

MANIFESTO!

MAINTENANCE ART -- Proposal for an Exhibition

"CARE"

©1969

Mierle Laderman Ukeles

I. IDEAS:

A. The Death Instinct and the Life Instinct:

The Death Instinct: separation, individuality, Avant-Garde par excellence; to follow one's own path to death--do your own thing, dynamic change.

The Life Instinct: unification, the eternal return, the perpetuation and MAINTENANCE of the species, survival systems and operations, equilibrium.

B. Two basic systems: Development and Maintenance. The sourball of every revolution: after the revolution, who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?

Development: pure individual creation; the new; change; progress, advance, excitement, flight or fleeing.

Maintenance: keep the dust off the pure individual creation; preserve the new; sustain the change; protect progress; defend and prolong the advance; renew the excitement; repeat the flight.

show your work--show it again
keep the contemporaryartmuseum groovy
keep the home fires burning

Development systems are partial feedback systems with major room for change.

Maintenance systems are direct feedback systems with little room for alteration.

- C. Maintenance is a drag; it takes all the fucking time (lit.)
 The mind boggles and chafes at the boredom. The
 culture confers lousy status on maintenance jobs=
 minimum wages, housewives=no pay.

clean your desk, wash the dishes, clean the floor,
 wash your clothes, wash your toes, change the baby's
 diaper, finish the report, correct the typos, mend
 the fence, keep the customer happy, throw out the
 stinking garbage, watch out don't put things in your
 nose, what shall I wear, I have no sox, pay your bills,
 don't litter, save string, wash your hair, change the
 sheets, go to the store, I'm out of perfume, say it
 again--he doesn't understand, seal it again--it leaks,
 go to work, this art is dusty, clear the table, call
 him again, flush the toilet, stay young.

- D. Art:

Everything I say is Art is Art. Everything I do is
 Art is Art. "We have no Art, we try to do everything
 well." (Balinese saying).

Avant-garde art, which claims utter development, is infected
 by strains of maintenance ideas, maintenance activities,
 and maintenance materials.

--Process art especially claims pure development and
 change, yet employs almost purely maintenance
 processes.

- E. The exhibition of Maintenance Art, "CARE", would zero
 in on pure maintenance, exhibit it as contemporary art,
 and yield, by utter opposition, clarity of issues.
-

II. THE MAINTENANCE ART EXHIBITION: Three parts: personal, general, and Earth Maintenance.

A. Personal Part:

I am an artist. I am a woman. I am a wife. I am a mother (random order).

I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, preserving, etc. Also, (up to now separately) I "do" Art.

Now, I will simply do these maintenance everyday things, and flush them up to consciousness, exhibit them, as Art. I will live in the museum as I customarily do at home with my husband and my baby (right, or if you don't want me around at night I would come in every day) for the duration of the exhibition, and do all these things as public Art activities: I will sweep and wax the floors, dust everything, wash the walls (i.e. "floor paintings, dust works, soap-sculpture, wall-paintings"), cook, invite people to eat, clean up, put away, change light bulbs. I might save and make agglomerations and dispositions of all functional refuse. The exhibition area might look "empty" of art, but it will be maintained in full public view.

My working will be the work.

B. General Part: Everyone does a hell of a lot of noodling maintenance work. The general part of the exhibition would consist of interviews of two kinds.

1. Previous interviews of, say, 50 different classes and kinds of occupations that run a gamut from "maintenance man", maid, sanitation man, mailman, union man, construction worker, librarian, grocery store man, nurse, doctor, teacher, museum director, salesman, baseball player, child, criminal, bank president, mayor, movie star, artist, etc., about what they think maintenance is; how they feel about spending whatever parts of their lives on maintenance activities; what is the relationship between maintenance and freedom; what is the relationship between maintenance and life's dreams.

These interviews will be typed and exhibited.

2. Interview Room--for spectators at the Exhibition:
A room of desks and chairs where professional (?) interviewers will interview the spectators at the exhibition along same questions as typed interviews (in 1. above). The responses should be personal.

These interviews are taped and replayed throughout the exhibition area.

C. Earth Maintenance:

Everyday, a container of the following kinds of refuse will be delivered to the Museum: 1) the contents of one sanitation truck; 2) a container of polluted air; 3) a container of polluted Hudson River; 4) a container of ravaged land. Once at the exhibition, each container will be serviced: purified, depolluted, rehabilitated, recycled, and conserved by various technical (and/or pseudo-technical) procedures either by myself or scientists.

These servicing procedures are repeated for the duration of the exhibition.

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MAINTENANCE ART

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