

THE KITCHEN

CENTER FOR
VIDEO, MUSIC
AND DANCE

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The Thought That Counts

ART

By Peter Frank

Now that all that business about painting being dead, so fashionable a few years ago, has been proven so much wind, it's time to face up to the fact that, while traditional media remain vital, the new forms that were supposed to replace them are still around. In fact, the range of forms and styles collectively dubbed "conceptual," "dematerialized," "post-studio," "nonobject" have an impressive lineage by now, as can be seen in the current exhibit of JOSEPH BEUYS's early drawings at Sperone-Westwater-Fischer (142 Greene Street, to March 24), and the retrospective of bookwork by DICK HIGGINS and his Something Else Press at Franklin Furnace (112 Franklin Street, to March 24). The program of Fluxus performances this Saturday at the Kitchen (484 Broome Street, at 8:30 p.m.) will reacquaint New Yorkers with one of the earliest movements within the new—post modern?—aesthetic of intermedia.

Intermedia—the seamless blending of disparate forms and media that concerns time and space, sound and word, image and idea—is the general context into which all nontraditional art, including conceptual, performance, installation, video, and book art, falls. The installations of DENNIS OPPENHEIM, for instance, combine visual aspects with ideational ones, static aspects with kinetic ones, verbal aspects with sonic ones. Most significantly, Oppenheim's room-filling structures issue from the artist's own poetic sense, a sense that exploits the evocative and associative properties of sounds, phrases, and images whose symbolic import is somehow diffused. Oppenheim is showing several new image-structures, two at the Kitchen (484 Broome Street, to March 24) and four at and

in front of Gibson (392 West Broadway, to March 31). What do these apparitions signify? Why do several derricklike towers cluster at the Kitchen, the music box mechanisms atop them forming a cloud of tinkly sound? Why does Oppenheim say he wants to run the roller-coaster like ramp at Gibson out of a tenement in the South Bronx? Meaning and reason are secondary to, perhaps even obscured by, the imaginative impulse and the subsequent technical refinements that permit Oppenheim to fabricate his visions. His ideas are not philosophical tracts or methodological examinations of phenomena; they are mixed metaphors embodying responses to place, space, and energy.

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