
Geoffrey Hendricks

Geoffrey Hendricks was involved in the Judson Gallery in 1967 and 1968.

In the 1960s, Judson Memorial Church, and especially the Judson Gallery in the basement of Judson House, became an important part of my life. That space at 239 Thompson Street was modest but versatile. Throughout the decade I witnessed many transformations of it as friends and artists, including myself, created work there.

The gallery's small size and roughness were perhaps assets. One could work freely and make it into what it had to be. It was a container for each person's ideas, dreams, images, actions. Three people in particular formed links for me to the space: Allan Kaprow, Al Carmines, and my brother, Jon Hendricks.

It must have been through Allan Kaprow that I first got to know about the Judson Gallery. When I began teaching at Rutgers University (called Douglass College at the time) in 1956, Allan and I became colleagues, and I went to the Judson Gallery to view his *Apple Shrine* (November 30-December 24, 1960). In that environment one moved through a maze of walls of crumpled newspaper supported on chicken wire and arrived at a square, flat tray that was suspended in the middle and had apples on it. With counterpoints of city and country, it was dense and messy but had an underlying formal structure. His work of the previous few years had had a tremendous impact on me: his *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, at the Reuben Gallery (October 1959), his earlier installation accompanied with a text entitled *Notes on the Creation of a Total Art* at the Hansa Gallery (February 1958), and his first happening in Voorhees Chapel at Douglass College (April 1958). From that time I also remember environments by Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine, who transformed the Judson Gallery with reworked material brought in from the street. In December 1963 Al Hansen took over the space for a 3rd Rail Viking Dada extravaganza *Oogadooga*.

Throughout the early 1960s, my wife, Bici (Nye Ffarrabas), and I were often at Judson for a whole range of events, including many dance and theater performances. As we went on to create pieces in the space, bringing our children with us as we worked, Judson Gallery became like a second home.

In 1964 my college art teacher, Bill Darr, asked if I would be interested in helping to create a New York winter term in music, art, and drama for Earlham College, where he was then teaching. Bill also asked about my thoughts of someone for theater, and I suggested Al Carmines. Together with Al and a music professor from Earlham, Larry Apgar, we created something that turned out to be considerably more radical than what Earlham originally had in mind.

Al took the students into the world of Off-Off Broadway theater, the theater at Judson, and Café Cino. I took them to the world of Happenings, Fluxus, and Pop Art. We had gatherings in Al's apartment at Judson House and at our apartment. We staged events in different parts of the church. Each winter from 1965 to 1969 I worked with a group of about twenty students, taking them to meet artists such as Al Hansen, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, Hui Ka Kwong, Bob Watts, Bob Morris, Yvonne Rainer, Carolee Schneemann, George Segal, Arakawa, and Jean Toche. We also went to galleries and museums, discussed what we saw, and created new work together. For the drama portion Al Carmines organized comparable events. During the first program in 1965 Bici and I did a reading, *Selections from the Friday Book of White Noise* (our collaborative journal) at the Café au GoGo (part of the Watts & Brecht *Monday Night Letter*). As part of the same series I did *Happening Weather* there, in which the Earlham students participated and which we did again at Judson in the back area of the Meeting Room.

In late 1964, while Al Carmines, Larry Apgar, and I were in the midst of planning the Music Art Drama (MAD) Winter Term for Earlham students, my brother Jon was called up by his draft board. As a conscientious objector he needed to find a place where he could carry out his alternative service. I put Jon in touch with Al. Jon met Al and Howard Moody, and his draft board approved Judson as an alternative site.

Soon after arriving at Judson, Jon began to reactivate the gallery, which had been closed for several years. He organized a piece by

Yoko Ono and Anthony Cox called *The Stone* and an exhibition with Bici Hendricks. Jon was showing women at a time when the art world was dominated by men. Bici's show had a vanity table where you could shed your ego and balance an egg; an array of ice cubes with the American flag, called *Defrost the American Flag*; a neon sign flashing "Über alleS"; *Word Work*, consisting of horizontal boxes with a moving text on a perforated tape lighted from behind; among other things.

Together with others, Jon conceived of a group of events in the Judson Gallery in which each person had that basement room for just one day. The morning was spent setting up; the exhibit or activity took place in late afternoon and evening; and the space had to be cleared that night for the next person. The *Twelve Evenings of Manipulation* was planned to run from Thursday, October 5, to Sunday, October 22, 1967, and turned into a dense three weeks. Exhibit goers wanted to get to every event, and with four events a week, time needed to be planned carefully. I have memories of rushing from teaching at Rutgers back to Judson. Three-year-old Tyche and eight-month-old Bracken called for further planning by Bici and me. Our children became part of this whole mix of art and life. The participating artists were Ralph (Raphael) Ortiz, Bici Forbes (Nye Ffarrabas), Jean Toche, Allan Kaprow, Al Hansen, Malcolm Goldstein, Steve Rose, Carolee Schneemann, Lil Picard, Jud Yalkut, Ken Jacobs, Kate Millett, Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman, Takahiki Jimura, and myself.

MANIPULATIONS

My evening was an environmental performance titled *Sky/Change* on October 13. I began with 100 cardboard boxes in flat bundles that I assembled and painted white. The only light came from changing projected slides of sky that became visible as the boxes became white. As the stacked boxes filled the room, shadows were cast. Some of my sky laundry was hung in the space—two sheets on which I had painted sky on both sides. These I also painted over white, so that the projected sky, first in interplay with the image of the sky on the sheets, then became the image. On a red table I had a bouquet of orange and yellow flowers that I covered first with shaving cream and then with a sheet of plastic. The event lasted three hours.

For her evening, Bici had a large cake of ice to chip and melt, with her event scores and word pieces projected on the wall and on the ice. Were burning candles floating in water? Memories of other pieces include Ralph Ortiz destroying furniture and objects; Jean Toche filling the space with blinding light and sound; Malcolm Goldstein taking a tape of President Johnson's State of the Union address and splicing and resplicing it into garbled incoherence; Steve Rose caging himself; Lil Picard in a performance focused on the Vietnam War, spraying perfume and burning objects in a frying pan; Kate Millett building a large cage of vertical dowels that filled the space, which she packed with the audience and then left them to their own devices; Charlotte Moorman playing the cello lying on her back while Nam June Paik cut a fine line on his arm with a razor blade bringing forth beads of blood. Was this Nam June atoning for Charlotte's arrest while performing his *Opera Sextronique*? (The latter event had taken place on February 9, 1967, the day our son Bracken was born. Bici and I missed that performance.) These events changed the basement room every day, each time giving it very different energy. Sometimes it was a focused performance, sometimes a total environment, and sometimes it moved into the garden behind Judson House. They were three great weeks of sharing.

DESTRUCTION IN ART

Then there were the DIAS (Destruction in Art Symposium) previews that took place in the Garden Room (Long Room), the Gallery, and the Garden. In September 1966 there had been a big *Destruction in Art Symposium* in London, and the plan was to have another one in New York. The previews in March 1968 were in preparation for the big event, which was later canceled because of the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy.

At the inaugural gathering, speakers and performers sat behind a long table alongside the wall, with the audience filling the rest of the room seated on folding chairs and the overflow crowd standing behind them. The most vivid moment of the evening came when Charlotte Moorman set out to perform Nam June Paik's *One for Violin*. The piece consists of holding the violin by the neck, very slowly raising it over one's head, and then rapidly, like a Zen slap, bringing it down to smash on the surface below.

Everyone in the audience knew the piece, but with each performance there was new suspense and anticipation. This one was unique. Saul Gottlieb, a political activist in the East Village and organizer of alternative programming, felt that Charlotte should not destroy the violin. From the back of the room, he got into a dialogue with Charlotte, explaining how the violin should be given to some poor child on the Lower East Side who wanted to play the violin—it could be the beginning of a great career.

Charlotte said yes, things like that should be done, but this was music by a great composer and should be performed. Charlotte was determined to continue and complete the piece. The suspense was great. Slowly she raised the violin high over her head. At that point Saul pushed his way through the crowd, slid over the long table, and stood in front of Charlotte just as she brought the violin down, smashing it on Saul's head.

Everyone was stunned.

I was sitting in the front row and retrieved the neck of the violin. Later, I painted a bank of cumulus clouds on the fingerboard. I saw the piece as a collaborative work between Nam June, Charlotte, and myself. I titled it *In Memoriam: Saul Gottlieb*, for within the year Saul was dead of cancer.

During another exciting DIAS preview someone freed two chickens that Ralph Ortiz had planned to kill.

As to the Judson House building itself, I am drawn to nineteenth-century Federal architecture. I like the scale, the simplicity, the dimension of the spaces, the character of the windows, the relation of the Judson House to the houses that used to line all of Washington Square. It is unfortunate that the building is slated to be torn down.

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lives in New York City.