JUAN DOWNEY

Los Angeles Pitzer Contemporary College Exhibitions Art Galleries

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Acknowledgments

Of the many peers, collaborators, and friends who assisted with the organization of *Juan Downey: Radiant Nature*, the Estate of Juan Downey is foremost among them. We extend our deepest gratitude to Marilys Downey, whose unparalleled understanding of Downey's oeuvre both informed our research and enabled us to include many works that otherwise would have been impossible to refabricate. We are also grateful to Javier Rivero Ramos at the estate, who worked tirelessly to ensure we had the information we needed to pursue particular lines of inquiry; his dedication to accuracy was matched by his good-natured approach to all aspects of this complex project.

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The inclusion of many key works in Juan Downey: Radiant Nature was possible only because of the extraordinary efforts of a few expert individuals. Through their in-depth research into obsolete technologies, Jeff and Theresia Kleeman at Studio Sereno enabled us to refabricate several of Downey's early Interactive Sculptures and Life Cycle Installations. Maurice Schechter at DuArt lent his expertise in digitizing Downey's original Portapak performance videos, which play a central role in the exhibition, while Matina Donaldson-Matasci, assistant professor of biology at Harvey Mudd College, brought a knowledge of bees that was critical to remaking Life Cycle: Electric Light + Water + Soil \rightarrow Flowers \rightarrow Bees \rightarrow Honey. We are grateful to composer Annea Lockwood, who made illuminating contributions to two of Downey's works, Monument to a River, Cambridge (1973) and Bi-Deo (1976). We also thank Clifford Jones, for sourcing period-specific equipment to the exhibition, and Jeremy Grubman, project archivist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for Advanced Visual Studies Special Collection, for assisting with research on Downey's residency at the institute.

In preparation for this exhibition, we sought input from many of Downey's collaborators and peers. We would like to acknowledge all those who took the time to meet with us-their extraordinary generosity in sharing their memories and experiences were vital in shaping our approach. Carmen Beuchet graciously hosted us in her home in Pucón, Chile, where she described the choreography of each of her collaborations with Downey in meticulous detail. Likewise, Barbara (Lloyd) Dilley was an indispensable source of information and insight about her performances with the artist. We are grateful as well to scholar and curator Jennifer McColl Crozier, who further clarified Downey and Beuchet's contributions to avant-garde dance movements; to Ed McGowin, who shared memories of working with Downey on the New Group's Happenings in Washington,

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D.C., during the late 1960s; and to Steve Paxton, whose insights helped illuminate Downey's relationship to New York's avant-garde dance community during the early 1970s. Likewise, our conversations with David A. Ross during the research phase were extremely helpful. In Chile, Enrique Rivera, director of the Chile Media Arts Biennale, took time to show us around the Museo Nacional de Belles Artes. Claudia Zaldívar, director of the Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende, shared her experiences of Downey's work, while Francisco Martinez of Needle recalled his visit to Downey's 2010 retrospective at Fundación Telefónica España, generously offering his copy of the long-out-of-print catalogue, Juan Downey: El Ojo Pensante. In Argentina, artist and curator Gabriela Golder, art historian Mariana Marchesi, and artist Marta Minujín met with us to talk about Downey's work and our plans for the exhibition.

We are thrilled to have been able to produce a beautiful and comprehensive publication to accompany *Juan Downey: Radiant Nature*. Catalogue designer Tanya Rubbak deftly organized a wealth of material, smartly deploying historical and contemporary references that complement the thematic structure of the exhibition. Elizabeth Hamilton skillfully managed the catalogue's editing and production with considerable expertise and patience; her intelligent and precise editorial comments greatly contributed to both the publication and the exhibition. We are extremely thankful to have had the participation of our contributors, whose diverse and original perspectives on Downey's work have further enriched the project. Stuart Comer's insightful interview with Marilys Downey provides a rare glimpse into Downey's history and practice, while essays by Bill Anthes, Julieta González, Ming-Yuen S. Ma, and Grant Wahlquist each apply a unique lens to his oeuvre. We are grateful to Pasadena Arts Alliance for their generous financial support, and to Emmy Catedral, manager of publisher services at Distributed Art Publishers, Inc., for her help in finding a wider audience for this catalogue. Thanks also go to Yann Novak for his thoughtful and detailed approach to compiling our research into an efficient, indexed master archive.

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the Getty Foundation for initiating the ambitious Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA program and for including *Juan Downey: Radiant Nature* as part of it. Special thanks go to Deputy Director Joan Weinstein for her unwavering encouragement and to Program Officer Heather MacDonald for her deep sensitivity and attentiveness to the project. On the Getty team, Project Administrator Christina Lopez and Program Assistant Selene Preciado kept us on track, while Managing Director, Gloria Gerace skillfully coordinated the entire initiative. At the Getty Research Institute, Consulting Curator in Architecture and Contemporary Art Glenn Phillips offered invaluable advice.

In addition to the Estate of Juan Downey, we are grateful to the many institutions and individuals who generously lent works to the exhibition. We extend our deepest thanks to the Museum of Modern Art, New York, especially the Robert Lehman Foundation Chief Curator of Drawings and Prints Christophe Cherix, as well as Hope Cullinan, senior registrar assistant; Kathleen Curry, assistant curator; Emily Cushman, collection specialist; Emily Edison, collection specialist; Athena Christa Holbrook, collection specialist; and Marissa Klein-Kundrath, senior registrar assistant. Thanks are also due to Jennifer Belt, associate permissions director at Art Resource, for helping to secure archival photographs for the exhibition. At the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., we extend our gratitude to Director Earl A. Powell III and Deputy Director and Chief Curator Franklin Kelly as well as to Peter Dueker, head of digital imaging services; Peter Huestis, department of visual and imaging services; Lisa MacDougall, senior loan officer; Carol Nesemann, former assistant loan officer; Carlotta Owens, assistant curator; Karry Rose, curatorial assistant; and Shannon

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Robert Crouch

Executive and Artistic Director, Pasadena Arts Council

Ciara Ennis Director and Curator, Pitzer College Art Galleries

Juan Downey: Radiant Nature ROBERT CROUCH AND CIARA ENNIS

Juan Downey: Radiant Nature examines the interdisciplinary practice of Chilean artist Juan Downey, who was distinguished by his experimental and collaborative approach to artmaking. Downey's work stands in contrast to the discipline-specific approaches that dominated the art scene in the U.S. and Europe during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Unconstrained by artistic conventions, Downey merged disparate practices—performance, dance, sculpture, and installation—as well as privileged interdisciplinary approaches, experimentation, and collaboration as the most valuable aspects of his work.

The exhibition focuses on three bodies of work that, though not as widely shown, were foundational to Downey's practice and infuse in various ways the later, multichannel video projects for which the artist is better known.¹ Exploring connections between technology and social relations, energy and the environment, Downey's Electronic Sculptures (1967–71), Happenings and Performances (1968–74), and Life Cycle Installations (1970–74) demonstrate not only a thematic unity, but also a consistency of purpose. Hardwired into their conceptual, material, and intellectual frameworks is the necessity of audience participation; conceived as vehicles for interactivity, works from each of these series were conceived to be played with rather than merely observed. The Electronic Sculptures, for example, stand dormant and incomplete until activated by viewer-participants, whose spontaneous interactions often brought a destabilizing element into the typically hyper-controlled gallery environment.

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Participation was essential to Downey's Happenings, social artworks loosely organized around sets of instructions, as well as to his Performances, in which the presence of the audience filtered into the unfolding action of the work in various ways. Also incorporating exchange and participation—on the part of human and nonhuman elements, alike—the Life Cycle Installations comprise nonhierarchical systems of organic and inorganic components.

Central to Downey's interest in participation was the potential of technology to transform social relations as well as forge new modes of communication between organic elements or environments and machines or machine systems. The organic and technological aspects of his work were conceived as relational, operating in tandem. And, in their potential to be altered by feedback, Downey's works incorporate ideas from second-order cybernetics; participant-viewers interfacing with the Electronic Sculptures, for example, may trigger an array of outcomes—sounds, flashing lights, projections depending on their actions. Expanding on these efforts by incorporating the world beyond the gallery walls, Downey imagined participants in his Happenings and Performances as part of an unpredictable, amorphous system in which performers, video cameras, closed-circuit televisions, laser beams, and other technologies are equal elements. The implications of the Life Cycle Installations are perhaps even further reaching, as their systems of mechanic and organic interdependence demonstrate Downey's belief in the potential of

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cybernetics to solve environmental issues by facilitating more equitable relationships between humans, technologies, and ecologies. For Downey, rather than facilitating degradation or destruction, technology enabled cooperation, empathy, and elevated consciousness.

Much of Downey's work was produced with the support of, or in collaboration with, visual artists, performers, and musicians as well as his own family members. He was especially connected to New York's avant-garde dance community, working closely with Carmen Beuchat, Suzanne Harris, Cynthia Hedstrom, Rachel Lew, and Judith Padow. Downey's interest in fusing technological and social systems was ultimately grounded in a deeply held politics informed by both his personal background and the concerns of his generation. Though he emigrated to Paris in 1963, he remained connected to his home country of Chile, where social unrest culminated in a U.S.-backed coup in 1973 that resulted in the assassination of democratically elected socialist president Salvador Allende. Downey's time in Paris and New York was spent among artists and others engaged in antiwar, civil rights, labor, and other issues. In Paris², he was particularly affected by the interactive, kinetic environments of the collective Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, which used technology to integrate viewer and work. Although formally distinct, Downey's early sculptures share the same concerns in their attempt to transform a passive, receptive audience into an active, thinking

one through playful encounters and, in doing so, strip away familiar power hierarchies between viewer and artwork. Ultimately, Downey viewed such participation as a political act.

Downey also made works that were overtly political and less playful, though still reliant on action and participation via collaboration and protest. *Doing Things Together: Imperialistic Octopus* (1972) and *Chile Sí, Junta No* (1974) addressed the collusion of multinational corporations with government agencies in propping up right-wing military juntas in South America and elsewhere. Similarly, *Boycott Grapes* (1969) was made in support of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee's campaign for improved conditions for migrant workers, while *Make Chile Rich* (1971) advocated for the worldwide use of Chilean soil, with its high concentration of nitrates, as an alternative to the chemical fertilizers common to industrialized farming.

Downey's Electronic Sculptures, Happenings and Performances, and Life Cycle Installations draw attention to the richness of Downey's early work. Innovative and visionary, these series blur disciplinary boundaries and stretch the limits of their respective fields. Downey's frequent collaborations with New York's avant-garde dance community, for example, prefigured a contemporary interest in similar interdisciplinary approaches.³ Downey's use of new media in contemporary performance—electromagnetic sensors, portable video cameras, and surveillance technologies—as means for choreographing

scores the prescience of his practice. In particular, Downey's inclusion of sound in his work constituted a radical approach for artists working in the 1960s and 1970s. His experiments were as innovative as those of the avant-garde electroacoustic collectives and composers that were working concurrently in the United States and Europe, although the absence of his work in contemporary sound art studies is conspicuous. Groups such as the San Francisco Tape Music Center, founded by Morton Subotnick and Ramon Sender, or Pierre Shaeffer's Groupe de Recherches Musicales in France, centered their production on the recording, editing, manipulation, and playback of audiotapes. Similarly, Downey's Happenings and Electronic Sculptures relied on audience interaction to activate the recording and manipulation of audio, such that his works were not only experimental, but also collaborative and interdisciplinary. Sound played a major role, for example, in *Electronic Urban Environment*

the movements of a performer or performers, or an audience, further under-

(1969), performed as part of the 1969 Avant-Garde Festival in Washington, D.C. For this work, Downey placed seven devices which monitored changes in radiation, electromagnetic energy, and sound at a number of cultural institutions around the National Mall. The data were fed into an oscillator that generated sound. Downey's use of electronic information to modulate tonality has striking parallels with a forerunner of the modern synthesizer, the Buchla Music Easel created in 1973 by Don Buchla—an electronic device Subotnick

helped develop in order to make it impossible for himself to compose traditional tonal music. Both the Buchla Music Easel and Electronic Urban Environment are cybernetic devices that require stimulation to modulate a set of parameters to produce the desired aesthetic experience. But while the Buchla can ostensibly be performed by anyone in any properly equipped studio or concert hall, Electronic Urban Environment can only exist in the context of the Washington, D.C., cultural institutions for which it was made. The wealth, political, and cultural power of these institutions necessarily inform a reading of the latter work, prompting the question, "What is the sound of power?" For Downey, an artwork was more than just an object-it was a mechanism for social organization as well as a focal point for a cybernetic system. His early oeuvre's focus on technology as a means of producing more socially and environmentally conscious relationships between the organic and artificial has much to offer us today in our technologically networked, environmentally precarious, and socially fragmented world.

¹Juan Downey has been recognized primarily for the multichannel video series Video Trans Americas (1973-76) and the Thinking Eye (1975-89). The former can be understood as a recuperative, autobiographical project by which Downey sought to dismantle traditional Eurocentric ethnographic cinema by appropriating and upending the form itself. This work marks a major shift in the evolution of video art, both structurally as well as conceptually, as Downey actively pushed against the limits of the documentary form. Similarly, for *The Thinking Eye*, a series of videos made for public television, Downey drew from linguistic, psychoanalytic,

and semiotic theory to further deconstruct Latin American identity and Eurocentric notions of it.

² Downey lived in Paris from 1963 until 1966, when he relocated to Washington, D.C. He moved to New York in 1969.

³Contemporary dance has received renewed attention from the art world in recent years, with interdisciplinary choreographic works by Tino Sehgal, Anne Imhof, Gerard & Kelly, and taisha pagget, among others, included in major museum exhibitions and biennials.







The Electronic Sculptures were the first works that Juan Downey made after moving from Paris to Washington, D.C., in 1967. While in Paris, he had been influenced by experiments in Op and Kinetic art by the collective Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV). GRAV championed the use of technology as way to create multisensory environments-replete with color, light, and moving objects-that compelled viewers to interact with their artworks rather than merely observe them. Although they take a different form, Downey's Electronic Sculptures incorporate technology to achieve similar objectives; viewers are invited to touch and play with the works, triggering recording devices, projectors, light displays, and other electronic mechanisms that encourage further interaction and exploration. Drawing from second-order cybernetics, Downey was interested in establishing an interface between artwork and audience that could shift or evolve. Thus, many of the Electronic Sculptures incorporate viewer feedback into their operations. The viewer's agency in altering his works also reflects Downey's interest in flattening the traditional hierarchies of artist, art object, and viewer.

Electronic



1967–71

Sculptures

NOSTALGIC ITEM



18

1967

1968

White Box comprises a pedestal-like structure embedded with audio-visual components. As with all of Downey's Electronic Sculptures, this work requires audience participation for activation. The clapping of hands triggers a projection, while the touching of photoelectronic cells on either side of the sculpture actuates the audio components.



DO IT YOURSELF: THE HUMAN VOICE





orations between engineers and artists.

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WITH ENERGY BEYOND THESE WALLS





DO YOUR OWN CONCERT



Electronic Sculptures

This rectangular metal sculpture, which sits on the floor, contains a reel-to-reel tape recorder, a set of switches, and two metal plates that may be activated by touch. By manipulating the various components, individuals or groups may create sound compositions as well as edit or erase them.

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AGAINST SHADOWS



A precursor to *Information Center* (1970), *Against Shadows* is an Electronic Sculpture that Downey made in collaboration with engineer Fred Pitts for a 1969 exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The sculpture is a box embedded with photosensitive cells connected by a tube to a wall-mounted lightbulb display. Casting a hand, arm, or leg over the surface of the box triggers a corresponding silhouette to appear on the display. Rendered by lightbulbs, the viewer's shadow, normally cast in darkness, is instead visible as an abundance of light.

AGAINST SHADOWS

A MACHINE WITH THREE CONDITIONS





1969

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Juan Downey with A Machine with Three Conditions, 1968 Installation in Juan Downey: Audio-Kinetic Electronic Sculptures, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1969 Plywood, formica, and electronic parts Dimensions unknown Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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Nostalgic Item, 1967 Color etching on two plates on wove paper Image (overall): 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 18 in. (29.21 x 45.72 cm); plate (left, irregular): 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (29.21 x 45.09 cm); plate (right, irregular): 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (12.07 x 14.61 cm); sheet: 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (49.21 x 62.87 cm) Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Corcoran Collection Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Barrett Linde

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Juan Downey in his studio, Washington, D.C., with *White Box*, 1968 Plywood, formica, and electronic parts Dimensions unknown Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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Juan Downey in his studio, Washington, D.C., with *Do It Yourself: The Human Voice*, 1968 Plywood, formica, and electronic parts Dimensions unknown Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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Video/Space/Time, The Human Voice, 1968 Color pencil, graphite, and ink on paper 22 ¼ x 29 ¼ 6 in. (56 × 76 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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Do It Yourself: The Human Voice (Hazlo Tu Mismo: La Voz Humana), 1967 Etching; edition of 25 Plate: 11 13 /16 x 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (30 x 44.5 cm); sheet: 19 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 25 $\frac{5}{16}$ in. (49.8 x 64.3 cm) Courtesy of Museum of Modern Art, New York, Inter-American Fund, 1968

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With Energy beyond These Walls, 1969 Installation in Cybernetic Serendipity, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1969 Plywood, formica, and electronic parts Dimensions unknown Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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With Energy beyond These Walls: A System of Two Sculptures, 1970 Color pencil and graphite on paper 21²/₃₂ x 29²/₃₂ in. (55 × 75.5 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

Works, pp. 17–31

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Do Your Own Concert, 1969 Pencil, acrylic, pastel, glued-on paper, and gummed stamp on white paper 22 x 23 % in. (55.88 x 60.64 cm) Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Corcoran Collection Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Barrett Linde Photo: Denis Doorly

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Do Your Own Concert, 1969 Plywood covered in white formica, electronic components, metal plates, acrylic cover, and buttons with two speakers 7 % x 17 % x 31 3/32 in. (20 x 43.5 x 79 cm) Three-minute mono audio loop Courtesy of Museum of Modern Art, New York, Latin American and Caribbean Fund through the gift of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, 2013 Photo: Museum of Modern Art, New York

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Juan Downey with Against Shadows, 1969 Installation in Juan Downey: Audio-Kinetic Electronic Sculptures, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 1969 Plywood, formica, and electronic parts Dimensions unknown Made in collaboration with engineer Fred Pitts Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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Against Shadows, 1969 Red chalk, graphite, acrylic paint, and silver paper on wove paper Image: 16 5 x 13 ½ inches (42.23 x 34.29 cm); sheet: 17 x 14 inches (43.18 x 35.56 cm) Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Corcoran Collection Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Barrett Linde Photo: Denis Doorly

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Against Shadows, 1969 Installation in With Energy beyond These Walls, Howard Wise Gallery, New York, 1970 Plywood, formica, and electronic parts Dimensions unknown Courtesy Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts Photo: Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College

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A Machine with Three Conditions, 1969 Installation in With Energy beyond These Walls, Howard Wise Gallery, New York, 1970 Plywood, formica, and electronic parts Dimensions unknown Courtesy Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts Photo: Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College





INFORMATION CENTER



INFORMATION CENTER





1970

This Electronic Sculpture was first shown in *With Energy beyond These Walls*, a 1970 exhibition at Howard Wise Gallery in New York. The work requires the viewer to activate it; casting a hand over its mirrored surface triggers light bulbs to flash in one of several possible patterns, accompanied by a corresponding audio track. *Information Center* is accompanied by a series of drawings, *Research on the Art World*, that explicates the ideas at play in the work.

RESEARCH ON THE ART WORLD



1970



Electronic Sculptures

A companion to *Information Center* (1970), *Research on the Art World* comprises eight large-scale drawings that represent the results of Downey's survey of the art world. Interested in mapping social and economic hierarchies within the art system, as represented by galleries, museums, publications, and other influential institutions and individuals, Downey sent 1,000 questionnaires to artists, critics, curators, and dealers, tabulating their responses and illustrating different aspects of his findings.



Dear Collector:

I am conducting a research on the Art World, covering the social, political and economical aspects. Please help me by answering the questions below. Similar forms will be sent to: art students, artists, critics, curators, dealers, general public, trustees. Answers should be in as soon as posible. Thank you,

Juan Downey

- 1) How many years ago did you start collecting art? ____ years. 2) What percentage of your purchases do you no longer like? %
- 3) Which one of the following reasons generally moves you to buy art? AESTHETIC IDLENESS MORAL LONELINESS
- 4) Are you happy when the work of art you bought gains museum or commercial recognition? Check one. YES INDIFERENT
- 5) Under which one of these influences do you buy your works of art? CRITICS DEALERS OWN TASTE MUSEUMS
- 6) If you get tired of a particular work of art in your collection. what do you do? Check one. SELL

SELL	KEEP ON THE WALL	
TRADE	GIVE AWAY	

7) Who would you give more power to in the Art Museum
next to the occupation, write numbers from 1 to
8 the maximum of power and 1 the minimum.
ART STUDENTS CURATORS
ARTISTS DEALERS
COLLECTORS GENERAL PUBLIC
CRITICS TRUSTEES

- 8) Your collection currently consists of: a) Number of works of art _____ b) Current market value____
- 9) If you prefer to buy art from any of the following groupings, indicate your preference. LATINAMERICAN AMERICAN BLACK

DUT THURHINGT ON
EUROPEAN
PRIMITIVE

ORIENTAL

Electronic Sculptures

New York, January 1970. SOCIAL ECONOMIC NO WEALTHIER FRIENDS OTHER ARTISTS STORE DESTROY m structure? 8. Being

New York, March 1970.

Dear Critic:

I am conducting a research on the Art World, covering its social, political and economical aspects. Please help me by answering the questions below. Similar forms have been sent to artists and collectors. They will be sent to: art students, curators, general public, dealers, museum directors and trustees.

Thank you, Worn Downly Juan Downey

1) Who would you give more power to in the Art Museum structure? Next to the occupation, write numbers from 1 to 10. Being 10 the maximum of power and 1 the minimum. Curator ____

Art Historian ____ Art Student Artist _____ Collector ____ Critic___

Dealer General Public Museum Director Trustee ____

- 2) What do you consider yourself? Check one. Fine Artist ____ Art Historian Critic ____ Writer ____
- 3) Do you feel that your writing affects the Art Market? Very Much ___ Yes __ Indifferent __ No ___

4) Before getting involved in Art Criticism which one of the following was your occupation? Art Student_ Writer

Journalist	Museum
Artist	Other

5) How many hours per week do you spend Reading about art? Considering works of art?____ Talking about art? ____

6) While you are writing about art, you think of people reading you. To which of the following groupings do most of these people belong to? Art Historian or Critics Dealers Artists

Collectors

Museum Staff Publishers____

7) When writing, which one of the following influences you most? Art Commerce Ethics Aesthetics Personnel relations

- 8) For how many years did you study art? ____ years.
- 9) For how many years have you been writing about art? ____ years.

70 8 . BEINE 8







7 CRITICS



1970

1970



INFORMATION CENTER



1970



POLLUTION ROBOT

1970





Pollution Robot debuted in 1970 during the opening of *With Energy beyond These Walls* at Howard Wise Gallery in New York. Downey himself occupied the work, which features a one-way mirror placed at eye level and a hole below through which he could blow hot air. Imitating a robot with his voice and mannerisms, Downey singled out audience members as they milled about the gallery, rolling up to them and posing a series of questions that he delivered in three different languages. A merger of sorts between the Electronic Sculptures and Performances, *Pollution Robot* underscores the potential for a symbiotic relationship between technology and the body.

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Installation in *With Energy beyond These Walls*, Howard Wise Gallery, New York, 1970 Formica, mirror, 25-watt lightbulbs, electronic components, 4 light-beam sensors, and 4 playback devices with speakers Two volumes (upper and lower): $1 \times 1 \times 6$ ft. (30 \times 30 \times 182 cm) each; wall unit: $3 \times 6 \times 1/2$ ft. (91.44 \times 182 \times 15.24 cm); and supporting pedestal: $3 \times 6 \times 1/2$ ft. (91.44 \times 182 \times 15.24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

Information Center, 1970

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Juan Downey and unidentified woman with *Information Center*, 1970 Installation in *With Energy beyond These Walls*, Howard Wise Gallery, New York, 1970 Gelatin-silver print 6×9 in. (16×24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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Information Center, 1970 Installation in With Energy beyond These Walls, Howard Wise Gallery, New York, 1970 Formica, mirror, 25-watt lightbulbs, electronic components, 4 light-beam sensors, and 4 playback devices with speakers Two volumes (upper and lower): 1 x 1 x 6 ft. (30 x 30 x 182 cm) each; wall writ: 2 x 6 x 1/2 ft. (01 4 4 x 182

wall unit: $3 \times 6 \times 1/2$ ft. (91.44 x 182 x 15.24 cm); and supporting pedestal: $3 \times 6 \times \frac{1}{2}$ ft. (91.44 x 182 x 15.24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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Research on the Art World: Number of Hours Artists Work on Their Art, 1970 Color pencil, acrylic, and graphite on paper $30 \frac{1}{8} \times 24 \frac{1}{4}$ in. (76.5 x 61.5 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Christopher Burke

Research on the Art World: Number of Artworks in Private Collections, 1970 Color pencil, acrylic, and graphite on paper $30 \frac{1}{8} \times 24 \frac{1}{4}$ in. (76.5 x 61.5 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Christopher Burke

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Information Center, 1970 Installation in With Energy beyond These Walls, Howard Wise Gallery, New York, 1970 Formica, mirror, 25-watt lightbulbs, electronic components, 4 light-beam sensors, and 4 playback devices with speakers Two volumes (upper and lower): $1 \times 1 \times 6$ ft. (30 x 30 x 182 cm) each; wall unit: $3 \times 6 \times 1/2$ ft. (91.44 x 182 x 15.24 cm); and supporting pedestal: $3 \times 6 \times \frac{1}{2}$ ft. (91.44 x 182 x 15.24 cm) Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts Photo: Imaging Department, © President and Fellows of Harvard College

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Research on the Art World: Artists' Yearly Income, 1970 Graphite and acrylic on paper 30 ¼ x 24 ¼ in. (76.5 x 61.5 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Christopher Burke

Research on the Art World: Answers Given by Critics, 1970 Pencil and acrylic on paper 36 ½ x 40 ½ in. (91.7 x 102 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Christopher Burke

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Collector Questionnaire from Research on the Art World, 1970 Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts Photo: Imaging Department, © President and Fellows of Harvard College

Critic Questionnaire from Research on the Art World, 1970 Harvard Art Museums Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts Photo: Imaging Department, © President and Fellows of Harvard College

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Research on the Art World: Answers Given by Artists, 1970 Color pencil, acrylic, and graphite on paper 36 ½ x 40 ½ in. (91.7 x 102 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Christopher Burke

Research on the Art World: Dear Critic, 1970 Pencil and acrylic on paper 36¼ x 40 ¼ in. (91.7 x 102 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Christopher Burke

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Research on the Art World: Mailed One Thousand Forms to Artists and Collectors, 1970 Color pencil and graphite on paper 35 % x 29 % in. (90 x 74.5 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Christopher Burke

Research on the Art World: Dear Artist/Dear Collector, 1970 Color pencil, collage, acrylic, and graphite on paper 30 ¼ x 24 ¼ in. (76.5 x 61.5 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Christopher Burke

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7 Critics, 1970

Color intaglio of nine plates on wove paper Image (irregular multiple plates): 32 x 25 in. (81.28 x 63.5 cm); sheet: 39 % x 28 ½ in. (100.65 x 71.44 cm); framed: 47 x 36 in. (119.4 x 91.4 cm) Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Corcoran Collection Gift of Harry Lunn, Jr. Photo: Ric Blanc

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Poster for *With Energy beyond These Walls*, Howard Wise Gallery, New York, March 2–April 25, 1970 Color pencil, graphite, acrylic, and collage on paper 29²⁹/₃₂ x 22 1/₁₆ in. (76 x 56 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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Juan Downey's studio, New York, with Information Center, 1970 Formica, mirror, 25-watt lightbulbs, electronic components, 4 light-beam sensors, and 4 playback devices with speakers

Two volumes (upper and lower): $1 \times 1 \times 6$ ft. (30 x 30 x 182 cm) each; wall unit: $3 \times 6 \times 1/2$ ft. (91.44 x 182 x 15.24 cm); and supporting pedestal: $3 \times 6 \times \frac{1}{2}$ ft. (91.44 x 182 x 15.24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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Inside the Robot, 1970 Color pencil on paper 22 ½ x 30 in. (57.15 x 76.2 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

Follows People and..., 1970 Color pencil on paper 22 ½ x 30 in. (57.15 x 76.2 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

And Breathes Hot Air on Them, 1970 Color pencil on paper 22 ½ x 30 in. (57.15 x 76.2 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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Juan Downey's studio, New York, with Invisible Energy, 1968; Radioactive Chair, 1968; Pollution Robot, 1970; and White Box, 1968 Plywood, formica, and electronic parts Dimensions unknown Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk







The Politics of Play in the Early Work of Juan Downey CIARA ENNIS

between viewers.

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Key to facilitating this playful exchange was technology, which in Downey's work often manifested as physical gear—such as Portapak video recorders, audio recorders, projectors, and closed-circuit televisions-as well as intangible elements including laser beams, ultrasonic and radio waves, and microwaves. In its most basic application, technology was deployed to facilitate communication between artwork and audience as a way to inspire moments of individual and collective agency. At its most utopic, it was intended as a tool for enhancing telepathic connections between organic and machinic forms of intelligence.

Juan Downey's Electronic Sculptures (1967-71),

Happenings and Performances (1968-74), and

Life Cycle Installations (1970-74) evince his be-

lief in the revolutionary potential of art to awak-

en collective political consciousness. In contrast

to his later video and sculpture installations,

which asserted a more overt political critique,²

these works are neither didactic nor propagan-

distic; they eschew the conventional political art

strategies that coalesced around the Vietnam

War³ in favor of participatory approaches de-

signed to forge more egalitarian relationships

conventional object-viewer relations, which

among artist, artwork, and viewer. Sidestepping

positioned solitary, passive spectators in thrall

to the artist's privileged vision, Downey concep-

tualized participation as a playful encounter that

had the potential to disrupt routinized ways of

experiencing art and, by extension, the world.

Such playful interactions allowed for moments

that resulted in relationships and collaborations

of spontaneous and improvised engagement

-JACQUES RANCIÈRE¹

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The Politics of Play: **Electronic Sculptures**

Despite dominating the mid-to-late 1990s, participatory artworks have been important to a host of 20th-century movements and practices. Notable examples include the disruptive tactics of Dadaists, Futurists, and Surrealists during the 1920s and 1930s; the event-driven works of Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV), Situationist International (SI), and Fluxus during the 1960s and 1970s; and the open-ended, event-based works grouped under the rubric of Relational Aesthetics. Predominantly historicized from a Western perspective, participatory art practices have also had a vibrant history in Latin American, as exemplified by the output of Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Pape, and Lygia Clark. Although the three continents in which Downey predominantly worked-South America, Europe, and North America—differed in terms of their sociopolitical and cultural contexts, he employed relational practices in each place in order to extend art into the public sphere, collapse divisions between artist, audience, and artwork, and forge a more democratized experience of art viewing.

Despite having left Paris before the civil unrest of May 1968, Downey was undeniably influenced by the city's highly energetic and politicized artistic climate, dominated by two opposing factions, GRAV and SI. Championing the utopian potential of technology to produce nonhierarchical, participatory art forms, GRAV built interactive environments that functioned as "destabilizing spectacles meant to reveal particular perceptual and ideological mechanisms of the modern environment."⁴ In contrast, SI, cofounded by theorist Guy Debord, rejected GRAV's articulation of the emancipatory potential of spectacle, arguing that the viewer was far from empowered, but instead enslaved to a top-down system that dictated and controlled behavior. As Larry Busbea observed, for SI, "the imperative to include the spectator in the spectacle resulted in a further ideological integration...in which no activity whatever escaped



(i.e., those in power). To counter these effects, SI proposed Constructed Situations, temporary collaborative events that, as a result of their unfamiliar form and content, had the potential to disrupt conditioned behavior.

the organizing activities of the programmers"5

Much of Downey's early work deployed the methodologies and the aesthetics of GRAV and SI while also articulating some of their divergent philosophical and political positions.⁶ While Downey's Electronic Sculptures find commonality with GRAV's interactive environments, which required audience participation to complete the work, his Happenings reference SI's Constructed Situations, which encouraged subversive actions. Focused on the participatory experience as a political one, Downey, GRAV, and SI were each concerned with prompting a different understanding of the world, highlighting its structural inequalities, and bringing viewer-participants to a new political and social consciousness. As such, their approaches to politically engaged art departed from more conventional, didactic strategies that privileged a message over an aesthetic experience.

In Downey's interactive sculptures, technology is critical to establishing participatory relationships between artist, audience, and artwork. Works such as White Box and A Machine with Three Conditions (both 1968), each of which comprises a pedestal-like form embedded with media components, require the viewer's activation. With White Box, the clapping of hands prompts the work to project an image onto a wall, while touching photoelectric cells on opposite sides of the sculpture alters the color of the projection and triggers various audio compositions. Likewise, A Machine with Three Conditions relies on human touch for activation, but it also. as its title indicates, requires two other factors: the fluctuation of light in the gallery space as well as the broadcasting of radio waves at a particular frequency. According to Downey's description, A Machine with Three Conditions functioned "somewhat like the brain [in that it] selects and re-

ceives an input, adds it up and then produces an

output."⁷ However, the work's operation necessitates that all three conditions are met simultaneously—only then does it emit both sound and light.

As the Electronic Sculptures developed, the level of audience interaction became more elaborate. *Do It Yourself: The Human Voice* (1968) comprises four plinth-like structures connected by tubes and arranged in a circle. While all of the plinths are embedded with either a tape recorder or player, each has a different function; one makes audio recordings of viewers' conversations happening in real time, another plays those exchanges back. The third, when activated by a switch, triggers an audiotaped explanation of the work, while the fourth functions as an evolving archive, cataloging and replaying recordings as they continue to be made.

In conceiving these interactive sculptures, Downey drew on second-order cybernetics⁸ as a theoretical model, believing in technology's capacity to enable progressive, symbiotic relationships between human and artificial intelligence. Second-order cybernetics incorporates feedback, which allows for a two-way system of communication; receivers may alter the information being output by interacting with the system in specific ways. Downey was interested in extending this notion to the societal level, believing that second-order cybernetics had the potential to significantly impact sociopolitical and economic relations; he "hoped for strong communications networks of multi-directional potentials as opposed to our present-day pyramidal oppressive hierarchy that misinforms the base in order to remain at the apex."9 As such, Downey's commitment to a critical cultural politics was embedded in his practice at the theoretical, conceptual, and material levels.

Despite the complex and serious nature of Downey's work, the viewer's playful participation is essential for communicating these ideas. Conceived as a means to loosen ties with existing artistic paradigms, for Downey, play had the capacity to strip away the conventional rules encoded in the viewing

experience by injecting unalloyed pleasure into the activity. He wrote, "The reaction of the general public, in particular children; scientists; men who helped to build the sculptures and salesmen in stores of electronic devices have been highly positive. They appear to understand the 'game' attitude required. On the other hand painters and sculptors have responded negatively, with rare exceptions, for they say that what I do is not art!"10 Unlike more mainstream forms of political art, which drew on established visual and perceptual regimes, Downey's dialogic and collaborative strategies encouraged viewers to lend their own creative and interpretive capacities to the work, decentering the artist as the author and privileging the viewer-participant.

The desire to recuperate a visionary position for technology through play is reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's theorization of the emancipatory potential of the cinematic experience. Although writing at a time when technology was explicitly linked to the stultifying and alienating effects of industrial capitalism, Benjamin argued for the possibility of technology's potential qualities to counter the deadening effects of industrialization. The playful cultural modes made possible by technology were central to this, as they provided a space for the collective experience of a mass audience, in contrast to traditional artworks, which required solitary and passive contemplation. For Benjamin, film was one such cultural form, a democratizing tool capable of transforming social relations by dissolving the traditional (auratic) hierarchies and function of art and art contexts.

Socioeconomic and political parallels can be drawn between Benjamin's embrace of the emancipatory possibilities of technology during the industrial capitalist era, and Downey's, thirty years later, during the post-industrialist late 1960s. Both Benjamin and Downey occupied outsider positions relative to their progressive cultural counterparts, who railed against the ill effects of technology. Both highlighted importance of play as a means to reverse what Miriam Bratu Hansen described as the "catastrophic consequences

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of an already failed reception of technology."¹¹ And both emphasized the relational aspects of technologically driven artworks, specifically the potential for collective agency. For Benjamin, film leveled the playing field for the reception of art, encouraging dialogue unmediated by alleged experts or critics. For Downey, works rooted in technology and driven by play helped shift the balance of power from artist as sole producer to audience as collaborator.

Participation as Play: Happenings and Performances

Downey's celebration of play as a radical cultural form is also apparent in his Happenings. Staged during the late 1960s, these works were collaborative and spontaneous and were influenced by the politically volatile U.S. context in which he was working-one characterized by civil rights struggles, Vietnam War protests, and increased opposition to free-market capitalism. In general, the 1960s have been romanticized by the Western art world as a moment of intense political activism, exemplified by the activities of the Art Workers Coalition (AWC). Composed primarily of white male Minimal and Conceptual artists,¹² the AWC campaigned for greater control over their cultural labor as well as for museum reform, including advocating for artists' rights and more equitable race and gender balances within art institutions. Ironically, as art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson observed, the AWC's demands for increased diversity did not extend to its own group, which was unable to "recognize structural inequalities—including racism and sexism—in its own organization,"¹³ resulting in its early demise in 1971.

It was within this highly charged context that Downey staged his Happenings. However, unlike that of the AWC, Downey's engagement with the politics of cultural production was less didactic, involving the utopic adoption of technology and play as a means to disrupt the art-viewing experience. As a founding member of the New Group,¹⁴ he organized several Happenings, including *Communication*, which took place in Washington, D.C., in 1968. For this work, Downey set up a "communication center" for one night, issuing an open call for participants, who gathered together in a space and listened to a looped, prerecorded message. Given access to walkie-talkies, video equipment, telegraphs, intercom radio systems, and other means of communication, participants were asked to memorize the message and then travel by foot, bike, car, or bus to a location of their choosing, where they communicated their recollection of the recording back to the center. Transmissions were transcribed and pinned to a large map of the city to indicate the locations they were broadcast from. At dawn, participants returned to the center, where the prerecorded message was replayed as the transcriptions and the map were burned. A Chinese Whispers game of sorts, the Happening's instructions provided a loose organizing logic that participants might interpret and/or respond to in unanticipated ways.

Downey's extension of art into the social sphere challenged the institutional power of traditional art-viewing spaces, recalling the Constructed Situations of SI. Violently opposed to commodity capitalism and its alienating effects, SI placed great value on the destabilizing effects of play, specifically inventing games in order to subvert social norms. As Claire Bishop wrote, "The Situationist game stands out from the standard conception of the game by the radical negation of ludic features of competition and of its separation from the stream of life."¹⁵ Focused on a collective endeavor rather than individual actions, Constructed Situations encouraged random and unorthodox behavior, "so as to incite the spectator into activity by provoking his capacities to revolutionize his own life."¹⁶ Similarly, Downey's Happenings privileged the experiential the participatory, and the playful as moments for enhanced collective agency.

The Constructed Situations were not the only social artworks of the 1960s that may have influenced Downey's Happenings. In Paris, GRAV staged *A Day in the Streets* (1966), a daylong event focused on disrupting the work day. Standing on busy thoroughfares, GRAV members

invited passersby on the way to work to stop and play with the kinetic sculptures they had temporarily installed in the street. In Argentina, Marta Minujín, an artist Downey collaborated with in 1972,¹⁷ was creating politically charged actions such as Suceso Plástico (1965). Referencing the forced roundups of citizens by brutal dictatorships, Minujín trapped a crowd of unsuspecting people in a sports stadium in Montevideo, deploying motorbikes to surround the building and a helicopter to hover above. Graciela Carnevale's action for the Cycle of Experimental Art, 1968 exhibition organized by Grupo de Artistas de Vanguardia in Rosario, Argentina, also employed incarceration as a tactic. Carnevale invited viewers to enter a storefront exhibition space and then proceeded to lock them inside. They remained captive there for an hour, until the storefront window, which she had plastered with posters to prevent communication with the outside, was smashed by a bystander.¹⁸

As performance scholar Gunter Berghaus noted, there was a marked difference in the tones and approaches of European and U.S. Happenings, with the former engaging in overt political critique and the latter emphasizing the merging of art and life.¹⁹ That said, the Happenings and performances taking place in Latin America make the U.S. works look tame by comparison. Occupying a place somewhere between GRAV and SI, Downey did not take up the aggressive tactics of Minujín and Carnevale, suggesting that his geopolitical context, as an artist in the U.S., significantly impacted both the subject matter and structure of his work.

Similar to Communication, Downey's Happening Check a Space (1968) provided participants with a set of simple instructions to interpret: travel to and explore a place of your choosing. Upon returning, participants were asked to describe the locations they chose using whatever means they preferred. In both Communication and Check a Space, new social bonds were formed between groups of people as they interpreted and produced the work. Downey's orchestration of participants into small communities brings to mind Michel de Certeau's theorization



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of tactics-maneuvers deployed by the "marginalized majority" to circumvent dominant systems of control. Described as everyday material practices, these tactics are "'ways of operating': victories of the 'weak' over the 'strong'...clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things," and include "talking, reading, moving about, shopping, cooking, etc."²⁰ For an urban context, de Certeau suggests alternative walking practices, such as moving along a path diagonally rather than in a straight line, in order to resist the rules and regulations encoded into a city's spatial and architectural arrangements. Such subtle, playful acts of resistance were also generated by Downey's Happenings. For example, Check a Space prompted participants to recalibrate their relationships to familiar civic spaces by inscribing them with their own subjectivities and histories. At their most radical, these public interventions could be regarded as "minor infringements that haunt the margins of the law."

In contrast to the Happenings, which invited individual participants to take an active role in the production of the work, Downey's Performances deployed communities of practitioners, including fellow artists and dancers. In keeping with Downey's own progressive practice, these artist groups, such as the New Group and Judson Dance Theater, were transdisciplinary and unorthodox, working outside of mainstream art world discourse.²¹ Focused on subverting the stultifying traditions of their medium, Judson dancers rejected traditional techniques and performance sites in favor of ordinary gestures and accessible venues, including the street. This approach was discernible throughout their practice, as conventional costumes were replaced by utilitarian, loose fitting clothing, and movement and choreography were prompted by simple sets of rules. Judson also often incorporated participants untrained in dance history or theory into their performances as a way of erasing distinctions between the "expert" on stage and the "amateur" in the audience. Their nonhierarchical gestures closely aligned with Downey's critical cultural practice, which is borne out in several of his works, including *Ultrasonic Field* (1972), for which Judson performer Steve Paxton used one of Downey's Electronic Sculptures—a bank of photoelectronic cells that, when activated with a switch, produced sounds—as a prompt for contact improvisation.²²

Although all of Downey's Happenings and Performances were concerned with visible and invisible forms of social exchange, the latter primarily focused on the production and transfer of invisible energies. Downey used laser beams and ultrasonic and radio waves to create channels of communication between himself, performers, and audience which he referred to as invisible structures. The Performances reflected his utopian belief that technology could revolutionize the relationships of the human and machinic at a local as well as global level. For Energy Fields (1972), an invisible structure was articulated with laser beams controlled by eight performers tasked with defining the contours of the work. Documentation from the event, which took place at 112 Greene Street in New York, depicts performers sitting on each other's shoulders or laying in a cruciform position on the ground in an attempt to define the coordinates of the structure. Although viewers were not invited to perform, their ability to circulate in the space was unrestricted, a fluid element in the open-ended work, and their movements were recorded by Downey and played back on closed-circuit televisions installed throughout the space.

Downey's utilization of technology in the form of video recordings, closed-circuit television feeds, and laser beams mediated multiple and layered interactions between performers, audience, and artist. Parallels can be drawn between Downey's belief in technology as a panacea for social unrest and Benjamin's theorizing of film in relation to innervation. Defined by Bratu Hanson as "a neurophysiological process that mediates between internal and external, psychic and motoric, human and machinic registers,"²³ innervation, Benjamin claimed, could ameliorate the alienating effects of industrial capitalism, which had dulled the senses and rendered individuals

incapable of free action. For Benjamin, innervation functioned as a therapeutic tool, a two-way system that could convert mental energy into physical gestures, which, in terms of film, was theorized as the staccato, machinelike movements of Charlie Chaplin or the frenetic energy of Mickey Mouse. The latter's ability to perform miracles that "seem improvised out of the bodies and the objects on the screen, in a freewheeling exchange between animate and inanimate worlds,"²⁴ suggested the potential for human applications of technology outside established conventions. Capable of galvanizing communities by prompting spontaneous collective laughter, these filmic models, "through the kinetic transfer of visual-acoustic shocks or, rather, counter-shocks...had the capacity to perforate collective psychopathological armors and thus effect a reconversion of neurotic energy into sensory affect."25 Benjamin's politics of innervation, which privileged technology's potential as a healing, collectivizing force for social change, resonates with Downey's utopian vision of global connectivity between the human, organic, and machinic.

Downey's belief in the radical potential of technology to link human and machinic intelligence is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in Plato Now (1973), a performance conceived to generate collective telepathic communication via technological applications. For this work, nine performers were asked to stand in a single row, facing a wall with their backs to an audience, and to meditate. Each wore a pair of headphones, and each was wired to machines that recorded their brain activity. The space was lit so that the audience cast a shadow on the wall that the performers faced. As the performers reached meditative states, as indicated by their brains' increased levels of alpha waves, excerpts from Plato's writings were played through their headphones. The performers' faces were recorded as they meditated, with the footage displayed in real time on closed-circuit televisions that were visible to viewers. Although audience participation in *Plato Now* was less pronounced than that of Downey's Electronic Sculptures and

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Happenings, their shadows both facilitated the performers' meditation and literalized Plato's *Allegory of the Cave.*

Plato Now reflected Downey's larger ambitions for a future "in which ultra-developed human brains are deeply woven into the energy paths and patterns to an extent where disorder, war, waste and crime are out of context."²⁶ The transformative, transporting, and radical aspect of technology as both a unifying balm and political agent is again reminiscent of Benjamin's theory of a collective innervation. "Only when in technology," Benjamin wrote, "body- and image-space so interpenetrate that all revolutionary tension becomes bodily collective innervation, and all the bodily innervations of the collective become revolutionary discharge."²⁷

The Politics of Play: Life Cycle Installations

Unlike his Performances, Downey's Life Cycle Installations required nonhuman life forms, such as animals and plants, to complete the work. *A Clean New Race* (1970), which took place over several months in Downey's New York loft, comprised an interdependent system of plants and animals (goats, dogs, and humans), fueled by sunlight as well as ultraviolet and infrared lighting systems, that could in theory generate enough food to sustain itself indefinitely. Not only did this work attempt to circumvent the dominant economic order by generating its own food supply, but it also asserted a non-anthropocentric position by making humans and nonhumans equal components within a system.

The interdependence of human and nonhuman life forms was also a major theme in *A Vegetal System of Communications for New York State* (1972), in which plant intelligence specifically, the capacity of plants to sense human presence—was given primary consideration. For this work, a philodendron plant was hooked up to electrodes and encased within a large copper box that acted as a conductor. When approached by humans, the plant

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emitted a high-pitched whine that changed in volume and intensity according to the levels of electromagnetic energy detected. A map of New York State, two-thirds of which Downey covered with white paint to indicate vast areas of deforestation, was installed on a nearby wall. While the interactions between plant and viewers underscored the immense and untapped possibilities for interspecies communication, the map functioned as a call to action to fight against increasing ecological and environmental destruction.

Beginning in the late 1960s, Downey also began making more overtly political works and, as with his Happenings, he employed play as a tactic to forge a collaborative, community orientated artmaking practice. Although he had left Chile a decade before a right-wing military coup ousted President Salvador Allende in 1973, Downey's identification with his birth country, his support for its subaltern indigenous communities, and his admiration for Allende's progressive politics are threaded throughout his oeuvre. At odds with U.S. foreign policy, which had played a significant role in the overthrow and assassination of Allende, Downey adopted a dissident stance that alienated him from many of his North American artist peers. This distance was doubly cemented by his practice, which was formally and conceptually out of sync with the Minimalist and Conceptualist paradigms of a U.S. art scene that tended to marginalize interdisciplinary, collaborative work because it did not fit the dominant narrative.

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Boycott Grapes (1969), Chilean Nitrate Soda Potasch (1971), Make Chile Rich (1971), Doing Things Together: Imperialistic Octopus (1972), and Chile Sí, Junta No (1974) directly address contemporary political issues. Both Chile Sí, Junta No and Boycott Grapes were calls to action that were dependent on social relations. Chile Sí, Junta No asked participants to join a protest outside the New York City headquarters of the multinational corporation International Telephone and Telegraph, which he staged exactly one year after Allende's assassination. ITT was founded during the 1920s as a telecommunications company, but by the 1960s it had evolved into a large conglomerate with diverse holdings in numerous industries. Connected with the Nazi war machine,²⁸ ITT also had been linked to the military coup in Chile that overthrew Allende; at the time, the conglomerate owned seventy percent of the Chilean telephone company and was funding the right-wing newspaper *El Mercurio*. In addition to organizing the protest, documentation of which was later used in his video *La Frontera* (1976), Downey printed 300 t-shirts featuring the title of the work punctuated by fake blood stains, which the protesters wore in solidarity.

Boycott Grapes also took the form of a protest, this time in support of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFW), led by César Chávez. Protesting the abject working and living conditions of migrant farm workers in California's Central Valley, the UFW called for a boycott of grapes grown by Schenley Liquor Company, which owned the majority of the vineyards in the San Joaquin Valley. Prompted by the boycott, Downey produced 250 t-shirts in support of the cause, giving 200 to supermarket checkout clerks, who wore them to remind shoppers that their consumer choices had political consequences. The remaining 50 shirts were signed and sold, with the proceeds going to the UFW. Both Chile Sí, Junta No and Boycott Grapes were rooted in collaborative, participatory, and activist approaches that relied on non-art publics for their execution and completion.

Similarly, Downey initiated *Doing Things Together: Imperialistic Octopus* for the Peace March organized by the National Peace Action Coalition, which took place on a rainy afternoon in Bryant Park, New York, on April 22, 1972.²⁹ Constructed out of papier-mâché and cardboard, the work took the form of a gigantic octopus, with each of its tentacles representing multinational corporations or U.S. intelligence agencies involved in manipulating foreign governments for financial or political gain. The FBI, CIA, and ITT were all represented, as was General Motors, which had funded secret police and death squads in Argentina and Brazil, while the head of the octopus signified the U.S. government, the "nerve center" directing these organizations. Making visible the links between U.S. foreign policy, business interests overseas, and right-wing military coups in Latin America and elsewhere, the octopus was a strident anti-imperialist symbol whose own making was a central part of the work itself.

Viewer participation was central to Downey's early work. The various forms that it took not only referenced the progressive models articulated by GRAV and SI, but also drew extensively from cybernetic theory. Downey regarded participation as an emancipatory tool, capable of activating art and non-art publics alike, which anticipated the socially engaged practices that would emerge decades later as part of Relational Aesthetics.³⁰ However, in Downey's work, participation's emancipatory power was accessible predominantly through playful encounters between artwork and viewers. For Downey, play permitted viewers to develop a more critically engaged consciousness and expanded worldview in their encounters with art. A rejection of didacticism in favor of alternative aesthetic models, Downey's engagement with play in his work recalled Jacques Rancière's critique of political art. According to Rancière, as a socially agreed upon set of rules that are both produced and propped up by the art industry, aesthetics can only reflect the dominant ideologies of the hegemon. In order to challenge these ideologies, artists must reconfigure the coordinates of the perceptual system so that new practices and ideas can surface: "images change our gaze and the landscape of the possible if they are not anticipated by their meaning and do not anticipate their effects."³¹ Downey's work does this by positioning the viewer as central to his works' subjects as well as their meaning. His commitment to eroding entrenched artist-audience boundaries and contesting the authority of art institutions was not only a political act, it challenged the very definition of art itself.

¹ Jacques Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," in *The Emancipated Spectator* (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 17.

² Juan Downey is best known for the multichannel *Video Trans Americas* (1973–76), a video that uses a quasianthropological lens to document his visits to Central and South America. The work is in part a critique of Eurocentric ethnographic works that use scholarly authority to prop up misrepresentations of the Other.

³ Some examples include the Artist's Protest Committee's *Peace Tower* (1966) in Los Angeles, the Art Worker's Coalition's 1970 protest in front of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the New York Artists' Strike Against Racism, Sexism, Repression and War in 1970.

⁴ Larry Busbea, "Kineticism-Spectacle-Environment," *October* 144 (Spring 2013): 95.

⁵ Ibid., 102.

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⁶ My understanding of the differences between the participatory approaches of GRAV and SI is indebted to Busbea's "Kineticism-Spectacle-Environment" as well as Claire Bishop's analysis in *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and New York: Verso, 2012).

⁷ Downey, quoted in *Juan Downey: With Energy beyond These Walls*, ed. Juan Manuel Bonet, exh. cat. (Valencia, Spain: Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, 1998), 323.

⁸ Incorporating organic and artificial intelligence, second-order cybernetics is a circular system that can be altered through feedback. There is a sociopolitical dimension to the second order, as it privileges the observer and links the idea of "information" to individual and collective agency. I am indebted to Julieta González's analysis of cybernetics in relation to Downey's work in her essay "Juan Downey's Communications Utopia," in *Juan Downey: A Communications Utopia*, exh. cat. (Mexico City: Museo Rufino Tamayo, 2013), 10–78.

⁹ Downey, "Architecture, Video, Telepathy: A Communications Utopia," in *Journal of the Centre for Advanced TV Studies* 5, no. 1 (1977): 1.

¹⁰ Downey, "Electronically Operated Audio-Kinetic Sculptures" (1968), *Leonardo* 2, no. 4 (October 1969): 406.

¹¹ Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Mistaking the Moon for a Ball," in *Cinema and Experience: Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodore W. Adorno* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 139.

¹² Coalition members included Carl Andre, Hans Haacke, Leonardo Katz, Lucy Lippard, Seth Siegelaub, and Robert Smithson. Julia Bryan-Wilson provides a thorough analysis of the relationship of the Art Workers' Coalition to their historical and cultural moment in *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009).

¹³ Bryan-Wilson, "From Artists to Art Workers," in *Art Workers*, 25.

¹⁴ Initiated by Douglas Davis, the New Group was a loose organization of artists based in Washington, D.C., during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

¹⁵ Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," in *Artificial Hells*, 97.

¹⁶ Ibid., 98.

¹⁷ Downey created an invisible corridor, articulated by ultrasonic waves, for Marta Minujín's performance *Interprenning*, which took place in the Sculpture Garden of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, on August 11, 1972.

¹⁸ The violent nature of Graciela Carnevale's performance is discussed in relation to the Argentinian political context of the late 1960s in Grant Kester's essay "The Sound of Breaking Glass Part I: Spontaneity and Consciousness in Revolutionary Theory," *e-flux* no. 30 (December 2011), available at e-flux.com/journal/ the-sound-of-breaking-glass-part-i-spontaneity-and-consciousness-in-revolutionary-theory/.

¹⁹ Bishop outlines Gunter Berghaus's distinction between European and U.S. positions vis-à-vis the politicization of Happenings in "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," in *Artificial Hells*, 94–95.

²⁰ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), xix.

²¹ Members of the Judson Dance Theater included Carmen Beuchat, Trisha Brown, Simone Forti, Steve Paxton, and Yvonne Rainer.

²² Contact Improvisation is a technique, pioneered by Steve Paxton, by which dancers' spontaneous physical contact propels improvised movements.

²³ Bratu Hansen, "Mistaking the Moon for a Ball," 133.
²⁴ Ibid., 174.

²⁶ Downey, "Technology and Beyond," *Radical Software* 2, no. 5 (Winter 1973): 2.

²⁷ Walter Benjamin, quoted in Bratu Hansen, "Mistaking the Moon for a Ball," 140.

²⁸ ITT's subsidiary, C. Lorenz AG, funded Luftwaffer fighter planes, radars, and transceiver equipment during World War II.

²⁹ Fifty-thousand people took part in the demonstration, and *Doing Things Together: Imperialistic Octopus* was mentioned in the *Daily Pennsylvanian*'s coverage of the event on April 24, 1972.

³⁰ For discussion of these practices, see Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon, France: Les Presses du réel, 2002), 28.

³¹ Rancière, "The Intolerable Image," in *The Emancipated Spectator*, 105.

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²⁵ Ibid., 160.




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Radioactive Chair, 1968; Invisible Energy, 1968; and A Machine with Three Conditions, 1968 Installation in Juan Downey: Audio-Kinetic Electronic Sculptures, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1969 Plywood, formica, and electronic parts Dimensions unknown Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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Energy Fields, 1972 Enlarged photographic documentation of video-performance Gelatin-silver print 10 x 8 in. (25 x 20 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Peter Moore, © Estate of Peter Moore/VAGA, New York

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Juan Downey with *Radioactive Chair*, 1970 Installation in *With Energy beyond These Walls*, Howard Wise Gallery, New York, 1970 Plywood, formica, and electronic parts Dimensions unknown Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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Invisible Energy, 1968; Installation in Juan Downey: Audio-Kinetic Electronic Sculptures, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1969 Plywood, formica, and electronic parts Dimensions unknown Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk MOTHING

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Juan Downey



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PREFACE

CHAPTER I

ED MCGOWIN

Ed McGowin-First I'd like to know, do you plan more than three chapters? Juan Downey-No. E.M.-Is there to be only two chapters? J.D.-No. E.M.-One chapter? J.D.-No. E.M.-No chapters then. J.D.-No. E.M.-Can I begin to find out what the novel is about by asking questions that you can answer "YES" or "NO"? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Is the novel about personalilities? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is the novel about...Does it have anything to do with visual arts? J.D.-No. E.M.-Can the...Do the participants in the novel know each other? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is Alice Denney in the novel? J.D.-No. E.M.-I saw her making a chapter, didn't I? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-But now she's been excluded? J.D.-No. J.D.-No. E.M.-Let's see...Will this novel J.D.-No. be for general public consumption? J.D.-No. J.D.-No. E.M.-But it will be published in J.D.-No. print. J.D.-No. J.D.-No. E.M.-Will anyone el...Will anyone know ... Will anyone know any-J.D.-Yes. thing about the novel outside yourself ever? J.D.-Yes. J.D.-No. E.M.-Can we...Will I ever know anything about the novel? J.D.-No. J.D.-No. E.M.-If I would like to make a J.D.-No. novel, would you record a chapter for me? J.D.-Yes. J.D.-No.

E.M.-How long can we work on this

novel?

novel?

the novel?

J.D.-No.

J.D.-No.

J.D.-No.

J.D.-No.

J.D.-No.

J.D.-I cannot answer that question. E.M.-That's right.

I'd like to know, is this novel more or less ... Will it take any of the most ordinary points of departure that I might be familiar with?

E.M.-Most of all I'd like to know, do you want to make this

E.M.-And, if you don't want to make the novel, then why is this premise being set up to do what you don't want to do? Let me say that ... To answer that you can say "Yes" or "No" to ah...to this perhaps, ah ... ah...Do you want to mistreat

E.M.-Would you like to make a beautiful novel?

E.M.-Would you like to make a tragic novel?

E.M.-A sincere novel?

E.M.-Superstitous novel?

E.M.-Excentric novel?

E.M.-Exciting novel?

E.M.-Uneven novel?

E.M.-Is this to be creative?

E.M.-Is it to be...ah...innovative?

E.M.-Is it...ah...almost on an intuitive level?

E.M.-Is it on a most rational level?

E.M.-Is it on a cerebral level as opposed to an emotional level? E.M.-Could you paint a picture about this? J.D.-No. E.M.-Could you sing a song about this? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is there any other way this could be managed? J.D.-No. E.M.-You couldn't make a movie out of this? J.D.-No. E.M.-Will it be plastic? J.D.-No. E.M.-Will it be free? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Will it cost a lot of money? J.D.-No. E.M.-Can you...Can you give it away? J.D.-No. E.M.-Can you produce it in enough quantity to give it away to everybody? J.D.-No. E.M.-Do you think that you will be able to decide who you can give it to? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Will you be able to give it to more than one hundred people? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Will you be able to give it to more than a thousand people? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Will you be able to give it to more than a million people? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Will you be able to give it to more than ten million people? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Will you be able to give it to more than a hundred million people? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Will it be in one language? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Will it be in English? J.D.-No. E.M.-Will it be illustrated? J.D.-No. E.M.-Will it be black and white? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Could it be red and white? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Would you like for it to be red and white?

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J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Would you like for it to be green and white? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Does it matter what color it is? J.D.-No. E.M.-Could it be green and red? J.D.-No. E.M.-Will it be lengthy? J.D.-Lengthy? No. E.M.-Ah...then it'll be a very brief novel. J.D.-No. E.M.-It'll be a more or less modest middle range novel. J.D.-No. E.M.-Will there be a cat in it? J.D.-No. E.M.-Will there be any sex in it? J.D.-No. E.M.-Will there be any women in it? J.D.-No. E.M.-Will there be any men in it? J.D.-No. E.M.-Will it deal with voids? J.D.-No. E.M.-It will only deal with positive elements. Physical positive. J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Could we...Could I make one after you have made the novel? J.D.-No. E.M.-Could I make an object like it? J.D.-No. E.M.-Can the novel grow, could it perpetuate itself? J.D.-No. E.M.-Could it become ... Could it be smaller, could it reduce itself? J.D.-No. E.M.-Could it be ... PAUSE E.M.-Does it deal with voice? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Does it deal with communication? J.D.-No. E.M.-Will there be more than one voice involved? J.D.-No. E.M.-Will you erase one of our voices?

J.D.-No.

E.M.-Will it be ... ah ... That's right, it's to be, it's to be, it's to be written. J-D--No-J.D.-Yes. Ah, No. E.M.-It will not be written in the final analysis. It will be ... J.D.-No. on the final production, it will be on tape? J.D.-Yes. J.D.-Yes. E.M.-And you said you might be able J.D.-No. to give this away to as many as one hundred million people? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-On tape? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Do you have a lot of money? J.D.-No. E.M.-Ah...Can I play it all day long? J.D.-No. E.M.-Would I be tired of it all day long? J.D.-No. E.M.-Can I play it like background music? J.D.-No. E.M.-Do I have to concentrate on it? J.D.-No. E.M.-Can I understand it without thinking about it? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is it pertinent to contemporary art? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is it pertinent to contemporary philosophy? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is it pertinent to contemporary...ah...ah...living? J.D.-No. E.M.-Does it have any pertinence? J.D.-How do you spell pertinence? P-E-R-T-I-N-E-N-C-E ? E.M.-Yes. J.D.-It has pertinence. E.M.-Does it have pertinence spelled: P-E-R-E-N-C-E ? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Does it have pertinence spelled: P-E-R-E-N-T-E-N-C-E ? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Do you know how to spell pertinence? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Do I know how to spell pertinence? J.D.-Yes.

E.M.-Is it ah...urinatious? J.D.-No. E.M.-Aringo? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Is it very urenometer? J.D.-Very WHAT? E.M.-Urenometer? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is it an instrument for measuring small objects? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is it...Does it equivocate? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Does it...To use an ambiguous ceive. J.D.-Yes. E.M.-It's equivocal. J.D.-No. E.M.-Ah... The ambiguous language specific? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is random? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is it about butterflies? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is it about anything I know about? J.D.-No. completely new to me? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Ah...If I don't like foreign J.D.-No. E.M.-Ah...Would it make me very angry? J.D.-No. E.M.-Would it make me passive? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Is it ah...ah...What is jink? J.D.-No.

it?

Nov

E.M.-Can pertinence be spelled in more than one way?

E.M.-Ah...Can I fall in love with

E.M.-Is it inanimate?

E.M.-Is it ethereal?

language with an intent to de-

with an intent to deceive is

E.M.-Is it completely...Should it be

things in general, do you suppose I would like this thing?

To impose upon, cheat, disapoint, to dodge, elude, frolics, pranks. Is it that?

E.M.-Ah...Would you like some more wine? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Ah...Will it be funny? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is this funny? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is this sad? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is this...ah...Is this novel religious? E.M.-And it doesn't have anything to do with anything I know bout? J.D.-No. E.M.-And I can't identify it in any J.D.-No. E.M.-Could I make one? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Would you teach me how? J.D.-No. E.M. Who. ... Can I find somebody that can teach me how? J.D.-No. E.M.-Can I do it simply because I'd J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Can I do it anyway I'd like to? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Can I do more than one at once? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Can I involve as much as I want to in my novel? J.D.-No. E.M.-Can my novel be big? E.M.-Ah...You're not going to San J.D.-No. E.M.-Because you have to do something here? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-You don't have the time to go. J.D.-Yes. E.M.-But, you prefer to stay here. J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Don't you like to go with Patsy

and I to San Juan? E.M.-Don't you like to go with Calvin and Enid to San Juan' J.D.-No.

E.M.-Do you know my friend from Mississippi? J.D. -Yes.

J.D.-No.

the novel?

E.M.-Do you know he'll be in San E.M.-If he goes to San Juan, would you go to San Juan? E.M.-Will all this be a part of the novel? J.D.-No E.M.-Will you take it out? J.D.-No. E.M.-Ah...Do you have a specific... ah...structure for answering questions for this novel? E.M.-Do you answer randomly? J.D.-No. E.M.-Do you answer ah...according to a design? J.D.-No. E.M.-Do you answer according to the question? I.D.-No. E.M. -Do you answer according to anything? J.D.-No. E.M.-And it's not random. .M.-But there is no system. J.D.-No. E.M.-Ah...Do you believe in systems? E.M.-Do you believe in education? .T. D. -No E.M.-Ah...Will this novel educate? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Will this novel educate everyone that sees it, hears it or reads it? E.M.-Do you have to be susceptible to this novel to be educated? J.D.-No. S.M.-Would you like this art, this novel to educate people? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Do you like for this novel to be widely understood? J.D.-No. E.M.-Would you like for this novel to be well received? J.D.-No. E.M.-Would you like this novel to be important? J.D.-No. E.M.-Would this novel have any historical relevance?

.-Yes.

ual?

novel?

novel?

novel?

the novel?

J.D.-No.

J.D.-No.

J.D.-No.

J.D.-No.

J.D.-No.

J.D.-Yes.

J.D.-No.

the novel?

J.D.-No.

it? E.M.-Ah...Would this novel be important to you as an individ-E.M.-Ah...ah...Will there be other people involved?
J.D.-No. E.M. -Would what I say in relation E.M.-Do we have much time to make to this novel make any dif-ference at all? the novel? E.M.-Is the novel to be presented E.M.-Does what anyone says about to a group of people? this novel or to the novel, J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Right away? or involved with the novel have any relation to the novel at all? J.D.-No B.M.-In the distant future? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Will Doug Davis allow his first E.M.-Will these be astute people? J.D.- Yes. E.M.-They'll be knowledgeable about chapter to be involved with the novels? E.M.-Is Doug Davis afraid of the J.D. -No. E.M.-Are you afraid to expose this novel? E.M.-Is Doug Davis ignorant about J.D.-No. S.M.-Is the novel surreal? J.D.-No. E.M.-Does Doug Davis understand the E.M.-Ah...Is it exciting? .D.-No. E.M.-Is it exciting to you? E.M.-Ah...Would Doug Davis like to make a novel? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Ah...Would you like to select E.M.-Even if he liked to make one the people to expose the novel to first? he couldn't? E.M.-Do you have any preference of E.M.-Ah...Could anyone else make a who would be exposed to the novel? J.D.-No. E.M.-Could I make a novel? E.M.-Would there be anyone whom you would like not to expose the B.M.-Ah... Is this a timeless novel? novel to? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Will the novel be understood E.M.-Ah... Is there good in this only in the next decade? novel? J.D.-No. E.M.-Will it be understood only in E.M.-Is the novel bad? the next five years? J.D.-No. E.M.-Would you like to make a good E.M.-Is there any motive for making novel J.D.-No. E.M.-Do you believe in good novels? E.M.-Is there any, sh... Is there J.D.-No. anything about the novel that E.M.-Can good novels be educational I would like to know about now? and informative to you? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Is there anything about the E.M.-Did you decide to make the novel that I would like to know in the process of making

E.M.-Is it going to be super? novel? E.M.-Could the novel...be read J.D.-No. E.M.-Is it going to be quiet? E.M.-Did someone else decide to make backwards? T. D. -No. J.D.-No. E.M.-Can it be heard backwards? E.M.-Will it be...ah...very self-J.D.-No. contained without any outside influences to help it? J.D.-No. E.M.-Can it be heard upsidedown? .D.-No. E.M.-Can it be heard in bed? E.M.-Is it to be with ah...ah... J.D.-No. . D. -No. lecoration? E.M.-AH...Does the novel have child-J. D. -No. ren in it? E.M.-Is it to be with a grandiose J.D.-No. J.D. -No. presentation? J.D.-No. E.M.-Does it have ... any people at all in it? E.M.-Is it to be ah ... Will it be J.D.-No. E.M.-Does it have animals in it? about me? J.D.-No. J.D.-Yes. J.D.-No. E.M.-Will it be about other people E.M.-Does the novel have cows? like me? J.D.-No. E.M.-Insects? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Will it be about any other J.D.-No. people like me? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Fishes? J. D. -No E.M.-Will it be about women? J.D.-No. E.M.-Dust? J.D.-No. E.M.-Will it be about men? J.D.-No. K.M.-Is it scary? J.D. No E.M.-Will it be about ah...celes-J.D.-No. It's not scary. E.M.-Is it ah...entertaining? tial objects? J.D.-No. E.M.- Will it be about Jesus? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is it ah... Is it a masterpiece? J.D.-No. J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Will God be mad at me? E.M.-Ah... Is it one of a kind? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Will He strike me dead? E.M.-Has it been preceeded by any J.D.-No. E.M.-Will my mother like this chapnovel of its kind? ter E.M.-Ah...Is it.... J.D.-No. E.M.-Ah...Will my father like it? Is it good for me? J.D.-Yeah. E.M.-Does it make me better? J.D.-No J.D.-No. E.M.-Will anyone like it? J.D.-No. J.D.-No. E.M.-Does it make me look better? E.M.-Will you make another novel? J.D.-No. E.M.-Feel better? J.D.-No. E.M.-Could I go away and finish the J.D.-No novel later? E.M.-Smell better? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is there a temporal thing in-J.D.-No. E.M.-Taste better? volved with the novel? J.D.-No. E.M.-Will I eat better? E.M.-Is there ah...Is there a structure to the novel beyond what we use right now? E.M.-Is it good for me in some way?

J.D.-No.

E.M.-Ah... Is there a point in the

most obvious sense about the

J.D.-Yes.

E.M.-Is it ah ... ah ... Is it going to

be terrific?

J.D.-No.

J.D.-No. E.M.-Is there a point in the most extraordinary sense about the novel? E.M.-Can this novel to on infinite-E.M .- Can the novel be in production for ten years? E.M.-For ten days? J.D.-No. E.M.-Ah...for ten minutes? E.M.-For one minute? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Can the novel be in production for ah...Can the novel be...Is the novel for other than human beings? E.M.-Is the novel in production for all human beings? E.M.-Ah...Can we make this novel in the closet? J.D.-No. E.M.-Do we have to make the novel in the living-room? E.M.-Can we make the novel in an automobile? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Can we make the novel on top of the washing machine? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Can we make the novel by just breathing? E.M. - Do we have to make the novel J.D.-No. E.M.-Can we make the novel by scratching? J.D.-No. E.M.-Is the novel... Is the novel... ah...Is the novel going to be fun to everybody? J.D.-No. (Sneezes). E.M.-Can we make the novel by sneezing? J.D.-No. E.M.-Are you sure this microphon is picking up your response?

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E.M.-Is that airplane to be part of E.M.-Is it good to you? the novel? J.D.-Yes. J.D.-No. E.M.-That's good. Ah ... Would you E.M.-Ah...The...Ah...The novel, will J.D.-No. it be presented as an art form? J.D.-No. E.M.-Ab. E.M.-Beyond an art form, as a novel J.D.-Listen, this is outside the itself? J.D.-No. E.M.-Will the novel be ever presented? E.M. -Yesh J.D.-No. E.M.-Is ah... Is there more to the novel than what I understand? J.D.-No. E.M.-Could we make ... the same novel tomorrow? J.D.-No. E.M.-Can we make a novel very much like this novel tomorrow? J.D.-No. E.M.-Do we have to make some more novels? E.M.-Can we stop making the novel? J.D.-No. E.M.-Do you like my pyramids? J.D.-No. E.M.-Do you think aluminum stripping on the edge would make them better? J.D.-No. E.M.-Do you think the color in the pyramids...is...Do you think that's pretty? E.M.-Ah...Didn't you buy a new Volkswagen? E.M .- Don't you have a new convertible? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-A yellow? J.D.-No. E.M.-A yellow Volkswagon convertible? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-The same one I saw you at that night's party in? J.D.-No. E.M.-Did you drive it over here tonight? J.D.-No. E.M.-Did you drive over here tonight? J.D.-No. E.M.-Do you know you just drank a

whole fifth of wine? J.D.-Yes.

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J.D.-Yes. N.-Do you feel that wine is good for your health? J.D.-No. N.-Do you feel that vegetables are better than different meats? J.D.-No. N.-Have you ever read a book on Buddhism, say. J.D.-No. N.-Would you want to? J.D.-Yes. N.-What about Hinduism? J.D.-No. N.-Are you interested in religion? T.D.-No N .- Would you care to find an opportunity to look into one? J.D.-Yes. N.-Would you like to understand the Universal Sphere? J.D.-Yes. N.-Would you like to meet Him, the Antichrist? J.D.-No. N .- Would it be for personal reasons that you don't want to meet Him J.D.-No. N.-Political reasons? J.D.-No. N.-An economic reason? J.D.-No. N.-National stability? J.D.-No. N.-O.K. I'll just keep it to myself then. What about sixteenth century renaissance painters? Do you feel they were important to their time? J.D.-Yes. N.-Do you feel that Warhol is important to his time? J.D. -Yes. N.-Co you feel that his films are better than his soup-cans? J.D.-No. N.-Do you feel that his soup-cans are the very best of his time? J.D.-Yes. N .- Do you find Ed McGowin's sculpsensual? J.D.-No. N.-Romantic? J.D.-No. N.-Organic?

J.D.-No. N.-Do you find that your own things have a mechanical insight of man's mechanics? Do you find man is mechanical as your machines are mechanical? Do you feel a relationship? J. D. -No. N.-Do you believe that James Joyce's flow of consciousness is deeply beautiful? J.D.-No. N.-Then you believe in introspection J.D.-No. N.-I'm not kidding upon it. Do you feel that you would like to be a comedian? J.D.-No. N.-Are you being serious about this also D.-Yes. N.-Are the most important things to you related to people? J.D.-Yes. N.-Do you like great, big, large groups of people or...do you like ... J.D.-Don't give me a choice. N.-O.K. What about large groups of people? J.D.-Yes. N.-And, what about small groups? .D.-No. N .- Do you like a lot of noise? J.D.-Yes. N.-What about silence? N.-Do you think that light is the first stir of art? J.D.-Yes. J.D.-No. N.-Do you think that white is a very evasive color? J. D. -No. N.-Are you interested in art? J.D.-No. N.-Does art have a universal meaning to you? J.D.-Yes. .-Does it affect you emotionally? J.D.-No. N.-Is it an intellectual experience? J.D.-Yes. N.-I can't believe you said that. Do you feel that you have some particular relation to organic

novel be adaptable to short stories? E.M.-Could it be made in fragments? E.M.-It has to be a continuum from E.M.-Can it be made, ah...ah...by any other device than the tape? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Ah...Could we make it on the telephone? J.D.-Yes. E.M.-Would it be more fun to make it on the telephone? J.D.-Yes.

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CHAPTER II

NANRTTR

like some brandy?

Do you want to stop?

chapter: you can stop when-ever you want to.

- Nanette-Juan, what is this chapter to be about? Juan Downey-You have to ask me questions that I can answer YES or NO. N.-I see. Does your novel have to do with Kant at all? J.D.-No. N.-You don't even care about distant. places, I mean about mystical places? J.D.-No N.-Does it have to do with mysticism at all? J.D.-No. N.-Are you interested in philosophy at all? Any particular person? J.D.-No. N.-I thought so. Are you interested in non-objective principles? J.D.-No. N.-Then you are interested in objective principles. J.D.-No. N.-Subjective principles? J.D.-No. N.-I see. Do you feel you are of an activist nature? J.D.-Yes. N.-Do you feel that sciences are needed at Peace Marches? J.D.-No. N.-Do you feel that you like color yellow? J.D.-No. N.-What about red? J.D.-You have ask me precise questions. N.-Answer me yes or no. How do you like red? .I.D. -No. N.-Do you like wearing number 69? You are wearing a number 69, you know. Do you like wearing it? J.D.-No. N.-Do you wear it because it feels comfortable? J.D.-Yes. N.-Does it give you a feeling of good family life? J.D.-Yes. N.-Security?
- J.D.-Yes. N.-Do you feel ... J.D.-No. No, no, not security. I am sorry. N.-Not security. Does you work make you feel secure? J.D.-Yes. .-Do you feel that you could feel more secure next year, than you do now? J.D.-No. N.-Are you looking forward to this curity? ine J.D.-No. N.-Do you like to continue in your J.D.-No. N .- Do you ever want to play the Tarat? J.D.-How do you spell Tarat? N.-T-A-R-A-T. J.D.-No N.-What about the I Ching? J.D.-No. N.-Astrology? J.D.-No. N.-Do you feel you make your own J.D.-No. N.-You feel you are famous then. J.D.-No. N.-Do you believe that you are going to have ten children? J.D.-No. N.-Do you believe in Free Will? J.D.-No. N.-Do you believe that it would interfere with your work? J.D.-No. N .- What about three wives? N.-Four dogs? J.D.-No. N.-One dog? J.D.-No. N.-No dogs? J.D.-No. N.-Aren't you anti-sexual?
- J. D. -No. N.-Do you prefer red wine or white wine

arts? I am not thinking about art. For instance, do you have relationship with nature?

J.D.-Yes. N.-Organic Nature?

.D.-Yes.

- N.-Do you think that your mind grows with its contact? .D.-No.
- N.-Do you feel that it affects you any way spiritually? J.D.-No.
- N.-Does nature affect you spiritual-17? Does it give you a sense of spiritualism?
- J.D.-No. N.-Do you believe in other dimension than our own? J.D.-No.
- N.-Do you mean that you do not believe in spheres? J.D.-No.
- N.-Do you believe in God?
- J.D.-No. N.-Do you think that you might ever
- change you mind if there is suf-ficient evidence? J.D.-Yes.
- N.-Do you feel that Jesus was God? Not God, but... J.D.-No.
- N.-Do you feel that He was just another man? J.D.-No.
- N.-Do you feel that He existed?
- J.D.-No.
- N.-Do you care?
- J.D.-Yes.
- N.-Would you rather have Him exist? J.D.-No. N.-Do you feel that ... How about a
- goal in your life? J.D.-Yes. N.-Do you feel that your life is
- reflected from industrial appearences?
- J.D.-No.
- N.-Do you feel that the machinessculptures you make have any
- relationship to time and space? .D.-Yes.
- N.-Do they have any relationship to our own life? J.D.-Yes.
- N.-Do they have anything to do with different ages of man? J.D.-No.

- N.-Does the number seven mean anything to you? J.D.-Yes. N.-What about three?
- J.D.-Yes.
- N.-Do you feel numbers are important? J.D. -No
- N.-Do you feel that life would be better if you had a Big Truth?
- J.D.-No. N.-Do you feel that you would be very happy if you had half a truth?
- J.D.-No. N.-Would you rather live on pure fantasy?
- J.D.-No.
- N.-Do you like string beans? J.D.-No.
- N.-Do you care for string beans at any time? J.D.-Yes.
- N.-Do you feel that you could dec-orate an apartment with string beans, lettuce and tomatoes?
- D.-No. N.-Do you feel that you could peel potatoes, set them up for miles and live on them?
- J.D.-No. N.-Do you feel that you could put hats on the big statues in this
- town? J.D.-No.
- N.-Do you feel that sometimes you could eat sausage and sometimes you could not?
- J.D.-No. N.-Co you feel that Buddhism has
- any relationship to sidewalks? J.D.-No.
- N.-Do you believe that Krishna ever existed?
- J.D.-No. N.-Do you believe that there could be big statues one hundred feet high that we have never found?
- J.D.-No. N.-Do you think that there could be life hidden in a cave?

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- J.D.-No. N.-Do you think that the American
- Flag could be painted orange and purple instead of white and red?
- N.-Would you prefer it that way?

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Sour Juin Deseys long Widels has evide as to write yet and has yet were goodloom, on here they are: In this singles show how the Volunteer Fire Dr. of Yan Neys, California, into detergent in their subjument on 15 will such in suddher and put out the fire accord?

the large account from become a moment Bo. Support [1] ask you if you would undry a restaurant that would feature tota steophyses-line and could be a fifthed string is when you got a lottlow journet, with a containing account, as an analyzery is driveduce analysis

Jone Dongy's summary Ro. Note 1'll gap you if writing a buck is pour real notice or if you are writing up to be able with a buck in the notice forming into a singuring and you do those own-tions to as large a creat is you into them at the base of the Manlagian Manumant, any grader adding Markenood?

We can be any acression of a second statement jun house, to assume the second statement of the second state of the second state of the line is as to second state in the second state of the second state is a line in the second state of the second state is also be also be as line is as a second state of the second state is all is all is a line second state of the second state is also be also be also to get a good second state is a second state is all is all is also the second state of the second state is also be also be also the second state of the second state is also be also be also the second state of the second state is also be also be also the second state of the second state of the second state is also the second state of the secon scersly,

Chip Lord

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From: Dimestore Designer's Workshop 221 Dexter Place Raleigh, N.C. 27605

Dimestore Designer's Workshop-Do you have art talent worth developing? Juan Downey-No. D.D.W.-Does your spray starch clog? J.D.-No. D.D.W.-\$500? J.D.-No. D.D.W.-Did you hear the one about the travelling salesman? J.D.-No. D.D.W.-Ready? J.D.-No. D.D.W.-Will you pay the price of a Cadillac...and not get one? J.D.-Yes. D.D.W.-Are they immoral? J.D.-No. D.D.W.-Isn't that Elke Sommer behind those Foster Grants? J.D.-No. D.D.W.-Ever read the label on the back of Beefeater Gin? J.D.-No. D.D.W.-Should she wait until she's married? J.D.-No. D.D.W.-You want the Sears self-sealing tire? J.D.-Yes. D.D.W.-Can a young girl college graduate from the Middle West find happiness in the Peace Corps? J.D.-No. D.D.W.-Should you douche? J.D.-Yes. D.D.W.-I happen to perspire other places besides under my arms. Don't you? J.D.-Yes. D.D.W.-Does she...or doesn't she? J.D.-Yes. D.D.W.-Are there days when every mother feels as Carolyn did and wants to stop the wheels of progress, convinced that they have already run her down and are out to get her children? J.D.-No. D.D.W.-Are we having a nervous

breakdown?

J.D.-No. D.D.W.-If you wear your Gleneagles raincoat in the suburbs, is it your suburban coat? J.D.-No. D.D.W.-Does Avis turn back the odometers? J.D.-No. D.D.W.-Are you looking for possible growth for your money?

J.D.-No.

From: 116, Hawthorne USA. 77006

Question-Could you make it in electronics? Juan Downey-No. Q.-How fine is fine? J.D.-No. Q.-Ron Rico. Wasn't he the dance director who spotted Ruby Keeler in the Ziegfield line-up? J.D.-No. Q.-Can a Capital Market Plan save our urban areas? J.D.-No. Q.-Just because the U.S. Olympic Team will wear Converse basketball shoes, should you? J.D.-Yes.





Page 13, Section 10 Wednesday, October 2, 1968	Editorials	By Merriman Smith	STIC)
Humphrey's in	trouble	THE 30-CALLED prace demonstra- tors making life minerable for Vice-President Hubert E. Humphrey in city after city have a simple par- trage Present bine from definering bin	Nonsense. In Portland, signals for peac distant to walk young woman in
Bubert Humphrey is an honorable Rep man who has made a distinguished por	ublican challenger Richard Nixon, the third-party contender George	speech or in any case, turn his ment- ing into a shambles. This is not police hisarsay at politi-	various chants Johnny Unitas e Baltimore Colts. The hard core
Minneapolis, as U.S. senator from Min- nesota and as vice-president of the U	t their nominating conven-	cal interpretation, but personal, an- the-spot observation of this reporter whe has spent a good bit of time with the Homothery detractors on the	supporters attrac rection unually f ders very well. One apparentl
AD SH	erences to crusade jubilantly te Republicans. This year is Humphrey started out be-	etrects and in audiforiums There is a continuity in their pur- pose, technique and singana, to say	the group in Sea rather harshly o told this reporter "Talk about fi
ne pono	ie latest Gallup Poll shows so critical weeks in Septem- Il farther behind. Nixon held	the leaders in the wild demonstration at Seattle were in Humphrey's sheet- ing audience at Portland the night be- fore Dethermore, this presents one	thick Hubert Hu is except as an trial for nurder namese. He call
NERH	ith 43 percent of the voters, aphrey dropped from 31 per- 3 percent. Wallace, on the	attest to the fact that some of the Seattle and Portland demonstrators were in the front ranks of yoing peo- ple who battled with police during the	Hitler youth, W something - he Goebbels, " Why don't th
eg ddi	is the overwhelming favor- t of the South, yet so strong	Democratic convention in Chinago. This applies to a relatively small group of young men and women. The demonstrators insist their activities	Bichard M. Nix not responsible policies and carr efforts
TORE?	present lead, it appears he easily without the South, erting an inconclusive elec-	are in no way planned or organized; that theirs is a community of parpose and they show up at the same place at the same time out of individual	By disrupting rafiles, what do plish? Elect Geo az Wallace is co
i dec X	which would throw the pres- ction into the House of Rep- is where Humphrey might	Viewweinte	is an emphatic
V line as	ed Democrats outnumber olitical parties in the coun- is year, the	viewpoints	L
H ne Ky n	y's candidat	OWE	-
ehh	ds to rees		ie i
p;er o et	dollars wh mind that this singl,	Fine':	~
in he	 raising campaign you can ith a dollar contribution. be all right for each of the 	for fatrics. It was stated that the considerable cost incruise resulting from the	Core
	 but this United Fund as to raise enough money them ell. should you give? The 	gene into the price from the manufacturer's level. The article fid not, however, state that this problem is one which stores have encountered	-
1	" plan suggests a scale of on income. It is intended a guide. A "Fair Share"	tin a year-round basis for the last sev- eral years. Merchandise is frequent- ly returned to manufacturers when at fails to pass the quality centres star-	
-	ounsain or one hour's pay	timely control to protect their cus- tomers. Today's plother do not in fact "ball sport" in the hands of the measures of	Peop
the and writer, we say it to prove call	Selfer where many is most presentations, ready there are the sold or derivative		By Rus
affumions and served three day, while other citizens begged off, the Associ- ated Press reports. Jary service is one of the upportant pote	let: to serve are not as well quali- imes Garland, we are pleased to takes his rivie remonsib time.	It is at loss that the companies there the be protoched. In short, it he distributes attempts to ofter his interior merchandles in the public, he will either the their	There are from to men than trull to bear, and then
responsibilities of citizenship-like seri paying taxes, respecting the law and cust voting. The jury is the chief dispenser dida	ously. Most judges would have ex- ed him because of his age, but he i't ask to be excused. We don't	considerate or in the long run te re- futer by a decrease in sales. For the public, this confidence factor lasting- them against the problems Mr. Lave- rence consist. Such shally control	saily have to tak in Galden's time ward to bear the around the sun.
American justice is good ar bad decorr pends largely on the caliber of the tion citizens who make up our juries.	w whether Mr. Garland is con- ted about law and order in the na- . In any case, he is doing some- try about law and order in his own	is a way of life for some stores, and the public must look to these people for their protection in this era of con- sumer concurs. Because the inter-	became very ang threatened him w sequences until b "And yet it m
Some otherwise honorable citizens con find they are too busy to serve an jur- les and make excuses. Some say they oth	munity. fore power to him, and let's hope or citizens will profit by his ex-	play of the market place is still the rinal arbiter, it behaves any retailer to protect his position in that market.	afterwards. And Eugene McCart paign used to cit tice of killing it
New York students	start late	Almeda-Genoa Road unforgettable work	brought had news reason why he Democratic nomin tory against Pre-
Across the nat' 'idren V	When school started last month,	From Mes. David R. Moore, 1999 Barin. There is an unbelievable piece of	New Hampshire, was the messeng the bad news to Like the clus
a month now. T Usth	se of teacher strikes Officials of ""tional Education Asan., the "he more conservative of	which I feel the public should be aware I didn's realize that the whole United States possessed such a pre-	lenged by the rev with the nocessity thought, the par- the difficulty of
delayed by MIL WO	as 300 to 400	Texas! The effect of its three dispensional aspects with variation of texture and	preferred to preta had happened. Ar
Americ Shonila	Contelle	quite overwheiming. I feel one must is believe the final work for it in a very moving experience	Å
school teachers to a your hack up their dening to your hack up their dening to your hack up their class room condition.	erse ho. C	When the is that	THE CT
	aski	than Tea	- Contraction
122 h Al	n New Yors. 1 over a millio nt back to class Monda, .	show an	THE
	by the local governing board or - dominately Negro and Puerto Rican trict and the transfer of 100 others	-c5,	A NOTION
HI SALES	was a complicated quartel in which submerged issues involved decen- lization of authority, local control	When reading	PROCESSION OF STREET
TARSING #	public schools, racism, resentment the poor against the establishment.	we ever find a man who wants to help as sveid new faxation.	TWINE LONGUING
	d the teachers' desire to be con-	W. R. Archer of Houston why has	
	d the teachers' desire to be con- ted in matters involving personnel. The dispute, however, was not so inficant as the disruption it caused. this sert of thing continues this	W. R. Archer of Houston who has been trying to have a provision put into the Constitution forbidding state income taxation. There's a man to whom everyone should be transful.	A100

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DEAR JUAN DOWNEY, DOUG MICHELS HAS ASKED ME TO WRITRE YOU AND ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS SO HERE THEY ARE:

 IS THIS CHAPTER ABOUT HOW THE VOLUNTEER FIRE CO. OF VAN NEYS CALIF. USES DETERGENT IN THEIR EQUIPMENT SO IT WILL SOAK IN QUICKER AND PUT OUT THE FIRE SOONER.2

NO..... MAYBE I'LL ASK YOU IF YOU WOULD ENJOY A RESTUARANT THAT FEATURED TOTAL ATMOSPHERES LIKE ONE COULD BE A FIFTIES DRIVE*INN WHERE YOU PUT ON LETTER JACKETS, SIT IN CUSTOMIZED CARS, AND EAT HAMBURGERS AND CHOCOLATE MALTS?

NO..... MAYBE ILL ASK YOU IF WRITING A BOOK IS YOUR REAL MOTIVE OR IF YOU ARE REALLY GOING TO MAKE THIS WHOLE THING INTO A HAPPENING AND READ ALL THESE QUESTIONS TO AS LARGE A CROWD AS YOU CAN DRAW AT THE BASE OF THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT ON ANY GIVEN SUNDAY AFTERNOON NO..... MAYBE I WON'T ASK YOU ANY OF THOSE QUESTIONS MAYBE I'LL JUST TELL YOU THAT I WAS BORN CHARLES L LORD JR. IN CLEVLAND OMIO ON NOV. 1 1944 AND THAT I AM 5' 8" TALL AND WEIGHT 145 POUNDS SO THAT I WILL BE SURE TO GET A GOOD SPOT IN " A NOVEL "



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A Novel, 1969 Mimeographed booklet 40 pages; 9 x 6 in. (22.86 x 15.24 cm) each Harvard Art Museums Archives Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts Photo: Imaging Department, © President and Fellows of Harvard College

A Novel was first presented as part of a 1969 exhibition of Downey's Electronic Sculptures at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Mimicking the operational procedures of a computer using basic binary code, the narrative of A Novel is driven by simple "Yes" or "No" responses from viewers who interact with the work. A Novel evolves with each new encounter, reflecting Downey's interest in cybernetic theory and the idea that a continually evolving system of communication is possible through the incorporation of viewer feedback.





The Use of Cybernetics in Juan Downey's Early Work JULIETA GONZÁLEZ

"The power of the arts to anticipate future social and technological developments by a generation and more has long been recognized. In this century Ezra Pound called the artist 'the antennae of the race.' Art as radar acts as 'an early alarm system,' as it were, enabling us to discover social and psychic targets in lots of time in order to prepare to cope with them. This concept of the arts as prophetic contrasts with the popular idea of them as merely a form of self-expression. If art is an 'early warning system,' to use the phrase from World War II, when radar was new, art has the utmost relevance not only to the study of media but to the development of media controls."

-MARSHALL MCLUHAN, UNDER-STANDING MEDIA: THE EXTENSIONS OF MAN, 1964

Marshall McLuhan's statement reflects a shared sentiment within the artistic community in the 1960s: that artists could pick up the signals emitted by scientific progress and put their particular sensibilities and discursive strategies at the service of society at large. Juan Downey was one such artist, whose work foresaw the future of technology as a driving force in society and, in correspondence with this vision, manifested a constant concern for the relations between humankind and technology throughout his prolific career. Downey's practice developed against the backdrop of cybernetics' systemic view of the world, recast in computational terms as a series of homeostatic systems regulated by feedback dynamics. This essay thus attempts to map the influence of cybernetic thought on Downey's entire oeuvre, identifying it as the connecting thread that runs through his diverse and heterogeneous bodies of work, from his early Electronic Sculptures to his deconstruction of the ethnographic canon in the works produced as the result of his stay with the Yanomami in the mid-1970s. The focus on the specific time frame corresponding to the foundational period for many media-based art practices, such as video art, electronic, and computer or digital art, responds to an attempt to trace some of the cultural, philosophical, and technological genealogies of the different bodies of work that Downey produced throughout the course of his career, charting, in the process, the demise of cybernetics in the late 1970s and the shift in communications theory towards postmodern semiotic analysis as it was reflected in the artist's last body of work, The Thinking Eye (1975-89). The countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s provide a unique context for an understanding of the cultural implications at large of cybernetic thought, as they mirrored the cultural, ethico-philosophical, and theoretical shifts that marked the transition from first- to second-order cybernetics. It is within these specific shifts, and some of the ideas that emerged from them (reflexivity, observer participation, information as action), that I would like to frame the discussion on Downey's work and its cybernetic affiliations, in which we may identify the role that systemic thought played in Downey's particular engagement with art's social function.

Some More Beginnings: From the First Machine Age and Art's Desire for Social Transformation to the Second Machine Age's Quest for an Information Revolution

"The Mussorgsky of the future is giving a coastto-coast concert of his work, using the Radio apparatus to create a vast concert hall stretching from Vladivostok to the Baltic, beneath the blue dome of the heavens."

-VELIMIR KHLEBNIKOV, *THE RADIO* OF THE FUTURE, 1921

To understand Downey's particular vision of his role as an artist in the context of the information and technological revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, it is necessary to revisit yet an earlier period, at the dawn of the 20th century, during which the complex intersection of art and technology animated art's utopian desire for social agency. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Soviet Constructivist ethos, which sought to manufacture a radical transformation of society through an alliance between aesthetic pursuits and the dynamics of industrial production.¹ The "first machine age"² thus provided the original impetus for many of the early-20th-century avant-gardes, which incorporated the imperatives of the Industrial Age into their artistic practices, taking into account industrialization's social and economic implications. In their affiliation with the machine aesthetic, the Productivists were concerned with the object, the commodity, and, like Karl Marx, they did not foresee the transformation of information into capital

and the shifts in power that this would bring about. However, Velimir Khlebnikov's highly utopian radio project *The Radio of the Future* (1921) stands out as exceptional in this sense, as it foresaw the transit towards a "second machine age" and the role that information and communication would play in the construction of a new social ideal.

In his highly influential 1968 essay "Systems Esthetics," Jack Burnham proposed a new way of looking at the dematerialized and then-emerging conceptually based practices from the standpoint of the systems theory formulated by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, and placed the Productivist paradigm shift at the root of his genealogy³:

For some readers these pages will echo feelings of the past. It may be remembered that in the fall of 1920 an ideological schism ruptured two factions of the Moscow Constructivists. The radical Marxists, led by Vladimir Tatlin, proclaimed their rejection of art's false idealisms. Establishing ourselves as "Productivists," one of their slogans became: "Down with guarding the traditions of art. Long live the constructivist technician." As a group dedicated to historical materialism and the scientific ethos, most of its members were quickly subsumed by the technological needs of Soviet Russia. As artists they ceased to exist.⁴

This is particularly the case of Karl loganson, whose 1922 credo "From Construction to Technics and Invention" actually contains the phrase, loosely quoted by Burnham in his essay, "down with art, long live technic!" What Burnham implied by "artists ceasing to exist" would seem to be in line with loganson's view of himself not as an artist or even a technician, but rather as an inventor, proposing a new role for the artist that in some way approximated Ezra Pound's view of artists as "the antennae of the race." loganson was clearly aware of the technical limitations of artists at the time; in his view, technics was subordinated to invention, a concept that allowed him to circumvent the lack of technological know-how as it disengaged invention from purpose.⁵ Moreover, it was loganson who actually fabricated the first structure resembling, what decades, later R. Buckminster Fuller would define as a tensegrity, based on a design by Kenneth Snelson, a student of Fuller's at the Black Mountain College.⁶ However, as Maria Gough argues in her book on Productivism, loganson cannot be fully credited for the structural use that the tensegrity would have in architecture, as the technology of the time had not yet produced cables capable of withstanding high amounts of tensile stress, but in his self-fashioned role of the artist as inventor, loganson posited an idea that would be taken up again by Snelson and

The Use of Cybernetics in Juan Downey's Early Work

Buckminster Fuller decades later despite the fact that they were probably not familiar with loganson's Spatial Constructions.

We could thus say that is was within this paradigm of invention that artists working with technology in the 1960s and 1970s, unwittingly or not, recast themselves. The "second machine age" was an age of dematerialization; of information, networks, flows, and miniaturization, where everything had the potential to be divided into bits and organized as systems. Its early stages brought about not only utopian visions of the future that found a voice in the arts, from architecture to music, literature and the visual arts, but, similar to the "first machine age" avant-gardes, also a desire on behalf of artists to function within the logic of their own time.

Downey was no exception, and it seems pertinent to frame him within this paradigm of invention when discussing his work in the light of cybernetic theories and the technologies of the information revolution that significantly defined both the Cold War era and 1960s and 1970s counterculture. In the same way that loganson conceived of a new constructive form that was not structurally feasible with the technical means of his time, but that later provided the principle for megastructures, geodesic domes, skin architectures, and other forms that departed from the rigid structural schemes deriving from post-and-lintel construction, Downey's works and writings proposed networks of communication, that though intuitable, were technologically not feasible at a time when the personal computer, the Internet, and the social networks that shape our lives so significantly today were not even on the horizon.7

Paradigms/Contexts/Modes

"We might say that in creative art man must experience himself—his total self—as a cybernetic model."

-GREGORY BATESON, *STEPS TO AN* ECOLOGY OF MIND, 1972

In one of his notebooks, Downey outlines a diagram where the influences and lines of thought running through his work are distributed in the following categories: "PARADIGMS/CONTEXTS/ MODES." While it is difficult to decipher the internal logic underlying this diagram, we can read it as a map of influences in his work and of the modes of operation that articulated his practice, which enables us to single out some of its elements in order to equally analyze the paradigms, modes, and contexts that framed his production.

A rather factual overview of the names listed in this diagram sheds light on the medullar function of cybernetic theories in Downey's conceptualization of his artistic practice. The names of the cyberneticists penned by Downey in his diagram offer us more clues to a reading of his work in terms of a contextual analysis than the names of the artists that appear on the opposite side of the diagram (Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, Antonin Artaud, Yves Klein, Piero Manzoni, and Joseph Beuys).⁸ The mention of Albert Einstein at the top of the list already reveals Downey's interest in observer participation, which marked the shift from first-order to second-order cybernetics in the late 1960s, as Einstein's theory of relativity highlighted the observer's crucial role in the determination of the quantitative measurements of time and space, which were relative to the speed of the observer. Claude Shannon's name introduces us to Downey's interest in information theory and general notions of source code, pattern, and noise in communication. We can read Downey's interdisciplinary interest in cybernetics, beyond the realm of mathematics, in the names of Ross Ashby and Ludwig von Bertalanffy, pioneers of general systems theory who respectively came from the fields of psychiatry and biology. Cybernetics' neurobiological genealogies-likewise mapped in the names of neurophysiologist Warren McCulloch, logician Walter Pitts, and Mexican physiologist Arturo Rosenblueth, with whom Norbert Wiener and Julian Bigelow co-authored one of the first papers on cybernetics, "Behaviour, Purpose, and Teleology," in 1943, seemed to offer Downey a wide-ranging, speculative ground, evidenced in his recurrent allusion to neural systems of communication and his general conception of systems anchored in the body that ultimately bypassed the role of machines enabled by technology.

But perhaps it is in the figures of Buckminster Fuller and Gregory Bateson that we can find the ultimate influences on Downey's work by virtue of their close relation to the countercultural context in which it developed. Downey's interest in "invisible energies" and his later conception of "invisible architecture"⁹ is undoubtedly akin to Fuller's characterization of our epoch as one defined by a concern with what lies beyond the visible spectrum.¹⁰ Downey's lifelong investment in ecology, which I will engage further on in this

essay, was very possibly informed by a reading of Bateson's theories. Ultimately, and beyond the technological dimension of cybernetic theories, Downey seemed to be interested in their philosophical aspect, as it widened the scope of scientific advances (information theory, mathematical models, topology, set theory) that ushered the world into the era of information towards a wider cultural arena that encompassed the human sciences, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and psychiatry as well as art.¹¹

What appears as modes in his diagram includes "ecological, technological, ontological"12 as well as "ideological, heuristic, and didactic," underscoring the prevalence of a technologically inflected approach in his work. Indeed we can assert that it operated within the parameters of the technological, ecological, ideological, didactic, and ontological, either addressing each one individually or at their intersection. Framing Downey's position, as well as that of other artists working in a similar vein at the time, in relation to technology within the paradigm of invention allows us to understand his approach to cybernetics not from the standpoint of the cyberneticist or the scientist but rather as the artist who is able to make projections beyond technology and his own time.

Technology

In his early work, paintings, drawings, and engravings produced towards the end of his stay in Paris, we can already appreciate Downey's concern for technology, but always in the field of representation; hybrid figures of men with machine extensions, and the first projective drawings for what would become his Electronic Sculptures a few years later. These drawings evidenced a clear interest in McLuhan's writings of the time as well as in concepts such as the cybernetic organism or cyborg, as they explored the connections between man and machine, proposing technology as an extension of the body.

Upon Downey's move to Washington, D.C., in 1965, these representations of cyborgs soon gave way to installations and Electronic Sculptures that engaged the active participation of the spectator. While in Washington, he met Douglas Davis and Ed McGowin, with whom he founded the New Group. As a member of the New Group, Downey participated in and organized a series of Happenings in Washington, including collaborations with

Ant Farm's Doug Michels and Davis, in which the notions of feedback and energy transformation began to emerge as operative principles. Downey's Happenings addressed energy transformation (A Fire Sculpture [1968], an action performed during the Gene Davis Giveaway organized by Gene Davis, Douglas Davis, and McGowin at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C.), and relied on acts of communication (Check a Space, Communication, and Do It Yourself: The Human Voice [all 1968]), but without the mediation of technology. According to his statement for Communication, Downey gathered a group of people in a place and then sent them away, using the most varied means of transportation (foot, bus, taxi, boat, car, plane) to gather information about random places, register it, and send back messages using once again an assortment of means that included telephone calls, telegrams, and even the pigeon post. Do It Yourself: The Human Voice gathered a group of people in a space where tape recorders registered conversations and played them back engaging the audience in a feedback dynamic as they would react and interact with the recordings of the conversations.

What is remarkable about these events is that they reveal Downey's interest not so much in technology itself but in theories of communication and information related to cybernetics. Although ephemeral and seemingly isolated incidents in his production (in part due to their extremely precarious documentation), they paved the way for Downey's later experiments with electromagnetic waves and highlight his primordial interest in communication for which technology was only a means, albeit an important one, as we can assess in his Electronic Sculptures, where his diverse interests in cybernetics, communication, and audience participation would finally begin to crystallize.

On the occasion of his first exhibition of Electronic Sculptures at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., on which he worked with engineer Fred Pitts to develop the technology that would enable his sculptures to perform different feedback dynamics, he also presented a text-based work titled A Novel (1969). This singular work has received little, if any, critical attention, but offers important clues as to Downey's cybernetic concerns. According to the description in the catalogue, this novel "consists of several dialogues, each of which Downey, as one of the participants, keeps alive by a preconceived pattern of "yes" or "no" answers. The sparse nature of these replies

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places the whole burden of communication on the other participant. In like fashion in the exhibition, it is some person or extreme thing which activates the sculpture and enables it to communicate its message." The systemic nature of Downey's endeavor is made evident not only in the group of Electronic Sculptures he presented, but also in this novel, whose binary structure evokes the operative principles behind the Turing machine. Much like the hypothetical device invented by Alan Turing in 1937 that enables the simulation of algorithmic logic in computing machines, Downey's novel modulates a conversation according to a set of pre-defined rules; that is, the pattern of "yes" and "no" answers that is already decided a priori, creating different feedback responses from the other participant, on whose shoulders the burden of communication is effectively placed, as the catalogue text states. This work also evidences Downey's interest in working with algorithmic structures, patterns, and codes; the set pattern of "yes" and "no" answers, like the binary pattern; of zeros and ones in the Turing machine, can be used to generate a program; that is, the text that we can read as Downey's novel, a text generated by the set responses, which elicit feedback on behalf of the participants in dialogue with the artist-coder.¹³ The novel is kept in a sort of state of homeostasis through negative feedback, as the preset negative responses seem to elicit more questions about the nature of the novel itself from the participants; occasionally, when the answer is a "yes," then the system seems to open, allowing for a narrative that departs from the tautological structure of the novel itself.

Going back to the argument on technics and invention developed by Maria Gough in relation to loganson's drawing of an electric circuit that by then was obsolete, a representation that indicated that such a circuit "was once an invention that eventually-though not, of course, inevitably-led to radio broadcasting," thus the drawing of the circuit is a "simultaneous figuration of (stagnant) technics and (dynamic) invention."¹⁴ Ultimately, according to Gough, this representation of the electrical circuit "freed loganson's [Spatial] Construction from the fate of easelism" and is "the key to loganson's assertion of the potential efficacy of the non-technical specialist Constructivist as a vanguard inventor in industrial production."15 Similarly, in this rather free analogy to the operating principles of the Turing machine, Downey's

novel serves to assert his position as an artist working in a world increasingly dominated by technology where his agency as an artist would necessarily be carried out from and have an effect within the parameters of the technological.

In "Systems Esthetics," Burnham states that "the specific function of modern didactic art has been to show that art does not reside in material entities, but in relations between people and between people and the components of their environment." Likewise, we can find in Downey's dematerialization of the art object¹⁶ a desire to create spatial experiences that highlighted the social dynamics of the exhibition space, and even more complex affinities to cybernetic ideas, especially regarding context, observer interaction, and the conception of the artwork as an element within a system. Downey's Electronic Sculptures¹⁷ engaged in diverse acts of communication and energy exchange, all articulated by feedback-loop structures. The objects themselves were part of the system as much as the spectator. These sculptures-which also anticipated Downey's later transit to video, as they operated on the basis of feedback-organized the spatial relation between spectator and the work; essentially, they were mainly the means for relaying a host of "invisible energies," and spectator interaction with them triggered visual, and more often sonic, manifestations that were a translation of these invisible energies into perceptible form.

Ecology

The ecological mode outlined by Downey in his diagram is a natural consequence of working with feedback loops and engaging audience participation to produce veritable media ecologies. Downey indeed conceived of the systems he created-both in his Electronic Sculptures as well as his later works with invisible energies and architecture-as inscribed within the realm of the ecological in the widest sense. Downey's writings of the time are clearly inflected by an ecological perspective, particularly "Technology and Beyond" (1973) and "Architecture, Video and Telepathy: A Communications Utopia" (1977), and in many instances manifest affinities to Gregory Bateson's particular concepts of ecology, flexibility, and adaptation, employed concurrently with the notion of systems, which met with widespread use in the late 1960s and 1970, through countercultural magazines such as Radical Software and Stewart Brand's Whole

Earth Catalog, essentially articulated around this systemic conception of ecology.

The group of works gathered in the exhibition under the title of Life Cycle Installations is demonstrative of ecology as a way of thinking in Downey's work; at the center of his program is the life cycle structure, where nature, man, and technology enter a symbiotic relation of positive interdependence and exchange. The 1972 work A Vegetal System of Communications for New York State is exemplary in this sense. Fittingly, this work was shown in the 1975 exhibition A Response to the Environment at the Rutgers University Art Gallery in New Jersey, an exhibition that featured the works of artists such as Hans Haacke, Robert Smithson, Rafael Ferrer, Alan Sonfist, and Michael Snow, among others. The installation consisted of a large panel with a map of a portion of New York State over which Downey had painted in white the areas that were devoid of vegetation, indicating "the absence of woods-brushwood." Adjacent to this map was a copper planter-Downey used copper to insulate the plants but also on account of its ductile properties, which facilitated the transmission of electric impulses—with a philodendron plant inside, electrodes attached to each of its leaves. Each electrode was assigned a musical note, and depending on the energies it perceived from the public the plant would respond and its reaction would be "translated" into a specific sound. The core principles behind this work resonate with a passage in Downey's essay "Architecture, Video and Telepathy: A Communications Utopia": "Due to its fully electromagnetic fiber the future is artificially natural. An aspiration to a man-made and natural harmony expressed in a media environment. An enjoyable landscape where each plant talks about a higher order of proportions, numbers, energy, through each one of its petals." Downey's communications utopia resided in this ecological, total, and telepathic communication between humans and the natural world,¹⁸ ideas that seem recurrent in all of his writings. "Technology and Beyond" clearly states the need for this symbiosis of man and environment, but clarifies that technology is the way to achieve this: "Ironically, the man-nature chasm can only be closed by technology. The process of reweaving ourselves into natural energy patterns is Invisible Architecture, an attitude of total communication within which ultra-developed minds will be telepathically cellular to an electromagnetic whole [...]

Human beings would share with all other species the benefits of natural cycles: communicant balance." Much like Bateson, Downey was aware of the fact that the unrestrained path of technological progress would inevitably lead to the demise of the human race through a destruction of the natural environment, and this frail symbiotic relation is what he set out to demonstrate with *A Vegetal System of Communications for New York State*.

Another work from the early 1970s, Life Cycle: Electric Light + Water + Soil \rightarrow Flowers \rightarrow Bees \rightarrow Honey, exhibited at the Electric Gallery in Toronto in 1971, was an experiment in video feedback and how it could be used to create artificial and topological environments. The work consisted of an installation of beds of flowers inside the gallery space that provided a setting for beehives, cameras, and television monitors connected in closed-circuit feedback loops that contributed to create an environment in which the bees, perceiving themselves in the television monitors, adapted to and were able to produce honey as if in a natural environment. This work can be read in the light of Bateson's notions of flexibility and adaptation, which for him are crucial to regaining an ecologic balance in a world dominated by technology, where a return to a primitive state of harmony and balance with the environment would not only be unfeasible but also unwise, as he argues in an article published in Radical Software titled "Restructuring the Ecology of a Great City."¹⁹ In this article, he defines flexibility according to Ross Ashby's system theory, stating that "any biological system (e.g., the ecological environment, the human civilization, and the system which is to be the combination of these two) is describable in terms of interlinked variables such as that for any given variable there is an upper and a lower threshold of tolerance beyond which discomfort, pathology, and ultimately death must occur. Within these limits, the variable can move (and is moved) in order to achieve adaptation."

Bateson's systemic ecology also seems to be at the base of the Life Cycle Downey installed in his own home, *A Clean New Race* (1970), using specific lighting situations of his loft's architecture to create different environments that would foster plant and animal life. A no-longer-extant super-8 film was made documenting the experience, and the project only survives in the drawing with the same title and preliminary sketches in his notebooks, where we can see how a combination of natural

and artificial light situations could enable plants to grow inside the domestic space, providing oxygen and food for animals (fish, poultry, goats, dogs) and the apartment dwellers—in this case, Downey and his family. The cyclical, feedback-based, homeostatic, ecological balance proposed by a cybernetic view of ecology would continue to inform Downey's other architectural conceptions, most notably his project for the Roosevelt Island Competition (1975), where he envisioned a closed, self-regulating system that would even provide work for its inhabitants. Alveolar structures that recycle air appear in these drawings as well as in other ones in his notebooks, notably in one that bears the inscription an "oxygen religion." For his exhibition at Howard Wise Gallery, and for the traveling group exhibition Air, organized by Jim Harithas, Downey had already experimented with lung-like structures that simulated breathing patterns. The cycle of oxygen renewal as a life-sustaining force was clearly central to his concerns, and in 1972 he collaborated with Gordon Matta-Clark on Fresh Air, a street performance that consisted in distributing oxygen to passersby on the street from a fresh air cart built by Downey and Matta-Clark.

Ontology

One way of reading the ontological mode in Downey's diagram is from the systemic relation between the technological and the ecological. The second machine age's imperatives of invisibility and microstructures that guided Downey's experimentation with electromagnetic waves also called into question the conception of the real,²⁰ as we have mentioned before in relation to Buckminster Fuller's writings on the subject, and as such called for a redefinition of our ways of existing in and knowing the world we lived in. The technological era was marked by the pressing concern for new ontologies and epistemologies that would make sense of humankind in an environment drastically changed by technological progress. In The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society, Norbert Wiener had already in 1950 raised the issue of a new ontology at the intersection of technology and ecology: "We are the slaves of our technical improvement [...] We have modified our environment so radically that we must now modify ourselves in order to exist in this new environment. We can no longer live in the old one."21

Bateson called for a reconsideration of ontology and epistemology, preferring to use epistemology to "cover both aspects of the net of premises which govern adaptation (or maladaptation) to the human and physical environment."²²

An ethical dimension was also inscribed within these ontological reconsiderations of the time. In the context of Cold War politics, the nuclear arms race, and escalating conflicts worldwide, including the war in Vietnam, social unrest, turmoil and guerrilla warfare that ensued during and after the decolonization and independence struggles of many countries in Africa, the scientific and theoretical community began to express reservations about the role that cybernetic theory had played in the development of the military apparatus during World War II and their own involvement in these developments. If unchecked, technological advance could prove lethal to the human race and provoke its self-destruction. Wiener's open refusal to engage in further military-related work and Bateson's critical position are exemplary in this regard.

The editorial of the first issue of *Radical Software* (spring 1970) clearly takes sides with the growing perception that technological progress in the field of cybernetics and information technologies was a double-edged sword. It also made manifest its advocacy to promote alternative uses of technology that would contribute to the greater good. The editorial is clear about the new ontology brought about by scientific advance in the information era, in which the rules of the game have been completely and irrevocably changed:

As problem solvers we are a nation of hardware freaks [...] Meanwhile, unseen systems shape our lives.

Power is no longer measured in land, labor or capital, but by access to information and the means to disseminate it. As long as the most powerful tools (not weapons) are in the hands of those who would hoard them, no alternative cultural vision can succeed. Unless we design and implement alternate information structures which transcend and reconfigure the existing ones, other alternate systems and lifestyles will be no more than products of the existing process.

Fortunately, new tools suggest new uses, especially to those who are dissatisfied with the uses to which old tools are being put. We are not a computerized version of some corrupted ideal culture of the early 1900s, but a whole new society because we are computerized.

Only by treating technology as ecology can we cure the split between ourselves and our extensions. We need to get good tools into good hands—not reject all tools because they have been misused to benefit only the few.

So six months ago some of us who have been working in videotape got the idea for an information source which would bring together people who were already making their own television, attempt to turn on others to the idea as a means of social change and exchange, and serve as an introduction to an evolving handbook of technology.

Between 1970 and 1974, *Radical Software* played a central role in the dissemination of video's social potential and responsibility. It was published by the Raindance Corporation, an "alternative think tank" set up in 1969 by artists Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider, journalist Michael Shamberg, philosopher Victor Gioscia, and writer Marco Vassi, with Beryl Korot and Phyllis Gershuny as editors. The name Raindance was an ironic reference to the Rand Corporation, a global policy research and development nonprofit initially founded by Douglas Aircraft to provide technological support to the United States Air Force and which played a significant role in shaping U.S. military strategy during the Cold War.

In 1973, the magazine devoted an issue to Art and the Environment, extensively featuring the work of Downey, including the cover, on which he appeared inside a tent along with members of his Video Trans Americas (1973-76) crew and the editors of Radical Software. A dossier on his recent video-feedback performances was published in the issue along with Downey's essay "Technology and Beyond," a text that not only contains important keys to an understanding of the intersection of these three modes in his work and thinking, but also sheds light on the ethico-philosophical shift in the perception of the effects of technology that informed some of the countercultural movements and initiatives of the 1960s, which also played a key role in the transit from first order to second-order cybernetics that had already begun to take place during the Macy Conferences, held between 1946 and 1953.23

From the Agency of Information to Feedback Nation(s)

"Cybernetics is a call for social change: a revolution within the detection, processing and dispersal of information. I am calling for an Information Revolution. I aspire to a society with strong communications networks of multi-directional potentials as opposed to our present-day pyramidal oppressive hierarchy that misinforms the base in order to remain at the apex. I call for a diversity of signal in multi-directional networks!"

–JUAN DOWNEY, "ARCHITECTURE, VIDEO, TELEPATHY: A COMMUNICA-TIONS UTOPIA," 1977

In *How We Became Posthuman*, Katherine Hayles analyzes the tensions and theoretical struggles that demarcated the Macy Conferences: "participants wavered between a vision of man as a homeostatic self-regulating mechanism whose boundaries were clearly delineated from the environment and a more threatening reflexive vision of a man spliced into an informational circuit that could change him in unpredictable ways. By the 1960s, the consensus within cybernetics had shifted dramatically toward reflexivity."²⁴

The notion of reflexivity brought about by second-order cybernetics placed the concept of the observer at the forefront of the discussion; in first-order cybernetics, as Hayles asserts, the homeostatic mechanism's boundaries were clearly demarcated from the environment or context. According to Hayles's account of the Macy Conferences, the challenge to scientific objectivity posed by the inclusion of the observer in the system was met with emphatic resistance from some of the participants, notably Warren McCulloch.²⁵ The opposition between homeostasis and reflexivity in the diverging conceptions of information that emerged during the conferences is an important issue in the context of this discussion due to the effects this would have on a generation of artists working within the frame of systems and communications in the 1960s and 1970s. Homeostasis implied the reification of information, whereas reflexivity advanced the conception of information as action. For Hayles, "making information a thing allies it with homeostasis, for so defined it can be transported into any medium and maintain a stable quantitative value, reinforcing the stability that homeostasis implies. Making information an action links it with reflexivity, for then its effect on the receiver must be taken into account, and measuring this effect sets up the potential for a reflexive spiral through an infinite regress of observers."26

We can illustrate this paradigm shift in a more schematic way so as to facilitate a visualization of its implications:

First-order cybernetics \rightarrow SYSTEMS, FEEDBACK LOOP \rightarrow HOMEOSTASIS \rightarrow INFORMATION AS A THING // decontextualized

Second-order cybernetics → the system widens to include the observer (who in turn influences the system) → INFORMATION AS ACTION // contextualized

in Juan Downey's Early Work

Use of Cybernetics

The distinction between what information is (Macy Conferences) and what information does (Donald McKay's theory, in general terms followed up by Bateson's notion of information as the "difference which makes a difference") is crucial to an understanding of the way art practices in the 1960s and 1970s approached "information" not as an object or a thing, but rather as a form of agency. Context and agency were fundamental imperatives of media-based and conceptually oriented practices of the period; the debates surrounding these ideas took place in different arenas and, as far as artistic practices based on new media, especially video, were concerned, most notably in the pages of Radical Software. The new role bestowed on information by second-order cybernetics was one that many artists working with video at the time seemed eager to put to good use.

The inclusion of context and the observer that marked the transition towards second-order cybernetics, when extrapolated to the realm of art, constitutes one of the fundamental underpinnings of a large number of art practices of the time period that concerns this essay, including Downey's. Art in the 1960s became increasingly aware of its context-specificity. The 1960s and 1970s in particular are characterized by dispersal, dematerialization, de-hierarchization, and deterritorialization, embodied in the non-object practices of the time, which placed the artwork's constantly changing position and meaning in a relational system-like structure between the artist, the spectator, and context or the exhibition space. This conception of context as active and behavioral is clearly demonstrative of the imperatives of second-order cybernetics, as context here becomes an active and influential factor in the feedback system.

In an article published by Paul Ryan in *Leonardo* in 1988 titled "A Genealogy of Video," Ryan retrospectively analyzes the bifurcating imperatives that defined video's early years, more specifically the period between 1968 and 1971; namely, the differing positions that posited video as a tool for social transformation on the one hand and video as an art medium on the other, which for the author resulted in video's mutation "from a countercultural gesture to an art genre." Ryan, as he himself has manifested in his writings and several recent interviews, was interested in video's potential for social transformation, which is an idea that related to second-order cybernetics conception of information as action: "I was looking for both social change and aesthetic concern."27

It is important to note the influence that Ryan's writings may have had on Downey.²⁸ In the 1970s, Ryan designed an environmental television channel, developed on the concepts of the Klein Form and Relational Circuits, deeply influenced by the ideas of Bateson and Charles Sanders Peirce. Ryan's book Birth and Death of Cybernation: Cybernetics of the Sacred, published in 1973, is a compendium of many of the ideas he published in Radical Software and other publications. It contains descriptions of some of his artworks, including Everyman's Moebius Strip (1969), in which he translates the concept of the Moebius strip into a video-feedback experience.²⁹ In the book, he outlines the role of video feedback, not only in terms of his artistic concerns-"sculpting time and space," "participating in your own audience participation"-but also in regard to a wider project for social agency: "strategy for schools: feedback process," "videotape in the classroom." The book also introduces us to Ryan's more complex topological explorations and to the notion of "infolding" in a series of topologic triadic models, Klein Forms, that establish a three-fold relationship between part contained, part uncontained, and part containing, which he explains related to different forms of video feedback and playback. Ryan, like Downey, had a serious interest in cybernetics; both were deeply aware of the possibilities that video feedback presented the artist with a desire to have an incidence outside the boundaries of the gallery space, and the shift enabled by second-order cybernetics offered myriad opportunities to be explored with the medium of video and its feedback and playback specificities.

In *Cybernetics of the Sacred*, Ryan takes up on McLuhan's idea of the audience as a work force, as opposed to an audience of passive consumers, and the unlimited possibilities that this would imply for the television medium:

[S]uppose we were to brief fifty million people on some extremely difficult problems facing top-level scientists. Inevitably, some dozens, hundreds of the fifty million audience would see instantly through any type of opaque problem, even on the highest scientific levels [...] there are enormous possibilities for using an audience as a work force in scientific research, or any other type of research. It is simply that we insist on beaming instruction at them instead of allowing them to participate in the action of discovery.³⁰

These ideas may well be at the core of Downey's *Video Trans Americas*, perhaps his most ambitious project involving video feedback, which he would carry out in three expeditions from New York to

Central and South America between 1973 and 1976. Downey was equipped with a van and video and sound equipment and was accompanied by his wife, Marilys, and stepson, Juanfi Lamadrid, as technical assistant. The VTA³¹ team was on occasion joined by other people from Downey's artistic milieu, such as photographer Bill Gerstein (first trip, from New York to Tennessee, Monterrey, San Luis de Potosí, Mexico City, Mérida, Veracruz, Yucatán, and elsewhere), Beryl Korot and Ira Schneider, who went along with the group from Mérida to Guatemala on that same trip; and Willoughby Sharp and Frank Gillette, who appear in some of the footage filmed in California for Moving (1974). Video Trans Americas was edited after the trips and was filmed in locations in the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, and Chile in black and white, employing a documentary style that focused on the landscape, the peoples, and their architecture, customs, and cultures, interspersed with some personal impressions and anecdotes.

Even if the work of Downey during this period can be read through the very precise codes of the New York context of the 1970s, Latin America continued to beckon him. The 1973 the coup in Chile that overthrew president Salvador Allende left a profound mark on Downey, who after this event decided to turn towards Latin America in search for his native roots.³² Video Trans Americas comes across as a highly utopian project of integration of the indigenous peoples of the Americas through video feedback. Perhaps Downey also realized the potential of an audience of millions of Latin Americans who could not only become a work force in McLuhan's sense, but a political force through the agency of video. It is here that the artist, previously working under the model of invention in relation to technology, finally fashions his own paradigm of the artist as activating anthropologist and cultural communicant by crossing the threshold of alterity:

Many of America's cultures exist today in total isolation, unaware of their overall variety and of commonly shared myths. This automobile trip is designed to develop a holistic perspective among the various populations inhabiting the American continents, thus generating cultural interaction. A videotaped account from New York to the southern tip of Latin America. A form of infolding in space while evolving in time. Playing back a culture in the context of another, the culture itself in its own context, and, finally, editing all the interactions of time, space and context into one work of art. Cultural information (art, architecture, cooking, dance, landscape, language, etc.) will be mainly exchanged by means of videotape shot along the way and played back in the different villages, for the people to see others and themselves. The role of the artist is here conceived as a cultural communicant, as an activating aesthetic anthropologist with visual means of expression: videotape.

Video Trans Americas was Downey's way of approaching the role of the active observer prescribed by second-order cybernetics as conducive to information as a form of agency. Downey took the cue from Ryan's notions of infolding to generate different feedback dynamics that were central to his project. There is a political intention in the work that is clearly a manifestation of Downey's left-wing ideological affiliations,³³ supported, among other things, by the fact that he saw this act of playing back one culture in the context of another and a culture itself in its own context as an instrument of political and social transformation.³⁴ In a 1984 interview, he stated that "feedback is very important and goes beyond. I think it will allow society to look at itself. It is like a massive mirror." Beyond the cybernetic implications of the project, it is also possible to frame the topological utopia that Downey attempted with his feedback experiences in Video Trans Americas within Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the "contact zone," as one that "invokes the space and time where subjects previously separated by geography and history are co-present, the point at which their trajectories now intersect."35

What is not possible to appreciate in the present-day version of the installation, which is the final form Downey gave to the work in 1976 when he exhibited it at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston, Texas, is the feedback dynamic that structured the entire project, something that only survives in the photographic documentation of the trip. However, previous installations, such as those at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, New York, and at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, highlighted the feedback structure at the base of the work. For the Syracuse installation, Downey created a hanging pyramid with suspended monitors at the center of which Carmen Beuchat performed a dance that was filmed for closed-circuit television. In the Whitney version, the monitors, were placed on an X/Y axis, with videos situated in the cardinal points; at the center of this arrangement, a closed-circuit system projected one of the videos on the floor, on which spectators could stand and be filmed by a closedcircuit system, which enabled them to "enter" the video by way of feedback.

Use of Cybernetics in Juan Downey's Early Work

The act of communication in *Video Trans Americas* is one that clearly positioned information as action and that carried within the seeds of a utopia, that of empowering the audiences that Downey encountered during his expedition, through the experience of video feedback.

Self and Observer

Soon after the *Video Trans Americas* experience, Downey embarked on a voyage to the "point of no return" that resulted in what could also be considered one of his landmark bodies of work, produced in the Venezuelan Amazonian basin during the year he lived among the Yanomami between late 1976 and 1977. There, in the midst of the tropical forest, he found the cybernetic utopia he had been looking for throughout his entire life as an artist—however, one without the mediation of technology. This encounter made a profound impression on Downey; a cultural shock after which he was never to return to the techno-utopian propositions that marked his previous bodies of work.

The architecture of the shabono, the communal dwelling of the Yanomami, revealed itself to Downey as the most perfect expression of a cyclical and ecological architecture. The circular lean-to structure is built within a clearing in the forest with the leaves and branches of the trees felled down to make the clearing, its "posts" and "beams" tied with fibrous palm leaves. Every two or three years, the shabono begins to naturally disintegrate; it is then abandoned and the tribe moves to another spot in the forest to make a clearing and begin the process all over again. The shabono, aside from its function as shelter, regulates the social structure of the Yanomami; there are no hierarchies, and families are distributed around hearths placed along the shabono's circular frame, what Downey called the "circle of fires." while the collective and ritual activities take place at the center of the structure, which is open to the sky and the elements.

Beyond Downey's discovery of an ecological utopia in the midst of a primitive tribe in the Amazonian forest that signaled a point of no return, it is pertinent to analyze the impact that Downey's cybernetic influences had in his own perception of the experience among the Yanomami, as his whole endeavor hinges around the act of observation and a calling into question of the place of the observer—that is, the discussion that enabled the shift from first-order to second-order cybernetics. In the forest, Downey continued to work with video, having the Yanomami engage with its feedback and playback capabilities, an experience that was entirely new, though ostensibly not of great interest, to them.³⁶ But, more importantly, he produced a series of single-channel videos that appropriate the form of the ethnographic documentary to dismantle the ethnographic canon, precisely through an interpellation of the act of observation ³⁷ which takes us once again to the intersection of the ecological, the technological, and the ontological in Downey's work and thought, since this reflection on the observer also entailed one on the self and a cybernetic view on the construction of subject positions.

The Thinking Eye

Before his trip to the Venezuela, and in the midst producing Video Trans Americas, Downey began to work on a parallel project, a series of documentary-style videos that reflect on Eurocentric and Western culture through semiotic analysis. The title of this series was The Thinking Eye and, according to unpublished handwritten notes, Downey envisioned it as "a parallel strategy to Video Trans Americas, basically by projecting the anthropological gaze on Western culture."

This series of videos, initiated in 1975 and con-

tinuing throughout the 1980s, marks an important

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shift in Downey's work. As I mentioned before, following his experience in the Amazon, Downey would never return to his techno-utopian proposals, and the cybernetic inflection that ran through his different bodies of work seemed to dissolve to give way to an interest in semiotic analysis. However, some of these videos continue to engage with the concepts of communication and feedback; Information Withheld (1983), for example, is, in his words, "a video essay about signs, in 'high' art and in the everyday world [...] the signs we encounter in our everyday life such as road signs, traffic signals, and Olympic sports symbols, convey information clearly and rapidly, while signification in the fine arts reveals its full complexity gradually and ambiguously." ³⁸ He takes an essay by Leo Steinberg as a point of departure to speak to a lay audience about using linguistics as a method of interpreting art. In terms of a time frame, it is interesting to note that this shift occurs at the moment in which the forward-thinking, technologically inflected discourse of the counterculture lost ground to the allegorical modes of address of postmodernism, intent

on recuperating a historical past mediated by a nostalgic and melancholy gaze but also adhering to the empty signifier as the quintessential figure of allegory. In this sense, works like Shifters and Information Withheld are clearly inscribed in the paradigm shifts of postmodernism. In The Looking Glass (1982), a series of videos he made on the subject of Diego Velásquez's Las Meninas (1656), Downey points to the persistence of feedback, the observer, and other cybernetic themes in his discourse, made manifest in Steinberg's analysis of the triangles of gazes and reflection that are at play in Velásquez's painting³⁹:

The painter gives us the real, the depicted and the reflected, as three interdependent modes, as three modalities of the visible that cause and succeed one another in a perpetual present, coexisting in ceaseless circulation: I see you seeing me [...] I see you seeing yourself being seen—and so forth, beyond the reaches of grammar. Partaking of an infinity that is not spatial but psychological: an infinity not resident in external space, but in the mind that knows and knows itself known.40

Aside from pointing to the semiotic shift of the late 1970s and early 1980s, The Thinking Eye seems to mirror the demise of cybernetic thought as a driving force in culture, and in the arts, reflected in Burnham's essay "Art and Technology: The Panacea that Failed." After having been one of the most enthusiastic and articulate writers on the intersection between art and technology in the late 1960s, Burnham published this open disavowal in 1980 and proceeded to analyze the cause of that failure, citing as significant examples the corporatization of Experiments in Art and Technology and the failure of several exhibitions in which Downey participated, such as Some More Beginnings, Cybernetic Serendipity, and his own exhibition Software at the Jewish Museum in New York, citing a lack of technological know-how that eventually resulted in "dismal failures."

Though not necessarily in agreement with Burnham's rant on technologically inflected art, Downey may have come to a similar realization after his experience with the Yanomami. However, as recent curatorial and academic revisions and critical rehabilitations have demonstrated, the utopian promise of cybernetics is still very much alive and, despite his own disavowal, Burnham's writings on systems and real time are reread today in the light of Relational Aesthetics and institutional critique. So, it seemed appropriate to read the work of Downey on his own terms of engagement and his commitment to cybernetic thought. The medium is still the message!

96 Page from Juan Downey's journals, 1970-74 Pencil on paper 17 x 14 in. (43 x 35.5 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

¹ For the advocates of Productivism, it was of paramount importance to insert their work within the means of industrial production and distribution, and thus they engaged in experiments in industrial and textile design in the belief that these mass-produced objects would eventually, by virtue of their widespread dissemination, effect substantial change in everyday life (byt) that would gradually transform the proletariat into the utopian society envisioned by the revolution.

² I use the term "first machine age" in reference to the arguments advanced by Reyner Banham in his seminal book Theory and Design in the First Machine Age (New York: The Architectural Press, 1960).

³ Jack Burnham states in his essay that "the priorities of the present age revolve around the problems of organization. A systems viewpoint is focused on the creation of stable, on-going relationships between organic and nonorganic systems, be these neighborhoods, industrial complexes, farms, transportation systems, information centers, recreation centers, or any of the other matrices of human activity. All living situations must be treated in the context of a systems hierarchy of values. Intuitively many artists have already grasped these relatively recent distinctions, and if their "environments" are on the unsophisticated side, this will change with time and experience." Burnham, "Systems Esthetics," Artforum 7, no. 1 (September 1968).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ For a lengthy analysis of the dichotomy between technics and invention in Karl loganson's work and writings, see Maria Gough's *The Artist as Producer:* Russian Constructivism in Revolution (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 2005).

⁶ Kenneth Snelson claimed that R. Buckminster Fuller took credit for the structure, coining the term "tensegrity," a contraction of the words "tension" and "integrity," whereas Snelson has always called it a "floating compression." Gough also revisits this incident in her discussion of loganson's invention of the aforementioned structure in the early 1920s.

⁷In an interview with Art 21 about Radical Software, Beryl Korot said that the artists working with electronic media in the early 1970s saw a radical potential in television and video, but they never imagined that their visions would actually materialize in the computer-based technologies of today. See Korot, "Radical Software, 1970-74," produced by Art21 and available at youtube. com/watch?v=hIXIB1CHmOQ.

⁸ Despite the fact that we may identify the influence of Yves Klein's Air Architectures on Downey's concept of invisible architecture and his interest in dematerializing architecture, we can identify Downey's interest in channeling energy flows in the work of Piero Manzoni and the Gruppo Zero; the inspiration for Downey's guest in the Amazon in Antonin Artaud's theatre, cinema, and experience among the Tarahumara of Mexico; and natural contextual affinities and a common interest in the shamanic and in the medium of television in the work of Joseph Beuvs.

⁹ I have analyzed this at length in a previous essay, "From Utopia to Abdication: Juan Downey's Architecture without Architecture," in Juan Downey: The Invisible Architect, ed. Valerie Smith, exh. cat. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT List Visual Arts Center; and New York: Bronx Museum of the Arts, 2011).

¹⁰ "Up until the 20th century, reality consisted of everything that humans could see, smell, touch, and hear. Then, at the entry into the 20th century, the electron was discovered. A century after the time of Malthus,

much of science became invisible with the introduction of an era of electronics, electromagnetics, and atomics." Buckminster Fuller, in collaboration with E. J. Applewhite, Synergetics: Explorations in the Geometry of Thinking (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1975), online version available at rwgrayprojects.com/synergetics/s00/p0000.html.

¹¹ As Norbert Wiener wrote, "besides the electrical engineering theory of the transmission of messages, there is a larger field which includes not only the study of language but the study of messages as a means of controlling machinery and society." Weiner, "Cybernetics in History," in The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press, 1988), 15.

¹² In this essay I have chosen to work with the first set of modes described by Downey in his diagram.

¹³ We can find many similar endeavors in the tautological and text-based experiments of 1960s conceptual art that exhibited a kinship with cybernetic notions of pattern, coding noise, and redundancy; Dan Graham's 1966 Schema is a notable example. On the Internet, we can find an interesting analogy between Schema and present-day XML coding, available at mbutler.org/ schema/, that adds to a cybernetic reading of such works.

¹⁴ Gough, *The Artist As Producer*, 114–19. ¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Even though the sculptures were objects, I am also referring to the events he staged as well as A Novel.

¹⁷ Downey's Electronic Sculptures have been analyzed in depth by Carla Macchiavello in her essay "Vento Caldo," in Juan Downey: El ojo pensante, exh. cat. (Chile: Fundación Telefónica, 2010), available online at fundaciontelefonica.cl/arte/downey/archivos/parte 1. pdf and fundaciontelefonica.cl/arte/downey/archivos/ parte 2.pdf. I have also previously discussed Downey's Electronic Sculptures in "From Utopia to Abdication: Juan Downey's Architecture without Architecture."

¹⁸ The idea of telepathic communications features prominently in Buckminster Fuller's introduction to Gene Youngblood's Expanded Cinema: "For the last two decades scientists probing with electrodes have learned a great deal about the human brain. The brain gives off measurable energy and discrete wave patterns disclosed by the oscillograph. Specific, repetitive dreams have been identified by these wave patterns. The neurological and physiological explorers do not find it extravagant to speculate that we may learn that what humanity has thus far spoken of mystifiedly as telepathy, science will have discovered, within decades, to be ultra-ultra-high-frequency electro-magnetic wave propagations." Moreover, Buckminster Fuller saw this as an imminent reality, "for humans to have within their cerebral mechanism the proper atomic radio transceivers to carry on telepathetic communication is no more incredible than the transistors which were invented only two decades ago, and far less incredible than the containment of the bat's radar and range-finding computer within its pin-point size brain. There is nothing in the scientific data which says the following thoughts are impossible and there is much in the data which suggests that they are probable."

¹⁹ A slightly different version of this text is included in Steps to An Ecology of Mind under the title of "Ecology and Flexibility in Urban Civilization."

²⁰ Buckminster Fuller and Applewhite, Synergetics.

²¹ Wiener, "Progress and Entropy," in *The Human* Use of Human Beings, 46.

²² Gregory Bateson, "The Cybernetics of 'Self': A Theory of Alcoholism," in Steps to an Ecology of Mind (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 314.

²³ The Macy Conferences were a series of interdisciplinary meetings organized under the patronage of the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation between 1946 and 1953. They marked the emergence of cybernetics as a field of knowledge in the mid-twentieth century. The core group members of the Macy Conferences came from a wide range of disciplines: anthropologists Margaret Mead and Bateson, physiologist Arturo Rosenblueth, mathematicians John von Neumann and Norbert Wiener, neurophysiologist Warren McCulloch, and physicist Heinz von Foerster, among others.

²⁴ Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman:* Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 34-35.

²⁵ However, the notion reflexivity lingered on and was refashioned over the next two decades by some of the original participants in the conferences, such as von Foerster, Mead, and Bateson, and others including Humberto Maturana who, with Francisco Varela, developed the theory of autopoiesis.

²⁶ Hayles, How We Became Posthuman, 56.

²⁷ Ayreen Anastas and René Gabri, "Paul Ryan: Two Is Not a Number," in 100 Notes—100 Thoughts, no. 15 (Kassel, Germany: Documenta 13, 2011).

²⁸ Paul Ryan has been the subject of an intense revision by art historians in recent years and has given several interviews that shed light on a practice that otherwise remained obscure and peripheral in art historical accounts that immediately followed the period.

²⁹ Ryan had presented the work in the 1969 exhibition TV as Creative Medium at Howard Wise Gallery-it is, in fact, the first work he showed in a gallery space. See Ryan's letter to Howard Wise in the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art, available online at aaa.si.edu/collections/viewer/paul-ryan-letter-to-howardwise-9940

³⁰ McLuhan, quoted by Ryan, in *Birth and Death* and Cybernation: Cybernetics of the Sacred New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers/Interface, 1973), 6.

³¹ From Video Trans Americas. (1973–76)

³² It is interesting to note, in this context, that Salvador Allende had hired Anthony Stafford Beer to apply cybernetic theories to the management of the country's economy, a project that Stafford Beer developed in Chile between 1971 and 1973, better known as Project Cybersyn (from cybernetics and synergy). Noted cyberneticists and neurobiologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela collaborated by giving workshops to its team, as the system's type of internal and external organization borrowed from Maturana and Varela's theory of autopoiesis.

³³ Which I will not address in this text, but that has been analyzed in depth by Nicolás Guagnini in "Feedback in the Amazon," October, no. 124 (Summer 2008). Guagnini frames the work of Downey, specifically Video Trans Americas, in the context of Marxist Catholic movements in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s, Leonardo Boff's Theology of Liberation, and Paulo Freire's ideas regarding education, among others. Guagnini writes, "Without oversimplifying Freire's, Boff's, and Gutierrez's intertwined contributions, one can parallel Downey's approach to portable video technology with those thinkers' attempts to exploit Catholicism and the educational system in the service of liberation. All forms of image capturing and the representations arising from them have been an instrumental part of colonialist and neocolonialist domination. For that reason, within liberation struggles, many perceived advanced technology such as video as

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González

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a tool of oppression. Downey clearly took colonialism and imperialism to be his subject matter and attempted to transform the role of video in shaping reality in this context."

³⁴ We must also not underestimate the fact that Downey's work had the potential of reaching large and international audiences. The diverse installations of Video Trans Americas were exhibited in major museums in the U.S., such as the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, New York, and the Long Beach Museum of Art in Long Beach, California.

³⁵ For more on this, see my *Notes on Juan Downey's* Program for a Fake Anthropology (Santiago: Fundación Telefónica, 2010).

³⁶ They had been filmed before but not with video, so they did not have the possibility to see themselves in real time. Downey observes that the videos of other cultures did not have much appeal for the Yanomami, who only showed interest for the "desirable objects that appear in them: guitars, motor boats, rifles."

³⁷ A topic I will not discuss here, as I have devoted an entire essay to this subject in Juan Downey: El ojo pensante.

³⁸ Downey, "The Other Within," unpublished draft for a conference, dated 1989.

³⁹ This is also the motif of a drawing entitled *Leo*'s Triangles (1981).

⁴⁰ From my transcription of a fragment of the video.





Throughout his career, Juan Downey was interested in merging art and technology as a way to transform social relations, whether facilitating deeper interaction between audience and artwork/performer or establishing new modes of communication between humans and machines. In both his Happenings and Performances, Downey used audio, video, laser, and electromagnetic technologies to establish information systems that were alterable by viewer feedback and participation. Downey often staged these works in collaboration with dancers, choreographers, composers, musicians, family members, and other visual artists. The Happenings, made with the New Group artist collective in Washington, D.C., in 1968, took place in public, with participants following sets of loose instructions to move about the city and record and relay their experiences and observations through various technologies. The Performances utilized video cameras and closed-circuit televisions in order to bring performers and audience together, with a live feed of the unfolding work often integrated into its choreography.

Happenings &



1968-74

Performances

COMMUNICATION

СНЕСК А SPACE

The New Group welcomes you to COMMUNICATION by Juan Downey () Groove here until the tape is played. 2 Write down or remember Whatever the tape says, in whole or in part. (3) When the tape ends, leave. Go as Far as you wish (you do not have to return til daybreak), by Car, bus, Foot, anything. (4) When you reach your destination, stop and try to communicate with Juan, back here at the studio. Communicate the message you got out of the tape. Phone him, telegram him, send a Carrier Pigeon, anything. The Number here is 39397/1 Address: 802 F St., NW, 1st-floor studio. (5) When you have successfully sent the message, Come back to the studio. A party begins at midnight.) At daybreak, the tape will be played again, Frontwards. While it plays, the messages will be burned. Stand Silent around the fire.



For this Happening, Downey set up a "communication center" for one night. Participants gathered and listened to a looped, prerecorded message. Given access to walkie-talkies, video equipment, telegraphs, intercom radio systems, and other means of communication, they were asked to memorize the message and then travel to a location of their choosing, where they communicated their recollection of it back to the center. At the end of the Happening, these communications were burned.

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1968

1968



THREE WAY COMMUNICATION BY LIGHT





This work extends Downey's interest in technology as a tool to facilitate communication and empathy, with three performers using video and laser technologies to communicate with each other. Seated in a triangular formation, they projected images of their own faces onto each other's, viewing their transformed visages using handheld mirrors, and they used lasers to transmit their voices to one another.

Happenings and Performances

















THREE WAY COMMUNICATION BY LIGHT



THREE WAY COMMUNICATION BY LIGHT













Choreographed by Carmen Beuchat and performed at 112 Greene Street in New York, *Energy Fields* featured dancers connected to the avant-garde groups Judson Church Theater and the Natural History of the American Dancer, including Trisha Brown, Beuchet, Barbara (Lloyd) Dilley, Gordon Matta-Clarke, Suzanne Harris, and Rachel Lew. Downey established an invisible, pear-shaped energy field that emitted sound when encroached upon; as a result, the dancers tailored their movements to accommodate the perceived flow of energy around the space.

1972

Happenings and Performances





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Communication, 1968 Enlarged photocopy of telegram Dimensions unknown Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

99

Check a Space, 1968 Enlarged photocopy of telegram Gelatin-silver print 10 ¼ x 8 ¾ in. (26 x 21 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Alfonso Barrios

100

Three Way Communication by Light, 1972 Colored pencil, acrylic, and graphite on Bristol board 39 % x 59 ½ in. (100 x 151 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

101

Three Way Communication by Light, 1972 View of video-performance at Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, Michigan, October 1972 Gelatin-silver print 6 % x 9 ½ in. (20 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Bill Gerstein

102

Three Way Communication by Light, 1972 Video installation with three monitors and three Portapak videos transferred to digital media; black-and-white and sound 36:58, 34:07, and 32:44 min. each Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

103

Three Way Communication by Light, 1972 View of video-performance at Downey's studio, New York Gelatin-silver print 6 % x 9 ½ in. (20 x 25 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

104-105

Three Way Communication by Light, 1972 Colored pencil, acrylic, and graphite on Bristol board 39 % x 59 % 6 in. (100 x 151 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

106-107

Pages from Juan Downey's journals, 1970-74 Colored pencil on paper 17 x 14 in. (43 x 35.5 cm) each Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

108–111

Energy Fields, 1972 Enlarged photographic documentation of video-performance, 112 Greene Street, New York, February 1972 Gelatin-silver print 6 % x 9 ½ in. (16 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Peter Moore, © Estate of Peter Moore/VAGA, New York





PLATO NOW



This work was first performed on January 6 and 7, 1973, at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, New York, under the direction of Jim Harithas; Marilys Downey, Chris Harithas, David A. Ross, and Bill Viola were among the participants. Nine performers, wearing headphones and facing a wall, their backs to the audience, sat meditating. Each was connected to a biofeedback machine monitoring brain activity; when a performer reached a meditative state, excerpts from Plato's Timaeus, Theaetetus, and The Republic were transmitted through the headphones. Viewers were able to see the performers' faces via closed-circuit televisions, while performers were aware of the viewers because of the shadows they cast on the wall.

Happenings and Performances





PLATO NOW

BRAIN WAVES TAPED CONCERNING THE VISIELE AND THE INVISIELE MEDITATION TO F.T. REVISITED

















More overtly political than Downey's other Performances, *Nazca* references the devastation caused by the Pan American Highway that links South America to the United States and Canada. For this work, first performed at the Kitchen in New York in February 1974, Downey drew on the gallery floor a coal outline of a bird in the style of the ancient geoglyphs of the Nazca Desert in Peru. As Downey lay down in the center of the drawing, Carmen Beuchat and Suzanne Harris, wearing shoes filled with white powdered chalk, moved diagonally across it. The broken outline, a mix of black coal and white chalk dust, symbolized the social and environmental destruction caused by the highway.



NAZCA






Happenings and Performances

For *Chile Sí, Junta No*, Downey made 300 t-shirts to be worn during an action on September 11, 1974, outside the New York headquarters of International Telephone and Telegraph, a multinational telecommunications corporation linked to the assassination of Chilean president Salvador Allende.

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Plato Now, 1973 Enlarged photographic documentation of video-performance at Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, January 6, 1973 Gelatin-silver print 6 3/8 x 9 1/2 in. (16 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

Plato Now, 1972 Collage, acrylic, and pencil on Bristol board 29 1/2 x 39 3/4 (75 × 101 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Collection of John Hanhardt, New York

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Plato Now, 1973 Enlarged photographic documentation of video-performance at Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, January 6, 1973 Gelatin-silver print 6 3/8 x 9 1/2 in. (16 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

115

Page from Juan Downey's journals, 1970-74 Colored pencil on paper 17 x 14 in. (43 x 35.5 cm) each Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

116-119

Plato Now, 1973 Enlarged photographic documentation of video-performance at Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, January 6, 1973 Gelatin-silver print 6 3/8 x 9 1/2 in. (16 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

120-125

Nazca, 1974 Enlarged photographic documentation of video-performance, The Kitchen, New York, February 1974 Gelatin-silver print $6 \% x 9 \frac{1}{2}$ in. (16 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Peter Moore, © Estate of Peter Moore/VAGA, New York

126–127 *Chile Sí, Junta No,* 1974 Gelatin-silver print 9 1/2 x 6 3/8 in. (24 x 16 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Rick Feist





CHILEAN FLAG



Happenings and Performances



PUBLICNESS



Produced for Manhattan Cable Access' experimental programming series, *Publicness* presents political commentary and critique in the form of staged vignettes. In one, a performer, dressed in military garb, waves the Chilean flag to the sound of the national anthem, linking the flag colors to a sustained cycle of bloodshed and whitewashing.



DEBRIEFING PYRAMID





DEBRIEFING PYRAMID



For *Debriefing Pyramid*, which originally took place at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, New York, in April 1976, Downey arranged 14 monitors from floor to ceiling in a geometric formation to resemble the Great Pyramid of Giza, also known as the Pyramid of Cheops. The monitors displayed footage of four pyramids that Downey had recently visited: Teotihuacan, Palenque, and Tajin in Mexico and Tikal in Guatemala. (The majority of these videos appear later as part of *Video Trans Americas* [1973–76]). During the installation, Carmen Beuchat performed on a platform erected in the center of the work, while a camera recorded her movements and played them back in real time on a monitor at the floor; her performance, informed by her own view of herself in the monitor, channeled the perceived energy of the pyramid.

Happenings and Performances

choreographer: Barbona Dilles Mozof designers: B. Dilley, pran Downey, victo-artis Mo. of dances: length of piece: 30 minutes (determined date + place of initial performance Fri April 26 19 #4 Byrd Hoffman School 147 Spring St. M/C The unpact That The work has had on The development of the Chieveographer. D'investigation The image of tele-vision as an element in performance of dance The dancers became Et image - makers and The Camera - men became dancers. This project strengthened my interest in abstracted energy patterous for group works and inter-media works. 4 interesting 1/2 hour Papes were produced with The possibility of distribution Them as a video-dance performance & an on-going co-laborative process mas established between myself and The 3 other performers.

QUARTET



Downey staged *Quartet* at the artist community Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds in New York on April 26, 1974, in collaboration with dancers and choreographers Carmen Beuchat and Barbara (Lloyd) Dilley and videographer Andy Mann. As Downey and Mann filmed the performance, their footage was broadcast in real time on closed-circuit televisions scattered throughout the gallery. Beuchat's and Dilley's movements were prompted by their own view of themselves in the monitors. As Dilley observed, "The dancers became image-makers and the camera-men became dancers." *Quartet* also produced multiple viewpoints for the audience, who watched the performance as it unfolded in front of them as well as on the closed-circuit televisions.

Happenings and Performances

QUARTET

ULTRASONIC FIELD/ SHADOW STORAGE



This recently digitized Portapak video documents a Performance filmed in Downey's New York studio. The title, *Ultrasonic Field*, refers to the droning soundwave that Downey developed as a sculpture. Dancer Steve Paxton and a collaborator can be seen working out movements and techniques associated with contact improvisation, an experimental dance form Paxton pioneered. Later, the two dancers interact with one of Downey's Electronic Sculptures, *Shadow Storage*, in which a bank of photoelectric cells triggers lightbulb displays on an adjacent panel. Similar to *Energy Fields* (1972), *Ultrasonic Field* utilizes sonic and sculptural components as prompts for performers.



VIDEO DANCES





For this collaboration between Downey and dancer and choreographer Barbara (Lloyd) Dilley, a camera was placed on the floor of Downey's New York studio and manipulated as Dilley moved around it; capturing Dilley from different points of view, Downey turned the camera upside down, placed it on its side, and moved it back and forth. The resulting footage upends the performance's traditional figure/ground relationship and explores its latent architectural potential.

Happenings and Performances

VIDEODANCES



Downey recorded and edited Carmen Beuchat's performance for *Debriefing Pyramid* (1974) into the single-channel triptych *Videodances*. In the first section of the video, footage from *Debriefing Pyramid* is cut with footage of Beuchat performing with a mirror in Downey's studio and Downey interacting with a closed-circuit video feed. In the second section, Beuchat's performance is interspersed with footage of pyramids in Tikal, Guatemala. The third section presents additional footage of Barbara (Lloyd) Dilley performing in Downey's studio; much of the footage truncates Dilley's body, as the camera is constantly turning in relation to her movements. The soundtrack for *Videodances* moves from classical opera to electronic drone, suggesting a transference of the energy generated between Beuchat and the pyramids to Dilley's ecstatic performance.

Happenings and Performances



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Chilean Flag, 1974 Photographic documentation of video-performance broadcast on Manhattan Cable Television, November 1974 Gelatin-silver print 6 % x 9 ½ in. (16 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

130-131

Publicness, 1974 Live performance on Manhattan Cable Television, November 12, 1974 Portapak video transferred to digital media; black-and-white and sound 30:17 min. Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

132-135

Debriefing Pyramid, 1974 Enlarged photographic documentation of video-performance, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, April 1974 Gelatin-silver print Dimensions variable Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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Barbara (Lloyd) Dilley's notes from the performance of *Quartet*, 1974 Courtesy of Barbara (Lloyd) Dilley

137–138

Quartet, 1974 Photographic documentation of video-performance, Byrd Hoffman School for Byrds, New York, April 26, 1974 Gelatin-silver print Dimensions variable Courtesy of Barbara (Lloyd) Dilley Photos: Juan Downey

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Ultrasonic Field/Shadow Storage, 1973 Portapak video transferred to digital media; black-and-white and sound 31:13 min. Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

140–141

Video Dances (with Barbara [Lloyd] Dilley), 1974 Portapak video transferred to digital media; black-and-white and sound 28:37 min. Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

142-143

Videodances (with Carmen Beuchat), 1974 Portapak video transferred to digital media; black-and-white and sound 28:12 min. Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey





Evidence and Encounter: On Juan Downey and Barbara (Lloyd) Dilley's *Quartet* GRANT WAHLQUIST

Grant Wahlquist

On January 16, 1971, Tom Shull and Charlie Baker were murdered after a party in the clubhouse of the Richmond Hell's Angels in Northern California.¹ William Moran, a member of the gang, strangled the latter and assisted others in cleaning up the scene. In September and October of 1972, Hell's Angels member William "Whispering Bill" Pifer met with an old acquaintance, a member of the Pittsburg, California, police department, described the circumstances of the murder, and led police officers to the site of Shull and Baker's decomposing bodies.

Pifer, who had throat cancer and only six months to live, was granted immunity for a wide variety of crimes and testified at Moran's preliminary hearing about the circumstances of the murders and Moran's involvement. As all involved assumed that Pifer would be dead by the time of trial, his testimony was videotaped, and Moran's counsel questioned Pifer extensively, attempting to impeach him on the basis of his past misdeeds. Pifer died on the second day of trial. As a result of Pifer's death, the prosecution sought to introduce an eight-hour videotape of his testimony. Moran's counsel objected, arguing that introduction of the tape would deprive him of his right to confront the witness under the Sixth Amendment of the United States Constitution. The trial court admitted the tape in its entirety, including the portions documenting Moran's counsel's prior cross-examination of the witness. The jury convicted Moran for the murder of Baker.

Moran appealed, providing a California court of appeal the first opportunity to consider the propriety of a trial court's admission of a videotape of the preliminary hearing testimony of a main prosecution witness. Moran "urge[d] that he was deprived of due process as the video-tape medium unduly distorts the appearance and demeanor of the witness and the dramatic components of the testimony." For example, Moran argued that Pifer was made to look "rougher" on tape. The court considered "the advantages and disadvantages of the 'filtering' effect of the medium" and found that they fell "equally on both sides":

Conceding that testimony through a television set differs from live testimony, the process does not significantly affect the flow of information to the jury. Video tape is sufficiently similar to live testimony to permit the jury to properly perform its function.... [W] e do not comprehend defendant's contention that the tape is less valid or less reliable than the reading of the written transcript of the preliminary hearing. Discounting the potential prejudicial effects of introducing prior videotaped testimony, the court stated that introducing videotaped testimony might in fact "better protect the rights of all concerned. We can also take...notice of the fact of the ubiquity of television sets...and recent availability of low-cost television cameras.... With such widespread availability of television comes a familiarity with its technical characteristics and distortions.... [T]he television camera is a stranger only in the slower moving apparatus of justice."

Though the introduction of videotaped testimony at trial has now become somewhat common, its novelty attracted significant media attention at the time. The Los Angeles Times published an article bearing the headline "Dead Witness Will Testify via Tapes,"² demonstrating that the use of video to convey information-and in the legal context, to aid in the production of legally recognizable facts—was of interest not only to murderous bikers and their attorneys. A clipping of the article appears with other materials in the archives of Avalanche, a magazine founded by Willoughby Sharp and Liza Béar that was published from 1970 to 1976.³ After the introduction of the first Sony Portapak in 1967, lawyers were not the only ones concerned with the distorting effects of the new medium. Juan Downey and Barbara Dilley's Quartet (1974), though little known, remains one of the most fascinating of attempts by artists to work through the relationship of video's "filtering," "distorting" effects.

Dilley (then Barbara Lloyd) had previously toured with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company and performed in Yvonne Rainer's seminal 1969 work Continuous Project—Altered Daily at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Dilley, Rainer, and others including Steve Paxton (who also collaborated with Downey) subsequently formed the Grand Union, which developed a choreographic method that became known as contact improvisation. On February 21, 1972, Dilley and Carmen Beuchat performed in Downey's Energy Fields at 112 Greene Street, an interdisciplinary arts space in New York founded in 1970 by Jeffrey Lew with Alan Saret and sometime Downey collaborator Gordon Matta-Clark. Around this time, Dilley, Beuchat, Suzanne Harris, Cynthia Hedstrom, Rachel Lew, Judy Padow, and Mary Overlie formed the improvisational dance company the Natural History of the American Dancer.

Downey's experiments with live-feed video were already well under way at this time. In particular, Plato Now, performed on January 8, 1973, at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, New York, is an important precursor to Quartet. Plato Now consisted of nine performers seated, facing the wall of the gallery, wearing headphones that played excerpted recordings of texts by Plato. Suggesting the Allegory of the Cave from *Plato's* Republic, the audience stood behind the performers, their shadows projected onto the wall faced by the performers. Meanwhile, the faces of the performers were shown to the audience on televisions via live-feed video. While, on one level, Plato Now substituted the audience for Plato's ideal and ultimately most real "forms" (and thus both their shadows and the televised image of the performers for specific, and thus less real, objects), it also modeled the multiple perspectives and forms of attention distilled in Quartet.

Quartet was developed over a number of months by Dilley, Downey, Beuchat, and Andy Mann (who had also been featured in the exhibition where *Plato Now* made its debut).⁴ Dilley devised the choreography in concert with Downey as he experimented with the Portapak, a self-contained video camera that transmitted a live feed to an adjacent monitor. *Quartet* was performed in New York at the Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds at 147 Spring Street on April 26, 1974, as part of a two-part program with *Video Eye*, a performance by Tina Girouard and Dickey Landrey.

The program for the performance describes it as a work "in which THE FIGURE is manifested as the ground plan for the evolution of a communication. The images present are monitored and recorded by television. This is the latest in a series of explorations concerning this energy-pattern." THE FIGURE was a floor plan that Dilley had developed in previous works for the purpose of facilitating structured improvisation. In this instance, it took the form of a central circular space in which the performance occurred. The circle contained two sets of two monitors on plinths facing outward toward the front and rear of space, creating viewing areas from which the audience could observe the images. The performers were able to pass between the banks of monitors, and the audience was free to circulate between the viewing spaces via interstitial spaces alongside referred to as "passage ways." The performers wore white and performed for

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approximately twenty minutes; it is unclear whether any sound was played. In the few photographs that document the performance, Downey and Mann circle around Beuchat and Dilley; they stand, crouch, and lie on the floor as they rotate their Portapaks and zoom in and out on the dancers' faces.

Although no tapes were made of the performance itself, Downey appears to have retained video from its rehearsals, which he subsequently reduced to two works, Videodances and Video Dances (both 1974). The former approximately nineteen minutes in length, is roughly divided into three sections: images of Beuchat, images of the Mayan ruins of Tikal in Guatemala, and images of Dilley. Beuchat and Dilley's movements are deliberate, and the camerawork is smooth. Beuchat is often photographed from above, looking at her own image on the monitor. She slowly turns in circles and frequently shifts between a low crouch and standing position with her arms extended upward. Downey occasionally cuts to close-ups of her hands, her fingers gathering into a fist and then extending, recalling Rainer's first film Hand Movie from 1966. The lighting, particularly its effect on images of Beuchat on the monitor, is highly expressive, as is the music Downey pairs with the first third of the work.

In contrast with the relatively formal geometries of the first third of the video, in which the camera either films along a vertical access from above or horizontally at Beuchat's side, the camerawork in its final third is much more freeform. Downey rotates the camera and inverts Dilley's image, as if she is pinned to the ceiling, or films at a diagonal. Dilley executes her movements in an environment covered in white paper and under even light, and generally sticks close to the floor. At times, she gathers her arms and legs inward as if she is going to assume a fetal position, then stretches them out again as she rotates on her hips. The overall effect suggests that Dilley is moving in a boundless space.

While *Videodances* is an invaluable window into Beuchat and Downey's dancing and Downey and Mann's videography, it is the performative context of *Quartet* that intrigues most. Of course, it was not the first performance to complicate the relationship between live performance and the camera. Its earliest forerunner is Trisha Brown's *Homemade* (1966), in which Brown performed with a film projector strapped to her back playing a film of a prior performance

of the work. As Carrie Lambert-Beatty has observed, Homemade, like many of Quartet's precursors, "multiplied familiar movements, but teased the viewer by making them just-unrecognizable and by splitting the viewer's attention between the body filmed and live."5 In Performance Demonstration (1968), Rainer projected photographs, shot by Peter Moore at her instruction, of dancers performing another work, Stairs, in sequence on three screens, rendering the presentation of "documentation" a performance in itself.

Subsequent works incorporating live-feed video further complicated the relationship between image and event. In Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy and Organic Honey's Vertical *Roll* (both 1972), Joan Jonas performed both as herself and as her persona Organic Honey for a live feed simultaneously projected on a stage, extending the performance from the "real" of physical space to the "virtual" space of the image. (Dilley recalls being aware of Jonas's use of video at the time.) In December 1970, Dan Graham performed TV Camera/Monitor Performance at the Loeb Student Center at New York University as part of the program Performance, Film, Television & Tape. Graham rolled from side to side on a stage at the height of the audience's vision and rolled back and forth while pointing a video camera at a monitor behind the audience. Graham continued to use live-feed video to "split the viewer's attention between the body filmed and live" in performances such as *Two* Consciousness Projection and Past Future Split Attention (both 1972) and in installations such as the Time Delay Rooms and Opposing Mirrors and Video Monitors on Time Delay (both 1974).

Barbara (Lloyd) Dilley's Quartet Downey and Encounter: On Juan and

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Grant Wahlquist

Though these works exemplify the attempt of artists to reckon with the proliferation of video and the impact of the camera on performance, Quartet seems most indebted to Rainer's Continuous Project-Altered Daily, which, as noted above, Dilley herself performed in. For that evening-length work, the audience was invited to go to any of three different performance areas at any point in time and to view live performance as well as films, both Rainer's own and from Hollywood. As Lambert-Beatty puts it, Rainer's "resistance to the binary opposition between 'captive' spectator and putatively liberated viewer-participant...created an audience whose freedom was the freedom to choose what to watch."6

Dilley and Downey's Quartet gave the audience a similar freedom. They could elect to watch the dancers "in the flesh" or on the screen; they could also elect to watch Downey and Mann-to watch another's watching, and have another's watching become a sort of dance. More than this, incorporating not only the videotaped images of Beuchat and Dilley but also the actions of Downey and Mann as they created those images, made space for considering video of performance as something other than a "distortion." The video image of Beuchat and Dilley was not a substitute for the "truth" of their dancing bodies, but a supplement to their bodies as well as a subject in itself.

Quartet serves as an inflection point in Downey's work, linking his performances and installations of the early 1970s to other video-based works that followed.

¹ The circumstances of the murders and the resulting criminal proceeding are described in People v. Moran, 39 Cal. App. 3d 398 (Ct. App. 1st Dist. 1974).

² "Dead Witness Will Testify via Tapes," *Los Angeles* Times, March 6, 1973, 25.

³ The 1973 winter/spring issue of Avalanche did not discuss the article, but did include discussion of a performance by Barbara (Lloyd) Dilley at St. Mark's Church in the Bowery and Juan Downey's Video Art Circus at the Electric Gallery in Toronto.

⁴ Descriptions of *Quartet* and its development are drawn from an interview with Dilley, to whom I express my deepest thanks.

⁵ Carrie Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched: Yvonne* Rainer and the 1960s (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2008), 56.

⁶ Ibid., 227.

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Pages from Juan Downey's journals, 1970–74 Pencil on paper 17 x 14 in. (43 x 35.5 cm) each Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

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ONE IS THE UNIVERSE. OBJECTS FRAGMENTATE FRT IS TO GENERATE SOMETHING IN SPACE. THE LESSER THE MASS INVOLVER THE SETTER THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT, THE GROWTH New York, Sainte. March 17/1971. Juan? Bowna?



The Ethereal-Acoustic: Juan Downey and Futurisms MING-YUEN S. MA

In 2012, Juan Downey's installation Plato Now (1973) was re-created at the Tate Modern in London.¹ The work featured nine participants performing meditation exercises while facing a wall, their backs to the audience. Each of the performers wore a set of headphones, and each was outfitted with sensors that monitored the alpha-waves generated by their brain activity as they meditated. When a performer generated a high enough level of alpha-waves, a switch mechanism triggered audio recorded excerpts from Plato's writings to be broadcast through the headphones. While the audience was not able to hear these excerpts, they were able to observe the performers' facial expressions, which were relayed by live-feed video cameras linked to a bank of closed-circuit televisions. In turn, the performers could not directly see the audience, but they were aware of their presence because of the shadows they cast on the wall.

Plato Now creates a complex communications system in which audio and visual information is split between the audience and the performers. In this system, which Downey mapped out in a 1972 drawing, audience and performers have different access to visible and invisible energies and information—sound, alpha-waves, shadows, and the scanning electrons that compose an analog video image-that circulate in the work. Plato Now highlights the representational and illusionistic quality of visuality (as shadows and electronic images) and presents its content as audio information accessible only to the performers. The work echoes Plato's critique of representation in his philosophical treatises and challenges ocularcentrism both implicitly, with an audience who may or may not be familiar with the *Dialogues*, and explicitly, with performers who gain access to the text only when they have reached a sufficient meditative state.

Plato Now is emblematic of Downey's oeuvre from 1967 to 1975 in many ways. Its complex circulation of energies exemplifies Downey's interest in what he called "invisible energy" and "invisible architecture," which drove this compact yet productive period in materialist ways and influenced the conceptual premises of his later works in video art.² As Downey wrote, "The universe is not an assemblage of independent parts, but an overlapping, interrelated system of energy. All my work relates to this vision."³ In this essay, I argue that Downey's "vision" of an architecture composed of invisible energies is based more on an acoustic model than a visual one, and that inherent in this model is a

critique of ocularcentrism.⁴ The privileging of hearing over seeing as the path to higher consciousness in *Plato Now* affirms Downey's critique, echoing Plato, that visuality is fundamentally illusionistic.

Furthermore, Downey's utopian conceptualization of invisible architecture as systems of communication, transmission, and consciousness is not the only futurism derived from an acoustic model. At the turn of the 20th century, the Italian Futurists had a different vision; they imagined a world driven by speed, movement, and electricity as well as violence and war, in which sound in the form of noise and vibration played a central role. My essay suggests an overarching paradigm, or "superflux," in which the disparate futures of Downey and the Italian Futurists, the former counterculturally utopic and the latter retrospectively dystopic, converge. This superflux, or "the nothing that connects everything," is the ether.⁵ A seemingly antiquated notion of "a mediating substance between technology, science, and spiritualism,"6 the ether has again become relevant, some might even say emblematic, of contemporary culture and its discourses, as increased digitization has rendered previously "solid" objects and concepts ethereal and as art, culture, communication, politics, business, finance, education, crime, and even wars are now facilitated through the immaterial bits and bytes of a networked society. The ether, in the form of invisible energies including alpha-waves, radioactivity, and sound, permeates Downey's experiments in interactive sculpture, performance, installation, video, and architecture from the late 1960s through the 1970s, anticipating our current ethereal turn. The ethereal, in its acoustic mode, is also where the disparate visions of Downey and the Italian Futurists can meet and resonate

Invisible Energy Discourse: Ether, Waves, Vibrations

Among the audio-recorded passages that the *Plato Now* performers might have heard were texts referencing "invisible or formless" energy, a mediating substance that connects everything. While, historically, this energy has had many names (God's sensorium, the noosphere, and the central fire as well as anima, chi, Ein Sof, the orgone, and prana) in wide-ranging cultural contexts, it typically has been characterized as a formless, intangible, invisible, and often spiritual force that is vitally linked to the material world. Joe Milutis described

it as the ether, "that vitalistic principle which holds the whole together."7 Despite ruminations on the "ethereal light," the ether has always been more conceptually acoustic than visual. It is a spectrum of waves, signals, vapors, and other forms of invisible energy that is beyond day-to-day human perception unless accessed through technological prosthesis or elevated consciousness.

In an ethereal move, sound studies scholars have recently begun to consider sounds that are beyond human perception, thereby challenging the phenomenological roots of the emerging discipline and its anthropocentric limitations.⁸ In Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art, Brandon LaBelle discusses David Gissen's idea of "subnature," which he defines as "those elements, forces, and bodies that surround, through a type of informal and somewhat repressed presence, the environments we come to occupy." For LaBelle, subnature is an apt framework through which to understand and engage with works by sound artists that "rest precisely on the terrain of the peripheral, where energy waves, weather conditions, detritus, and the abandoned incite aesthetic productions."9

Steve Goodman's concept of the "unsound" more specifically addresses the limitations of human perception. He characterizes it as "that which is not yet audible within the normal bandwidth of hearing-new rhythms, resonances, textures, and syntheses."10 He proposes "an ontology of vibrational forces": "If we subtract human perception, everything moves. Anything static is so only at the level of perceptibility. At the molecular or quantum level, everything is in motion, is vibrating."11 Since sound is waves moving through a medium, vibrations encompass acoustic phenomena while exceeding the boundaries of human perception. For Goodman, an ontology of vibrational forces is of sound and beyond sound. As such, it can challenge and destabilize the ocularcentrism within Western philosophy:

An ontology of vibrational force delves below a philosophy of sound and the physics of acoustics toward the basic processes of entities affecting other entities. Sound is merely a thin slice, the vibrations audible to humans or animals. Such an orientation therefore should be differentiated from a phenomenology of sonic effects centered on the perceptions of a human subject, as a ready-made, interiorized human center of being and feeling. While an ontology of vibrational force exceeds a philosophy of sound, it can assume the temporary guise of a sonic philosophy, a sonic intervention into thought, deploying concepts that resonate strongest with sound/noise/music culture, and inserting them at weak spots in the history of Western philosophy, chinks in its character armor where its dualism has been bruised, its ocularcentrism blinded.¹²

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LaBelle also recognizes the criticality of sound and acoustic ontologies, which he calls a "dirty (and dirtying) force"; to engage in or cultivate "dirty" listening is to facilitate "the continual emergence of alterity; like a vapor passing in and out of so many bodies, hovering in the cracks to suddenly interrupt the scene, sound continually disorganizes, reconfigures, and supplements the fixity of form."¹³ Tellingly, Downey's Against Shadows (1969), Invisible Energy (1969), and Plato Now are among the group of predominantly contemporary art projects that LaBelle engages with in his discussion of subnature and dirty listening. These works fall within what I am calling the ethereal-acoustic trajectory in Downey's oeuvre. The ethereal-acoustic brings together the superflux of the ether, as a supernatural environmentalism, with the desire within sound studies to think beyond human perception while retaining an acoustic paradigm. As such, the ethereal-acoustic is inherently critical of ocularcentrism, but it avoids a dichotomy of the senses by delving below and exceeding a sonic philosophy. Vibration—everything moves if we enhance human perception beyond our anthropocentric limits-brings the ether, unsound, and invisible energies together into a conceptual resonance. These vibrations, waves, and energies are not yet perceptible to us, but we can learn how to "dirtily" listen to them by exceeding our ears. LaBelle writes that Downey's ethereal-acoustic experiments "move in and out of visibility to shift our attention toward that of the invisible and the energetic; from radio signals to the cellular activities of brain waves, [he] amplifies what is often only intuited: the energetic movements that shape our physical world."14

Video artist Bill Viola, who performed in *Plato Now* at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, New York, in 1973, also alluded to the ethereal-acoustic trajectory in Downey's work: "[What struck me most was Juan's faith in the idea that somehow all these disparate elements-the ethereal and the visceral, the contemporary and the ancient-could coexist perfectly well in a 20th century electronic artwork. This was no small feat at that particular time in art history."¹⁵ Julieta González pointed out the influence of R. Buckminster Fuller, who anticipated our current ethereal turn in his 1975 publication Synergetics, on Downey's work.¹⁶ And Downey himself evoked the ethereal-acoustic in his theorization of invisible architecture, which he conceptualizes a flux of energy exchange and orbiting bodies:

Invisible Architecture provides shelter and communication/transportation systems generated by the electromagnetic and gravitational energy exchange. (The universal law of gravitation can be understood not as a vertical pull, but as a tensional system sustaining the distances between bodies and their orbital cycles).¹⁷

In Downey's conceptualization, "The invisible architect becomes one with energy and manipulates this wave-material."¹⁸

Downey's Electronic Sculptures of the late 1960s and 1970s were designed to detect different invisible energies and transduce them into visible or audible representations. Works such as Do Your Own Concert (1969), Against Shadows, Invisible Energy, and Information Center (1970) sensed light, radio, and other energy waves and reacted to their ethereal presence by displaying light patterns, playing music or other sounds, or moving. As Gustavo Buntinx pointed out, they "privilege the flux, rather than the devices constructed for its induction."¹⁹ This flux and exchange of playful energy animated Pollution Robot (1970), a mobile sculpture Downey occupied in order to approach audience members attending his opening at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York and blow hot air on them. Downey also experimented with the flux of energies and consciousness in performance installations such as Plato Now, in which the performers' brain waves triggered audio recordings, and in Three Way Communication by Light (1972), which used light and sound to facilitate the "exchange of personal identities"²⁰ between three performers. For this work, the performers stood facing each other in a triangular formation, each equipped with a Super 8 film projector, laser voice receiver, mirror, and video camera, their faces painted white. On each performer's face, the videotaped image of another's face was projected, which they were able to see with their mirrors. Their voices were transmitted to each other using laser beams, while their video cameras recorded their faces as well as their conversations; the recordings were played on monitors in situ after the live performance. While, as its title suggests, Three Way Communication by *Light* very much engages with seeing and visuality, the communication takes places largely through laser transmission. Furthermore, the ethereal laser beams demarcating the triangular configuration of the performers were only apparent when a machine in the gallery generated enough fog to make them visible. The instability and imperfection of visual representation is emphasized by the projected visages, as a performer could never perfectly

While Downey's Electronic Sculptures detect invisible energies and make them visible, his collaborative performances of the early 1970s used these vibrations and waves as a medium. For Energy Fields (1972), co-created with dancer Carmen Beuchat and performed at 112 Greene Street in New York, Downey made "three-dimensional drawings" using laser beams and electronically generated sounds. The contours of these works were determined by levels of radioactivity in the audience and then articulated by a group of performers who interacted with an invisible field of ultrasonic waves: "This imperceptible and inaudible field was shaped like a pear measuring almost eighteen and a half inches long and fifteen and half inches in diameter. The movement of the dancers through the field defined its limits, thus rendering its shape perceptible to the audience."²¹ Downey created another energy field for Argentinian artist Marta Minujín's Happening Interpennings (1972) at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. According to the press release for the work, Minujín and fifteen performers selected participants from among the museumgoers and led them through a "barrier of ultrasonic waves, an 'invisible architecture' created by Juan Downey" into the Interpennings area in the museum's sculpture garden.²²

During this period, Downey worked and collaborated with many dancers and choreographers, including Beuchat, Trisha Brown, Barbara (Lloyd) Dilley, Suzanne Harris, Rachel Lew, and Steve Paxton, for his performances and installations. Downey's friendships and the particular social configurations of New York's downtown art community facilitated these collaborations, but he also seemed to have a deep interest in dance and its ethereal qualities, as evidenced by an untitled video in which Paxton and another male dancer are shown improvising or rehearsing in a loft space. Recorded on a stationary camera and subject to little or no editing, the video is mostly in a wide shot, with close-ups that capture minute movements and interactions between the two dancers. The soundtrack alternates between folkloric music and an electronic hum, seemingly triggered by the dancers' movements interacting with and improvising to an invisible energy field similar to the ones described in the Interpennings and Energy Fields performances.²³ It was their movements within and around this energy field that seemed to cause changes in the sound played. In its improvisational, gestural, spatial, bodily, and

evanescent qualities—all of which I would ascribe to the ethereal-acoustic—the dancers' collaboration exemplifies Downey's conceptualization of invisible architecture.

In Downey's Videodances and Video Dances, (both 1974), the ether is Downey's primary material; movement, sound, and sometimes light are used in these works to signify the presence of invisible energies, while visuality is shown to be inherently representational and unstable. Even in Downey's less obviously ethereal-acoustic works, such as the Life Cycle Installations or projects addressing the political situation in Chile or artworld demographics, the ether is represented as an ecological life force, as the invisible workings of capitalism and imperialism, or as the ineffable habitus that shapes our social mores and economic practices. As LaBelle notes, "In building out invisible architectures, Downey's work leads us into greater recognition of that 'quantum view' by which relationships expand into a form of radical inclusion, where an array of conscious states and energy fluctuations coalesce to form an altogether different view of the sensible."24 Downey's invisible architecture is a decidedly utopian articulation of the ether as a superflux, and its radical inclusion is exemplary of 1960s and 1970s counterculture. However, not all futures, even those imagined through the ethereal-acoustic, are utopian ones.

Utopic and Dystopic Futurisms

González and others have discussed how Downey's lifelong engagement with architecture his undergraduate degree from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, his early career in Paris, where he worked at the firms of André Gomis, Gérard Grandval, and Émile Aillaud, and his friendships and collaborations with architects-turned-artists Gordon Matta-Clark and Doug Michels and Chip Lord of the collective Ant Farminformed his conceptualization of invisible architecture.²⁵ Downey also designed a small number of architectural projects, mostly unrealized, throughout his career. But he also conceptualized invisible architecture through cybernetic theory: "Invisible Architecture re-explains electronic circuitry as a bio-feedback tool in evolving the collectivity of human brains to transmit and receive (non-verbally) high frequency electromagnetic energy."²⁶ His vision for invisible architecture was that it would

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inhabit another's face.

nd Futurism

build up to a futuristic dematerialized city that is nonetheless grounded in everyday reality:

The Dematerialized City is the electronic communications network, the neural circuit that binds individual selves despite distance, thus providing an understanding of relativistic space-time.... I define the Dematerialized City as that group of minds neurally connected to me. The structure of our city is the means of communication that maintains our unity. My family in Chile is part of this invisible city when we speak by phone via Telestar. Thus, the satellite and its orbit around the earth exist as a living neural cell.²⁷

To Downey, the dematerialized city was decidedly utopic: its integrated communication and energy network would provide services ranging from transportation to education, entertainment, work and finances, and even to what he termed "mass-eroticism." It is a "society dedicated to the cultivation and enjoyment of the earth...through the medium of electronic technology."28 Some of Downey's key ideas—merging a computerized communication network with the collective nervous system of humanity, reintegrating our lives into "natural energy patterns," and living in "symbiosis" with our natural environment—certainly show the influence of the countercultural thinking of the time, and he references the writings of Fuller, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, architect and urban planner Paolo Soleri, and others on his own.²⁹

Downey's drawings for *Mi casa en la playa* (1975) put into practice some of the utopian futuristic ideas expressed in his writing. A plan for a beach house in Quintero, Chile, it is one of the few architectural projects he undertook after the beginning of his art career. The shapes in his design are organic and biomorphic, echoing other futurist architecture of the time, such as Ant Farm's (1972), desiged with architect Richard Jost, and Buckminster Fuller's geodesic domes. Its design is also reminiscent of the circular shabono structures of the Yanomami, with whom he and his family were to spend time living with between 1976 and 1977.³⁰ Downey also referenced the Pyramid of Cheops in his design for Mi casa en la playa, as he did in the installation Debriefing Pyramid (1974), in which the pyramid's structure becomes the basis for the house's water system, where "sea water would provide, through desalination, clean drinking water for the house."³¹ Other features are what would now be called sustainable architecture, including solar- and wind-power generators as well as "smart-skin" membranes for technological integration throughout the building. Although Downey's beach house was never built, its core

ideas and designs are reflected in his other architectural projects, including his 1975 proposals for the F. D. Roosevelt Island Housing Competition and the expansion of the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston. Similar to *Mi casa en la playa*, both designs are organized around integrated systems that circulate energy as well as their inhabitant's bio-functions and life rhythms in renewable and sustainable models.

Downey's interest in exploring sustainability is also evident in his Life Cycle Installations, for which he set up self-contained, hybrid media-ecological systems in his home (A Clean New Race, 1970) and in art galleries (Life Cycle: Electric Light + Water + Soil \rightarrow Flowers \rightarrow Bees \rightarrow Honey [1971] and A Vegetal System of Communications for New York State [1972]). In these works, Downey tested out futuristic ideas practically and utopically. On one hand, the installation of flowers, bees, and close-circuit video that he set up in the Electric Gallery in Toronto for Life Cycle: Electric Light + Water + Soil \rightarrow Flowers \rightarrow Bees \rightarrow Honey was a successful ecological system in which the bees produced honey. On the other hand, the harmonious, ethereal-acoustic communication between man and nature suggested by A Vegetal System of Communications for New York State remains a utopic proposition.

Downey's futurism is very much of its time in its blend of cybernetics, non-Western spirituality, and optimism. However, it also shares much with other futurisms. Consider these quotes in relation to each other:

This is a post-political, erotic, mystic. electromagnetic, level of reality. Computers, by transforming the environment into cells of varied shapes integral to a synergistic whole, will introduce a mystical humanism. In some human beings, brain waves are symbiotic with natural phenomena: communication with others and with the environment is total.³²

The energy of distant winds, the rebellions of the sea, transformed by man's genius into many millions of Kilowatts, will penetrate every muscle, artery, and nerve of the peninsula, needing no wires, controlled from keyboards, with a fertilizing abundance that throbs beneath the fingers of the engineers.³³

The former is from Downey's 1973 essay in *Rad-ical Software*, "Technology and Beyond," and the latter is from a 1911 manifesto by Italian Futur-ist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Electric War (A Futurist Vision-Hypothesis)." There are certainly historical differences in these texts—for the Italian Futurists, electricity was cutting-edge technology; for Downey, cybernetics was. Still, with about sixty

years and two World Wars between them, Downey and Marinetti describe remarkably similar futures, envisioning the integration of technology, environment, and society into a totalized, utopian system that eliminates most, if not all, of the socio-political problems of their respective eras. However, there are also key differences between Downey's vision and that of the Italian Futurists.

Another Italian Futurist document, "Futurist Synthesis of the War" (1914), exhibits sensibilities and ideologies that are radically different those I have pointed out in Downey's Mi casa en la playa. A hybrid map/diagram, "Futurist Synthesis of the War" has a heading that begins, "We glorify war, which for us is the only hygiene of the world."³⁴ The diagram itself is linear and angular, representing the antagonism between the Futurists and what they called passéism, or the adherence to tradition and values rooted in the past. This conflict between Futurism and passéism is mapped onto the two opposing factions of World War I, with their respective member nations positioned around a central divide. The specific qualities assigned to each nation are listed under its name, and the division is clear: "elasticity," "intuitive synthesis," "invention," and other positive qualities of the Allies are depicted in conflict with the "sheepishness," "idiocy," and other negative qualities of Germany, Austria, and the Central Powers.³⁵ The arrow-shaped diagram propels the forces of Futurism against passéism: the future is unidirectional, and it will be built on the destruction of war.

The contrast between Downey's organic approach and the Italian Futurists' veneration of the mechanical is stark. The "radical inclusion" that LaBelle observed in Downey's work is nowhere to be found; instead, "Futurist Synthesis of the War" glorifies aggression and violence against the "other" in the name of progress. Other Futurist writings echoed this veneration of war, beginning with the founding manifesto of the movement, published in 1909: "We will glorify war-the world's only hygiene-militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for woman."36 Italian Futurist theater and performance, in the form of serata (evenings) that mixed cabaret with agitprop, were similarly aggressive in tone. In fact, manifestos were often a part of the serata, delivered to the audience as lectures or rants in between musical and other performances, and in a manner befitting Marinetti's instructions to "despise the audience."³⁷

These events, staged according to Marinetti's antagonistic instructions, sought to further alienate audiences through provocative acts such as flag burning, putting glue on the theater seats, overselling the venue, "offering free tickets to gentlemen or ladies who are notoriously unbalanced, irritable, or eccentric and likely to provoke uproars with obscene gestures, pinching women, or other freakishness," and they often devolved into all-out street brawls that resulted in arrests and (short) imprisonment for the Futurists.³⁸

The chaos and aggression in Futurist performances are a far cry from Downey's Happenings and Performances. Early works, including Do It Yourself: The Human Voice, Check a Space, and Communication (all 1968) emphasized cooperation, collectivity, and the use of media technology to enhance human communication, as did Plato Now, Three Way Communication by Light, Energy Fields, and Videodances. All of these projects can be considered collaborative experiments or consciousness-raising sessions that build towards Downey's utopian future: "If we achieve the right entrance into the wave...we can conceive of telepathy, teleportation, and even of teleeroticism: libidos acting at a distance, a collective tantric sex, a fusion of lights."³⁹ Downey's utopian vision of the cybernetic integration of man and nature contrasts radically with the Italian Futurists' (retrospectively) dystopic celebration of aggression, violence, war, and destruction in the name of progress.⁴⁰

The Italian Futurists' celebration of aggression was so pervasive that even in Luigi Russolo's manifesto about music, "The Art of Noises," war and violence play key roles. Russolo theorizes six families of noises for a Futurist orchestra, producing sounds including "explosions," "crashes," "booms," "screams," "shrieks," and "death rattle," which seem to have come straight from the battlefield.⁴¹ Yet, despite what Goodman characterized as "the art of war in the art of noise" in Russolo's influential theorization of noise as music, it is within the ethereal-acoustic that the futurisms of Downey and the Italian Futurists resonate with each other.⁴² For Russolo, noise-sound is vibration: "Every noise has a tone, and sometimes also a harmony that predominates over the body of its irregular vibrations."43 Vibration played an important role, mechanically and spiritually, in Russolo's endeavors; his manifesto called for the invention of noise instruments he later designed, constructed, and performed with the intonarumori (noise

intoners).⁴⁴ At the time, many Futurists were interested in the neurological phenomenon of synesthesia, experimenting with the integration of the senses to produce painting, music, theater/ performance, architecture, and other art forms through a theory of vibrations. As Enrico Prampolini wrote in his 1913 manifesto "Chromophony: The Colors of Sounds":

If we conceive of painting as an aggregation of chromatic vibrations we should remember that the principles on which future paintings must be established will be those of pure atmospheric visibility. The aim will be to encourage the optical appreciation of fine distinctions, atmospheric subtleties, and rhythmic influences of the atom, and to be able to express in chromatic terms the sound waves and the vibrations of all movement within the atmosphere.⁴⁵

Carlo Carrà similarly asserted that "sounds, noises and smells are none other than different forms and intensities of vibration," and that "any continued series of sounds, noises and smells imprints on the mind an arabesque of form and color."⁴⁶ Composer and scholar Luciano Chessa linked the Futurist interest in synesthesia and vibrations to the ethereal-acoustic in his discussion of Umberto Boccioni:

Everything moves, everything vibrates (all bodies are "persistent symbols of the universal vibration," can be read in the technical manifesto of futurist painting), all creation is energy, existing in the form of waves that organize the primal matter, the ether, into different levels of density or, as Boccioni puts it, of intensity. There is no separation between one body and another: in Boccioni's thought, continuity is preferred.⁴⁷

In *Luigi Russolo, Futurist: Noise, Visual Arts, and the Occult,* Chessa's study of the relationship between Russolo's cultural practices and his spiritual beliefs, he built on Linda Henderson's point that the theory of vibrations is "the preferred meeting place between science and spirituality."⁴⁸ He further argues that, for Russolo and the Futurists, "The idea that everything is vibration is an eminently occultist one, as it implies that all phenomena occurring in the world are in some way secretly linked."⁴⁹ This is one of the places where the Italian Futurism comes the closest to Downey's utopian futurism, and it is within the ethereal-acoustic.

Does the Future Sound Ethereal?

When the Tate Modern re-created *Plato Now* almost forty years after it was exhibited in Syracuse, New York, the accompanying text on its website read: "Downey's phantasmagoria of shadows and feedback, monitors and spectral projections reassesses our enslavement to sensorial experience, anticipating the complexities of global electronic communication in which the image, as one of the quotes from Plato states, 'is always a moving shadow of something else'."50 As it stands, many of Downey's ideas for an invisible architecture and a dematerialized city are now realities—the Tate's website, for example, is a part of a global communication network that links millions, if not billions, of minds. Cities are increasingly structured by integrated information, where sustainable architecture and urban planning mimic on a grand scale the experimental ecologies Downey set up in his loft and in art galleries. Video and digital cameras are ubiquitous. Yet, what about Downey's utopia? As much as new media technologies enable connectivity and instantaneous global communication, they are also deployed in surveillance, data-mining, fake news, hacking, online harassment, and even as weapons. As curator David Ross, who performed in the 1973 version of Plato Now, said on the occasion of its re-creation: "I think that even though today technology seems ubiquitous and repressive, there is always this response to the times you're in, an attempt to find another place. Downey's work was a genuine response to that, but also an embrace of it—it was a critique."51

Goodman also had to contend with the violent, anarchic, and totalitarian uses of contemporary sound technologies in Sonic Warfare.⁵² For him, the dystopia of aggression, totalitarianism, and proto-fascist tendencies already present in Italian Futurist discourse ("the art of war in the art of noise") can be tempered through the ethereal-acoustic: "What was salvaged from futurism, after discarding its dubious political affiliations and compromised linear temporality, was an aesthetic politics as a tactics of invention that suspends possibility for the sake of potential." And this potential he finds in his concept of "unsound"-"what is not yet audible"-the unheard realm of invisible energies and vibrations, the ether.⁵³ Furthermore, he proposes Afrofuturism as (an)other futurism that provides alternatives to the dichotomy between the utopia of countercultural cybernetics and the dystopia of Italian Futurist militarization and totalitarianism. Using an ethereal-acoustic model, he proposes Afro-diasporic electronic music and black science-fiction as "(micro)rhythm" that vibrates in between "control and enjoyment,

or repressive and mobilizing forces."54

Downey's references to non-Western cultures in his work, especially in their melding of architecture and spirituality, points to a similar vibratory microrhythm (or invisible energy) in his oeuvre.⁵⁵ In fact, the description of Afrofuturism as "a literary and cultural aesthetic which encompasses historical fiction, fantasy, myth, and magical realism and draws upon non-Western cosmologies to interrogate and critique current conditions of black and other people of color to examine the past and envision different futures"⁵⁶ might well have been used to describe his work. The definition encompasses Downey's early experiments in manipulating invisible energies and facilitating mediated communication as well as his final video works, in which he reinvents ethnographic filmmaking to include, even highlight, indigenous perspectives and deconstructs the Eurocentric canons of art history and visual culture, thus stretching and expanding their exclusionary paradigms.

Queer studies scholar José Esteban Muñoz writes about the utopian possibilities for queerness: "Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world."57 Muñoz draws from Ernst Block's philosophical treatise The Principle of Hope, in which Bloch makes a critical distinction between what he calls "abstract" and "concrete" utopias. For Muñoz, Bloch values abstract utopias, which are "untethered from any historical consciousness," "only insofar as they pose a critical function that fuels a critical and potentially transformative political imagination," whereas "concrete utopias are relational to historically situated struggles, a collectivity that is actualized or potential."58 This is probably the appropriate place in our present discussion to ask: Is the ethereal-acoustic a concrete enough historical consciousness to which we can tether Downey's utopia? Milutis posed a number of similarly open-ended questions at the conclusion of his book on the ether: "Is the idea of ether merely a way of seducing ourselves into nightmares of modernist rationality? [...] Or does the continual return of the ether announce a world of magic, higher consciousness, and self-realization?"59 He does not answer these questions in his book, nor will I here. However, as much as the ethereal-acoustic lacks a traditional (ocularcentric) concreteness, it is both enduringly present and tantalizingly immaterial. Along with Goodman's theory

of the unsound and LaBelle's praxis of dirty listening, it points to both utopian as well as dystopian futures: possible ontologies outside of our present ocularcentric paradigm that we have yet to learn to perceive and understand. I believe Downey's ethereal-acoustic experiments from the late 1960s and 1970s offer possible blueprints with which we can sound out our own futures, and in that belief I very much concur with Muñoz that hope "is both a critical affect and a methodology."⁶⁰

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¹ *Plato Now* was first performed at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, New York, on January 6 and 7, 1973.

² Juan Downey's video art includes important collaboration with the indigenous Yonomami in Venezuela from the mid-to late 1970s, including *The Circle of Fires* (1979) and *The Thinking Eye* (1975–89).

³ Downey, quoted in Anne H. Hoy, "Juan Downey: 20 Years," in *Juan Downey: Of Dream Into Study* (Santiago: Editorial Lord Cochrane, 1989), n.p.

⁴ The notion that vision is the defining sense of modernity has recently begun to be challenged by sound studies scholars including Jacques Attali, Karin Bijsterveld, Michael Bull and Les Back, Charles Hirschkind, Douglas Kahn, James Lastra, Jonathan Sterne, and Emily Thompson.

⁵ Joe Milutis, *Ether: The Nothing That Connects Everything* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

⁶ Ibid., xi.

⁷ Ibid., xiv.

⁸ I am thinking of the influence of philosophers including Jean-Luc Nancy, Don Ihde, and, to a certain degree, Edmund Husserl, and their contributions to the discipline's phenomenological roots in listening.

⁹ Brandon LaBelle, *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 297.

¹⁰ Steve Goodman, *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2010), 191.

¹¹ Ibid., 83.

¹² Ibid., 81.

¹³ LaBelle, *Background Noise*, 298.

¹⁴ Ibid., 314.

¹⁵ Bill Viola, quoted in *Juan Downey: The Invisible Architect*, ed. Valerie Smith, exh. cat. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT List Visual Arts Center; and New York: Bronx Museum of the Arts, 2011), 142.

¹⁶ Julieta González, "Juan Downey: A Communications Utopia," in *Juan Downey: A Communications Utopia, ed. González,* exh. cat. (Mexico City: Museo Rufino Tamayo, 2013), 22. Downey referenced R. Buckminster Fuller in his own writings, including in "Technology and Beyond," *Radical Software* 2, no. 5 (Winter 1973).

¹⁷ Downey, "Technology and Beyond," 3.

¹⁸ Ibid., 2.

¹⁹ Gustavo Buntinx, "Against Shadows," in *Juan Downey: The Invisible Architect*, 76.

²⁰ Downey, "Three Way Communication by Light," in *Juan Downey: With Energy beyond These Walls*, ed. Juan Manuel Bonet, exh. cat. (Valencia, Spain: Institut Valenciá d'Art Modern, 1998), 326.

²¹ Bonet, "Energy Fields," in ibid., 326.

²² "Art Event Staged by Marta Minujín in Museum Garden," press release from the Museum of Modern Art, New York, no. 96 (August 1972), 1.

²³ Downey can be seen at the beginning of the tape adjusting equipment or perhaps an Electronic Sculpture in the space, which suggests the sonic interruptions are produced by an energy field similar to that used in *Interpennings* and *Energy Fields*.

²⁴ LaBelle, *Background Noise*, 314.

²⁵ "In fact it was during this period—between 1970 and 1975—that he developed most of his architecture-related projects, including his experiments with electromagnetic fields, which form part of his general conceptualization of invisible architecture." González, "From Utopia to Abdication: ²⁶ Downey, "Technology and Beyond," 2.

²⁷ Ibid., 3.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

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³⁰ For more on *House of the Century* and Ant Farm's architectural and countercultural influences, see *Ant Farm: 1968–1978*, ed. Constance Lewallen and Steve Seid, exh. cat. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive and University of California Press, 2004). Downey's work bears similarities with other Ant Farm projects, such as the inflatable *50' x 50' Pillow* (1969) and *Spare Tire Inflatable* (1970). See also essays by Buntinx and González in *Juan Downey: Invisible Architect* for more on the influence of Yanomami's living spaces and social structure on Downey's praxis.

³¹ González, "From Utopia to Abdication," 68.

³² Downey, "Technology and Beyond," 2.

³³ Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Electric War (A Futurist Vision-Hypothesis)" (1911), reprinted in *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1972), 104.

 34 Marinetti, "Futurist Synthesis of the War" (1914), in ibid., 62–63.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Marinetti, "The Futurist Manifesto" (1909), in ibid., 42.

 $^{\rm 37}$ Marinetti, "The Pleasure of Being Booed" (1911), in ibid., 113–15.

³⁸ Marinetti, "In Praise of the Variety Theatre" (1913), in ibid., 121.

³⁹ Downey, "Architecture, Video, and Telepathy: A Communications Utopia," *Journal of the Center for Advanced TV Studies* 5, no. 1 (1977): 2.

⁴⁰ In addition to the violence and aggression in their art and rhetoric, the Italian Futurists celebrated Italy's entry into World War I and many joined to fight (and were injured or killed). Later, when Mussolini launched the Fasci di Combattimento (Italian Fascist Movement) in 1919, Marinetti and his followers were early supporters. Marinetti himself was elected to the Central Committee in the Fascist Party and remained unrepentant in his commitment to Fascism until his death in 1944, a few months before Mussolini's execution. However, Futurism as a cultural movement had a more complex and contradictory relationship with Mussolini's cultural policy, which eventually led to the Ministry of Popular Culture discrediting it by the late 1930s. Furthermore, regional movements from Turin to Sicily were not always loyal to II Duce. See Richard Humphreys, *Futurism* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 64-76.

⁴¹ I referred to two translations of Luigi Russolo's "The Art of Noises" (1913), one by Caroline Tisdall in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), 74–88, and the other by Barclay Brown in *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, ed. Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (New York: Continuum, 2004), 10–14.

⁴² Goodman, Sonic *Warfare*, xviii.

⁴³ Russolo, "The Art of Noises," in *Futurist Manifestos*, 85.

⁴⁴Luciano Chessa, *Luigi Russolo, Futurist: Noise, Visual Arts, and the Occult* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 20. ⁴⁵ Enrico Prampolini, "Chromophony: The Colors of Sounds" (1913), in *Futurist Manifestos*, 85.

⁴⁶ Carlo Carrá, "The Painting of Sounds, Noises, and Smells" (1913), in ibid., 112.

⁴⁷ Chessa, *Luigi Russolo, Futurist,* 25.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 32. See also Linda Henderson, "Vibratory Modernism," in *From Energy to Information: Representation in Science and Technology, Art, and Literature*, ed. Henderson and Bruce Clarke (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002), 131–32.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 20.

⁵⁰ Exhibition description for *Juan Downey*, installation at the Tate Museum, London, October 23–26, 2012, available at tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern-tanks-tate-modern/exhibition-film/juan-downey.

⁵¹ David Ross, "Juan Downey: Plato Now—The Tanks," interview from 2012 on the Tate Museum, London, YouTube channel, available at youtube.com/watch?v=Aa4RIyDatO8.

⁵² Goodman foregrounds the militarization of cutting-edge sound technology by beginning with a sensorial description of the effects of "sound bombs" deployed by the Israeli air force in the Gaza Strip in November 2005. Goodman, *Sonic Warfare*, xiii.

⁵³ Ibid., 190-91.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 193.

⁵⁵ Downey references the Pyramid of Cheops in *Video Trans Americas* (1973–76), *Debriefing Pyramid* (1974), and in his drawing for *Mi casa en la playa* (1975); the Mesoamerican pyramids in *Video Trans Americas* and *Debriefing Pyramid*; and the Nazca Lines in Peru in *Nazca* (1974).

⁵⁶ Sandra Jackson and Julia Moody Freeman, eds., *The Black Imagination: Science Fiction and the Speculative* (Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2010), 3.

⁵⁷ Jose Estaban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 1.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁹ Milutis, *Ether*, 159.

⁶⁰ Muñoz, Cruising Utopia, 4





Juan Downey's Life Cycle Installations ask: How might we exist in a more ethical relationship with the environment? Sharing thematic and conceptual concerns with the Electronic Sculptures and Happenings and Performances, these works merge organic and artificial elements in systems that may be continually altered through feedback. The Life Cycle Installations are particularly focused on the potential of nonhuman forms of intelligence to solve human-made problems such as ecological disasters and climate change. These works propose alternative ecosystems in which technology enables communication and collaboration between humans, plants, animals, and environments.

Life Cycle



1970–74

Installations



This drawing documents an experimental ecosystem that Downey set up in his New York City loft and inhabited for several months. He divided the space into sections: one was occupied by chickens, goats, and fish, another by plants, and a third by humans. Using infrared and UV lighting, Downey was able to engineer an environment that supported animal and plant survival through interdependence—for example, the plants provided food for the humans and animals, while the humans and animals emitted carbon dioxide that helped the plants grow.

Life Cycle Installations



Monument to a River, Cambridge

Downey worked on *Monument to a River, Cambridge* while he was an artist in residence at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Documenting the Charles River, which runs between Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts, the work explores the impact of the four seasons on environmental conditions such as wave patterns, clouds formations, wind, and the abundance of specific microorganisms. Downey represents the river as a complex system that is interdependent on the natural and built environments that surrough the two represents the tabut series of t round it. Avant-garde composer Annea Lockwood contributed to the soundtrack, chanting the word "sound" in various languages. Monument to a River, Cambridge was intended to be a multiple-channel video installation; however, Downey only completed two channels before leaving the CAVS program.



Life Cycle: Electric Light + Water + Soil \rightarrow Flowers \rightarrow Bees \rightarrow Honey



This Life Cycle was originally installed in October 1971 at the Electric Gallery in Toronto, and again two months later at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, New York. Downey trained a video camera on a colony of 2,400 bees that work to produce honey in their eight-frame hive. Footage of the bees' activities is played back on a monitor installed in a flowerbed containing lavender, rosemary, and red apple groundcover. Downey imagined that the plants and video footage might work together to stimulate the bees' production of honey.



VULTRAVIOLET BULB DURO TEST BULB INFRARED BULB

A BEES FLYING. A B BEES WORKING IN THE HIVE. E183-10001 AZU YN , MOY 150 West 26 Street #903 BUIND R DOMUG

THE ARTISTS RESPIRATION AND CIRCULATION SYSTEMS A RESEARCH OF THE ART WORLD THE INVISIBLE SPECTRUM OF ELECTROMAGNETIC ENERGY BECOMES AUDIO-VISIBLE ELECTRIC LIGHT + WATER + SOIL -> FLOWERS -> BEES -> HONEY THE ELECTRIC GALLERY **272 AVENUE ROAD TORONTO CANADA** OCTOBER 9-NOVEMBER 4 1971

"LIFE CYCLE" by Juan Downey. Soil + Water + Air + Light = Flowers. Flowers + Bees = Honey. C.C.T.V. environment. Electric Gallery Toronto, Canada, 1971 Everson Museum of Art Syracuse, N.Y., 1971



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CALIPALIBLAE ODP PPEIRCHERT HANGE S AL IR IS T'HE OUGHT'S THINK A TONE TODO TO AND A TO DISTANT FEGERIATION D'INDESSI N. BALLETTAT TOBLISS HEAST DEBENERS IP IRCOVIEID DETY SURING THE CELANGES OF BLECTERICA TRASSISTIZATEDE IN APPENDE A PEATRIESE

PROPOSAL: A VEGETAL SYSTEM OF COM-MUNICATIONS FOR NEW YORK STATE.

A Vegetal System of Communications for New York State

For this work, a philodendron plant was hooked up to an electrode monitor that signaled its recognition of human electromagnetic energy. Encased in a copper box that acts as a conductor, the philodendron transmitted a high-pitched whine when humans approached it. Varying in tone, the plant's transmissions correspond to the types of electromagnetic energy it detected. An adjacent drawing documented the massive deforestation in New York State up until the time when the work was made.





Chilean Nitrate of Soda Potash: My Balcony



Life Cycle Installations

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Life Cycle: Electric Light + Water + Soil → Flowers → Bees → Honey, 1971 Installation at Electric Gallery, Toronto, Canada, 1971 Gelatin-silver print 6 % x 9 % in. (16 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

162-163

A Clean New Race, 1970 Colored pencil, pencil, and gouache on board 36 x 40 in. (91.44 x 101.6 cm) Courtesy of Museum of Modern Art, New York, David Rockefeller Latin American Fund

164–165

Monument to a River, Cambridge, 1973 Two-channel video 30:35 min. Courtesy the Center for Advanced Visual Studies Special Collection, MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology Used with permission of the Estate of Juan Downey

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Life Cycle: Electric Light + Water + Soil \rightarrow Flowers \rightarrow Bees \rightarrow Honey, 1971 Installation at Electric Gallery, Toronto, 1971 Two color photographic prints 6 $\% \times 9 \%$ in. (16 x 24 cm) each Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photos: Bill Gertstein and Michael Mitchell

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Life Cycle: Electric Light + Water + Soil \rightarrow Flowers \rightarrow Bees \rightarrow Honey, 1971 Graphite, colored pencil, and collage on paper 40 x 60 in. (101.6 x 152.4 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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Life Cycle: Electric Light + Water + Soil \rightarrow Flowers \rightarrow Bees \rightarrow Honey, 1971 Installation at Electric Gallery, Toronto, 1971 Photographic documentation with invitation and annotations in the verso 6 % x 9 % in. (16 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

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Fire, 1971 Photographic documentation of performance, 112 Greene Street, June 30, 1971 Gelatin-silver print 6 % x 9 % in. (16 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

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A Vegetal System of Communications for New York State, 1972 Copper box, biosensors, transducers, output devices, philodendron plant, acrylic on paper, and Bainbridge board Copper box: 20 x 20 x 36 in. (50.8 x 50.8 x 91.44 cm); drawing: 85 % x 50 % in. (217.9 x 127.62 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

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Page from Juan Downey's journals, 1970–74 Colored pencil on paper 17 x 14 in. (43 x 35.5 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

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Chilean Nitrate of Soda Potash: My Balcony, 1971 Pastel, graphite, and tempera on paper 39 % x 59 % 6 in. (151 × 100 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey





Activating "The Difference which Makes a Difference": Juan Downey's Decolonial Field **BILL ANTHES**

Bill Anthes

In May 1969, Juan Downey, living in Washington, D.C., produced two editions of an artist's multiple: the directive "BOYCOTT GRAPES" and the logo of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFW) silkscreen printed in bold red on inexpensive, white t-shirts. Downey made the editions in solidarity with the newly formed labor organization, which had coalesced in 1965 as the Chicano National Farmworkers Association joined the predominantly Filipino American Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee in a strike and consumer boycott targeting grapes grown on farms in Delano, a town north of Bakersfield in California's agricultural Central Valley. The two groups merged in 1966, forming the UFW, and later joined the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, the nation's largest federation of labor and trade unions, in 1972.

The UFW's organizing campaign brought national attention to the plight of migrant farm laborers, who worked under poor conditions for depressed wages from season to season. By the summer of 1970, their efforts had produced results: the economic impact of the boycott forced most grape growers in California to sign union contracts. The UFW's successful grape boycott connected middle-class consumers in cities and suburbs across the United States to workers made invisible in the vast production and supply chains of the agricultural industry. A virtual community—and a link from farm to table many years before that phrase became commonplace—was forged by the UFW's savvy mobilization of powerful images and slogans, including skits by the Chicano theater group El Teatro Campesino and the memorable rallying cry Sí se puede ("Yes, we can").

Similarly, Downey's *Boycott Grapes* artwork circulated in and connected distinct locales gallery and grocery store as well as urban dinner table and rural farm. Downey exhibited and sold a signed and numbered edition of fifty shirts at the Lunn Gallery in Washington, D.C., with proceeds donated to the UFW to support its ongoing work. A second edition, of two hundred, was given to baggers at local supermarkets. A political action as well as an artwork, *Boycott Grapes* was in many ways an early embodiment of the social commitments and theoretical interests that animate Downey's later performance and video work. Julieta González described Downey's approach in terms of the 1960s countercultural interest in cybernetics and systems theory and the notion that information is action—"the difference which makes a difference," in the words of British anthropologist and semiotician Gregory Bateson.¹ *Boycott Grapes* aimed to reveal invisible systems—national supply chains and unequal labor markets—and cultivate affinities and collective action across those differences and distances.²

Downey's work applied the methods of cybernetics and systems theory to problems of structural inequality and violence and, later, to issues of U.S. interventionism and cultural imperialism in the Americas. Downey's works of the Cold War era are, to be sure, artifacts of a geopolitics defined by a North-South divide (a distinction that has been complicated since the 1990s by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of Asia). The politics of the Cold War drove U.S. interventionism in the Americas, including sponsorship of the 1973 Chilean coup that ousted the popularly elected Salvador Allende. Downey's works of the 1960s and 1970s responded to the particular alignment of the Cold War and the ascendancy of the U.S. military-industrial complex. But his works might also be seen to resonate with what in the 21st century has been called "decolonial" praxis. Exemplified in the work of Argentine semiotician and literary theorist Walter D. Mignolo, the Latin American intellectual and artistic decolonial movement has focused on articulating the analysis that colonialism was constitutive of modernity, the "darker side" of the European Renaissance and the Western culture and society that flowered in its wake. Decolonial praxis-a political as well as philosophical, critical, and aesthetic project-operates by what Mignolo called "epistemic disobedience," as it seeks to "de-link" coloniality from modernity to posit "decolonial options" for a more just future.³

Downey's multifaceted artworks of the late 1960s and 1970s resonate with decolonial praxis in that they employed cybernetics and systems theory to critique economic injustice and cultural imperialism. By the late 1970s, Downey was staging implicit critiques of ethnographic documentary practice in works such as *Video Trans Americas* (1973–76), *Bi-Deo* (1976), and *The Laughing Alligator* (1979), anticipating the international indigenous media movement. Downey's work and influence as an artist in multiple media should be understood as part of a larger globalization of the art world—a microcosm of the global society brought into being by the linked projects of coloniality and modernity analyzed by Mignolo and other decolonial critics. Indeed, Downey's elaborate works as well as unrealized proposals are prescient of much in a contemporary art world in which, as the editors of a roundtable published in *Art Journal* in 1998 described, artists "travel widely to create and exhibit their work, much of which derives from their experience of homeland, displacement, migration, and exile."⁴

But Downey's work should be seen as distinct from-and critical of-contemporary globalization, largely understood through the discourses of political economy, that is, in terms of market liberalization and technological and communications breakthroughs since the late 1980s that have in some ways opened the art world to new voices and locales, yet not challenged the hegemony of the West and the Global North. Downey's works are productive of what Donna J. Haraway called "alter-globalization," a term coined by European activists (Autre-mondialisation) to signal that their resistance to a neoliberal world order bolstered by military might is not a disavowal of the global or a reactionary turning inwards, but a means to build a just and peaceful world in which connection across distance and difference are nurtured.⁵ Downey's model—an other globalism, an imagined decolonial future—is ever more crucial today, as he remains a resource for a radical contemporary art practice. In terms of its place in the history of contemporary art, Downey created Boycott Grapes as well as performance works such as Electronic Urban Environment (1969), Invisible Energy Dictates a Dance Concert (1969), and Energy Fields (1972) during the period that art critic and historian Rosalind Krauss identified as a key moment in the discovery of an "expanded field" of practice, as artists broke with modernism. Considering the field of sculpture, Krauss saw in the work of a cohort of North American and European artists a recognition that modern sculpture's engagement since the late 19th century with the traditional "logic of the monument" was exhausted.⁶ As Krauss explained, the monument is "not architecture" and "not landscape," but a representational form in space that enacts a commemorative and place-marking function. "Sculpture" as a modernist category partakes of this logic (sculptures are also built forms in space that are neither architecture nor landscape) but renders it self-referential. The commemorative function of the monument has been evacuated by

Activating "The Difference which Makes a Difference": Juan Downey's Decolonial Field

modernist sculpture's nonrepresentational exploration of plastic form and its disconnection from a specific place. Modernist sculptors from Auguste Rodin to Constantin Brancusi engaged with the logic of the monument by making the acts of representation and place-marking abstract and reproducible (in the form of editions and multiples) and disconnected from fixed sites and their specific histories by reinventing (in league with dealers, collectors, and critics) the monument itself as a portable aesthetic commodity. As Krauss wrote, modernist sculptures were "functionally placeless and largely self-referential." Brancusi, for example, took up the pedestal as a primary object of analysis, turning the platform that formerly functioned as the device that "mediate[s] between actual site and representational sign" into a form that was "essentially transportable, the marker of the work's homelessness integrated into the very fiber of the sculpture."7

But if modernist sculpture made strange the logic of the monument, Krauss seemed to say, that logic was still honored in the breach. The aesthetic pleasure to be derived from a Rodin or a Brancusi, at least in Krauss's telling, required that the logic of the monument be understood, even as it became the basis for intellectual play (and commercial gain). Moreover, in furthering the logic of the monument, modernist artists and critics defined the work of art as essentially formalist—an exhaustive working through of all possible solutions presented by the categorization and historical trajectory of sculpture as "not architecture" and "not landscape." As Krauss wrote, the artists of the late 1960s broke with all that, feeling "permission (or pressure) to think the expanded field."8 Christo, Michael Heizer, Robert Irwin, Mary Miss, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Dennis Oppenheim, Robert Smithson, and others produced now-canonical works that Krauss characterized as "marked sites," "site construction," and "axiomatic structures"-spatial and structural practices made possible by opening up the "field' beyond the binary of architecture and landscape, with sculpture as a third term.9

Downey's works also functioned in this expanded field of practice, but his purview was broader than that of the artists Krauss cited in her important essay. Downey's field of concern encompassed national networks of labor and consumption as well as hemispheric geopolitics. Downey's field was decolonial and, in retrospect, his works of the 1960s and 1970s make many of

made almost exclusively by North American and Western European men and struggled mostly with the gravitational force of Western modernism. They remained primarily formalist explorations, even as the field of practice had been forced open. If Krauss was seeking to decenter the modernist category of sculpture (or any media-specific field), she was not alone in doing so. Nor was she the most radical. As she remained focused on spatial and structural practices, Krauss seemed to cling to a notion of formal and technical rigor that was essentially modernist, committed to the idea that artistic innovation derived from in-depth study of the specific capabilities and limitation of particular media. The artists Krauss cited might be seen to be mostly concerned with questions of form and the perception of space (space being the purview of sculpture) and, as such, their work remains within a field that, if expanded, was still clearly demarcated; "Yet I would submit that we know very well what sculpture is," she wrote.¹⁰ The field was, perhaps, even exclusive and exclusionary. But as early as 1958, Allan Kaprow was conceiv-

the now-canonical works Krauss described seem

parochial (even provincial), especially as they were

ing of an art practice that was not so self-evident or so bounded. Kaprow is the artist most associated with the participatory Happenings of the 1960s, an art form that from our present historical perspective was among the most prescient and influential for contemporary art practice in its post-medium condition.¹¹ Art practice was becoming less and less dependent on an artist mastering the specific qualities and technical rigors of particular media. Writing in ARTnews in 1958, Kaprow implored artists to abandon "concrete" media and focus instead on ephemeral experiences in galleries, alternative spaces, and in public. "Young artists of today need no longer say, 'I am a painter' or 'a poet' or 'a dancer," Kaprow wrote. "They are simply 'artists.' All of life will be open to them."12 Downey organized Happenings as part of the New Group in Washington, D.C., beginning in 1968, and in producing works in diverse media as well as collaborative and experiential performances, his art more and more was open to "all of life."

In contrast, the expanded field, focused on formal and aesthetic concerns, was not inclusive of "all of life." As a closed and bounded system, Krauss's expanded field begins to look like the "field of cultural production" described by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.¹³ Bourdieu's oft-cited analysis argues that cultural production, including

the production of artworks, occurs within a closed system. Artworks and artists operate in "the space of positions and the space of position-takings."14 Artists are players on a field, with rules and boundaries. Artworks are strategic moves. Artists take positions by positing works that either enhance their position within a status quo or seek to modify the status quo to their advantage, seeking "recognition" as a form of social capital. Recognition and the accumulation of social (and real) capital demands that an artist work within already understood parameters, or to introduce innovation only incrementally. The field of cultural production is remade with each artistic action, but it is remade in essentially the same form. The field itself-and actions within it-are ultimately conservative.

Downey, with his interest in cybernetics and systems theory, understood the art world in terms that resonate with Bourdieu's analysis. Downey's 1970 project Research on the Art World borrowed a method from the quantitative social sciences. Based on a survey he devised and sent to artists, critics, and curators, Downey generated a statistical map of the New York art world, exposing the bias of the market towards First World artists from the West and the Global North, in the Cold War terminology of the time. Much like the conceptual artist Hans Haacke would do with his 1971 artwork Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971 (which documented the ownership of slum properties by members of the Guggenheim Museum's board of trustees, producing what art historian Thomas Crow called "an economic X-ray of both the geography and class system of New York City"¹⁵), Downey created a snapshot of the art world embedded within networks of economic and political power and privilege and, like the Western modernity of which it was part, founded upon systemic inequality and injustice.

Downey's systems perspective complicates Krauss's notion of the expanded field by recognizing a field of cultural production that was itself embedded in a larger field of forces—a system riven with energies. These energies are social and political, but also physical, geological, and atmospheric, and in keeping with Bateson's cybernetic model of ecologies, these energies—some more visible than others—move within closed networks and loops. Downey's performance works sought to detect and tap into these energies and, with technologies and performers trained to translate those energies into sounds and movements, make them into information, another form of energy, the difference which makes a difference. In some works, Downey's goal was to make fields of energy perceptible. The goal of making the field visible is an interesting contrast with Krauss's and Bourdieu's readings of artists' efforts within the field, which remains unmarked, an invisible limit to action. For Downey, the concern was with marking the edge of the field, the furthest extent of its presence and influence, as in works such as *Energy* Fields, staged at 112 Greene Street in New York in 1972. In this work, ten performers, including Downey, detected and articulated with their coordinated movements the edges of a large, silent, and imperceptible pear-shaped field of ultrasonic waves in the gallery space, which was revealed to audience members by an electronic tone generated by the dancers' movements.¹⁶

Three years earlier, in August 1969, Downey mounted the performance *Invisible Energy* Dictates a Dance Concert in Washington, D.C., at five sites along the National Mall. He placed devices including Geiger counters, seismometers, and walkie-talkies at the Museum of History and Technology, National Museum of Natural History, Arts and Industries Building, Air and Space Museum, and the Freer Gallery of Art. The devices were calibrated to detect different energies present in the city environment-radiation, earth vibrations, radar waves, radio waves, and sound waves created by aircraft. The energies detected by the devices were processed by electric oscillators and recorded to audiotape, resulting in a "musical composition" featuring five distinct "voices," each representative of energy detected by the equipment installed around the mall. Five dancers created movements in response to each of the voices, and their performance was relayed via closed-circuit television to a video monitor. Audience members, in a separate room, were also recorded as they responded to the video, becoming an additional relay point in the work, their spontaneous participation in reaction to the broadcast performance a response to the invisible energies permeating the city. The recorded energy waves became relayed information and, as in Boycott Grapes, information became action. While Invisible Energy Dictates a Dance Concert presented an abstract network of relays and effects, Downey's interest was the same. Previously undetected invisible energies became information-the difference which makes a difference-producing collective experience and action among strangers across distances mediated by technologies.

Interestingly, Downey's works incorporating energies and systems could be abstract (with the unnamed energy merely a prompt for collaborative action and generated for the occasion, as in Energy Fields), referential (pointing to other levels of information), or more directly activist, as in Boycott Grapes. Detecting existing energy fields such as radiation, earth vibrations, radar waves, radio waves, and "sonic booms," Downey was able to connect his work to issues including the proliferation of electronic media, global communication and transportation, and civic and state power and the military-industrial complex as well as geological forces on a global scale. Responding to these energies by translating them and then relaying them as information to feed the creation of movement and sound in his performance works, Downey was bringing "all of life"-and all of modernity and coloniality-into his work. In keeping with his political commitments, his work was global in its focus, even as the specifics of any given piece might be local, even quite intimate, involving a shared experience and collaboration between just a few participants.

Detecting, making visible or audible, and interacting with invisible energy could also function as a metaphor or practice for identifying and responding to energy and information systems and the corporate and state control of these systems. If information "makes a difference," its free circulation was crucial for a more just, decolonial future in the Americas and globally. Downey carried out or proposed other artworks employing invisible energy translated into a movement or sound over the next two years, including a version of *Invisible* Energy Dictates a Dance Concert in New York in 1970 that incorporated devices capable of detecting seven types of energy and that featured seven dancers. Electronic Urban Environment, created for the Avant-Garde Festival on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., in October 1969, also made use of seven devices, including a Geiger counter to measure radiation, a photoelectric cell to record changes in light levels, and a microphone to transmit street noise. This information was processed through an oscillator that generated tones heard by the audience as well as broadcast live on the radio. An unrealized version proposed for the Annual Avant-Garde Festival of New York in September of that year, Invisible Energy in Chile Plays a Concert in New York, would have transmitted data collected by devices in Santiago via satellite to New York, where the information would be converted

to electronic sounds for a live audience and radio broadcast. The work remained unrealized, expressed only as a preparatory sketch, when the plan was not approved by the sponsoring agencies because Downey refused to present a written score for the composition in advance.

Downey's interest in making use of as well as thematizing communicative acts and the relay of information in his work extends to his Happenings of the early 1970s, planned and executed with the New Group. (In some ways, *Boycott Grapes* functioned as a Happening, drawing shoppers and grocery baggers into a performance linking consumers and agricultural laborers.) A Latin American critique of U.S. cultural imperialism was also emerging during that time; Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart's Para Leer al Pato Donald (How to Read Donald Duck), an essay linking U.S. popular culture to economic and military interventionism, was first published in Valparaíso in 1971 and reprinted widely throughout Latin America and Europe. The book was banned and burned in Chile after the 1973 coup.

In 1972, Downey's political commitments inspired a series of Happenings or participatory performances that he titled Doing Things Together, including works critical of U.S. interventionism. For Doing Things Together: Imperialistic Octopus (1972), part of this series of participatory events, Downey and a group of collaborators created a large papier-mâché octopus that they carried in a march for peace in New York. The octopus as a symbol for the tentacle-like reach of U.S. corporate and military intervention around the world has a long history in political graphics. In 1904, illustrator Udo Keppler depicted the Standard Oil Company as an octopus in the American satire magazine Puck attacking industry (steel, copper, and shipping) as well as a state legislature, the U.S. Capitol Building and the White House. If, during the American Progressive era, the octopus was a symbol of the dangers of corporate monopolies and rapacious capitalism, for Downey's generation of New Left countercultural artists and activists, the grabby cephalopod embodied the dangerous international adventures of a hubristic American military-industrial complex (the clear bright line between business and government having been blurred), its reach threatening a global stranglehold.

Like Boycott Grapes, Doing Things Together: Imperialistic Octopus was a Happening in the broadest sense, making undetected systems and

energies visible and making decolonial options thinkable and perhaps possible. In the sense that Krauss and other critics of the 1960s used the term and shaped the discourse, works such as these were not even artworks. Downey's works were not concerned with parochial questions of form, but encompassed all of life-all of modernity and coloniality—as they sought to activate the difference which makes a difference. But to recognize Downey's Happenings and activist works as art, and Downey as an artist rather than an organizer or purely political actor, expands and opens the field of and recognizes the diversity and commitments that animate contemporary art practice on a global scale, with profound implications for decolonial praxis, epistemic and political as well as aesthetic.

The 1973 Chilean coup and subsequent junta and military dictatorship under Augusto Pinochet affected Downey and his work deeply, his systems theory perspective grasping the networks of power and inequality that linked North and South, as the coup had been underwritten by U.S. industrial interests and had the tacit support of the Nixon Administration at the height of the Cold War. After living abroad for nearly a decade, in 1973 Downey began traveling from the U.S. to Central and South America, making trips by car. He described his desire to reconnect with "the essence of that which was Latin American."¹⁷ Significantly, these trips included North American destinations such as indigenous communities in the Pacific Northwest. Downey's trips to Central and South America would lead to Video Trans Americas (1973-76), a multifaceted video and installation project begun in 1973.

If Downey felt himself to be grounded in a Latin American essence, his view was also transnational and hemispheric. In 1974, in the aftermath of the Chilean coup and shortly after Downey had returned to New York from a lengthy road trip to South America, he staged the performance Nazca at the Kitchen, an avant-garde music and performance art space in New York. The work was based on a two-channel video of the same name, which was shown on monitors accompanying the performance, during which Downey, face painted white, laid out pieces of coal in the shape of a bird, recalling the ancient massive figurative earthworks found on the vast expanses of the high desert in southern Peru. After Downey had rendered its form, two dancers crossed over the shape, dragging a line of

white chalk with the soles of their feet. The violent bisection of Downey's bird form referenced the construction of the Pan-American Highway, which connects the Americas from Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, to Ushuaia, Argentina. A modernist dream of a linked North and South America, the highway ran roughshod over ancient heritage sites such as the Nazca Lines. *Nazca* also referenced the mineral interests that drove North-South relations during the Cold War years (although Chile's copper reserves were always much more enticing to U.S. industry than coal).

Downey made Chile Sí, Junta No (1974) for a protest march at the New York headquarters of The International Telegraph and Telephone corporation (ITT), a communications, aerospace, transportation, and energy conglomerate with close ties to the U.S. political establishment and a long history of international dealings, including ties to military contractors in Nazi Germany and involvement in the 1964 U.S.-sponsored coup in Brazil as well as the Chilean coup and Pinochet's military junta. For the march, Downey returned to his strategy for Boycott Grapes, printing a simple white t-shirt to be worn by protestors with the message Chile Sí, Junta No and red smears suggesting blood stains. Downey made a video of the march, cutting the footage with clips from a reading by Chilean poet, dissident, and Nobel Prize-winner Pablo Neruda, a prominent critic of Pinochet's regime. The resulting two-channel video installation was exhibited as La Frontera as part of Video Trans Americas in 1976. While Video Trans Americas would occupy Downey's attention for the rest of the decade, he continued to produce works in performance that expressed his hemispheric and decolonial perspective, and which were notable to bringing an awareness of Chile and Latin America into the New York art world. These performances continued his practice of making all of life and all of modernity and coloniality his purview as an artist and expanded the field to be decolonial.

¹ Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mankind* (1972), quoted in Julieta González, "Beyond Technology: Juan Downey's Whole Earth," *Afterall* 37 (Autumn/Winter 2014): 21. See also González, "Juan Downey: A Communications Utopia," in *Juan Downey: A Communications Utopia*, ed. González, exh. cat. (Mexico City: Museo Rufino Tamayo, 2013), 10–81.

² Downey, however, perhaps missed another opportunity for affinity and action: the cheap, dimestore t-shirts used in *Boycott Grapes* were also commodities, manufactured by nonunion factories (gone today, the textile industries having long ago left for cheaper markets) of cotton harvested by lowwage workers in the American South. In giving the Chicano and Filipino workers of the UFW in California a voice, *Boycott Grapes* had to silence black and white workers in other fields and factories.

³ Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011).

⁴ Mónica Amor, Okwui Enwezor, Gao Minglu, Oscar Ho, Kobena Mercer, and Irit Rogoff, "Liminalities: Discussions on the Global and the Local," *Art Journal* 57, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 29.

⁵ Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 3.

⁶ Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," October 8 (Spring 1979): 30–44.

⁷ Ibid., 33-34.

- ⁸ Ibid., 41.
- ⁹ Ibid., 38.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., 33.

¹¹ The term is Krauss's. See "A Voyage on the North Sea," in Krauss, *Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999).

¹² Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock" (1958), in Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 9.

¹³ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

¹⁴ Ibid., 30.

¹⁵ Thomas Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent* (London: Lawrence King Publishing, 1996), 181.

¹⁶ Gabriela Rangel, "Carmen Beuchat and Interdisciplinary Pollinations in the 1970s," *Bomb* 120 (Summer 2012), available at bombmagazine.org/article/6640/carmen-beuchat-and-interdisciplinary-pollinations-in-the-1970s.

¹⁷ Juan Downey, quoted in "Juan Downey, Map of America, 1975," part of the Art and Artists section of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, website, available at www.moma.org/ collection/works/164788?locale=en.

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Chile Sí, Junta No, 1974 T-shirt Dimensions variable Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Chile Sí, Junta No, 1974 Still from television broadcast Gelatin-silver print $6 \% x 9 \frac{1}{2}$ in. (16 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Rick Feist









An Interview with Marilys Downey STUART COMER

New York, October 20, 2016 Stuart Comer:

When did Juan Downey first become invested in the idea of performance and live action in his work?

Marilys Downey:

He was always very interested in art viewers' participation. He felt that, if they were really going to enjoy and understand a piece, they had to participate in it somehow and make it theirs. In the early 1960s, before I even met him, he was making pieces in Chile that viewers could paint over or rearrange. They were made for people to be able to touch.

SC:

This was an impulse that was shared by a lot of artists, in Latin America in particular, during the 1960s.

MD:

No, in Latin America it was seen as a very weird thing. They'd say, "No wonder you're leaving for Europe. No wonder you're leaving for New York, even. No wonder we're getting rid of you."

SC:

An Interview with Marilys Downey

Stuart Comer

But, if you look at Brazil, Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark were approaching an idea of participatory practice through the body. And in Argentina, around the Torcuato di Tella Institute, artists were also approaching an idea of participation and communication, but through technology. I think Juan's practice intersected both. What do you think led him to merge these approaches—to introduce this kind of thinking through an art practice that was addressing machines and bodies, and how machines are used to look at or frame the behavior of bodies?

MD:

It's curious—hospitals horrified him, but he would go to doctors and ask them to put all kinds of testers in his arm, and then he'd draw, and they would output a graph of what his muscles did when he drew. It didn't make sense for somebody who would see a nurse and run in the other direction! But he was always interested in understanding the inside of the body. For his architecture school thesis project, he designed a building with proportions based on the human skeleton. It was the whole body—the molar at one point, then bigger, bigger, bigger, to the brain through which everything was controlled.

SC:

This links to issues raised in Plato Now [1973], for which Juan monitored the brain waves and alpha waves of participants in the work, although you don't actually see the graphs or patterns. Instead, you see the faces of the participants meditating on closed-circuit televisions while they are seated in a row just beyond the monitors, with their backs to the audience, watching the viewers' shadows on the wall in front of them. Thinking about Plato Now from the perspective of 2016, when we're all effectively trapped in a feedback loop of computer technology through iPhones and social media, it's maybe a little easier to be cynical about where such participation might lead, in terms of its cooption by corporate interests. But Juan was devising feedback loops in his works to open things up, to make them more participatory, and he was drawing on discussions about radical software and cybernetic theory. How did he view the relationship between the machine and the body at that moment?

MD:

He felt the body was the perfect machine and, therefore, that it should rule the other machines. But it should make the best use of the other machines to help it along. So, he saw the relationship as a joint effort.

SC:

How do you think moving to New York had an impact on his work?

MD:

He felt that he had to come to a more open society, and that the art movement, from having had a capital in Paris, was beginning to have a capital in New York—not the United States, per se, but New York. And in New York he found that there were more things that were accessible to him, and people were more open to what he was doing.

SC:

Who were the first people he had a deep engagement with here?

MD:

Leo Steinberg, Billy Kluver—that whole group was branching out into their own thing, but also feeding back and feeding off each other. One would get an idea, the other one would develop it more or contradict it, and then it became a group of conversations that kept going. It was a very important time, because people were more open, although they were very competitive about it, like, "I'm gonna be more open than you." Juan also had the great privilege of being taken under the wing of Jim Harithas and David Ross.

SC:

David Ross, in particular, raises the question of upstate New York as a crucial hub for expanding media practices, while in New York City there was also an emphasis on dance and the politics of movement. How was Juan tapping into those two different conversations and connecting them?

MD:

In Syracuse, he did the first painting at the Newhouse School, *Through the Looking Glass*, and the engineers let him play with all the machines. He would ask them, "Can you do this for me?" And they would say, "Yes, I can, but it's not what the machine is supposed to do." In New York City, a lot of his friends were dancers. He did a lot at the Judson Church—they were very open and offered a great platform, because they didn't judge you by age, or country of origin, or ability.

SC:

Do you remember the first project he did there?

MD:

I don't remember. I think it started with some people who wanted to address the draft.

SC:

As that group of artists began to organize themselves around things like the Vietnam War and other political developments here in the United States and internationally, how was Juan staying connected to politics in Chile and in Latin America?

MD:

He was less interested in political action, and more interested in what effect politics had on the people. He was very proud of his indigenous roots. His father, who was of Irish descent, taught him to be proud of having Mapuche blood, and he was raised believing that he had to defend the underdog.

SC:

And how did his politics link to his use of broadcast video technology?

MD:

He saw that you could take very small bites of information and disperse them to many people. In *Video Trans Americas* [1973–76], people would glean different things from the information. They would be into the rhythm of the music. They would be into a leaf or the sound of a cricket they recognized. They would see the very tiny details, and he was teaching them, "Okay, you've never met these people. You've never even heard of them, but here they are."

SC:

Juan had a very sophisticated understanding of the politics of the camera. Alongside a generation of superb artists and filmmakers who have created important documentation of performance art, from Babette Mangolte to Charles Atlas, Juan did not simply document the performance. He drew the camera or the monitor into the heart of the performance.
MD:

Stuart Comer

He felt he didn't go to observe his subjects, but to participate with them. It's the difference between visiting the zoo to take your picture of the gorilla and visiting the zoo to live with the gorilla. So the performers were more open with us, because they didn't feel threatened, and he would let them use the camera. They would look at themselves in the lens and paint it with anatto, the red paint they used to paint their faces. And then my daughter and I would spend hours cleaning this stuff off. But Juan was very generous with his studio and equipment. He let little kids use the equipment adults, shamans-he just felt that if you wanted to get the best out of them, you had to give them the best that you had. You had to share if you wanted them to share with you. And that's how he got away with a lot of stuff.

SC:

In terms of his participatory approach to research and community, could you talk about his art world research from 1970? He was approaching creativity with a much more collective model in mind.

MD:

In 1970, he decided he wanted to communicate with different groups of people in the art world. So he sent out 1,000 questionnaires to artists, curators, museum directors, and philanthropists. The questionnaires differed from group to group, and he included a return envelope and a stamp so it was very easy for people to answer. They all answered, including Robert Rauschenberg, who added a "Love you, Juan" at the end. I have two huge books filled with the answers, because when Juan was tidying up the studio, he threw them in the trash. I picked them out of the trash and took them home again. He gave everybody the voice to answer who they thought they were, and then he produced drawings from the tabulated answers for Howard Wise Gallery. The last show he had there, which was the last show

at Howard Wise, featured an interactive sculpture that, when triggered by passing through a beam of light, would show a graph of how many artists answered, or how many curators answered, or philanthropists, or whomever. And a voice would say, "Out of 1,000 curators, 600 answered and said this...."

SC:

Participation and communication are not necessarily the same thing, but they do become intertwined in the work.

MD:

They do become intertwined. He liked establishing connections built on participation, whether with somebody who's your dear friend or somebody off the street. He said, "Each will teach the other something they don't know." And they will become closer and realize better what their needs are—what their real needs are, not just, "Oh, I wanna live here, or I wanna live there," but, "Why are you living where you're living?" or "Why are you working where you're working?" They come to a deeper conversation.

SC:

Tell me about the drawings and how they relate to the performances.

MD:

He was always writing, drawing, painting, and performing at the same time. The drawings are not storyboards for the performances—it's not one simple story. He would be on a train to Brooklyn and he would do a very fast sketch and put certain ideas he wanted to communicate in just one line or one word.

SC:

I'm also interested in the fact that he was moving from the most traditional technologies drawing—to things like alpha-wave monitoring or touch-activated devices. He was rearranging sensorial experience through technology. There's an interesting play between the drawings, the diagrams, and this matrix of technology. They were open systems.

MD:

They were open systems, and then when he started to make them, he would realize he had to perfect one thing or expand on another. And he felt that the camera would be ideal when he could look at something and record it without a camera. Forget the camera. The camera was so ideal, it was out of the picture. He was very much into the idea that the mind could bypass technology, but that technology could make the mind get there.

SC:

How do you feel about restaging these works, both in this exhibition and the reconstruction of *Plato Now* we did at Tate Modern in 2012? Is it honest to the original intentions of the works?

MD:

I try to make it as exact as possible through photographs, through memories, through writings. A lot of things unfortunately are going to be lost to memory, because it's a generation that's dying off. It's good that you're recording certain things that, even if it's not one hundred percent accurate, it feels as accurate as it's ever going to be, and then certain histories will have to be updated slightly as things continue to surface.

SC:

Well, I think with Juan's work the challenge is getting the balance right between its openness, and trying to preserve the spirit of that, but also realizing that there has to be a certain degree of precision. When we did *Plato Now*, we didn't use exactly the same technology that we would have used in the 1973, but it approximated the spirit.

MD:

Juan would have loved it, because you came into a dark place going down, and you could barely see your footsteps—thank goodness there were no steps in there—but it gave you a feeling of the cave. You felt you were going into the cave. It was really well done. And people were very attentive.

SC:

I remembered watching a number of very small children, infants in particular, who would crawl up to the monitors and start tracing the contours of the faces on the monitors.

MD:

Well, that Juan would have loved, because he loved the participation of kids, and of people in general.

SC:

To me, that was the heart of the work, and it was also the clearest indication that this work had a powerful future.

MD:

Yes, I would love to redo it again. Juan had a weird friend, Gardo San Jorge, who was doing scientific work with biofeedback, and he talked to the guy and said, "Oh, what are you doing now?" "I'm doing this." And he said, "Oh, I'll train your people." He came in one night and trained us to use alpha and beta waves, explaining to us in a very simple but strict way how you get into alpha mode and how you get into beta. He loaned us all the equipment. He was a scientist, but was allured by having an artist use his methods.

SC:

I think Juan provided a blueprint for making the divisions between art, science, and technology much less distinct that will continue to be very productive.

MD:

They crossed over both ways. They didn't just meet at a line, they fed from each other.



Exhibition Checklist



Nostalgic Item, 1967[†] Color etching on two plates on wove paper 19 ¾ x 24 ¾ in. (49.21 x 62.87 cm) Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Corcoran Collection

Communication, 1968* Enlarged photocopy of telegram Dimensions Variable Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Against Shadows, 1969[†] Red chalk, graphite, acrylic paint, and silver paper on wove paper 17 x 14 in. (43.18 x 35.56 cm) Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Corcoran Collection

A Novel, 1969[†] Mimeographed booklet 40 pages; 9 x 6 in. (22.86 x 15.24 cm) each Harvard Art Museums Archives Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

A Novel, 1969/2017 (facsimiles)[†] Ink on paper 9 x 6 in. (22.86 x 15.24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

A Novel, 1969/2017 (facsimile)[†] Ink on paper 9 x 6 in. (22.86 x 15.24 cm) each Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Poster for *Invisible Energy Dictates a Dance Concert (Parts 1 & 2)*, 1969* Graphite on paper 14 x 11 in. (35.56 x 27.94 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

7 *Critics*, 1970[†] Embossed lithograph 47 x 36 in. (119.4 x 91.4 cm) Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Corcoran Collection

And Breathes Hot Air on Them, 1970[†] Color pencil on paper 22 ½ x 30 in. (57.15 x 76.2 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Follows People and..., 1970^{\dagger} Color pencil on paper $22 \frac{1}{2} \times 30$ in. (57.15 x 76.2 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Information Center, 1970/2017[†] Formica, mirror, 25-watt lightbulbs, electronic components, 4 light beam sensors, and 4 playback devices with speakers Two volumes (upper and lower): $1 \times 1 \times 6$ ft. (30 x 30 x 182 cm) each; wall unit: $3 \times 6 \times \frac{1}{2}$ ft. (91.44 x 182 x 15.24 cm); and supporting pedestal: $3 \times 6 \times \frac{1}{2}$ ft. (91.44 x 182 x 15.24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Inside the Robot, 1970^{\dagger} Color pencil on paper 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 30 in. (57.15 x 76.2 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Pollution Robot, 1970[†] Super 8mm film by Howard Wise transferred to DVD; olor and silent 9:22 min. Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Pollution Robot, 1970/2017[†] Formica, heater blower, wheels, and mirror 3 x 3 x 6 ft. (91 x 91 x 182 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Poster for *With Energy beyond These Walls*, 1970[†] Howard Wise Gallery, New York, March 2–April 25, 1970 Color pencil, graphite, acrylic, and collage on paper 29¹⁵/₁₆ x 22!/₁₆ in. (76 x 56 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Pages from Juan Downey's journals, 1970–74* Colored pencil on paper 17 x 14 in. (43 x 35.5 cm) each Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Research on the Art World: Answers Given by Artists, 1970[†] Color pencil, acrylic, and graphite on paper 36 1/8 x 40 1/8 in. (91.7 x 102 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Research on the Art World: Answers Given by Critics, 1970[†] Pencil and acrylic on paper 36 ½ x 40 ½ in. (91.7 x 102 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Research on the Art World: Artists' Yearly Income, 1970[†] Graphite and acrylic on paper 24 ¼ x 30 ½ in. (61.5 x 76.5 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Research on the Art World: Dear Artist/Dear Collector, 1970[†] Color pencil, collage, acrylic, and graphite on paper 30 ½ x 24 ¼ in. (76.5 x 61.5 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Research on the Art World: Dear Critic, 1970[†] Pencil and acrylic on paper 36 ½ x 40 ½ in. (91.7 x 102 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Research on the Art World: Mailed One Thousand Forms to Artists and Collectors, 1970[†] Color pencil and graphite on paper 35 % x 29 % in. (90 x 74.5 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Research on the Art World: Number of Artworks in Private Collections, 1970[†] Color pencil, acrylic, and graphite on paper 24 ¼ x 30 ⅛ in. (61.5 x 76.5 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Research on the Art World: Number of Hours Artists Work on Their Art, 1970[†] Color pencil, acrylic, and graphite on paper 24 ¼ x 30 ½ in. (61.5 x 76.5 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Fire, 1971⁺

Photographic documentation of performance, 112 Greene Street, June 30, 1971 Gelatin-silver print 6 % x 9 % in. (16 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Life Cycle: Electric Light + Water + Soil \rightarrow Flowers \rightarrow Bees \rightarrow Honey, 1971[†] Graphite, colored pencil, and collage on paper 40 x 60 in. (101.6 x 152.4 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Life Cycle: Electric Light + Water + Soil \rightarrow Flowers \rightarrow Bees \rightarrow Honey, 1971[†] Two color photographic prints 6 % x 9 % in. (16 x 24 cm) each Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photos: Bill Gertstein and Michael Mitchell

Life Cycle: Electric Light + Water + Soil \rightarrow Flowers \rightarrow Bees \rightarrow Honey, 1971/2017[†] Hives, lavender, rosemary, red apple, ground cover, flowers, video camera, video monitor, retro grow lights, and bees Hive: 40 x 40 x 1 ½ in. (101.6 x 101.6 x 3.8 cm); and garden: 4 x 4 ft. (121.92 x 121.92 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Energy Fields, 1972* Portapak video transferred to digital media; black-and-white and sound 14:25 min. Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Energy Fields, 1972* Enlarged photographic documentation of video-performance, 112 Greene Street, New York, February 1972 Gelatin-silver print 6¾ x 9 ½ in. (16 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Peter Moore, © Estate of Peter Moore/VAGA, New York

Energy Fields, 1972* Enlarged photographic documentation of video-performance, 112 Greene Street, New York, February 1972 Gelatin-silver print 10 x 8 in. (25 x 20 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Peter Moore, © Estate of Peter Moore/VAGA, New York

Doing Things Together: Imperialistic Octopus, 1972* Portapak video transferred to digital media; black-and-white and sound 58:27 min. Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Three Way Communication by Light, 1972* Video installation with three monitors and three Portapak videos transferred to digital media; black-and-white and sound 32:55, 32:29, and 31:01 min. each Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Three Way Communication by Light, 1972* Colored pencil, acrylic, and graphite on Bristol board 39 % x 59 ½ in. (100 x 151 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

A Vegetal System of Communications for New York State, $1972/2017^{\dagger}$ Copper box, biosensors, transducers, output devices, philodendron plant, acrylic on paper, and Bainbridge board Copper box: 20 x 20 x 36 in. (50.8 x 50.8 x 91.44 cm) drawing: 85 % x 50 % in. (217.9 x 127.62 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Doing Things Together, 1973* Portapak video transferred to digital media; black-and-white and sound 6:34 min. Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Monument to a River, Cambridge, 1973[†] Two-channel video 30:35 min. Courtesy the Center for Advanced Visual Studies Special Collection, MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology Used with permission of the Estate of Juan Downey

Plato Now, 1973* Enlarged photographic documentation of video-performance at Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, January 6, 1973 Gelatin-silver print 6 % x 9 ½ in. (16 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

Ultrasonic Field/Shadow Storage, 1973* Portapak video transferred to digital media; black-and-white and sound 28:43 min. Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Chilean Flag, 1974* Portapak video transferred to digital media; black-and-white and sound 13:44 min. Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Chile Sí, Junta No, 1974* T-shirt Dimensions variable Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Chile Sí, Junta No, 1974* Still from television broadcast Gelatin-silver print $6 \% x 9 \frac{1}{2}$ in. (16 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Rick Feist

Debriefing Pyramid, 1974* Enlarged photographic documentation of video-performance, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, April 1974 Gelatin-silver print Dimensions variable Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Harry Shunk

Nazca, 1974* Enlarged photographic documentation of video-performance, The Kitchen, New York, February 1974 Gelatin-silver print 6 ¾ x 9 ½ in. (16 x 24 cm) Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey Photo: Peter Moore, © Estate of Peter Moore/VAGA, New York Publicness, 1974* Live performance on Manhattan Cable Television, November 12, 1974 Portapak video transferred to digital media; black-and-white and sound 30:17 min. Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Quartet, 1974* Photographic documentation of video-performance, Byrd Hoffman School for Byrds, New York, April 26, 1974 Three gelatin-silver prints Dimensions variable Courtesy of Barbara (Lloyd) Dilley Photos: Juan Downey

Quartet, 1974* Performance announcement, postcard, and notes Dimensions variable Courtesy of Barbara (Lloyd) Dilley

Videodances (with Carmen Beuchat), 1974* Portapak video transferred to digital media; black-and-white and sound 29:49 min. Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

Video Dances (with Barbara [Lloyd] Dilley), 1974* Portapak video transferred to digital media; black-and-white and sound 28:06 min. Courtesy of the Estate of Juan Downey

* Work installed at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions * Work installed at Pitzer College Art Galleries

Selected Exhibition History

Solo Exhibitions and Performances

1961

Juan Downey, Sala de Exposiciones Temporales, Ministerio de Educación, Santiago

1962

Juan Downey, Galería Condal, Barcelona 1964

Juan Downey, Galería Carmen Waugh, Santiago

Juan Downey, Galería Marta Faz, Santiago

Juan Downey: Grabados, Casa de las Américas, Havana, Cuba

1965

Calcografías de Juan Downey, Casa de las Américas, Havana, Cuba

Juan Downey, Emerson Gallery, McLean, Virginia

Juan Downey of Chile, Pan American Union Building, Washington, D.C.

1966

Juan Downey: Grabados, dibujos y óleos, Universidad de Puerto Rico, San Juan

Juan Downey: Prints, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, D.C.

1967

Juan Downey, Emerson Gallery, McLean, Virginia

Juan Downey: Sculptures, Drawings and Prints, Gallery 252, Philadelphia

1968

Fete-le Vous Même, Galerie Jacqueline Ranson, Paris

Juan Downey, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

Juan Downey: An Electronic Environment, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Juan Downey at the Soft Gallery (with Marta Minujín), Soft Gallery, Washington, DC

Juan Downey: Electronic Sculptures, Martha Jackson Gallery, New York

Juan Downey: Environmental Electronic Sculpture, Judson Church, New York

Juan Downey: Etchings and Drawings, Lunn Gallery, Washington, D.C.

1969

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Boycott Grapes, Lunn Gallery, Washington, D.C.

Invisible Energy Dictates a Dance Concert, Smithsonian Institution and The National Mall, Washington, D.C.

Juan Downey: Audio-Kinetic Electronic Sculptures, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Juan Downey: Etchings, Cisnero Gallerv, New York

Juan Downey Grabados, Instituto Panameño de Arte Contemporáneo, Panama City

1970

Information Center and Make Chile Rich. Lunn Gallery, Washington, D.C. Invisible Energy Dictates a Dance Concert, Juan Downey: More than Two, Everson Filmmakers' Cinemategue, New York Juan Downey, Electric Gallery, Toronto With Energy beyond These Walls, Howard Wise Gallery, New York

1971

Life Cycle, Electric Gallery, Toronto Life Cycle, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York Fire, 112 Greene Street, New York

1972

Energy Fields, 112 Greene Street, New

Three Way Communication by Light, Central Michigan University, Lancaster, Michigan

Auburn Prison, Auburn, New York

Galería Conkright, Caracas

Public School 3, New York 1973

Video Performances and Videotapes, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York

Videotapes in Soft Gallery 200 Mattresses, Harold Rivkin Gallery, Washington, D.C.

Video Trans Americas, Electric Gallery, Toronto

1974

Chilean Flag, The Kitchen, New York

Nazca, The Kitchen, New York

Publicness, The Kitchen, New York

Representation, Artists' Space, New York

Video Trans Americas' Debriefing Pyramid, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York

1975

Juan Downey: Bi-Deo, Richmond College, New York

Juan Downey: Energy Systems, Center for Inter-American Relations, New York

Juan Downey: Recent Works, Anthology Film Archives, New York

Video Trans Americas, Center for Media Studies, University at Buffalo, New York

1976

Juan Downey: Bi-Deo, Anthology Film Archives, New York

Juan Downey: Bi-Deo, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York

Video Trans Americas, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Texas

Video Trans Americas, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, California Video Trans Americas, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Juan Downey, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, California

Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York

Juan Downey: Videotapes and Drawings, Galería Adler/Castillo, Caracas

Mas De Dos, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas, Caracas

1978

Juan Downey: Formats, Fondo del Sol Visual Arts and Media Center. Washington, D.C.

Juan Downey: New American Filmmaker Series, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

On Line: Real Time Video Program, Anthology Film Archives, New York

On Line: Real Time Video Program, Holly Solomon Gallery, New York

1979

The Laughing Alligator, Castelli/ Sonnabend Tapes and Films, New York

Venus Danger, Osuna Galleries, Washington, D.C.

Yanomami Healing I & II, Chicago Editing Center, Chicago

Yanomami Indians: Videotapes, Paintings & Drawings, Mandeville Art Gallery, University of California, San Diego

1980

Video vis a tergo, Firehouse Plaza Art Gallery, Nassau Community College, Garden City, New York

1981

Juan Downey, Boston Film & Video Foundation, Boston

1982

The Mirror Faze, Schlesinger-Boissanté Gallery, New York

1983

Information Withheld, National Academy of Design, New York

Information Withheld, Red Bar, New York Information Withheld, Institute for Art and

Urban Resources Inc., New York

Juan Downey, Castelli/Sonnabend Tapes and Films, New York

1984

Juan Downey, Visuala Galería, Santiago Juan Downey: Veinte años de dibujos, grabados y video, Galería Plástica 3, Santiago

Information Withheld, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

Ouvre de Juan Downey, American Center, Paris

1985

Juan Downey: The Thinking Eye, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco

Shifters, Visuala Galería, Santiago Shifters, Castelli/Sonnabend Tapes and

Films, New York 1987

New York

New York

1989

1992

Praxis, Santiago

1993

Kitchen, New York

Festival, New York

1994

1995

1997

1999

Santiago

Santiago

Spain

Long Beach, California

Art, Boston

York

York

1988

San Antonio, Texas

Festival Downey: Video porque Te Ve, Cine-Teatro Biógrafo, Santiago

Juan Downey, Galería Visuala, Santiago Juan Downey, Terne Gallery, New York Juan Downey: J. S. Bach, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, California

Juan Downey: The Thinking Eye,

International Center for Photography,

Information Withheld, Message to the

Juan Downey, Southwest School of Art,

Trans Americas: Drawing and Video-Book,

Trans Americas: Drawings and Videotapes

by Juan Downey, The Rotunda Gallery,

Video Artist Juan Downey, Rensselaer

Chapel and Cultural Center, Troy, New

Juan Downey, Institute of Contemporary

Juan Downey: Bach Disc, International

of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New

Juan Downey, Herbert F. Johnson Museum

Juan Downey, Long Beach Museum of Art,

Juan Downey: Dibujos y Pinturas, Galería

A Retrospective and Celebration, The

Festival, Mill Valley, New York

Tribute to Juan Downey, Mill Valley Film

Une Forêt "Videoformes"—Retrospective

Video Visions 93 Meeting Points: A Tribute

Juan Downey, Festival de la Création

to Juan Downey, 31st New York Film

Retrospectiva de Videos Juan Downey.

Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino,

Juan Downey: Instalaciones, Dibujos y

Videos, Museo Nacional Bellas Artes,

Juan Downey, Con energía mas allá de

Juan Downey Dibujando con los

estos muros, Centre del Carme, Valencia,

Yanomami, Galeria Artespacio, Santiago

Vidéo, Clermont-Ferrand, France

Center of Photography, New York

Public, Public Art Fund, New York

The Rotunda Gallery, New York

2000

de Chiloé, Castro, Chile

Chiloé, Castro, Chile

Venice Biennale, Venice

Chile, Washington, D.C.

2001

2002

2003

2005

Gallery, New York

Telefónica, Buenos Aires

2006

2007

Gallery, New York

2008

2010

2011

2012

2013

Mexico City

Group Exhibitions

1958

Santiago

Telefónica, Santiago

of the Arts, New York

Aires

Artespacio, Santiago

New York

York

Meditando con los Yanomami, Galería 1959 Modigliani, Viña del Mar, Chile Juan Downey y Luis Moreno, Sala Libertad, Santiago; and Instituto Chileno-Retrospectiva de Video Arte de Juan Francés, Valparaíso, Chile Downey, Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María, Valparaíso, Chile Lo Abstracto en la Naturaleza, Instituto Chileno Británico de Cultura, Santiago Noreshi Towai, Museo de Arte Moderno 1962 VI Salón de Mayo: Pintura, Escultura, Cerámica, Esmaltes, Sala Municipal de Retrospectiva de Video Arte de Juan Barcelona, Barcelona Downey, Museo de Arte Moderno de Exposición Casa Cultura, Universidad Austral de Chile, Valdivia, Chile About Cages, Chilean Pavillion, 49th Joven Pintura, Sala Libertad, Santiago Primera Bienal Americana de Arte, Juan Downey, Dibujando con los Córdoba, Argentina Yanomami, Consulate of the Republic of 1963 Latin American Artists. Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Paris Juan Downey. Dibujando con los Le Salon des Realites Nouvelles. Musée Yanomami, Consulate General of Chile, d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Paris New International Etching Group, Galerij Video Time, Museum of Modern Art, New Drieghe, Wetteren, Belgium Primera Bienal Americana de Grabado, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago Juan Downey: Grabados, Galería 1964 I Bienal Americana de Grabado, Museo de Juan Downey, Instalaciones, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago Arte Contemporáneo, Valdivia, Chile III Concurso Latinoamericano de Grabado, Casa de las Américas, Havana, Cuba Juan Downey: Drawings, Nohra Haime 3 International Triennial für farbige Originalgraphik, Grenchen, Switzerland XX Salon de Mai, Musée d'Art Moderne de Efecto Downey, Espacio Curaduría La la Ville de Paris, Paris Betaudier, Biasi, Downey, Fergola, Ferro, Estrecho Dudoso, TEOR/éTica, Buenos Martin, Revel, Skunder, Valdivieso, Waldberg, Galerie Jacqueline Ranson, Juan Downey: Convivencias, Museo Paris Nacional de Costa Rica, San José International Festival of Printmaking, Casa de Las Américas, Havana, Cuba Juan Downey: Meditation, Nohra Haime Tres Artistas Chilenos: Castillo, Downey, Nuñez, Galería Marta Faz, Santiago; and Instituto de Arte Contemporáneo, Lima Juan Downey: Video Trans Americas, 1965 Galería Gabriela Mistral, Santiago 11th Annual Exhibition: Latin American Prints, Galería Sudamericana, New York Juan Downey, El Ojo Pensante, Fundación Alternative Attuali 2 Rassegna internatzionale di pitura, scultura e grafica, Castello Spagnolo, L'Aquila, Italy Juan Downey: The Invisible Architect, Artistes Latino-Americains de Paris, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Massachusetts; and the Bronx Museum Paris Rassegna Artisti Latinoamericani d'Avanguardia, Due Mondi Galleria d'arte Juan Downey, Tate Modern, London internazionale, Rome 1966 Juan Downey, Una Utopía de la Fifteen Latin American Paintings, Butler Comunicación, Museo Rufino Tamayo, Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio The Hard Edge Trend, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 1967 Contemporary Art of Chile, Pan American Juan Downey y Luis Moreno, Salón Oficial Union Building, Washington, D.C. de Artes Plásticas, Museo de Belles Artes, Exposición Latinoamericana de dibujo y grabado, Universidad Central de Venezuela, Caracas

197

Latin American Art, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia

Young Artists: Recent Works, Emerson Gallery, McLean, Virginia

Young Artists: Their Work, Martha Jackson Gallery, New York

What Happened/A Look Back, Judson Church Gallery, New York

1968

Plásticos, Latin American Art Foundation, Washington, D.C.

Some More Beginnings, Brooklyn Museum of Art. New York

1969

IX Festival de Arte, Salón de las Americas de Pintura, Cali, Colombia

Cybernetic Serendipity, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Etchings and Drawings, Lunn Gallery, Washington, D.C.

Kinesthetics: Exploring the Aesthetic Potentials of Some Recent Technologic Developments, Howard Wise Gallery, New York

Latin America: New Paintings and Sculptures. Center for Inter-American Relations, New York

The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age, Museum of Modern Art, New York

Washington's Artists Paint-On for Lafayette Park Fence, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, D.C.

1970

Air: A Philip Morris Exhibition, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York Lucht/Kunst (Air/Art), Stedelijk Museum,

Amsterdam Proposition for Unrealized Projects, Howard

Wise Gallery, New York 1971 Art and Science, Stedelijk Museum,

Amsterdam

Artistas Jóvenes, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Caracas

Los 40 Puntos del Gobierno Popular, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago *Open House*, 112 Greene Street, New York

Twelve Artists from Latin America, John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Saratoga, Florida

1972

Selected Exhibition History

9th Annual Avant-Garde Festival of New York, South Street Seaport Museum, New York

XIV Sobre Papel, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Caracas

An Interpretation of Matter, Central Michigan University, Pleasant, Michigan Envirovision, New York State Fair, Syracuse, New York

Hacia un perfil del arte Latinoamericano. Museo Emilio Caraffa, Córdoba, Argentina Interpenning, Sculpture Garden, Museum of Modern Art, New York

Looking South, Center for Inter-American Relations, New York

1973

2nd Annual Video Arts Festival, The Kitchen, New York

About 405 East 13 Street, Jean Dupuy's studio, New York

Chilean Lifeline, The Space, New York Circuit: A Video Invitational, 52 Artists. Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York

1974

Art and Ideology in Latin America, Agora Studio, Maastricht, The Netherlands

Art Now '74, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C.

Conceptual Art Facing the Latin American Problem, Centro de Arte y Comunicación, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City

Envirovision. Everson Museum of Art. Syracuse, New York

Latin American Art, Centro de Arte y Comunicación, Zagreb, Croatia

Latin American Prints from the Museum of Modern Art. Center for Inter-American Relations, New York

Latinoamérica 1974, International Cultureel Centrum, Antwerp, Belgium

New Learning Spaces, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis

Project '74, Kolnischer Kunstverein Cologne, Cologne, Germany

The November Video Exposition, Manhattan Cable TV, New York

Towards a Profile of Latin American Art. Wspókezcsna Gallery, Warsaw

1975

9eme Biennale de Paris, Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris Arte de Video, Fundación Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Caracas

Artevideo & Multivision, Rotonda di Via Besana, Milan

Changing Channels, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

1975

12th Annual Avant-Garde Festival. New York

25th Film Festival, Berlin

Lausanne, France

About 405 East 13th Street: A Contradiction, Jean Dupuy's studio, New York

A Response to the Environment, Rutgers University, Brunswick, New Jersey

Art and Ideology in Latin America, Centro de Arte y Comunicación, Buenos Aires

Art Transitions, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Landscape Studies in Video, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, California Problematique of Latin American Art, École Cantonale de Beaux Artes d'Art Appliqué,

The Video Show, Serpentine Gallery, London

Video Art, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Video Art, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut

Video Fourth International Open Encounter, Centro de Arte y Comunicación, Buenos Aires

1976

Artists' Benefit, Judson Church Memorial, New York

Art Transition, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Labvrinth, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Video Art: An Overview, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco

1977

Documenta 6, Kassel, Germany

Filmex Artist Video and Film Program, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, California

Recent Latin American Drawings (1969-1976), International Exhibition Foundation, Washington, D.C.

The Intersection of the Words & the Visual Image & Television: Transformations & New Forms, Women's Interart Center, New York

1978

19e Festival dei Popoli, Florence

The Arts and Audiovisual Languages, 3ieme Rencontres de l'Audiovisuel Scientifique, Château de la Napoule, Mandelieu-la-Napoule, France

Autobiography, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

Images, La Napoule, Cannes, France

Latin American Art: The Other Image, Fondo del Sol Visual Arts and Media Center, Washington, D.C.

Matrix/Berkeley: A Changing Exhibition of Contemporary Art, University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley

Raíces Antiguas/Visiones Nuevas/ Ancient Roots/New Visions, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Summer Video Archives, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, California

1979

Masks, Tents, Vessels, Talismans, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

Videothos: Cross Cultural Video by Artists, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, California

1979

Everson Video Review, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York

Figura y Contexto-Figure and Context, Fondo del Sol Visual Arts and Media Center, Washington, D.C.

Political Comment in Contemporary Art, Brainerd Art Gallery, State University College, Potsdam, New York

1980

6th Annual Ithaca Video Festival, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, York Ithaca, New York

1983

Washington, D.C.

Films, New York

Art, Santa Fe

New York

New York

York

France

1984

Lam, Havana, Cuba

Modern Art, New York

American Art, New York

Cineteca di Bologna, Italy

Beursschouwburg, Brussels

Contemporary Art, Boston

Institute, Los Angeles

American Art, New York

Montréal, Montréal

Modern Art, New York

Anthology Film Archives,

New York

Montréal

Hague

New York

Festival, Athens

1985

39th Venice Biennial, Venice

Drawings: The Pluralist Decade, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

Esculturas Escondidas, Fondo del Sol Visual Arts and Media Center, Washington, D.C.

Festival of the Arts, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Virginia

La Bienal de Arquitectura, Quito, Ecuador

In/Out, Cayman Gallery, New York Latin American Artists-80, Cayman Gallery, New York

Video, el temps y l'espai, Series Informatives 2, Collegi de Arquitectes de Cataluña y Institut Alemany, Barcelona

Video Roma '80, Rome

Video Vis a Tergo, Firehouse Plaza Art Gallery, Nassau Community College, Garden City, New York

World Wide Video Festival, Kijkhuis, The Hague

1er Encuentro Franco-Chileno de Video

Arte, Instituto Chileno Francés de Cultura.

Art Works, Whitney Museum of American

York, Galería Garcés Velázquez, New York

Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, New

National Video Festival, John F. Kennedy

San Francisco International Video Festival,

Video: State of the Art, Canada Arts

Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of

National Video Festival, John F. Kennedy

Juan Downey & Eugenio Téllez, Instituto

Video Festival at the Anthology, Anthology

The Looking Glass, The Kitchen, New York

Chileno-Francés de Cultura, Santiago

Image Film, Video Center, Atlanta

Text/Picture Notes, Visual Studies

24th Annual Film Festival, New York

Drawing, Center for Inter-American

4th Sydney Biennale, Sydney

Return/Jump: Three Years of Video, The

World Wide Video Festival, Kijkhuis, The

Workshop, Rochester, New York

Center for the Performing Arts.

Council, Ottawa, Ontario

American Art, New York

Film Archives, New York

Kitchen, New York

Relations. New York

Hague

Center for the Performing Arts,

Dibujantes Latinoamericanos en Nueva

From the Academy to the Avant-Garde,

1981

Santiago

York

Art, New York

Washington, D.C.

San Francisco

1982

Washington, D.C.

Disinformation: The Manufacture of 30 Artistas Chile, Cayman Gallery, New Consent, Alternative Museum, New York Video Art, Stockholm International Film Festival, Stockholm Art é Video: Rétrospective et Perspective, Palais de Beaux-Arts de Charleroi, France *Video: Medium and/or Message*, Blaffer Gallery, University of Houston, Texas In/Out: Four Projects by Chilean Artists, Washington Project for the Arts. Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York Video Art, Castelli/Sonnabend Tapes and 1986 Il Bienal de La Habana, Havana, Cuba Video Art: A History Part II, Museum of VI Festival Franco-Chileno de Video Arte, Instituto Francés de Cultura, Santiago Video as Attitude, New Mexico Museum of Ciclo Internacional: Últimas Producciones de Autor, Filmoteca Nacional, Madrid Video at El Museo, El Museo del Barrio, National Film Festival, American Film Institute, Los Angeles Video View Points, Museum of Modern Art, Resolutions: A Critique of Video Art, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of Angeles The Freedman Gallery: The First Decade, Freedman Gallery, Albright College, I Bienal de La Habana, Centro Wilfredo Reading, Pennsylvania Video and Language, Video as Language, IV Encuentro Franco-Chileno de Video Arte, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Intituto Francés de Cultura, Santiago Los Angeles Anthology Video Program and Millennium 1987 Workshop, Anthology Film Archives, New 2ème Semaine Internationale du Vidéo, Geneva, Switzerland Chicago Boys: A Video Installation, 6th World Wide Video Festival, Kikihuis, Alternative Museum, New York The Hague VII Festival Franco-Chileno de Video Arte, Festival de Vidéo Montbéliard, Montbéliard, Instituto Francés de Cultura, Santiago From TV to Video—Dal video alla TV, 29th American Film and Video Festival, New York Juan Downey & Nöel Harding, Art, Technology, and Society Festival, Ars Electronica Center, Linz, Austria Mediated Narratives, Institute of Convergences/Convergencias: Caribbean, Latin American, and North American, Lehman College Art Gallery, New York National Video Festival, American Film *FestRIO*, Rio de Janeiro New American Video Art: A Historical From the Other Side, Terne Gallery, New Survey, 1967–1980, Whitney Museum of York Hegemonia y Visualidad, Simposio Video '84, Recontres Vidéo International de *Gramscis*. Instituto de Ciencias Aleiandro Lipschutz, Santiago Video and Ritual, Museum of Modern Art, Japan '87 Video Television Festival, Tokyo National Video Festival: Video Free America, Video: A Retrospective, Long Beach San Francisco Museum of Art, Long Beach, California Performance Night, Exit Art, New York Video de Montréal, Complexe Guy-Favreau, Selections from the Video Study Collection 1967-87, Museum of Modern Art, New York Video: Recent Acquisitions, Museum of The Australian Video Festival, Sydney The Self-Portrait: Tangible Consciousness, WNET Television Laboratory: A Survey, Rutgers State University, Brunswick, New Museum of Modern Art, New York Jersev World Wide Video Festival, Kikjhuis, The The Situated Image, Mandeville Art Gallery, University of California, San Diego Video Discourse: Mediated Narratives, 18a Bienal Internacional, São Paulo Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston 21st International Film Festival, Chicago Video Viewpoints on Video, Long Beach A Screening of Selected Works, Anthology Museum of Art, Long Beach, California Video Program & Millennium Film Workshop Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

60

1988

VIII Festival Franco-Chileno de Video Arte, Instituto Francés de Chile, Santiago

Athens International Film and Video Festival, Athens

Finis Terrae/The End of the Earth, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York

Infermental 7, Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, Buffalo, New York

National Latino Film and Video Festival, El Museo del Barrio, New York

The Debt, Exit Art, New York

The Latin American Spirit: Art and Artists in the United States, 1920–1970, Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York

Time and Memory: Video Art and Identity, Jewish Museum, New York

1989

IX Festival Chileno de Video Arte, Santiago Iberoamérica. Ultimas Tendencias. Música por ordenador y video-arte, Espacio Quinto Centenario, Madrid

Image World: Art and Media Culture, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

13th Atlanta Film & Video Festival, Woodruff Art Center, Atlanta

39 Berliner Festwochen, Berlin

Video 101: An Introduction to American Video Art, Brooklyn Museum, New York

Video-Skulptur Retrospektiv und Aktuell, 1963–1989, Kolnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany

1990

X Festival Chileno de Video Arte, Instituto Francés de Cultura, Santiago

32nd American Film and Video Festival, New York

National Video Festival, American Film Institute, Los Angeles

New Angle International Video Festival, Millennium Film Workshop, New York

Selections from the Video Study Collection, Museum of Modern Art, New York

Seoul International Art Festival, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul

Video Arte Internacional, Museo Internacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos

Vidéo Plastique: Poetics/Language/Image, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 1991

4ème Semaine Intrenationale du Vidéo, Saint-Garvais, Geneva

6th Australian International Video Festival, Sydney

Athens International Film and Video Festival, Athens

Cine de Mestizaje, National Latino Film and Video Festival, El Museo del Barrio, New York

Efecto de Viaje, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago

The Kitchen Video Afternoons in the Video Screening Room: New Works, The Kitchen, New York

Video Events, Tom Cugliani Gallery, New York

Video Fest '91, Berlin

Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

1992

York

Island

XII Festival Chileno de Video Arte, Instituto Francés de Cultura, Santiago

La Misma Onda—The Same Wave: Latino

Performance, Film, Video, and Expanded Cinema, Performance Space 122, New

Migrations, Latin American Art and the

Modernist Imagination, Rhode Island

School of Design, Providence, Rhode

Virgin Territories, Long Beach Museum of

I Bienal de Video Santiago, Centro Arte

Expanding Cinema, 1983-1992, Herbert

Festival de la Creation Video. Clermont-

Les Lieux de vidéo, International Video Art

Exhibition, Durham Art Gallery, Ontario,

Inconsequent, Natalie Rivera Gallery,

F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell

University, Ithaca, New York

SOHO Festival, New Museum of

Contemporary Art, New York

Art, Long Beach, California

1993

Alameda, Santiago

Ferrand, France

New York

and Design, Savannah, Georgia

Recent Acquisitions, Museum of Modern Focus on Video, Savannah College of Art Art, New York

> Terra Incógnita, Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro

2001

49th Venice Biennial, Venice

2013

A Trip from Here to There, Museum of Modern Art, New York

2014

Everything Under the Same Sun, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Past Futures: Science Fiction, Space Travel College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine

2015

America, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand

Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna

Canada 1995 13th National Video Festival. American Film Institute, Los Angeles 450 Años Ciudad de La Serena, Plástica

Chilena Contemporánea, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Universidad de Chile, Santiago

El Museo Part III: Reaffirming Spirituality, 25th Anniversary Exhibition, El Museo del Barrio, New York

Etnografía Amazónica, Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino, Santiago

Kwangiu Biennial, Seoul

Neruda: Un Joven de 90 Años, Americas Society, New York

Plástica Chilena Contemporánea, 1744-1944, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Universidad de Chile, Santiago

The Cultured Tourist Contact Zone's Video, Center for Photography at Woodstock, New York

Vagamundo: Reflecciones sobre el exilio, Filmoteca de Andalucía, Cordova, Spain Video Art: The First 25 Years, Museum of Modern Art, New York

1996

Legacy/Legado, Old State House, Hartford, Connecticut

One and Others, Galerie LeLong, New York 1997

XIX Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano, Havana, Cuba

Electronic Highways, Museum of Modern Art. New York

Re-Aligning Vision: Alternative Currents in South American Drawings, Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, University of Texas, Austin

1998

and Art of the Postwar Americas, Bowdoin

Transmissions: Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America, 1960–1980, Museum of Modern Art, New York

2016

Space to Dream: Recent Art from South

The Promise of Total Automation,

Trans-Pacific Transmissions: Video Art Across the Pacific, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, British Columbia

Aires

200

The Hybrid State, Exit Art, New York





Juan Downey: Radiant Nature, installation at Pitzer College Art Galleries, September 9–December 8, 2017







































Juan Downey: Radiant Nature, installation at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, September 13–December 3, 2017









2017

Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions

HAPPENINGS

AND PERFORMANCES



















