
Jon Hendricks

Jon Hendricks reopened the Judson Gallery in 1967.

I came to Judson as a conscientious objector from Vermont in 1965. The Vietnam War was heating up, so I applied for CO status with my local board. I thought I would like to work in a museum, but they had only jobs for guards. The Museum of Modern Art was not very sympathetic to conscientious objectors. They asked me what I would do if there was a rowdy crowd. They asked: "Are you such a pacifist that you would leave them alone?"

My brother Geoffrey knew about Judson Church because he had worked with Al Carmines teaching students who came to New York from midwestern colleges such as Earlham, so I applied to be placed there because Judson was an approved site. Judson had had one earlier CO. Little did the draft board know that the government was letting me enter a subversive role of resistance. Judson had no money to pay me but they agreed to give me room and board. I had a room on the second floor with the students. Beverly Waite also lived there. Downstairs, below Beverly's room, was Al Carmines's apartment, and to the left at the end of the hall was Ro Lee's. She was the church secretary at the time. Below Ro's apartment was Ed Brewer's. He was the church organist. There was a cook who provided meals, so I had food and a place to live. But I had no spending money. I would do odd painting jobs, and at Christmas the church gave me \$50.

NO JOB DESCRIPTION

I worked for the church full-time but there was no job description, so what I did was things like setting up chairs for the theater and moving the platform in the meeting room, because we had theater on Saturday night and church services on Sunday morning.

Howard was very interested in the idea of finding some alternatives to drug use. This was a time of heroin. This was before methadone. So he asked me to look into LSD. Was this an alternative? Was

this a possibility? This led to discussions of mind expansion, psychedelic experiences, away into some other state of being. We then began discussions about creating an environment for artists where one could experience something other than drugs. At the time, I was also very interested in groups and group activities. I wanted to find out what happens when a group of individuals gets together and something forms that is outside of the self.

The gallery was located in the student house under Al's apartment. It had not been used much since 1961 when Allan Kaprow, Jim Dine, and Claes Oldenburg exhibited there. These artists had been brought in by Bud Scott. Bud would go to the cafés and talk to the artists to see if there was a need for space to exhibit. The artists showed some very radical art in the gallery and began to have happenings there.

From the gallery you could get into the Garden Room (called Long Room at the time) and from there into the gymnasium. Some of the happenings of 1960 took place in the Long Room and the gymnasium but also in the gallery. But certainly by 1962 the gallery was closed, and it was just empty space.

THE GALLERY REOPENS

I was aware of this very important early history of the gallery. So I asked Howard if I could reopen the gallery, and he said yes. I began to talk to artists about this idea of creating an environment that would be sustaining over a period of time, that would change our state of being. We came up with the idea of something called *The Stone*, by Anthony Cox. It was really written by a group of us: Michael Mason, who created repeated loop sounds; and Yoko Ono, who had done eye bags and questionnaires. You would come down into the gallery and fill out a questionnaire, then you would be given a bag, take your shoes off, and then you would be in this room. The gallery was small and the room was smaller. Jeff Perkins did film messages, which were looped films that repeated. This became a famous event in art history.

We had a budget of \$50 a show, \$300 a year, money that the church gave us. We also had free use of the mimeograph machine. Yoko Ono and Tony printed *The Stone* and I helped. They wanted to charge \$1 for it, but I felt it had to be free. We did a lot of things

in the gallery that were different from the things that were done at the church. The gallery was more independent.

My work with the church was primarily with the arts program. And slowly Judson House became a place for artists rather than for students. The Judson Board decided that it would be more meaningful to provide living space for artists. At that time there was a very active program at the church in theater, dance, music, as well as the gallery.

ARTISTS AND RUNAWAYS

In 1967 I was asked to devise a program for artists in residence. Beverly Waite was the manager of the Student House. Beverly was a wonderful person. She was already at the house when I came. The idea was to create some kind of community, to make sure that the artists felt part of a community.

Then there was a program started in a building on Third Street with runaway kids, where people from the arts worked with teenage runaways. I did a program with Elaine Summers one or two days a week. Larry Kornfeld did something on theater. So we had this storefront, and each day kids would come in and freely hang out and use the materials. Some of the kids also lived in the Judson House. There was a feeling at the church that this might be a better use of the space. Giving the space to performers was very necessary, but here we had a crisis on runaway kids without a place to live. At that time there were a lot of runaways in the Village.

MANIPULATIONS

In 1967 the Vietnam War was in full swing and I wanted my own art activities to be more engaged in protesting the war. I had been a painter but had moved away into critical art activism. This was a transitional time when painting seemed to be a pretty poor way of addressing the war. Painting is a very removed form. You paint a painting, then you have to find a place to show it, maybe someone will buy it, and then you won't see it anymore, and here were these traumatic images on television of Americans murdering Vietnamese. So we were looking for other forms, other ways of expression. Certainly, the idea of art as performance and happenings was not new,

but still we felt we could do something within the gallery space or within the church.

I had invited a wonderful artist, Carolee Schneemann, to do an installation, but she was not able to get together what she wanted to do, and I was a little down. And then I had the idea to do a series of events over a period of three weeks, where each artist would be given one day and in that day they could do anything they wanted but they had to deal with destruction. So I started talking to people about this idea, and we came up with the title of *Manipulations*, and it would be held in the gallery space. I had organized several shows before, such as Kate Millett's furniture, but this was to be a major show.

The show took place in October 1967. The official title was *The Twelve Evenings of Manipulation*. Lil Picard had a piece called Construction-Destruction-Construction. That winter Andy Warhol asked Lil if she had something for a movie he was making. We went over and recreated Construction-Destruction-Construction in Andy's loft, and after we did our thing Andy and his friends started to do their thing, which was actually later.

Manipulations took place before DIAS, the Destruction in Art Symposium, that was held at Judson in March 1968. The Destruction in Art movement had begun in London in 1966, but I did not know about it, although subliminally I might have. It is not hard to jump to the idea of destruction with a war raging on. In the spring of 1968 we organized a DIAS-USA 68 and invited a bunch of artists to come. We canceled the show when Martin Luther King was killed. We then did another series of events where each artist was invited to say something about destruction. This was another very important event in the gallery. For all these events I acted as coordinator.

The artists involved in *Manipulations* were:

Ralph Ortiz, a Puerto Rican who now is a professor at Rutgers University.

Bici Hendricks (now Nye Ffarrabas), who did a wonderful piece. Jean Toche; we formed a group called the Guerrilla Art Action, which produced very provocative art actions. They were really theater pieces but we moved into an area that we considered art. They were provocative, direct, confrontational

art actions. Jean and I worked very closely for a number of years, and still do.

Allan Kaprow, who had run the Judson Gallery in the early years.

Al Hansen

Geoffrey Hendricks

Malcolm Goldstein, a composer who had worked with Elaine Summers on a piece for the Judson Dance Theater. For this show he did a wonderful piece where he took a tape with President Johnson's State of the Union address and invited people who came in to cut up the tape and resplice it and then play it. He had several tape recorders sitting around.

Steve Rose—I don't know where he came from. He came and set up a division in the gallery. He had a dog or maybe it was Beverly's dog. Anyway, the dog came in through the window.

Carolee Schneemann, a great early-happenings artist.

Lil Picard, a critic and artist, and a refugee from Nazi Germany.

Kate Millett, who later wrote *Sexual Politics*.

Jud Yalkut, a film artist.

Nam June Paik, one of the original video artists.

Charlotte Moorman, who was famous as the topless cellist but also was an interpreter of Paik and other avant-gardists.

All during the winter of 1967–1968 we had events having to do with destruction. In March 1968 we invited artists from all over the world to participate in our DIAS preview. Kurt Cren was there and other artists. One of the pieces by Ortiz was Henny Penny Up in the Tree. We bought two chickens, a white chicken and a black chicken, and we would climb up the tree and yell insults at each other and throw blood at each other and fight with the chickens, killing the chickens in a race war. Before we could start, Michael Kirby and one of the Motherfuckers, an anarchist group, grabbed the chickens and threw them over the fence. So here we were, stuck without the chickens to do our Henny Penny. Ralph said, Do you have any saws? And I said yes, and we climbed up the tree and we did this very silently. It was actually quite beautiful. We each sawed a branch of the tree and poured blood into the cut of the tree branch. We then climbed down and put the American flags into a pool of blood. It was actually a better piece.

CHARLOTTE MOORMAN PERFORMS

Then we went inside and we were going to have a symposium. Charlotte Moorman was to have performed but she had not shown up. She was notoriously late. We started without her, and then she walked in, upset that we had begun without her performance. We explained to her that we had done our performances and were now at the symposium part of the program. "No, no, no, I have to do my performance," she cried. We gave in but warned her not to take a long time. Her piece was called *One for Violin*, by Nam June Paik. Charlotte raised the violin slowly above her head with the idea to bring it down fast and smash it on the table. Someone in the audience yelled not to smash the violin, a kid on the Lower East Side could use it to make music. Charlotte answered: "It is my violin. I am going to make my kind of music." No, someone else yelled, you can't smash that violin. This gave rise to a big argument back and forth about the idea of material versus art—whose was the material? Is it better to do this? What about the kid on the Lower East Side?

Finally Saul Gottlieb came from the back of the room and sat on the table facing the audience, and Charlotte started doing a very abbreviated, quick version of her violin piece and hit Saul on the head with the violin. Well, that was the end of that symposium on destruction and all hell broke loose. Jill Johnston wrote a piece about the event in *The Village Voice* (March 28, 1968), in which she described the chicken rescue and violin performance as "the most unusual manifestation of a performer-audience situation I have witnessed in a decade of attending a theatre in which the performer-audience relationship has been pushed in every conceivable direction. Unusual is a mild word for it."

I left Judson House in June of 1968. Even after I was gone, I did three more shows, including the flag show in 1969. I also did a couple of benefits for Judson.

The artists-in-residence program was probably a failure. Some of the other things we did were probably failures. But what was important to me was that anyone living in the Judson House at that time would have been exposed to and taken part in the different productions— theater and dance and so on. And they would have been enriched by what they experienced.

NO LIMITS

The gallery was not programmatic, it was not planned. Maybe that was the failure of our thinking, that we could have programmed or planned something. But anybody who was there, and you would have to have been pretty dumb not to trip over it, would know that something was going on: artists going in and out, events going on, and so on.

Howard had a great deal of trust in what we did in the gallery. Once a decision had been made about the gallery, Howard defended the arts. There was never any interference. The church had made a decision to have an arts program in the gallery and I was to run it. There was actually one time when Beverly got very upset because her kids saw a dead lamb being smashed around in a piece by Hermann Nitsch, and there was kind of a division within the church. People were outraged at this destruction stuff and had very strong feelings about what we were doing.

Howard got up there and was so strong about free speech. There was never any wavering. He said, We may not like this but we have to be able to allow it. I have such a respect for the man, for sticking up for us. It was not a question of whether he liked it or not. It was not a question of whether it was good or bad. It was a legitimate artistic expression, and the church was not going to interfere with that. That was always the feeling at Judson. Once a decision was made there were no limits. The only limits were on fire and water. Fire could destroy the building and water would ruin the floor. Anything with fire and water had to be done in the garden. When we burned the flag we did it in the garden. But language or nudity were OK, even simulated sex acts. It was all part of that wonderful support of free expression that Howard especially was strong in.

I don't regret for a minute my time at Judson. The last year I was there the church gave me a little money. To be able to be free to do these things was great. Judson changed my life, but at the gallery we also did things that changed other people's lives. We weren't just spectators. What we did with destruction art changed art history.

JON HENDRICKS

lives in New York City.