How I Spent My Summer Vacation

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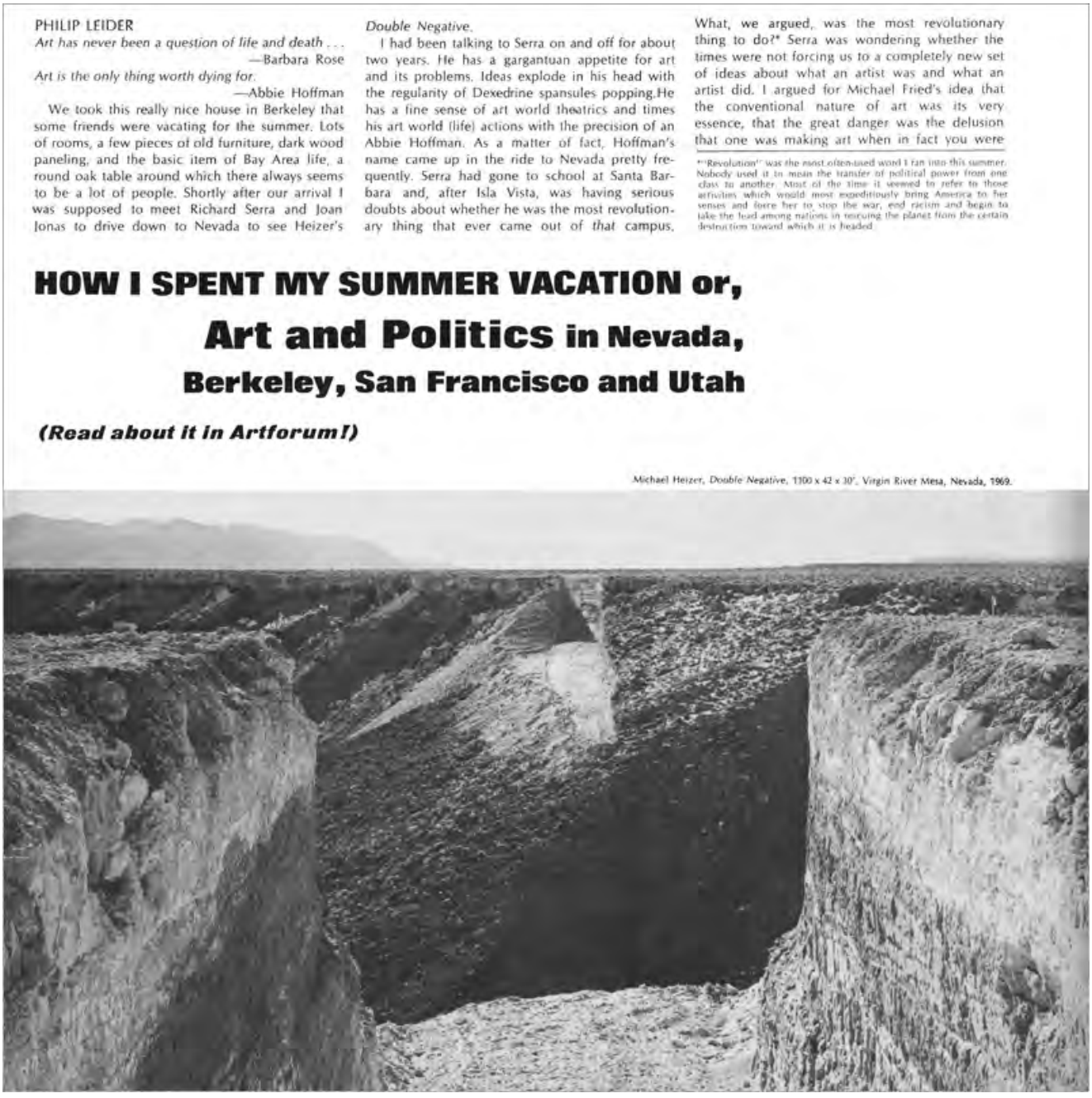

PHILIP LEIDER

Art has never been a question of life and death . . .
—Barbara Rose

Art is the only thing worth dying for.
—Abbie Hoffman

We took this really nice house in Berkeley that some friends were vacating for the summer. Lots of rooms, a few pieces of old furniture, dark wood paneling, and the basic item of Bay Area life, a round oak table around which there always seems to be a lot of people. Shortly after our arrival I was supposed to meet Richard Serra and Joan Jonas to drive down to Nevada to see Heizer's *Double Negative*.

I had been talking to Serra on and off for about two years. He has a gargantuan appetite for art and its problems. Ideas explode in his head with the regularity of Dexedrine spansules popping. He has a fine sense of art world theatrics and times his art world (life) actions with the precision of an Abbie Hoffman. As a matter of fact, Hoffman's name came up in the ride to Nevada pretty frequently. Serra had gone to school at Santa Barbara and, after Isla Vista, was having serious doubts about whether he was the most revolutionary thing that ever came out of *that* campus. What, we argued, was the most revolutionary thing to do?* Serra was wondering whether the times were not forcing us to a completely new set of ideas about what an artist was and what an artist did. I argued for Michael Fried's idea that the conventional nature of art was its very essence, that the great danger was the delusion that one was making art when in fact you were

*"Revolution" was the most often-used word I ran into this summer. Nobody used it to mean the transfer of political power from one class to another. Most of the time it seemed to refer to those activities which would most expeditiously bring America to her senses and force her to stop the war, end racism and begin to take the lead among nations in rescuing the planet from the certain destruction toward which it is headed.

HOW I SPENT MY SUMMER VACATION or,
Art and Politics in Nevada,
Berkeley, San Francisco and Utah

(Read about it in Artforum!)

Michael Heizer, *Double Negative*, 1300 x 42 x 30', Virgin River Mesa, Nevada, 1969.

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I'm more interested in art than politics, but, well, see, we are all caught in a word box. I find it difficult to make these kinds of divisions. Northrup, in Meeting of East and West*, said, "Life is an undifferentiated esthetic continuum." Let me say that the Vietcong attacking the U.S. Embassy in Saigon is a work of art. I guess I like revolutionary art.*

Serra wasn't quite ready to absorb even elegant military actions into art, but neither was he ready to dismiss the idea that there are certain moments when what artists do is suddenly thrown up for grabs. Was it possible that Hoffman had seen where a whole lot of art, from the Happenings on, had been leading?

Throwing money onto the floor of the Stock Exchange is pure information. It needs no explanation. It says more than thousands of anti-capitalist tracts and essays.

The car broke down about fifteen miles outside of Bakersfield, and we had to spend the night. As we walked across the parking lot of a truck stop toward the diner, Serra said, "Jesus Christ look at that—bombs!" A huge truck, parked in the lot, was stacked full with open-slatted crates containing, sure enough, bombs. We walked over to it and continued our political discussion:

"B-O-M-B-S," spelled Serra, reading the stencils on the crates. He looked at me. "They're bombs."

"Look, they pack the nose cones separately," I said, meaning the warheads, or the tips, or whatever they were.

“A whole truckload of bombs,” said Serra.

“Maybe they only travel at night,” I said.

We ate in the diner. When we came out, the bombs had left, off to Cambodia. Would they have gotten past Abbie Hoffman that easily?

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Michael Heizer, *Double Negative*, detail.

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nature in the most modest and unassuming manner, the quiet participation of a man-made shape in a particular configuration of valley, ravine, mesa, and sky. From it, one oriented oneself to the rest in a special way, not in a way competing with, or at odds with them either. The piece was a new place in nature. That seemed to me a risky kind of art; there was a range of consequences in doing it wrong that one wasn't used to contemplating in relation to art. But *Double Negative* was not doing it wrong.

We came back again to see the piece in the early morning, and Joan made a videotape of it. Then we left. On the ride back to Las Vegas we talked about the piece a lot, about politics not at all. It wasn't as if the problem had gone away; it was, at least for me, as if revolutionary art is where you find it and that the question of what is revolutionary art isn't too different, in the end, from the question of what is good art. Anyway, nobody mentioned Abbie Hoffman. We all got very happy. Serra wondered whether anyone in the "information" show had submitted a piece paper that said: "Go to a mesa and dig a slot 40 feet deep and one hundred feet long. Then go to the other side and dig a slot . . ."

4 more arson attacks zapped Oakkkland late Monday night and early Tuesday. $60,000 damage reported. That makes 19 alleged arsons since last Saturday. And underpaid firemen prepare to go on strike.

—*The Berkeley Tribe*, July 3–10, 1970.

The movement sisters objected strongly, as did many of the men, on the basis that a fuck-in was cool, but a video-taped fuck-in was just another media rip-off, and exploited women as well. It was decided to confront the video freaks at the lake, and rip-off the fuck-in.

—"The Black Shadow," *Rolling Stone*, July 23, 1970.

The "movement sisters" had also objected strongly, in Berkeley, to an exhibition of prints by Paul Wunderlich. The reason was pretty good:

THEY SAY THEY'RE SELLING PICTURES TO SEND MONEY TO VIETNAM, BUT ALL THESE ARE, ARE PICTURES OF A WOMAN DRAWN BY A MAN. WE'RE TIRED OF BEING BODIES AND WE'RE TIRED OF BEING SOLD. WE'RE TIRED OF BEING LABELLED IN A NUDIE CUTIE ROLE. SO FOR ALL THESE MALE PRIG ARTISTS LET THIS NOW BE KNOWN: WE'RE GONNA WIN THIS TIME. WE'LL MAKE THIS WORLD OUR OWN. FOR OUR SISTERS THAT WE'RE PAINTING, FOR THE WOMEN THAT THEY DRAW, WE'RE LETTING IT BE KNOWN WE WON'T BE SOLD ANYMORE. SOUTH EAST ASIAN SISTERS DIE FROM BULLETS FROM THE GUN: MALE ARTISTS IN AMERICA DRAW WOMEN JUST FOR FUN. WE'LL WIN TOGETHER NOW, ALL WOMEN NOW ARE ONE.

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Paul Wunderlich, untitled lithograph, 18 x 24", 1970.
"We're tired of being bodies, and we're tired of being sold . . ."

Magritte's *The Lovers* as reproduced in *Notes From The Second Year*. *When he isn't putting bags over their heads, he has a way of slicing them up . . .*

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The women picketed the show knowing all the facts. That the Phoenix Gallery was a Movement gallery. That at the same time the Wunderlich show was on the gallery was also featuring an exhibition of children's drawings, a good many by Vietnamese children, the proceeds from which were to go to Vietnamese children. That every half hour slide and tape presentation on the Vietnam war was shown. That Movement literature was constantly available at the gallery. But sections of the women had long ago concluded that from the point of view of the *Movement* there was *always* something going on that was more important than they were. And, secondly, why shouldn't the Movement be held to even stricter regard for feminism precisely because it was the Movement? So, tactically, the thing made sense. It made sense artistically, too.

I couldn't figure out what Wunderlich was doing in the Phoenix Gallery in the first place. The problem wasn't that he was far from what they usually show—the problem was that he was *near* to it. His prints combined a kind of tepid Surrealism with some Baconesque drawing. They had nothing new to say about anything. Some of the other people the gallery worked with were more alive, but most of them weren't doing more with Pop art, Bay Area art, Surrealism or Rauschenberg photo and montage imagery than had already been done. The subject matter most often concerned itself with Movement concerns, and that, I suppose, is what made it revolutionary art. But why shouldn't a Movement gallery show revolutionary art? What was it about *this* art that spoke to the revolution?

I thought the women were probably with me—if they were, I was with them. I thought the women were picketing the show because it was reactionary art. To the women, Mondrian must be a great revolutionary artist: Abstract art broke *all* of those chains thirty years ago! What is a Movement gallery showing dumb stuff like *this* for? But if it were just a matter of reactionary art, why would the women picket it? Why not? Women care as much about art as men do—maybe more. The question is, why weren't the *men* right there with them?**

For a while the Phoenix wasn't the only Movement gallery in Berkeley. During the "unrest" over Cambodia and Kent the Berkeley Art Museum had thrown open its walls to the students and a huge exhibition of poster art from on campus and off was held. I got to Berkeley after the show closed, and I was sorry I missed it. The show that Peter Selz had closed to make room for the poster show was Pol Bury's first retrospective in this country.

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**Causing me some doubt as to whether I properly understood the women was the prominent reproduction given to Magritte's *The Lovers* in *Notes from the Second Year*, a blood-curdling collection of tactical and theoretical essays from within the Women's Movement. Ti-Grace Atkinson had put in some time in the art biz, and may have had a hand in that. Anyway, I still felt that the women in front of the Phoenix knew that there wasn't too much for women in Surrealism, Wunderlich's or Magritte's.

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When I went, the Museum was having a two-man show: Arnaldo Pomodoro in one wing, and in the other, Pol Bury, an abbreviated version, perhaps, certainly an abbreviated installation. No one picketed the poster show as far as I know—not the women and not the men. I don't much go for him, but it seemed to me that Pol Bury had pretty good grounds for picketing. His picket sign could have read: "This Museum thinks I am one of the great sculptors of the 20th century." If anyone joined him they could write: "Does a museum have the right to close an artist's show for political reasons?"

Barnett Newman (1905-1970)

OBITUA, the computer that writes the death notices for the *New York Times*, outdid itself for Barney Newman. It clacks out pretty good copy on financiers and politicians, and does a workaday job with movie stars, but with artists—wow. With artists it does all right on the WHAT, WHERE and WHEN and sometimes the WHY, but it's pure hell on the WHO. Since the name isn't that common and the age was about right we figured it was the Barney Newman that interested us, all right.

Friends were staying with us for a few days, and the night the paper came we had been talking politics all evening. Later, we had what must by now be the ritual conversation each time OBITUA comes to the art world: "Well, who's left?" Newman had lived a pretty long life for an American artist, especially of the Abstract Expressionist generation—65. Hans Hofmann had done better, but we attributed that to his long-lived European background. Anyway, you could count the ones remaining on one hand. We talked about why these revolutionary artists didn't seem so revolutionary to the revolution, which seemed to prefer the art against which they revolted. It got around to Clyfford Still.

Still thinks his paintings can be used for life and misused for death. Newman thought his paintings meant the end of state capitalism. Maybe they did. Not many artists who dug Newman and Still found those claims outlandish. About the people that traded in them, well that was another thing. It was a thing Serra and I had talked about, also. We had both gloomed over Smithson's dreary conclusion, "Everything is purchasable." I thought that Heizer's piece, among other things, might have moved art a little more out of the system than ways other artists were thinking up, but Serra despaired. It was still gallery-backed, still needed art world money. ("Galleries are finished," said Nick Wilder to me in San Francisco, "but not dealers." And proved his point by giving me a lift in the first air-conditioned Cadillac limousine

Installation view, Protest, University Art Museum, Berkeley. An ore protester?

I've ever been in, chauffeured by two delirious art students.)

Well, Newman was part purchasable, but the parts that weren't belonged to artists. OBITUA thought he'd laid some claims to being the "father of the shaped canvas." (If an American artist can make it to 65 he gets to be father of just about everything.) I told about Heizer's piece, and of how directly it shook hands with Barnett Newman. Artists are colleagues, not fathers and sons, and the colleagues of good artists find prophecies in their work, and carry them out. That's what it means for an artist's work to "go on living." It goes on living until one day it looks out the window and there's state capitalism—on its knees.

The first rule for a good community is bad roads.
—Canyon saying

I ran into David Lynn in a community called Canyon, about fifteen miles north of Berkeley. I remembered his sculpture from *Artforum*. He had taught at the University, and his sculpture had been more abstract than a lot of the work being done in the Bay Area at that time. In Canyon, he was working on a house, with one helper and a broken-down crane. The house was four stories high. The frame was well on the way, and was being made of the hugest beams I'd ever seen. The corner beams kept the original shape of the trees intact: they were not even planed. Lynn got his beams from piers that were being demolished and a number of other inconvenient sources: he isn't into cutting down trees.

(When he runs out of money, Lynn contracts to design and build a house for someone else, and stops or slows down work on his own house. For one of these jobs, in Pleasanton, Lynn used Canyon labor, thus giving Canyon people some good carpentry training and also bringing a little money into the community. Local construction bosses heard about it and demanded to see union cards, so all the workers went and joined the I.W.W., including Lynn. He showed me his Wobbly card ("Master Builder"). "It has a Preamble," he said, "and a slogan, and there's all my dues stamps." I looked at it with incredible curiosity.)

Lynn hadn't been doing sculpture for a while, but a lot of his friends were Bay Area artists. I had been to an opening in San Francisco and saw some people that Lynn knew, and we more or less brought each other up to date. The opening had been of a collection of ceramic work by Dave Gilhooley. They were very whimsical pieces, with titles like "A Thousand Frogs Dance on the Head of a Nail." I told Lynn that I'd met Gilhooley, who'd told me he was living in Saskatchewan. He didn't like living in the States very much any more, and Saskatchewan seemed just fine. Arlo Acton and Mel Moss were building a house way off in the country about 100 miles away from San Francisco. We'd heard that Win Ng was living in a pottery commune on a Canadian island. Goodness, I thought, lots of artists seem to be disappearing . . .

Canyon is a peculiar community, almost all of it being illegal. People like David Lynn build mostly without permits, because no permits are issued. Others have their houses condemned out of hand because their houses bear no relation to anything

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David Lynn's house, Canyon, in construction.

Leibert Residence, detail (unfinished).

Leibert Residence, Pleasanton, Calif., designed and constructed by David Lynn, 1970. *Union made . . .*

described in the California Building Codes as a house. The nearest community is a non-site collection of real-estate developments called Moraga, which has Muzak piped onto the sidewalks of its shopping center. Canyon can't come close to Moraga for safe and sound housing. Moraga levels off hilltops like a barber. In Canyon it is worth your life to cut down a tree. Moraga houses are neighborly, near one another, laid out in "courts." In Canyon you have to climb a mountain and wander around in the underbrush for hours to find out where your best friend lives. In Moraga the paved highway is laid down even before the houses are built. Canyon's roads are cemeteries of automobiles that tried to negotiate them. Moraga passes its sewage right into San Francisco Bay. Canyon has offered the county a fully worked out plan for the recycling of its sewage. Moraga has discreet bathrooms. In Canyon the open-air bathtub is all the rage.

Canyon people don't like Moraga very much, and try to have to go there as little as possible. They know there's a lot of prejudice in their attitudes, but many of them nevertheless seem to feel that their neighbors to the south are sexually desperate, physically ugly, unavailable to reason, and capable at any moment of instant, murderous violence. But Canyon kids have to go to high school in Moraga, and that's the trouble. The Canyon point of view seems to have been taking uncommon hold among the Moraga kids, and it looks strictly like it's going to be a one-generation town for sure unless something is done about it.

Other neighbors also feel that something has to be done about Canyon. Abbie Hoffman had said, "Always create Art and destroy Property," and while the art world may not be sure whether Canyon is doing either, the real estate people are pretty sure they're doing both. To them, Canyon itself, with its dense brush and uncountable trees, has that long-haired look to which real estate peo-

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ple so itch to give that old subdivided crew cut. Brush shaved off to reveal that smooth concrete beneath, trees trimmed drastically from the sides and the back of the neck and there it is, all ready for the ranch house. So there are lots of reasons why concerned authorities should move against Canyon, and they have, repeatedly and consistently, beginning, of course, with the condemning of most of the houses they know about, and the self-evident illegality of those they didn't. Canyon people spend a lot of time in court, patiently explaining that the housing code is financially repressive and ecologically disastrous, that more concrete means less grass and more automobiles mean less air and therefore they have not felt honor-bound to provide off-street parking, there being, in any event, little auto traffic in Canyon, and fewer streets. They try to suggest that the houses they live in are beautiful, strong, economical and designed to fit the needs of the persons occupying them in a way that no house in Moraga or all of California for that matter could even approximate; that they effect no change in the natural ecology of the region; that, not unmindful of their duty to their neighbors in the outside world, they must therefore attempt to use this courtroom to indict the building codes, the real estate interests, the water departments, the sewer departments and all the other interests and departments that don't seem to realize that there's a war on. They can't seem to get it across, and lose all their cases.

The thing is, as soon as court lets out the Canyon people rush home and start building, not as if there was *no* tomorrow, but as if there were an infinite number of tomorrows. Those houses just don't look as if the people who live in them plan to give them up, and, in a state that kills a boy and gasses its population just because people made a park where there should have been a parking lot, that's a grim thought.

The last time I saw Dave Lynn, he didn't look grim at all, chortling over his Wobbly book and swinging another monstrous beam into place. We didn't talk about sculpture at all; it seemed pretty clear that as far as Lynn was concerned, every sculptural idea he ever had was in his building. The revolution in Lynn's art, if there was one, was dictated by the terrain: with Moraga just three miles down the road, and coming closer all the time, what serious artist could do otherwise? Whether this meant that Lynn wasn't an artist any more or whether he had undergone that complete redefinition of what an artist is and does that Serra worried about was my problem, not his.

I'm interested in the politics of the Triassic period.
—Robert Smithson

John Coplans and I met Robert and Nancy Smithson in Salt Lake; we were going to drive from there to see *Spiral Jetty*, a piece Smithson had made on the north shore. Smithson told us that Serra had called from Missouri, where he was tearing his hair out trying to make a piece.

Barnett Newman, *The Way #2*, o/c, 78 x 60", 1969. (M. Knoedler & Co.)

Friends were staying with us for a few days, and the night the paper came we had been talking politics all evening. Later, we had what must by now be the ritual conversation each time OBITUA comes to the art world: “Well, who’s left?” Newman had lived a pretty long life for an American artist, especially of the Abstract Expressionist generation—65. Hans Hofmann had done better, but we attributed that to his long-lived European background. Anyway, you could count the ones remaining on one hand. We talked about why these revolutionary artists didn’t seem so revolutionary to the revolution, which seemed to prefer the art against which they revolted. It got around to Clyfford Still.

Still thinks his paintings can be used for life and misused for death. Newman thought his paintings meant the end of state capitalism. Maybe they did. Not many artists who dug Newman and Still found those claims outlandish. About the people that readed in them, well that was another thing. It was a thing Serra and I had talked about, also. We had both gloomed over Smithson’s dreary conclusion, “Everything is purchasable.” I thought that Heizer’s piece, among other things, might have moved art a little more our of the system than ways other artists were thinking up, but Serra despaired. It was still gallery-backed, still needed art world money. (“Galleries are finished,” said Nick Wilder to me in San Francisco, “but not dealers.” And proved his point by giving me a lift in the first air-conditioned Cadillac limousine I’ve ever been in, chauffered by two delirous art students.)

Well, Newman was part purchasable, but the parts that weren’t belonged to artists. OBITUA thought he’s laid some claims to being “father of the shaped canvas.” (If an American artist can make it to 65 he gets to be father of just about everything.) I told about Heizer’s piece, and of how directly it shook hands with Barnett Newman. Artists are colleagues, not fathers and sons, and the colleagues of good artists find prophecies in their work, and carry them out. That’s what it means for an artist’s work to “go on living.” It goes on living until one day it looks out the window and there’s state capitalism—on it’s knees.

Mike's house, Canyon.

Mike's house, interior, Canyon.

Door, Mike's house, Canyon.

Bathtub, Barry's House, Canyon. *In Canyon, the open-air bathtub is all the rage . . .*

Canyon Bridge. Built by Mike Fox to haul supplies across while building his house. Convenience of access not being a main item in Canyon priorities, the bridge will probably come down when the house is finished. Fox used to be a Quiz Kid.

The first rule for a good community is bad roads.

—Canyon saying

I ran into David Lynn in a community called Canyon, about fifteen miles north of Berkeley. I remembered his sculpture from *Artforum*. He had taught at the University, and his sculpture had been more abstract than a lot of the work being done in the Bay Area at that time. In Canyon, he was working on a house, with one helper and a broken-down crane. The house was four stories high. The frame was well on the way, and was being made of the hugest beams I'd ever seen. The corner beams kept the original shape of the trees in tact: they were not even planed. Lynn got his beams from piers that were being demolished and a number of other inconvenient sources: he isn't into cutting down trees.

(When he runs out of money, Lynn contracts to design and build a house for someone else, and stops or slows down work on his own house. For one of these jobs, in Pleasanton, Lynn used Canyon labor, thus giving Canyon people some good carpentry training and also bringing a little money into the community. Local construction bosses heard about it and demanded to see union cards, so all the workers went and joined to I.W.W., including Lynn. He showed me his Wobbly card (“Master Builder”). “It has a Preamble,”/he said, “and a slogan, and there’s all my dues stamps.” I looked at it with incredibly curiosity.)

Lynn hadn’t been doing sculpture for a while, but a lot of his friends were Bay Area artists. I had been to an opening in San Francisco and saw some people that Lynn knew, and we more or less brought each other up to date. The opening had been of a collection of ceramic work by Dave Gilhooley. They were very whimsical pieces, with titles like “A Thousand Frogs Dance on the Head of a Nail.” I told Lynn that I’d met Gilhooley, who’d told me he was living in Saskatchewan. He didn’t like living in the States very much any more, and Saskatchewan seemed just fine. Arlo Acton and Mel Moss were building a house way off in the country about 100 miles away from San Francisco. We’d heard that Win Ng was living in a pottery commune on a Canadian island. Goodness, I thought, lots of artists seem to be disappearing . . .

Moraga. *Plenty of off-street parking.*

Doug's dome, Canyon, (unfinished.)

Moraga. "Brush shaved off to reveal that smooth concrete beneath . . ."

David Gilhooly, *A Thousand Frogs Dance on the Head of a Nail*, ceramic, 1970. Hansen Gallery, San Francisco. *The artist lives in Saskatchewan . . .*

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Canyon was a peculiar community, almost all of it being illegal. People like David Lynn build mostly without permits, because no permits are issued. Others have their houses condemned out of hand because their houses bear no relation to anything described in the California Building Codes as a house. The nearest community is a non-site collection of real-estate developments called Moraga, which has Muzak piped onto the sidewalks of its shopping center. Canyon can't come close to Moraga for safe and sound housing. Moraga levels off hilltops like a barber. In Canyon it is worth your life to cut down a tree. Moraga houses are neighborly, near one another, laid our in "courts." In Canyon you have to climb a mountain and wander around in the underbrush for hours to find out where your best friend lives. In Moraga the paved highway is laid down even before the houses are built. Canyon's roads are cemeteries of automobiles that tried to negotiate them. Moraga passes its sewage

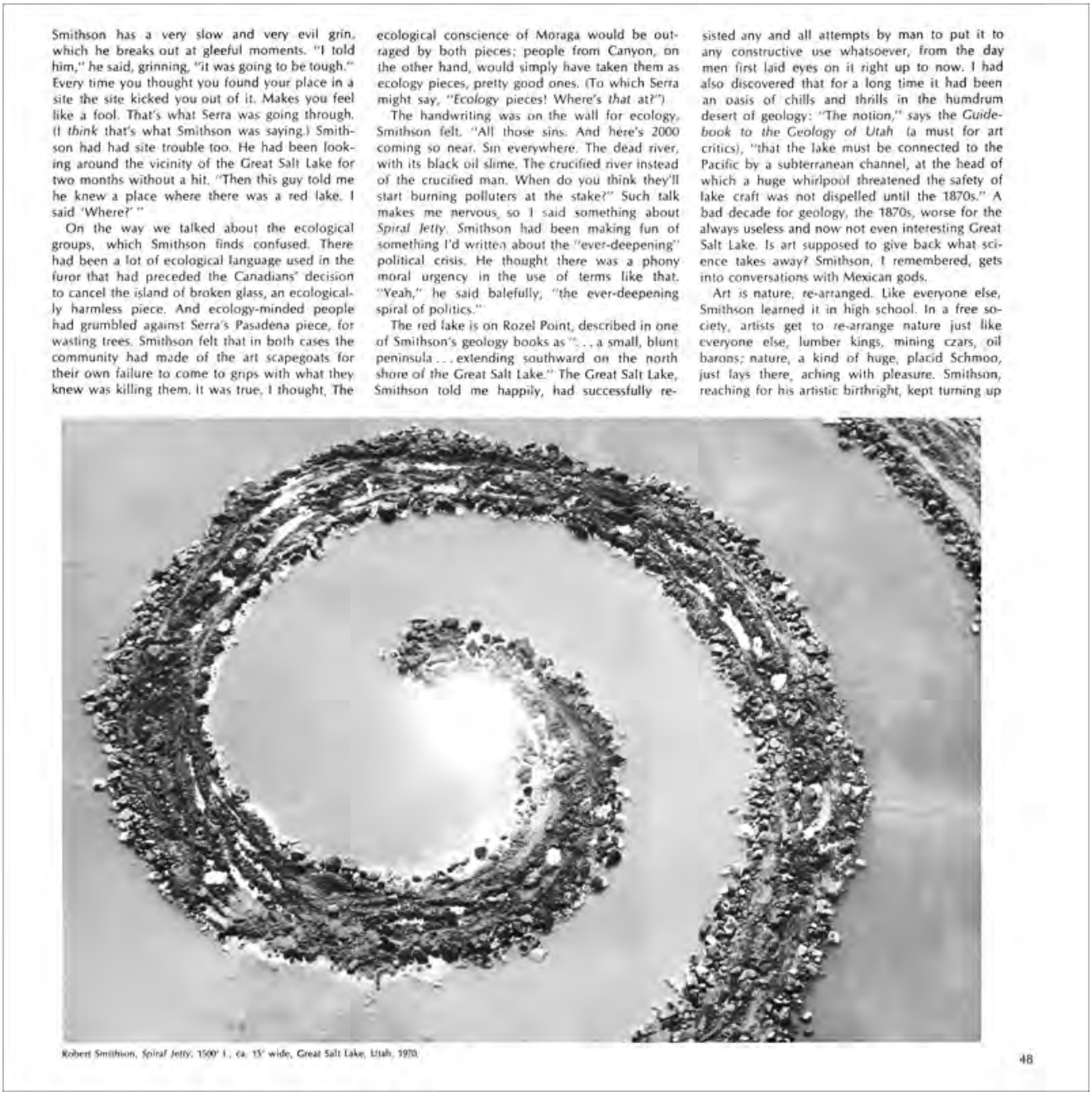
right into San Francisco Bay. Canyon has offered the county a fully worked out plan for the recycling of its sewage. Moraga has discreet bathrooms. In Canyon open-air bathtub is all the rage.

Canyon people don't like Moraga very much, and try to have to go there as little as possible. They know there's a lot of prejudice in their attitudes, but many of them nevertheless seem to feel that their neighbors to the south are sexually desperate, physically ugly, unavailable to reason, and capable at any moment of instant, murderous violence. But Canyon kids have to go to high school in Moraga, and that's the trouble. The Canyon point of view seems to have been taking uncommon hold among the Moraga kids, and it looks strictly like it's going to be a one-generation town for sure unless something is done about it.

Other neighbors also feel that something has to be done about Canyon. Abbie Hoffman has said, "Always create Art and destroy Property," and while the art world may not be sure whether Canyon is doing either, the real estate people are pretty sure they're doing both. To them, Canyon itself, with its dense brush and uncountable trees, has that long-haired look to which real estate people so itch to give that old subdivided crew cut. Brush shaved off to reveal that smooth concrete underneath, trees trimmed drastically from the sides and back of the neck and there it is, all ready for the ranch house. So there are lots of reasons why concerned authorities should move against Canyon, and they have, repeatedly and consistently, beginning, of course, with the condemning of most of the houses they know about, and the self-evident illegality of those they didn't. Canyon people spend a lot of their time in court patiently explaining that the housing code is financially repressive and ecologically disastrous, that more concrete means less grass and more automobiles mean less air and therefore they have not felt honor-bound to provide off-street parking, there being, in any event, little auto traffic in Canyon, and fewer streets. They try to suggest that the houses they live in are beautiful, strong, economical and designed to fit the needs of the persons occupying them in a way that no house in Moraga or all of California for that matter could even approximate; that they effect no change in the natural ecology of the region; that, not un-mindful of their duty to their neighbors in the outside world, they must therefore attempt to use this courtroom to indict the building codes, the real estate interests, the water departments, the sewer departments and all the other interests and departments that don't seem to realize that there's a war on. They can't seem to get it across, and lose all their cases.

The thing is, as soon as court lets out the Canyon people rush home and start building, not as if there was *no* tomorrow, but as if there were an infinite number of tomorrows. Those houses just don't look as if the people who live in them plan to give them up, and, in a state that kills a boy and gasses its population just because people made a park where there should have been a parking lot, that's a grim thought.

The last time I saw Dave Lynn, he didn't look grim at all, chortling over his Wobbly book and swinging another monstrous beam into place. We didn't talk about sculpture at all; it seemed pretty clear that as far as Lynn was concerned, every sculptural idea he has ever had was in his building. The revolution in Lynn's art, if there was one, was dictated by the terrain: with Moraga just three miles down the road, and coming closer all the time, what serious artists could do otherwise? Whether this meant that Lynn wasn't an artist any more or whether he had undergone that complete redefinition of what an artist is and does that Serra worries about was my problem, not his.



Smithson has a very slow and very evil grin, which he breaks out at gleeful moments. "I told him," he said, grinning, "it was going to be tough." Every time you thought you found your place in a site the site kicked you out of it. Makes you feel like a fool. That's what Serra was going through. (I *think* that's what Smithson was saying.) Smithson had had site trouble too. He had been looking around the vicinity of the Great Salt Lake for two months without a hit. "Then this guy told me he knew a place where there was a red lake. I said 'Where?' "

On the way we talked about the ecological groups, which Smithson finds confused. There had been a lot of ecological language used in the furor that had preceded the Canadians' decision to cancel the island of broken glass, an ecologically harmless piece. And ecology-minded people had grumbled against Serra's Pasadena piece, for wasting trees. Smithson felt that in both cases the community had made of the art scapegoats for their own failure to come to grips with what they knew was killing them. It was true, I thought. The ecological conscience of Moraga would be outraged by both pieces; people from Canyon, on the other hand, would simply have taken them as ecology pieces, pretty good ones. (To which Serra might say, "*Ecology* pieces! Where's *that* at?")

The handwriting was on the wall for ecology, Smithson felt. "All those sins. And here's 2000 coming so near. Sin everywhere. The dead river, with its black oil slime. The crucified river instead of the crucified man. When do you think they'll start burning polluters at the stake?" Such talk makes me nervous, so I said something about *Spiral Jetty*. Smithson had been making fun of something I'd written about the "ever-deepening" political crisis. He thought there was a phony moral urgency in the use of terms like that. "Yeah," he said balefully, "the ever-deepening spiral of politics."

The red lake is on Rozel Point, described in one of Smithson's geology books as "... a small, blunt peninsula ... extending southward on the north shore of the Great Salt Lake." The Great Salt Lake, Smithson told me happily, had successfully resisted any and all attempts by man to put it to any constructive use whatsoever, from the day men first laid eyes on it right up to now. I had also discovered that for a long time it had been an oasis of chills and thrills in the humdrum desert of geology: "The notion," says the *Guidebook to the Geology of Utah* (a must for art critics), "that the lake must be connected to the Pacific by a subterranean channel, at the head of which a huge whirlpool threatened the safety of lake craft was not dispelled until the 1870s." A bad decade for geology, the 1870s, worse for the always useless and now not even interesting Great Salt Lake. Is art supposed to give back what science takes away? Smithson, I remembered, gets into conversations with Mexican gods.

Art is nature, re-arranged. Like everyone else, Smithson learned it in high school. In a free society, artists get to re-arrange nature just like everyone else, lumber kings, mining czars, oil barons; nature, a kind of huge, placid Schmoo, just lays there, aching with pleasure. Smithson, reaching for his artistic birthright, kept turning up

Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1500' l., ca. 15' wide, Great Salt Lake, Utah, 1970.

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I'm interested in the politics of the Triassic period.

—Robert Smithson

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Art is also art re-arranged, and *Spiral Jetty* does what it can. There was Andre’s *Lever*, and Brancusi’s *Endless Column* before that. You don’t get a piece like *Lever* to turn in on itself by fooling around with a length of rubber hose, as Smithson had undoubtedly discovered by looking at New York art for the last few years.

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The truth makes you "hip."

—Charles Manson

Back in Berkeley the weather was nice, and a nice time began. Berkeley was coming up, slowly and cautiously, from two serious downers: Altamont and Manson. In both cases, a subterranean, criminal class, inextricably involved in the Movement, had made its move. It would no longer settle for a position behind the photographers. This was one revolution that was not going to betray it. But by midsummer, acute anxiety had become mild uneasiness, and people were telling cheerful stories. A Berkeley psychiatrist had been kicked out of the army when they discovered he'd been discharging the troops at the rate of one every five minutes. (The part that Berkeley liked was that the shrink was suing for an honorable discharge.) The Bay Area was leading the nation in draft resistance—34%, someone said. But the issue kept coming up, like a toothache. The *Tribe* printed a letter from a girl named HN drumming Manson out of the hip community, and devoted its center page to Manson's answer. Tom Hayden called Weatherman the Id of its generation, because it supported Manson (there is violence and there is Violence). The ever-deepening spiral of politics. Just before I left, Smithson had given me a Xerox of his lease on Rozel Point, for a souvenir. ■

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—*Philip Leider*

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NOTES

1. "Revolution" was the most often-used word I ran into this summer. Nobody used it to mean the transfer of political power from one class to another. Most of the time it seemed to refer to those activities which would most expeditiously bring America to her senses and force her to stop the war, end racism and begin to take the lead among nations in rescuing the planet from the certain destruction toward which it was headed.

2. Causing me some doubt as to whether I properly understood the women was the prominent reproduction given to Magritte's *The Lovers* in *Notes from the Second Year*, a blood-curdling collection of tactical and theoretical essays from within the Women's Movement. Ti-Grace Atkinson had put in some time in the art biz, and may have had a hand in that. Anyway, I still felt that the women in front of the Phoenix knew that there wasn't too much for women Surrealism, Wunderlich's, or Magritte's.