude. Something that affects me today will not necessarily affect me tomorrow. Nothing is constant. Everything is constantly changing. Every second from birth is spent experiencing; different sensations, different interjections, different directional vectors of force/energy constantly composing and recomposing themselves around you. Time (situations in a visible logical progression) never will and never can repeat itself. None of the elements involved in the experience of time will ever be the same because everything is always changing. Physically humans are constantly changing (cell division) and one is never in the same state of existence mentally or physically.

The physical reality of the world as we know it is motion. Motion itself = movement. Change. If there is any repetition it is not identical repetition because (at least) time has passed and therefore there is an element of change.

No two human beings ever experience two sensations, experiences, feelings, or thoughts identically. Everything changes, everything is always different. All of these vari-





ables merging, interacting, destroying each other, building new forms, ideas, "realities," mean that the human experience is one of constant change and, as we label it, "growth."

My source of amazement comes from the fact that most living human beings build their lives around the belief that these differences, changes, don't exist. They choose to ignore these things and attempt to program or control their own existence. They make schedules, long-term commitments, set up a system of time and become controlled by their system of controls.

People don't want to know that they change.

Unless they feel it is an improvement, and then they are all for "change," and will go to great lengths to "make changes" or contrive situations or force a change that is unnatural. There are so many aspects of this one concept that it is hard to write them all down.

Some attitudes I see all around me are:

Change is acceptable as long as it is controllable.

Change can be predicted.

Changes can be contrived and/or altered and/or planned.

If I stand in front of my mirror and gaze at my image, I see an endless number of different conceptions of how I look. I feel as though I have many different faces. I put them on and take them off, and my conception of other people is the same. People look different at different times. I mean completely different. It may have something to do with how *they* feel, but more likely is controlled by *my* feelings, my emotions, my reality at the time I am looking at them.

Usually the underlying fact that change is reality, that we are constantly changing and constantly in difficult situations, different states of mind and actually different realities

is ignored  
or misunderstood  
or misinterpreted  
or confronted.

Most simply, people know to some extent that they feel different at different times or look different to themselves different days, but few people really try to experience this or question it or really investigate its reasons or its implications. People tend to try to control this by living an opposite life pattern. It is like superimposing a grid on top of a patch of grass that is alive and constantly changing, and then trying to make the grass fit the predetermined design of the grid.

People, I realize, cannot live like a patch of grass. They could, I suppose, at one time, but we are so far removed from that time that it is hard to conceive. People can, however, live their lives with the realization that they are constantly changing, products of their changing environment and changing situations, and time. They can live, at least, in harmony with the knowledge and co-exist with it instead of working against it.

There is a point, I'm sure, where the modern man can confront this reality, question it, explore it, and live with it and actually become part of it and lead a much more comfortable life. To live in harmony with an idea. To live in harmony with an uncontrollable reality that we are subject to whether we choose it or not. There is no choice except the choice of how to deal with it.

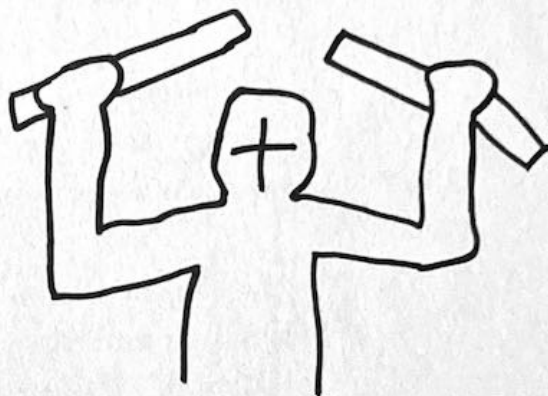
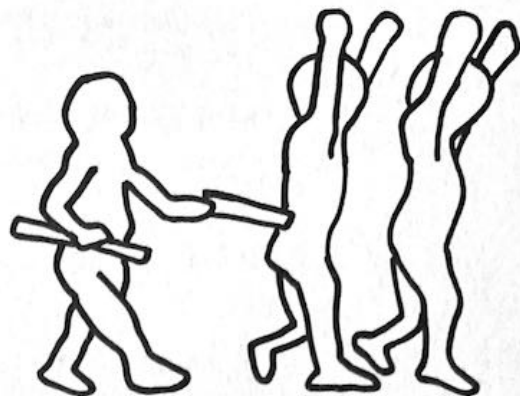
I keep writing because before I try to explain how I feel I am living with this "reality," I want to try to explain (to myself) that it really is a reality, that it exists, and that I'm doing things in a way that is not totally without reason.

To be a victim of your own knowledge is not understanding what your knowledge is and what its result is.

To be a victim of change is to ignore its existence.

To be a victim of "living by what you think" is to ignore the possibilities of "another way to live" or the possibility of "being wrong about the way it is" or ignoring the possibility of "not knowing what you think."

Thinking you know the answer is as dangerous as not thinking about the possibility of no answers.



Poetic sentences that make no sense might as well be poems.

Keith Haring thinks in poems.

Keith Haring paints poems.

Poems do not necessarily need words.

Words do not necessarily make poems.

In painting, words are present in the form of images. Paintings can be poems if they are read as words instead of images. "Images that represent words." Egyptian Art/hieroglyphics/pictograms/Symbolism. Words as imagery.

Can imagery exist (communicate) in the form of words?

Foreign languages, undeciphered alphabets can be beautiful, can express without a knowledge of the meaning of the words.

Looking at a book printed in Chinese can be as beautiful as looking at pictures. Images that represent words.

All of this in the context that everything is always changing. That is why, for me, painting, as I know it, can be imagery as words. Because I am different at different times. I believe I have never lived two days that were the same in *any* way. Similar, maybe, but not the same. I think, feel, act, conceive and live differently every day, every instant. And if I am different at different times, my imagery also changes.

I paint differently every day.

every hour.

every minute.

every instant.

My paintings are a record of a given space of time.

They are recorded patterns of thought.

Duplication is impossible without a camera.

Repetition, without a camera (or machine) is not repetition.

To paint differently every day makes it impossible to paint a consistent composition over the period of more than one session.



It is done, but not without pain, needless changes, de-evolution, false repetition (duplication), over-working, collage (piling different ideas on top of each other and calling them a "whole"), etc. Pure art exists only on the level of instant response to pure life.

I am not trying to say that art up to this point has been useless or any less pure than art done in this context. I am saying that art has evolved. Has changed faster than we have. Has been with humans from the beginning of time as a helpful companion. Each artist (person) of a given time has had a different life and therefore different attitude toward life and art. Although much art history is composed of "movements" and style unique to a *group* of artists, it always was and always will be a product of the *individual*. Even if a "group mentality" or "cultural grouping" of artists has existed, the act of art itself is individual or has (in collaborated efforts) an individual's conception or a mixture of individual inputs toward a group effort.

However, after seeing these many "movements" and "group styles" and "periods" of art history, I believe we have reached a point where there can be no more group mentality, no more movements, no more shared ideals. It is a time for self-realization.

Being tested by the media and mentality of this anti-individual society, where stereotypes are the reigning power and overpopulation has forced us to believe that we exist as "kinds of people" or "types of people" or "generalizations," has produced artists with the realization that individuality is still the base of it all. Individuality is the enemy of this mass society. Individuality speaks for the individual and makes him a significant factor. Art is individuality. I feel this is the underlying message of modern art. It is the lesson that must not be ignored. It is what modern art has been screaming at us since its beginnings. It is what *all* art has been saying since the beginning of time.

Where an artist has destroyed his own goals (or had them destroyed for him, and sat by and done nothing), is when he has let himself be part of groups, follow movements, make group manifestos and form group ideas. Matisse had a pure vision and painted beautiful pictures. Nobody ever has or ever will paint like him again. His was an individual statement. No artists are parts of a movement. Unless they are followers. And then they are unnecessary and doing unnecessary art. If they are exploring in an "individual way" with "different ideas" the idea of another individual, they are making a worthy contribution, but as soon as they call themselves followers or accept the truths they have not explored as truths, they are defeating the purpose of art as an individual expression—Art as art.

Art in 1978 has seen numerous attempts at classifying or labeling and then exploiting an idea until the idea itself is lost in the process, and now I feel it is time to come out against group mentality. I don't know if this is a shared opinion, but by the lack of any

existing movements or new movements or new directions, it looks and feels as though we are seeing individual artists, individual ideas. They have been influenced, of course, and many are probably not sincere in their endeavors, but this void of "group movements" after the over-emphasized, unquestioned "movements" of the last ten years that happened so fast—Pop, Conceptual, Minimal, Earth Works, post-this and anti-that—it seems like it is high time for the realization that art is everything and everywhere. That the conception of art occurs in *every* individual in day-to-day life in endless forms and ideas and is undefinable *because* it is different for each individual. That life is art and art is life. That everybody on every level identifies with art, regardless if they are aware of it or admit it or realize it. That the importance of the "individual idea" in a society of this size and mentality is the only reality. That it is important to the future existence of the human race that we understand the importance of the individual and the reality that we are all different, all individuals, all changing and all contributing to the "whole" as individuals, *not* as groups or products of "mass identity," "anti-individual," "stereotyped groups of humans with the same goals, ideas and needs."

I am me. I may look like you, but if you take a closer look you will realize that I am nothing like you at all. I am very different. I see things through a completely different perspective because in my life I had experiences that you didn't have, and I had feelings you didn't have, and I've lived places and seen places and experienced life from a completely different point of view than you have. I may be wearing the same shoes and the same haircut, but that gives you no right to have any preconceived notions about what I am or who I am.

You don't even know me.

You *never* will.

Art as a personal exploration.

Art as an end to the question "what is it?" or "what does it mean?"

The meaning of art as it is experienced by the viewer, not the artist.

The artist's ideas are not essential to the art as seen by the viewer.

The viewer is an artist in the sense that he conceives a given piece of his own way that is unique to him.

His own imagination determines what it is, what it means.

The viewer does not have to be considered during the conception of the art, but should not be told, then, what to think or how to conceive it or what it means. There is no need for definition.



Definition can be the most dangerous, destructive tool the artist can use when he is making art for a society of individuals.

Definition is not necessary.

Definition defeats itself and its goals by defining them.

The public has a right to art.

The public is being ignored by most contemporary artists.

The public needs art, and it is the responsibility of a "self-proclaimed artist" to realize the public needs art, and not to make bourgeois art for the few and ignore the masses.

Art is for everybody. To think that they—the public—do not appreciate art because they don't understand it, and to continue to make art that they don't understand and therefore become alienated from, may mean that the artist is the one who doesn't understand or appreciate art and is thriving in this "self-proclaimed knowledge of art" that is actually bullshit.

Art can be a positive influence on a society of individuals.

Art can be a destructive element and an aid to the takeover of the "mass-identity" society.

Art must be considered by the artists as well as the public.

The public will not, however, say what they want for fear of seeming uneducated or not understanding art. Therefore, the responsibility rests predominantly on the consciousness of the artist.

The artist cannot, however, make his decisions without considering the public, why they won't "come out" about the arts, why they need art, and how to help them fulfill their essential roles as viewers, how to experience art and why.

The decision is basically, is art for an educated few, or is art for all people of the time?

Is art successful without the input of the public?

If the public is afraid of art, should we be afraid of what we have done to make the public afraid of art?

Were they always? Do they matter? Is art for the individual, by the individual only for viewing and appreciation of the individual?

Is art for self? Is art simply fulfilling an artist-ego relationship?

I am interested in making art to be experienced and explored by as many individuals as possible with as many different individual ideas about the given piece with no final meaning attached. The viewer creates the reality, the meaning, the conception of the piece. I am merely a middleman trying to bring ideas together.

I have nothing specifically to communicate but this: That I have created a reality that is not complete until it is met with the ideas of another human being (or, I suppose, ani-

mal), including myself, and that the reality is not complete until it is experienced. It has infinite meanings because it will be experienced differently by every individual.

This is my message. The medium is unimportant.

It is art as I know it.

It is life as I know it.

The medium is a tool of the message.

The medium is not the message.

The message is the message.

Art is life. Life is art. The importance of both is over-exaggerated as well as misunderstood.

The destructive element exists in all art, but ultimately is determined only by the ideas of the viewer.

Art has no meaning because it has many meanings, infinite meanings. Art is different for every individual, and is definable *only* by the given individual.

There are no set answers, only questions.

When I go to SoHo, I come away with so many visions of new ideas for my own work that I wonder if that's why I go.

I start to look at the gallery spaces as spaces for my art instead of looking at the art being shown.

There is a lot of shit being shown in spaces that deserve more than shit.

I realized today that one of the main reasons I am here is because it is one of the only cities in the world that has gallery space big enough for my anticipated works.

I saw so many spaces today that look like they were made for my art.

But my art makes itself fit the space, any given space. It defines the space and experiences the space. It changes space and can be part of any given space.

I saw today walls that I could hang paper panels on and make a 30 x 400 foot painting.

It's wonderful. But how do you get there?

Today I imagined a gallery full of equally spaced video monitors (spaced as painting would be exhibited) all playing different tapes of my video paintings. I want to do it, but I am up against myself. I am up against the fact that I will have new ideas, different attitudes, different feelings and possibly never carry out this vision because another one will appear that seems more important. This gallery, however, existed today in my mind. I was at the opening and it was a nice show.

After the completion of my first video piece—me painting myself into a corner—I am becoming much more aware of movement. The importance of movement is intensified when a painting becomes a performance. The performance (the act of painting) becomes as important as the resulting painting.

Movement as painting. Painting as movement.

Moving toward a work of art that encompasses music, performance, movement, concept, craft and a reality record of the event in the form on a painting.

Almost a kind of diagram of the previous experience (i.e., blueprint, choreography).

Painting as performance.

Video—a medium capable of reaching higher levels of communication—more direct, more involved than painting/sculpture.

It's not necessarily true that New York is an impersonal city. In fact, I think it is quite friendly if you let it be. I have had a really nice walk home, exchanged smiles and even a few words. People are open to other people on a certain level, but there is still a barrier of fright (apprehension) on other levels. It can be a wonderful place. I say that now from first-hand experience.

It's strange, I curse my painting class 24 hours a day except when I'm in class, and then it seems like it might be valuable to my education in some way. But when I leave, I start cursing again.

I'm enjoying the theory and principles discussed in my painting class. I can see how repetition and a controlled vocabulary (symbol vocabulary) could be helpful in the sense that it is a discipline you experience and then later use as a reference point, but for some reason the canvas and oil paint repulse me. I hate them more the more I use them. I love the rich colors of the paint, but the vehicle for the color is so primitive, so restraining. In oil paints, the oil is the vehicle to hold and transport the color. In video, it is light. I guess the use of paint is



*Video stills, School of Visual Arts,  
New York City, 1979*



inevitable. However, if there is a better way I want to know it. Maybe I would enjoy the paint if I could experience it, control it, experiment and play with it. But it is hard to have an experience with oil paint when you are working in pre-drawn areas of shape and painting and re-painting and trying to control it instead of letting it control itself or control you.

Canvas as a material is wonderful. It is sturdy and can be sold and is somewhat permanent. But I am inhibited by it. I pay \$8.00 for a 30 x 40 canvas and oil paint, and then I'm paranoid about what it will look like 'cause I spent \$12.00 on the painting, and I think it should be worth something. However, when I paint on paper that I have found or purchased cheaply, and use ink that is watered down, I do a whole 4' x 9' painting for next to nothing. I love to paint. And you can see it in the work.

I don't care if it is a painting/drawing/sculpture performance.

I don't care if you don't like it.

I don't care if the paper is wrinkled, torn.

I don't care if somebody walked across it and got dirt on it.

I don't care if the lines vary and there are drips and splatters.

I don't care if I don't paint on it.

If I don't care about all of the lesser elements of the painting; if it is not regarded as "sacred" and "valuable," then I can paint, without inhibition, and experience the interaction of line and shapes. I can paint spontaneously without worrying if it looks "good" and I can let my movement and my instant reaction/response control the piece, control my energy (if there is any control at all). Maybe control is a bad word. I can "work" with all these elements and not be worried about the result and whether the finished (nothing is ever really finished) product conveys that whole feeling. It is pleasing to look at. A vacation from order. Or a different kind of order that emerges only from these conditions. It requires individual interaction and individual response—possibly individual interpretation.

It is loose, natural, real, uninhibited, beyond definition. It is temporary and its permanence is unimportant. Its existence is already established. It can be made permanent by a camera. I don't have to make it permanent.

Chances are, even my raw-paper paintings will last as long as any works in canvas that are being done. Atomic blasts destroy canvas just as fast as paper.

The silicon computer chip has become the new life form. Eventually the only worth of man will be to service and serve the computer. Are we there? In a lot of ways we are. Computer banks control information that we are incapable of dealing with. Are we controlling computers, or are we merely helping them to control us? This is "1984" and it

has been for the last ten years. If the computer continues to make the important decisions, store information beyond our mental capabilities, and program physical things (machines), what is the role of the human being?

To service our computer?

And what is the role of an artist?

Should the situation be resisted or accepted?

It appears to me that human beings have reached an end in the evolutionary process. We will, if we continue on the same path, eventually destroy ourselves. We are creating technologies to destroy ourselves. We are self-destructive. Possibly the computer will save us. Maybe it is a good thing that we have created a life form

that can continue to evolve and grow beyond our capabilities.

The major question is, though, are we going to be able to control the evolution of the computerized mind, or can it evolve and grow by itself? Will computers be able to decide their future and make it happen without our aid? Computers can do more and more every day. I think we are capable (with our minds, our technologies, our computers) of creating computers as a form of life that can function more efficiently than us in almost every aspect of life.

Machine aesthetic?

Do computers have any sense of aesthetics? Can an aesthetic pattern be programmed and fed into a computer so that it reasons and makes decisions based on a given aesthetic? Why not?

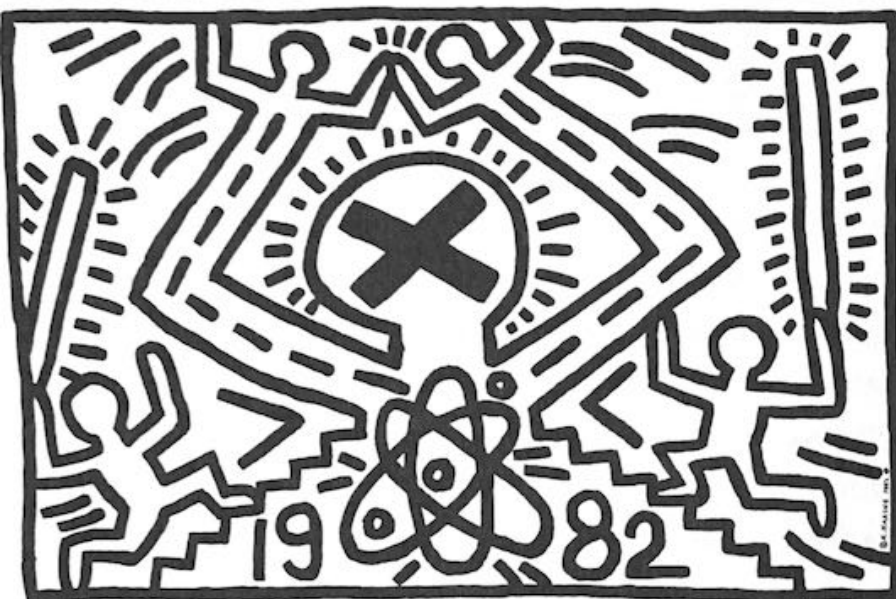
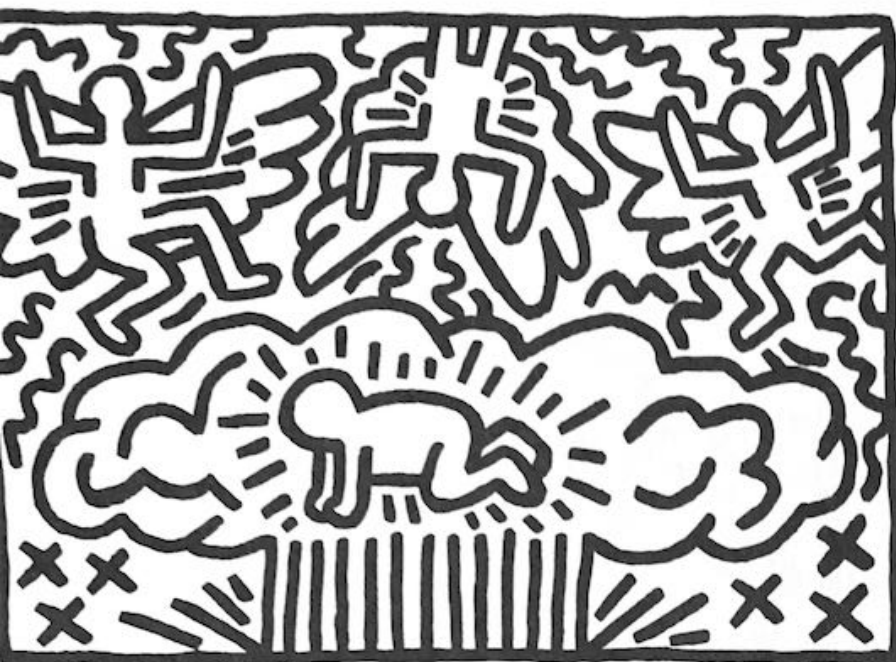
The role of the arts in human existence is going to be tested and tried. It is possibly the most important time for art the world has ever seen. The artist of this time is creating under a constant realization that he is being pursued by the computers. We are threatened. Our existence, our individuality, our creativity, our lives are threatened by this coming machine aesthetic. It is going to be up to us to establish a lasting position of the arts in our daily lives, in human existence.

If humans are expendable, then emotions, enjoyment, indulgence, creative aesthetic, and personality of human beings are expendable.

Question: As an artist aware of this situation, what should my position be?







I agree, to an extent, that if human beings are incapable of evolving further, we should evolve in the form of creating a new life form that can survive the human condition and transcend it. The question that I have trouble with is: Should the new life form be completely oblivious to the aesthetics of human beings? Is it forced, because of its very nature, to be a new life form with no traits of the human being? Have we created a life form "in our own image" or is it a completely different form?

This is the question that the artist of our times has to ask, because it is we who will have to lead the fight against a machine aesthetic or prepare people for it.

Minimal art leans toward the machine aesthetic. It is, in a sense, preparing us for the coming of the machine age—boxes, metal, geometric shapes, sculpture devoid of

sculptural aesthetic, ideas devoid of a traditional aesthetic consideration. It influences people's ideas, and our daily life.

Or there is the possibility that minimal art will have a shocking effect. A warning of the possibilities of the future. Punk rock.

By being negative are you being positive? Is this the approach we should take? Do people see the absurdity, or will they *accept* it as the future, and will it defeat its purpose? Being negative for the sake of trying to reveal the absurdity of the negative act—is that a positive act? Dada—positive or negative?

This is for me the question that will decide my position in the arts. In life . . .

How do you help the human race to realize its predicament? And if you do not see it as a predicament, how do you help to prepare humankind for the reality of a machine-aesthetic world?



Am I a comrade to the computer or to the entire history of humanity? The history of art rests on our shoulders.

Can we abandon it now?

Is it being "abandoned" or is it "evolving," or "de-evolving"?

Is it our duty, as human beings, to see the importance of an alternative life form? Isn't the new life form based on all our past discoveries and the result of the entire history of human beings?

Isn't this a product of the human race, a way to save the human race and continue the evolution of life itself?

Life is not only definable in human terms. It is time that we realize this. We (humans) are a necessary step in an evolutionary process. We cannot know what the end of the evolutionary process is or if there is an end.

For us to stop the evolutionary process of life simply because we are so vain that we believe we are an "end," and to believe that we can evolve no further, would be disastrous. Life is more valuable than human beings. It is the living force that is within human beings as well as other animals, sky, water, energy, gravity, space. It must be continued at any cost.

The destruction of this planet, this solar system, by human beings would not be an end to life. It would go on without us.

We have a choice, whether we wish to continue evolution on this planet or not.

I vote "yes."

#### **ELECTION DAY. NOVEMBER 7, 1978**

Everything in this notebook is subject to change.

When I re-read an idea two or three days later, sometimes (usually) I have a more defined, altered, or more simple version of the original idea, or a new interpretation of the idea, or a totally new idea that develops as a result of the first one.

This book contains thoughts that are spontaneous. Every day I think differently, re-evaluate old ideas, and express my ideas in different terms.

If I still believe any of the theory or philosophy I have written here next year at this time I will be surprised.

I'm waiting.

I'm waiting for the ink to dry.

I have just completed another landmark (for me, that is) painting. It is the first time I ever tried to utilize both arms to control two brushes. This afternoon I bought three

softer, more natural buzz. Time to contemplate, time to reflect and dream. Time to read at a time when it may be more important to read than to do.

Somehow it works out that I read and experience things in big chunks. And the chunks are always closely knitted together. Cross-references and reaffirmation. Some of the parts of the chunk come to me by "chance" and others are sought after. Some were with me a long time but become new, while some appear to have been with me always at their first encounter. Almost always this chunk of information/awareness comes to me without much effort on my part. It is stumbling across a gold box on a deserted road while you may or may not have been looking where you were walking.

### PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

In 1977 when I was working in the cafeteria at Fischer Scientific Corp. I was exposed to a very thorough collection of "alchemy artifacts." Since the cafeteria was located next to their gallery and a conference room containing many artifacts, prints, and quotations by alchemists, I was in contact with these objects and ideas every day. The quote that struck me most then and that I still refer to often was one printed on a 5" x 9" card and hung beside a large painting of *The Alchemist's Studio*. The air was full of excitement. All of the paintings contained a feeling of mystery with confidence.

"Chance favors the prepared mind."—Louis Pasteur

Well, I have this new chunk of information that is shedding light on everything that came before it. That's always how it works. And it also binds itself to this larger accumulating chunk that kind of absorbs this new information and makes the whole chunk new and stronger and a little larger. Well, part of this new awareness is leading me toward a possible acknowledgment of the big chunk in the universe. The mind of the universe. All knowledge. And every time you tap that you get closer to a kind of computer hook-up where you can plug your own personal accumulation into this eternal universal information and feed into it and off it and then your chunk can really start to grow. Or maybe it doesn't grow . . . it functions. They grow together. They kind of throb.

### A Vehicle of the Way (Wen Yi Tsai Tao)

And the way is as long as the mind is deep, comprising not only the personal "mind-system," but the huge memory storehouse of the "universal mind" in which "discriminations, desires, attachments and deeds" have been collecting "since beginningless time" and which "like a magician" . . . causes

phantom things and people to appear and move about.  
(Lankavatara-Sutra, 60, B, 300)

—Quoted from Preamble to  
*Towards a New American Poetics*,  
edited by Ekbert Faas

Anyway, this new information all came to me this summer under one big label:

POETRY.

I have been enlightened. I have fallen into poetry and it has swallowed me up.

I was [very large black rectangle] and when it spits me back out, or when I leave its system through its bowels, I will be [black rectangle] again.

THE CHUNK CALLED POETRY.

It started with JOHN GIORNO and BURROUGHS at the Nova Convention in December 1978. It's reading CAGE and starting my first recording with four cassettes at SVA in February. It's the poetries of video-tape and BARBARA BUCKNER. It's BURROUGHS and GINSBERG and GIORNO upstairs at the MUDD CLUB. It's living with DREW B. STRAUB, who was reading BURROUGHS thoroughly. It's VIDEO CLONES with MOLISSA FENLEY. It's ART SIN BOY and CLUB 57 POETRY READINGS EVERY WEDNESDAY NIGHT THIS SUMMER. It's reading SAINT GENET by SARTRE on the subway going to work in QUEENS. It's books from SVA library all summer and tape recorders from SVA for most of the summer. It's BOOKS THAT YOU JUST FIND IN A LIBRARY . . . BOOKS THAT FIND YOU. It's PATTI SMITH ON THE *BIG EGO* ALBUM with GIORNO, MEREDITH MONK, GLASS, etc. It's reading RIMBAUD, KEATS, JEAN COCTEAU, JOHN CAGE, HEGEL, JEAN GENET, TALKING POETICS FROM NAROPA INSTITUTE. It's meeting another like you and sharing everything including your body but mostly your ideas. It's POETIC UNDERSTANDING AND JUSTIFIABLE HATE. It's July 4 on the top of the Empire State Building after reading an ART SIN BOY mimeograph at Club 57 watching fireworks and thinking about the smile exchanged on the street and nothing but a second glance and lots of dreaming. It's KLAUS NOMI at Xenon. READING GINSBERG'S JOURNALS, READING SEMI-OTEXT, READING GERTRUDE STEIN, READING "HOWL" FOR THE FIRST TIME. It's NOW-NOW-NOW and paintings I did in the fall of 1978. It's Chinese pattern paintings in KERMIT'S HOUSE. BARBARA SCHWARTZ ON 22ND STREET AND DREW AT JOHN WEBER GALLERY BUILDING A ROBERT SMITHSON. DREW'S RAIN DANCE IN LITTLE ITALY. It's listening to JOHN GIORNO read *GRASPING AT EMPTINESS* for the 27th time. It's letting records skip for ten minutes and thinking it's beautiful. IT'S HAVING DINNER ON AVENUE C WITH DINA, DOZO, AND FUGACHAN (A MAN). It's thinking about SEX as ART and ART as SEX. It's continued situations and controlled environments, B-52s, BATHS,



AND SEX WITH FRIENDS. IT'S PAPA AND JOHN MCLAUGHLIN AND OUTER SPACE AND  
JET SET AND DELTAS AND THE ASTRO TWIST AND KENNY SCHARF AND LARRY LEVAN.  
It's being heckled reading what may be my favorite mimeograph piece with two tape  
recorders and being called a FAGGOT. IT'S LISTENING TO OTHER POETS AT CLUB 57.  
TALKING TO POETS. BEING A POET AT CLUB 57. It's painting on ST. MARKS outside of  
STROMBOLI PIZZA. It's having one night at Club 57 when everyone in the open reading  
was in top form and everyone knows it and everyone is smiling. It's HAL SIEROWITZ  
READING. IT'S BEING QUOTED IN HIS POEM AS SAYING, "I CONSIDER MYSELF MORE  
OF AN ARTIST THAN A POET," SAID KEITH." IT'S MAKING XEROXES and mimeographs.  
IT'S MEETING CHARLES STANLEY AND BEING APPREHENSIVE. IT'S TAPING UP  
XEROXES WALKING HOME DRUNK. It's looking in the window at BUDDHA. It's seeing a  
TRUCK THAT SAYS "BETTER METHODS." IT'S BUYING JEROME ROTHENBERG'S BOOK  
*TECHNICIANS OF THE SACRED* that BARBARA BUCKNER had lent to me in spring and  
now TIM MILLER has it out of the library and now I'm reading references to it in a new  
book I bought. IT'S ALL THOSE THINGS THAT FIT TOGETHER SO PERFECTLY THAT IT  
APPEARS PREDETERMINED. IT'S DREAMS OF FALLING INTO WARM WATER HOLE WITH  
EXOTIC FISH CREATURE AND ENOUGH LIGHT TO SEE EVERYTHING. It's finding HAND-  
BILLS ABOUT SIN that are poems in themselves. It's painting on walls in the suburbs.  
It's the bridge in LONG ISLAND WITH 1958 AND 1980 on parallel poles. IT'S FINDING  
OUT THE SPACE AGE BEGAN IN 1958. It's STEVE PAXTON dancing in the sculpture gar-  
den at MOMA. It's CARL ANDRE POEMS IN THE MOMA SUMMER SCULPTURE SHOW. It's  
JONES BEACH ON SUNDAYS. It's MATISSE. IT'S MATISSE. It's listening to old cassettes I  
made in winter and understanding them for the first time. A NOTION OF PROPHECY.  
IT'S DOUGLAS DAVIS'S ARTICLE IN THE VILLAGE VOICE about post-modern art. "POST-  
ART." It's pornographic pictures and black feathers. It's GERMANY. It's JAPAN. It's  
hearing DOW JONES AND THE INDUSTRIALS. It's loose joints and conversations. IT'S  
THE SAME THING, THE SAME THING. It's understanding painting. IT'S SOMEONE  
YELLING "LICK FAT BOYS." IT'S CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ALL ART BEING PRETEN-  
TIOUS. It's not going to look at ART in the galleries all summer. It's seeing drawings by  
KEVIN CRAWFORD AND DREW B. STRAUB and thinking about the relationship. IT'S  
THINKING ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEEMINGLY UNRELATED OBJECTS  
AND EVENTS. It's an art "context." It's thinking about poetry on as many different lev-  
els as I can. It's thinking about myself. It's companions and ratios and mathematical  
principles. IT'S THE POETRY OF NUMBERS. Language, culture, time, spirit, universe.  
IT'S THE PAST PRESENT FUTURE ALL TIME NO TIME SAME THING. It's systems within  
systems that evoke systems. ORDER-FORM-STRUCTURE-MATTER. It's seeing TRISHA  
BROWN DANCE. IT'S ITALIAN FILMS FROM 1967. IT'S LAURIE ANDERSON AT MUDD

CLUB. IT'S NEW MUSIC, NEW YORK at the KITCHEN for a week. IT'S CHARLIE MORROW'S PIECE FOR 60 CLARINETS AT BATTERY PARK IN CELEBRATION OF THE FIRST DAY OF SUMMER AT SUNSET. It's the BRONX ZOO. Reading RIMBAUD'S LETTERS. Reading RIMBAUD'S ILLUMINATIONS ON THE SUBWAY AND IN A CAFE EATIN' CREMOLATA AND DRINKING PERRIER. IT'S FELLINI FILMS WITH TSENG KWONG CHI. It's finding things on the street. IT'S CONVERSATION WITH LYNN UMLAUF ABOUT THE NOW NOW NOW TAPES A. J. WEBER GALLERY SHOW. IT'S XEROXES PUT UP IN the West Village for Gay Pride weekend and hearing people that had seen them months later. IT'S THE NINTH CIRCLE AFTER THE GAY PRIDE MARCH TALKING ABOUT APATHY AND MILITANCY. It's wearing and distributing red-and-white stripes for one evening. IT'S READING AT CLUB 57 WHILE THIS WOMAN who I later found out was GLORIE TROPP is saying things like AHHA and DO IT and YEAH while I'm reading and it feels good. IT'S XEROXES at GRAND CENTRAL STATION IN A HURRY. It's the poetics of chance. IT'S GOING TO THE POETRY SECTION INSTEAD OF THE ART SECTION WHEN YOU GO INTO A BOOKSTORE. It's a panel about performance art with MEREDITH MONK, LAURIE ANDERSON, JULIE HEYWARD, CONNIE BECKLEY, AND ROSALEE GOLDBERG. IT'S GRAFFITI IN THE SUBWAY. It's riding the BUS FROM KUTZTOWN TO N.Y.C. WITH CONNIE BECKLEY. It's BRIAN WARREN'S NEW PIECES. It's reading BRIAN'S journal and feeling close to it. IT'S A SHORT POEM CALLED "ART BOY." It's feeling real good about being an artist. It's depression that can kill. It's telling other people that depression can be productive and talking to yourself. IT'S KOZO'S BIRTHDAY PARTY AND SPANISH AND JAPANESE AND HEBREW. It's "Running on Empty." It's delivering tropical plants in Manhattan. IT'S MANHATTAN IN THE SUMMER. It's reading *NAKED LUNCH*. IT'S DISEASE XEROXES. It's JOSEPH KOSUTH AT CASTELLI ON CONCEPT AND CONTEXT. IT'S JOAN JONAS'S "JUNIPER TREE." It's CONNIE BECKLEY'S INSTALLATION in the VIDEO ROOM AT MOMA. IT'S KERMIT'S NEW DRAWINGS. It's playing CROQUET in Kutztown. It's talking about epileptic fits in an art context. It's suicide. It's ART AS SIN AS IF NO ART AS ART. It's MOHOLY-NAGY. It's JEAN COCTEAU WRITING ON "THE ORIGINAL SIN OF ART."

IT'S ANONYMOUS SEX. IT'S RE-READING DREW STRAUB'S "UNI-VERSE" WHILE LISTENING TO THE "UNI-VERSE" cut-up tapes we did in February or March IN AUGUST. IT'S READING BURROUGHS'S TALK ABOUT WORK WITH CUT-UPS ON TAPE IN AUGUST MONTHS AFTER WE HAD READ *THE THIRD MIND* AND DID THE SAME THING. It's the most logical step. LOGICAL DOESN'T MEAN RATIONAL. It's science-fiction films. It's reading SARTRE'S *SAINT GENET* ALL SUMMER with much else in between. It's 40 postcards sent to KERMIT OSWALD 172 W. MAIN ST. KUTZTOWN PA. 19530. It's not painting all summer except maybe once or twice. IT'S UNDERSTANDING WHY I SHOULDN'T TRY TO

UNDERSTAND. IT'S "NEGATIVE CAPABILITY"—AS SAID KEATS. DIANE DI PRIMA ON  
"LIGHT AND KEATS." It's wanting to know more. It's an accumulation of information.  
IT'S AN IDEA FOR TOTAL THEATRE. It's a new understanding. IT'S A BEGINNING A SEED  
A GARDEN IT'S THE BIG CHUNK CALLED POETRY.

DECEMBER 21, 1817 (THE WINTER SOLSTICE) JOHN KEATS

The excellence of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with beauty and truth . . . several things dovetailed in my mind, and at once it struck me what quality went to form a man of achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean negative capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.—Coleridge, for instance, would not go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge. This pursued through volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.

The word conveys the thing; it is the thing itself. Are we so far from poetry? May it be that poetry is only the reverse side of masturbation?

—Jean-Paul Sartre (*Saint Genet*)

But above all there's a sense-of-unity that surrounds the poem, a reality concept that acts as a cement, a unification of perspective linking

poet + man  
man + world  
world + image  
image + word  
word + music  
music + dance



dance + dancer  
dancer + man  
man + world  
etc.

All of which has been put in many different ways—by Cassirer notably as a feeling for “the solidarity of all life” leading toward a “law of metamorphosis” in thought and word.

—Jerome Rothenberg  
(*Technicians of the Sacred*)

This is not to invoke the mouldy cliché of a marriage between East and West but rather the concept, held by Robert Duncan, of multiphasic modern man as he emerges into a global culture for the first time in history. Present-day aesthetics is an eclectic hybrid of the primitive and civilized, the old and new—a constantly widening conglomerate made up of scrappy bits of information ranging from quantum mechanics to shamanism or biology. And the forces behind its ever-changing patterns, which have caused the most drastic reorientation of Western art since its beginnings, are all the more elusive as they are unprecedented.

—Ekbert Faas  
(*Towards a New American  
Poetics*)

FEBRUARY 27, 1818—JOHN KEATS

I think poetry should surprise by a fine excess, and not by singularity; it should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost as a remembrance.

APRIL 8, 1818—JOHN KEATS

The innumerable compositions and decompositions which take place between the intellect and its thousand mate-

# 1980

**FEBRUARY 20, 1980:**

*after the Baths in Semiotics class*

Again it was the same and I feel just the same again. Waiting for an answer. And you can say all you want to. I'm not saying anything. And we sit and talk about Barthes' "Lover's Discourse." And I experienced all these signs—condensed—last night and I guess always again. And it's just the way you always knew it was. Nothing has changed—it's still the same thing. But I'm tired—and feel guilty about being tired of it. But it hurt like it hurts for everyone. Distance and no more hope. O.K., give up—go home. He doesn't want you—and it wasn't just that—the right moves never happened. Uncomfortable pause and he gets up and walks away—but he was the only hope—so go home and don't care—and especially don't feel sorry for yourself—read Nietzsche, right? Rationalizations—I mean I just didn't do the right thing at the right time, but I couldn't control that at the time—so fast, I said. So he gets up and leaves and I've done it too—I've been on that side before. So why are you still talking. You've been in his shoes just one more rejection but this time it's not me who is feeling powerful. And it sounds like pure adolescent babble—silly—childish—and if I can't even overcome my own doubt—what can I overcome. This is not

a little thing. It has been the only thing in my head since this happened—this thing has crushed me. A misunderstanding, he said. I am nauseous with chilled stunted exaltation, I said. Sometimes I'm really happy. When? he said. I can't remember if—I'm not sure he... We're not going to help you, he said. So go away again and say to yourself that maybe it's happening to you because for you it's more than rejection—for you it is something else too. I'm not just sad—I compensate with rationalization or others—They can do this to me and I can say it will help me—make me stronger, bigger. I already saw the sadness—tragedy at home. I can see inside of it and absorb it into myself so that it has become bigger than me inside me and it is only me. But it's not only me—it's always again still the same—the tragedy—the ultimate failure of the spirit. He said soul. I said I'm going home. And how can this boy from the baths make me be in this place—and if he hadn't got up and walked away would you be better and didn't you cause it to happen—didn't you inflict the wound yourself? Sometimes I feel really stupid and sometimes I know I am—But you boy in the baths—you turned me inside out again and exposed myself—to myself—and I guess that's good again.

**FIRST "REAL" GROUP SHOW IN NEW YORK CITY  
... SALSA 'N' COLORS FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 9,  
1980**

I showed a large red-black on white painting 9' x 9' done January 15, 1979, in this group painting show called "Salsa 'n' Colors" at a Spanish school on the Lower East Side—107 Suffolk Street—in the gymnasium.

**MARCH 18, 1980**

These fucking beautiful boys drive me crazy. This guy in the subway sitting with his legs wide open in front of him—on purpose. Glancing at me and just enjoying being looked at. This guy in the cafeteria. Gorgeous. I just stand there and say "gorgeous" to myself over and over again. I find a reason to use the phone so I can stand there near him a little longer, just a little longer—pretty—pretty—pretty boys. And I just look and I know it's just as bad because I only look and I have an incredible imagination. I can have these boys, any of them, all of them, tonight alone in my little room in the dark—just my imagination—dark eyes, dark hair and gorgeous bodies, penetrating gaze. To quote from an essay by Jean Genet I read recently, "Eager thick penis rising from a bed of black curls." So writing it out. Writing it out of myself—stop thinking about it and take this energy into another form. This energy, sexual energy, may be the single strongest impulse I feel—more than art?(!)



APRIL 14, 1980

I missed Cosmology class. I completely forgot. I never thought about it the whole day till I saw Kenny and he said, "God is light."

APRIL 25, 1980: SEMIOTICS

The question of *whether* or *not* there *should be* any texts or grammar to raise moral issues or make us define our values, is itself a moral question.

Have the aspirations of the futurists and constructivists (the social upheaval of values of society by the introduction of abstract art) been realized?



JUNE 21, 1980: NEW YORK CITY

- "People are afraid of being pop, but it's not easy to be simple."—Tony Shafrazi (in reference to B. Beckley's alteration of photograph in piece)
- saw Lethalithic show on Church St.
- idea about criticism taking "art" out of the realm of experience and turning it into a literary practice
- from idea that someone should be writing about Club 57 right now but *not* showing others because writing "about" becomes "input into"
- writing would/could become an influence on the Club and substantially alter it and its activities/participation, etc. as with media, journalism, etc.
- talking about something is changing or making that thing
- still respect for Kenny's paintings. They are rich in experience, but also still new enough to be interesting in realm of language, history, etc.

JULY 26, 1980 —

After "Acts of Live Art III"

Finally understanding the conflict between the piece I presented and the generally "visual" domination of the other work. An understanding of a totally "visually oriented" program with the exception of my "language-based" presentation.

Context (as it was) remains determinant of criticism comparison: immediate response.

Maybe the "language-based presentation" (re: calculable specific information) becomes part of other attention center (memory) recall: associations fixed: juxtapo (he said) and I remembered.

Reading Gide, Lautréamont, Solanis: information recurring of self as artwork. Diaries of Hugo Ball: pieces of. The life of the artist as a work of art itself. See: Greek understanding of. "Man thinks of himself as beautiful—however it is simply a rationalization to deal with miserableness of self." Mankind thought as source/bit maybe virus situation occurs: again. "Painting is a disease or a curse"—Frank Holliday. Valerie Solanis sees "man" as eternal mutation: deviation: aborted female. Male spirit seen as weak, in opposition, she said. They shot Andy Warhol, she said.

# 1980

## *Special Projects*

Began drawing on blank advertising panels in New York City subway stations

## *Group Exhibitions*

*Club 57 Invitational*, New York City

*Times Square Show*, New York City

*Studio Exhibition at P.S. 122*, New York City

*Events: Fashion Moda*, The New Museum, New York City

# 1981

## *One-Man Exhibitions*

Westbeth Painters Space, New York City

P.S. 122, New York City

Club 57, New York City

Hal Bromm Gallery, New York City

## *Group Exhibitions*

*Drawing Show*, The Mudd Club, New York City



Brion and Andy, etc., it becomes increasingly important to keep the fires burning and use their knowledge and experience to prepare the present and forthcoming generations for the world they are about to inherit.

For that reason and a thousand more this weekend was a very important stepping stone in my life. I'm happy I'm here.

## OCTOBER 2, 1987

I'm on a train leaving Zurich. When I arrived yesterday I slept a while and then went to the Trickfilmstudio to start working on the animation. We had to start developing characters. The six one-minute spots are designed to teach children about home safety. It's the first time I'm using my "cartoon" characters for an animated film. It's funny to see these characters, most of which I invented when I was ten or eleven years old, turn into "real things." It's nice to be back in the house of Rolf Baechler where I did my first real animation three years ago for the store here called BIG. This time I'm sort of the art director and designer instead of having to do all the drawings.

Rolf and Yunia's kids are all real happy to see me. It's been three years and they've grown. Actually, that's not true. I met them three years ago the first time, but I saw them last year in Montreux when I was at the jazz festival. They can't stop climbing all over me and giggling a lot. Their father is always trying to get them to calm down and act normal, but they can't help it. Especially Serafina, the little girl, who giggles even if you touch her with one finger! I'm sort of an honorary member of the family. Again, they told me the story of how the kids cried for three days after I left them three years ago. I seem to be adopting these little families all over the world.

Speaking of families: I'm sitting in an empty train car so I'm playing my radio real loud. I've got a tape on that Junior made me called *Paradise Lost*. It still hasn't sunk in that the Paradise Garage has closed forever. Every time I hear a song that is a "Garage song," I get real emotional. I can't explain exactly why, but something about just knowing it was there was a comfort, especially when I was out of New York City. There was always something to look forward to immediately upon my return. In fact, I often scheduled my trips around the Garage, leaving on Sundays and returning before or on Saturdays. It was really a kind of family. A tribe. Maybe I should open a club, but I really don't want to deal with that headache. This is the worst heartache I ever felt. It's like losing a lover when everything was going just fine. It's like when Andy and Bobby died. Maybe Paradise Garage has moved to heaven . . . so Bobby can go there now. That would be nice.

The last night was pretty incredible but not as sad as I thought it would be. People were sort of numb. It's just so weird knowing that you're not going to see a lot of these



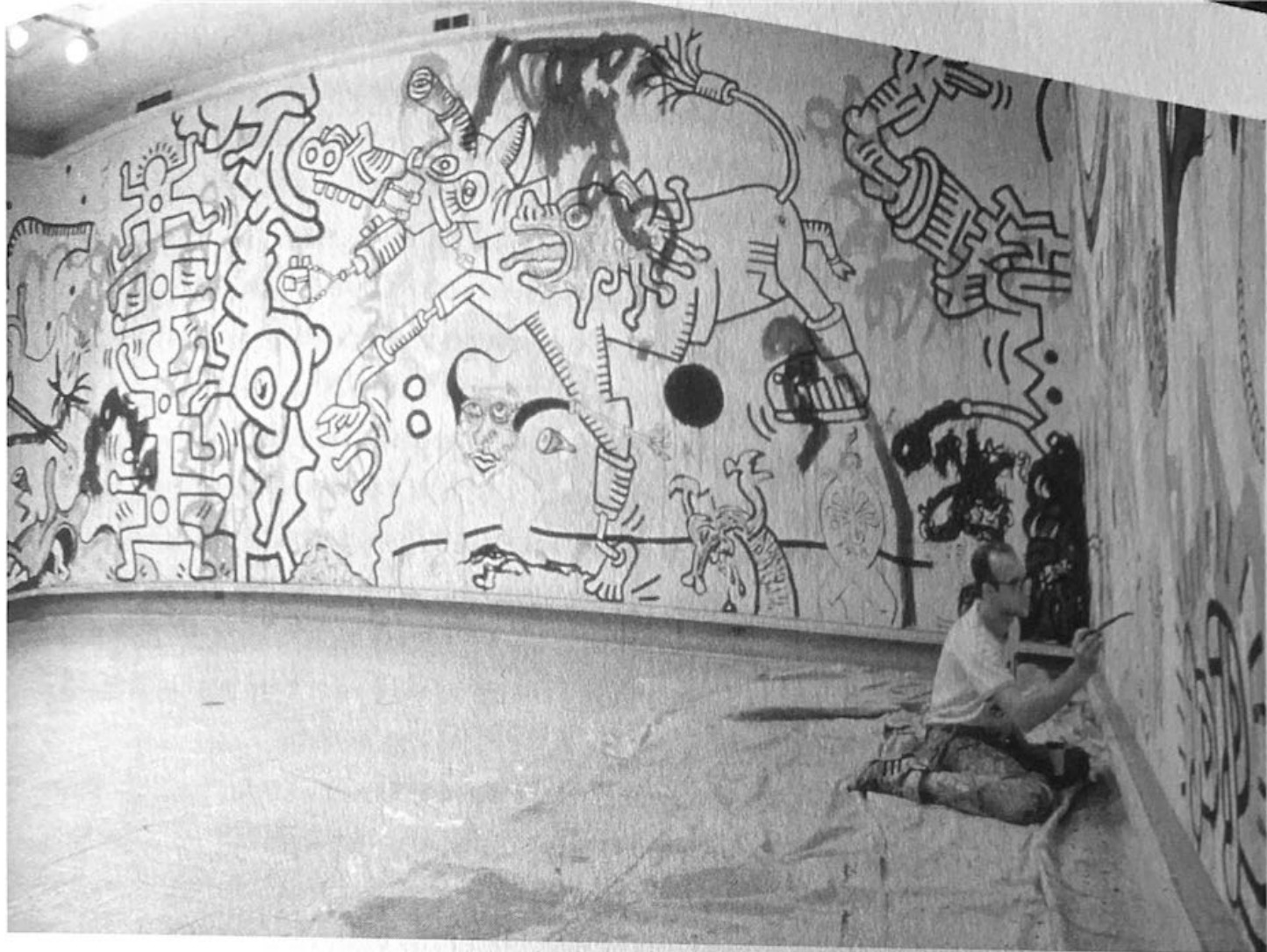
people again. There were a lot of people I only used to see there, a lot of them I never even spoke to the whole five years I went there, but I feel like I “know” them ‘cause I shared something with them. Grace came for a little while, but didn’t stay long. Larry Levan played all night and all the next day till after midnight. I had to leave at midnight because I had work to do Monday morning to prepare for this trip to Europe.

The last couple of weeks have been really hectic. The mural in Philadelphia with City Kids, and then a trip to Kansas to see Bill Burroughs, to Detroit for an installation at Cranbrook Academy of Art.

Cranbrook was pretty cool. I did probably my best painting to date! The room had 16-foot-high ceilings and the walls were 35 feet long. I did a fast Gysinesque color “calligraffiti” background with big Chinese brushes and then the next day painted with Japanese brushes with black (ink/paint mix) with different size lines and brushes. Each brush I used was nailed to the wall at the end of a line. The big Chinese brushes looked so cool after using them that it seemed like a good idea. I went there with no materials and decided what to do after seeing the space. So I bought all these brushes with Cranbrook money that weren’t very expensive and weren’t very reusable after the abusive painting of the color, so it seemed like a good idea and also, since this was a temporary installation, it was a chance to experiment. I’m obsessed with brushes, so somehow to sacrifice them to the painting was a kind of homage to the brushes themselves. The whole thing was a kind of sacrifice anyway. The room will be repainted in one month.

I took Kwong along to take pictures. Photography has become such an important part of my work since so much of it is temporary. It is, after all, the phenomena of photography and video that have made the international phenomenon of Keith Haring possible. How else would everyone in the world have plugged into my information? Most information about art is conveyed through pictures now. Sometimes that’s deceptive, but in my





*Mural, Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, 1987*

case it is the means *and* the end. Of course, the effect of scale is lost in photo depiction, but almost all of the other information is transferable.

My lecture at Cranbrook was probably the best I've ever done. The auditorium was packed. A lot of people there, in fact most of them, were not Cranbrook art students. Many people came from Detroit and a lot of kids from the private middle schools at Cranbrook. Somehow the words just flowed and I was pretty articulate. I'm anxious to hear a tape of the talk. Mobs of people afterward for autographs. My patience was even longer than usual.

Some girl brought a poster for me to sign which she said she got at the Tate in London. It's really funny to me how all these museums sell poster and postcard reproductions of my art, but refuse to exhibit, collect or even acknowledge it within the museum. I bet they didn't sell Peter Max in art museum bookshops ever. They want to play with me, but they don't have the balls to stand up and support me now. Wait, everyone says, just wait and be patient. I should be glad, I suppose, that I am still outside of their accep-



tance. It gives me a kind of freedom and gives me something to work against. Does this mean I'm still avant-garde? Ha-ha, just kidding. I can't believe that some people are so shallow as to worry about whether one person, like Saatchi, collects me or not. How can one person be an important determiner of what is good or not? In fact, if someone is trying to use their power or collecting to impose their taste and standardize the taste of the entire culture, then I think they are the most suspicious suspects of all. It's all banking and investment bullshit at that level. Saatchi might as well be a bank. The art market is one of the most dangerous, parasitic, corrupt organizations in the world, next to the Roman Catholic church or the justice system in the United States. How naive of me to even think that art was an island of "purity" in this vast chaos of business and "reality." The only time it remains pure is when you are doing it at a real public level without monetary compensation or when you do it totally for yourself in seclusion. Even now, when I draw in public, the autograph-seekers are sometimes motivated by the hope that my signature will be "worth" something instead of simply because they like it or admire it. It is, however, impossible to go backwards. I'm in this thing now and I've got to deal with it. I think I'm doing a good job of it so far.

I wish I could keep a diary in New York City; it seems I am so busy in New York, and there is so much going on that I never have time to think about it, let alone write it down.

Re-reading this last page I have to add the possibility of purity during the moments of working with children. When I do drawings with or for children, there is a level of sincerity that seems honest and pure. Admittedly, even some children keep their autographs because they are told "they might be worth something later." But most of them keep them because they love them.

### **OCTOBER 3, 1987**

I'm back on the train. What a fucking day! Twenty-four hours seemed like a week. Pierre picked me up at the train [in Lausanne] and we went directly to lunch with Mrs. Rivolta of the gallery and her 16-year-old, Francis.

This was the same fancy little restaurant that mistook Jean Tinguely for the repairman of the lift when he arrived in his coveralls. I was wearing my "safe sex" sweatshirt prominently displaying the cartoon "Willie." Needless to say, heads turned.

Pierre had with him 50 samples of the "condom button-boxes" that I'm producing in Switzerland for the Pop Shop in New York. They look great. After lunch we quickly visited Dolce Vita, the nightclub that has utilized my "wine label design" for stickers, T-shirts, etc. I helped myself to two packs of stickers and requested T-shirts sent to New York immediately. We had another quite small glass of Swiss white wine. By now I was