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Art in Review

There are no more Allan Kaprows in the art world

Silo

1 Freeman Alley, Lower East Side
Through Sunday

HOLLAND COTTER

Allan Kaprow, now in his 70's, is one of the grand antiheroes of contemporary art. In the late 1950's, seeking an alternative to what had become the production-line soulfulness of Abstract Expressionism, he helped pioneer activity-based art, for which he invented a name: Happenings. For decades after, he refined the concept in a series of interactive events, scrupulously orchestrated and documented, that mixed aesthetic forms (sculpture, performance, installation) and everyday life (social interaction, education, recreation).

Mr. Kaprow referred to the results as un-art, and to himself as an un-artist. As such, he might have trouble finding ready employment in the product-spewing art industry of the present. But his influence does, in fact, live on, as this small homage of a show suggests.

As Mr. Kaprow did in his early work, some of the show's 11 participants approach art as a gesture of intervention in the stream of public life. Stephan Pascher, following Mr. Kaprow's lead in using participatory art as a vehicle for teaching, asked students to "perform" shopping in a supermarket with the aid of self-composed scripts to create and structure interactions. An installation at Silo documents the project.

In a video by Sarah Gregg Millman, filmed at the American Museum of Natural History, we see her repeatedly singing the first line of a Christmas carol, "O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant," to a skeletal Tyrannosaurus, though her serenade to the once-sovereign reptile goes all but unnoticed by the crowds of museum visitors.

A plastic banner with a zesty graphic design by Danny Glicker hangs outside the gallery door. In form it's a standard promotional come-on, but the only commodity it advertises is promotion itself. Banners also figure in a video by



Patrick Grenier, *Invisible History of Chelsea*; Gerd Stern, *Artists*

Traci Tullius titled "Unflag (of UnParade)." Although the film seems to record placard-carrying, flag-waving marchers in a political demonstration, it actually documents a Lower Manhattan arts festival. The little flags being waved, made and distributed by Ms. Tullius, are all gray and emblazoned with words like "huh" and "oops."

While a slide piece by Patrick Grenier titled "Invisible History of Chelsea" documents the recent transformation, partly through erasure, of a neighborhood, much of the rest of the work here is more personal than public in scale. Elke Lehmann comments on the symbolic power of flags in a photograph of a knitted sweater, emblazoned with Old Glory, that is unraveling. Cammi Climaco's retiring version of a public gesture is to produce posters based on Burpee seed packets and leave them, free for the taking, near the gallery door.

Unreticent celebrity, on which the art world thrives, and which Mr. Kaprow did not entirely avoid, gets a critical nod. Gerd Stern reduces made-for-television interviews with well-known artists to a chaos of mumbled phrases and pore-examining close-ups. Ann Holcomb turns a Warholesque photographic eye on a sheet of Marilyn Monroe's personal stationery, which resembles grade-school writing paper.

Finally, as if in response to the well-rehearsed New Sincerity in contemporary art - not so different from an aspect of Abstract Expressionism Mr. Kaprow was trying to escape - Megan Lang offers a painted self-portrait composed entirely of astrological signs, and Douglas Boatwright films himself memorizing the verses to a pop love song. For Mr. Boatwright, rehearsal of ardor does not run smoothly: it is periodically interrupted by the ringing of the phone. Real life is calling, and Mr. Boatwright answers. In doing so he earns his stripes an un-artist in the classic Kaprow mold.