

Toward a Stroboscopic History



An Interview with Gerd Stern of USCO

by Tina Rivers Ryan

Formed in 1963 by poet Gerd Stern, painter Stephen Durkee, and engineer Michael Callahan, the Company of Us, or USCO, was a pioneer of "intermedia" in the 1960s. Sometimes used interchangeably with other terms like "multimedia," and closely related to movements such as expanded cinema, intermedia is as protean as the movement it describes. The members themselves outlined its essential traits:

"Intermedia" refers to the simultaneous use of various media to create a total environmental experience for the audience. Meaning is communicated not by coding ideas into abstract literary language, but by creating an emotionally real experience through the use of audio-visual technology. Originally conceived in the realm of art rather than in science or engineering, the principles on which intermedia is based are grounded in the fields of psychology, information theory, and communication engineering.(1)

As this definition suggests, USCO's kinetic sculptures and multichannel environments used electronics to layer language, sounds, lights, and images. The resulting experience, marked by both sensory confusion and perceptual immediacy, is closely related to popular notions of psychedelic experience. In fact, USCO created the light projections for Timothy Leary's Psychedelic Explorations show in New York in 1965, and the following year they designed

the audiovisual system for a Long Island discothèque, Murray the K's World, which is often credited as the first psychedelic nightclub. Notably, the reproduction and discussion of USCO's work in publications such as Life and Harper's Bazaar introduced the group to a mainstream audience, helping to define the psychedelic sensibility of the era. But just as importantly, USCO's intermedia—"conceived in the realm of art," as they pointed out—also circulated within the more rarified air of the contemporary art world, helping to pioneer the use of electronic technologies as a medium for art.

Until recently, narratives of postwar art generally ignored what we now call "new media art," or art made with electronic, and specifically digital, media. Yet in its heyday, USCO—a high-tech hippie collective operating out of a former church in Garnerville, New York, which they referred to as the Tabernacle (Figs. 4 & 5)—was positioned as an important avant-garde art group. Its reputation was built in part upon its members' individual careers: prior to forming USCO, Durkee was a painter whose works were included in Gene Swenson's seminal 1963 article on Pop art, while Callahan worked at the groundbreaking San Francisco Tape Music Center. Not long after its inception, USCO was invited to participate in the landmark Expanded Cinema Festival of November 1965, and to design an environment, along with sculptor Charles Ross, for the Architectural League of New York in early 1967. The group was also invited to exhibit in galleries and museums, including their oft-cited solo four-room show at New York's Riverside Museum in 1966, in which the group combined cosmic imagery and sounds to create a meditative space. (2) Around that time, USCO became a stalwart of surveys of kinetic and kinetic light art, most notably 1966's Kunst Licht Kunst at the Stedelijk van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, 1967's Light/Motion/Space at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and 1968's Light: Object and Image at the Whitney Museum in New York. The group was also featured in the landmark shows The Projected Image, held at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, in 1967, and Some More Beginnings, an exhibition of collaborations between artists and engineers that was juried by Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) and held at the Brooklyn Museum in 1968, in conjunction with MoMA's show The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age.(3) Stern—long the spokesman of the group—notes that USCO's connection to the art world was also social. Along with his fellow USCO members, Stern associated with the New York scene, counting as friends figures such as Mark di Suvero, John Chamberlain, and John Cage (to whom he was connected via his brief time at Black Mountain College, and whom he regularly drove into the city).



Fig. 2 Installation view of the exhibition Lights in Orbit with USCO's Seven Diffraction Hex (center), Howard Wise Gallery, New York, 1967

Thus, although the group never repudiated its countercultural underpinnings, they were equally embedded in the more conventional art world, where their reputation hinged less on psychedelia than on the exploration of new media technologies.(4) Their characteristic visual strategy was the use of electronically modulated strobe lighting, exemplified by their Strobe Environment for Light/Motion/Space and by Fanflashstic, another strobe environment created for the exhibition Intermedia '68. (Notably, although it was not part of the Intermedia '68 touring schedule, MoMA sponsored a private presentation of USCO's Fanflashstic to celebrate the exhibition's opening.) In Strobe Environment—widely reported to be the hit of Light/Motion/Space—visitors were surrounded on three sides by metallic panels that reflected the flashing light of a single strobe hanging from the ceiling. One reporter noted that some visitors tossed around pillows in order to engage the strobe's ability to slice up continuous movement. These playful experimenters “were jumping up and down and laughing with the sheer joy of so fantastic an effect. If this is psychedelic, it is the best kind,” he wrote. “The happy kind.”(5)

While making these and other works in the late 1960s, USCO lived and worked collectively, ex-

emplifying the communal ethos of the period. In the years that followed, Stern held teaching positions at Harvard and the University of California, Santa Cruz, while also continuing the USCO project. With Michael Callahan, he cofounded Intermedia Systems Corporation, running the company for many years from their base in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The interview below, which emphasizes Stern's intermedia activities from USCO onward, is an edited transcription of an interview conducted in New York on March 11, 2013.(6)

Tina Rivers Ryan (TR): In the 1960s, works that utilized technology and new media had a mixed critical reception, and it is often implied or suggested that these same works also failed to sell, despite drawing record crowds at galleries and museums. However, I have heard from a number of artists working in this vein that their works found buyers, including even prominent collectors. One of the most notable examples is USCO's Seven Diffraction Hex, which was exhibited in New York at the Howard Wise Gallery's 1967 show Lights in Orbit (Fig. 2), and was subsequently purchased, along with a number of other works in the show, by noted free-market capitalist Malcolm Forbes, publisher of Forbes magazine.

Gerd Stern (GS): Well, that's a wonderful

story. Howard (whom I believe I met through my friend David Weinrib, who often showed at his gallery) understood what we were doing, and why we were doing it. He wasn't necessarily involved in our multimedia work, although he knew about it. But our art pieces—which he showed at least twice, and sold—he not only appreciated but also valued. Howard called us up, and he said, "Gerd, I want to tell you that Malcolm Forbes just bought Seven Diffraction Hex." I said "Really? How come? Has he seen it?" Howard said, "He hasn't seen it. He bought [all the works in] the Newsweek full-page review for his next show in his gallery." (7) "Really?" "And you have to deliver it, after the show's over."

"The art world was not particularly receptive to psychedelia at that time, until all of a sudden there was a groundswell."

So Michael Callahan, our engineer (whom I'm still working with, up in the Boston area) and I put the piece—this is one heavy, heavy piece, by the way—into our Volkswagen Kombi, a little bus, and we drove way into the New Jersey hinterlands. He had a huge estate, and we come up to this electric gate, where we have to buzz ourselves in, and the butler comes, and he tells us where to park. And he says, "I will lead you to the gallery." And we pick up this piece, the two of us, one ahead and one behind, and we march following the butler, and we walk, and we walk, and we walk, and finally, we get to some kind of a weird looking structure, and he opens up a door, and we go down two flights of steps, and we say to him, "What is this?" And he said, "Well, this used to be Mr. Forbes's bomb shelter, and it's now his gallery." And we walked down his steps, and there at the bottom are five little waifs, and they are packing up the previous show, which was Op art, which was going to Princeton [University Art Museum]. And our Lights in Orbit show was going up. We put the thing down, and we show him how it gets plugged in, and show him how it works, and he says, "Mr. Forbes would like to offer you a drink." And he takes us to the mansion—it's another walk—and Mr. Forbes indeed gives us a drink, and congratulates us on delivering the piece, which of course he hasn't seen. And he says, "I would like to show you my favorite work of art." So he takes us into another room, and there is a pair of his bronzed combat boots, on a plinth. At that time, we were intense pacifists. We didn't know what to say, at all!

TR: While it does not appear to have caused Forbes any consternation, USCO was closely associated not only with pacifism but also with

the burgeoning psychedelic culture. How would you characterize the general response of the art establishment to this aspect of your work?

GS: It was a dangerous world. The art world was not particularly receptive to psychedelia at that time, until all of a sudden there was a groundswell. For example, Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) thought we were the worst, and they acted like it. I was a consultant for the Pepsi Pavilion at the Osaka World's Fair [1970], which E.A.T. was organizing, and Billy Klüver, the group's cofounder, had me thrown out because of our psychedelic connection. (8) Within the Woodstock Artists Association—which I was the chairperson of for three years—there was a movement to dismiss myself and my vice-chairman, Bob Dacey, who was also a psychedelic artist and part of USCO, because we were known to be psychedelic artists. We did acid!, and peyote!, and pot! We were saved by Arnold Blanch. Arnold was the head of the Woodstock branch of the Art Students League, and he was a professor at the league and a famous painter, and he had a famous painter wife, and he was the doyen of Woodstock artists. He came in one day, and he said, "These two young artists are being treated by you all ladies as if you were [Senator Joseph] McCarthy and they were Communists, and I won't stand for it! So if you want to go up against me, Ladies, go at it!" And there was not another peep out of them, forever. But like I said, it had dangerous implications. You know, Bob Dylan was at Woodstock at that time, and we did the concert book for the Loving Spoonful; their manager destroyed ten thousand copies because it was psychedelic.

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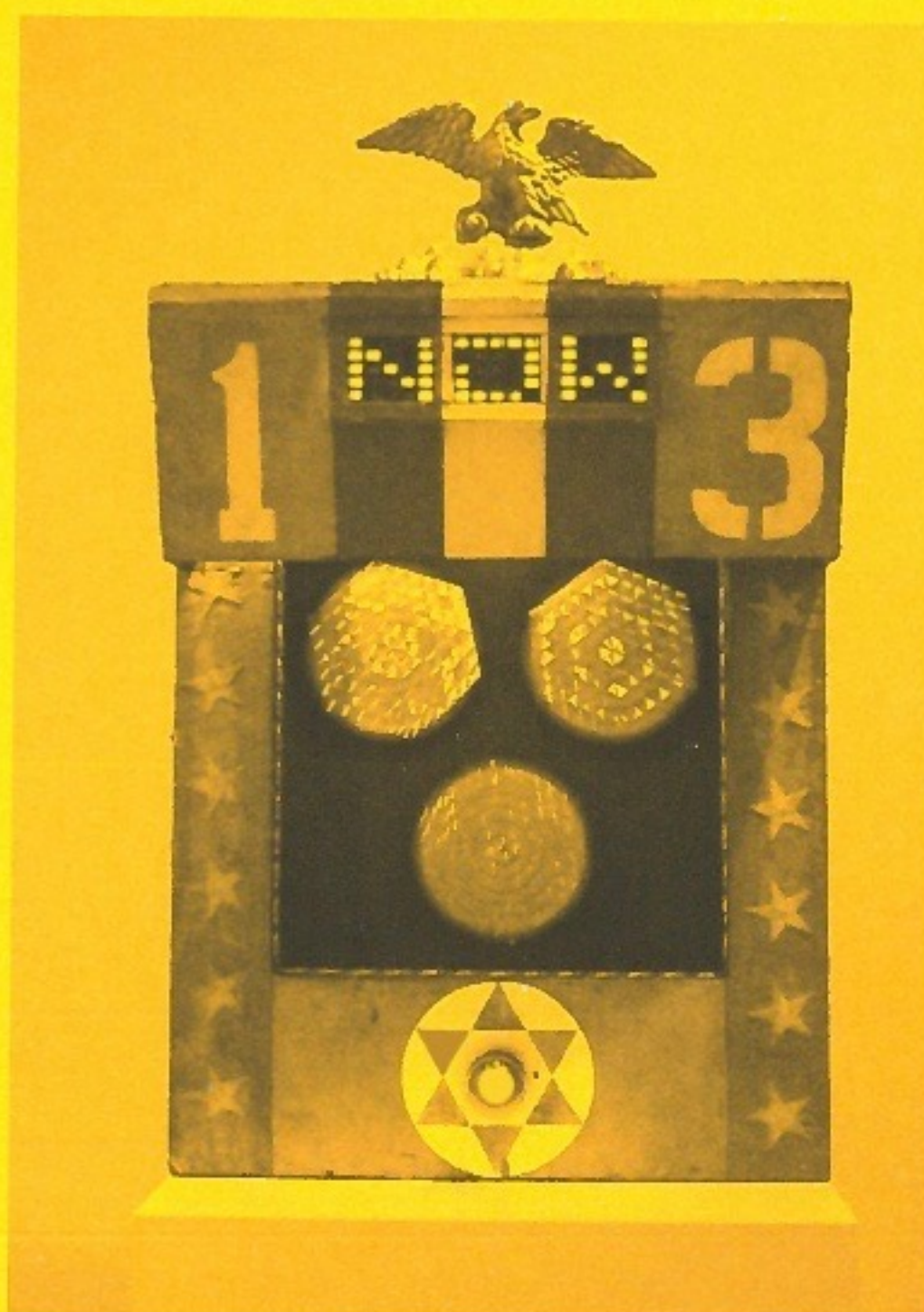


Fig. 3 USCO, Triple Diffraction Hex, 1965

TR: One of the most identifiably "psychedelic" elements of USCO's objects and environments is strobe lighting. Despite the popular association of the '60s with technophobic hippies, the strobe is an inherently electronic device. As scholars such as Fred Turner, Felicity Scott, and Michelle Kuo have noted, some strains of the psychedelic counterculture did not reject emerging media technologies, but attempted—through devices such as the strobe—to mediate their perceptual effects.(9) The connection between the strobe and electronics, in particular, was explicit: for example, when filmmaker and critic Jonas Mekas interviewed USCO member Stephen (now Nooruddeen) Durkee about it, he replied, "Strobe is the digital trip. In other words, what the strobe is basically doing, it's turning on and off, completely on and completely off."(10) Similarly, Time magazine's article on "luminal art" called USCO's use of strobe "the visual equivalent of the electronic scream at the end of the Beatles' record Penny Lane."(11) What are your thoughts on the strobe?

GS: Stroboscopic technology was something that was an intimate concern of ours. We did multimedia, and one of our biggest performances of our series of shows called Hubub (the title of which came from a quote of Martin Luther's) was at Kresge Auditorium at MIT. We had the strobes going; a motorcycle movie on three screens, with the movies going back and forth from each screen; four soundtracks; and this guy sitting on a big oscilloscope in the Buddha positions. Forty channels. The next

morning, we got a call from Harold Edgerton. He invented the strobe, but he was the head of the electrical engineering department at MIT and he was one of the principles of Edgerton, Germeshausen, and Grier, which was a major military contractor for early electronics. (And he was [Jacques] Cousteau's provider of underwater photography!) We knew who he was because of the Milk Drop Coronet [1957], his famous photograph. So he calls us up and he says, "I saw your show yesterday, and I'd like to talk to you; will you come up to my lab?" I said, "Who is this?" "My name's Harold Edgerton." So we go up to his lab, and he says, "You know, you guys, you have a really puny strobe. Look out the window. You see the Prudential Center? That's my strobe." He gives us the circuitry for his strobe, and he gives us two strobe tubes, made by EG&G, his firm. We're totally shocked, as he's an older man (I mean, he wasn't as old at that time as I am now, but you know). It was fascinating that Harold Edgerton, who was kind of a pure scientist, really got into it. He says, "You want to know how come I invented the strobe?" "Sure!" "It was long before the Milk Drop Coronet. I was in charge of measuring the speed of motors, and in that time, what we used to do was we had this little gadget that we stuck up against the spin of the motor, and it divided the speed by ten. Number one, it wasn't particularly accurate. Number two, it was a very cumbersome way of doing it. So I was trying to figure out a better way. And I hit upon the idea of a light. And that's how come I invented the strobe—to measure motor



Fig. 4 USCO multimedia event, interior view of the Tabernacle at their studio in Garnerville, New York, September 22, 1966

speed." Very few people know that. It was one of those fantastic eye-openers for us about technology. We always bought EG&G strobes after that.

TR: Given that Edgerton himself diverted his invention toward the creation of artistic photographs, as you mention, it does not surprise me that he was interested in USCO's creative use of strobe lighting. What did he think about your use of the strobe to create an intermedia environment?

GS: Well, he said to us, "You don't have to do it so loud. I don't think you really want to overload people, like you do." We overloaded people for a while, but actually, he changed us. We decided to build our way out of overload into an "own" environment. And we did. That was the last time we overloaded. We should've done it earlier, because we were all taking acid and getting into Meher Baba and into Kabbalistic spirituality, and it didn't occur to us that we were blowing a lot of the audience into some space where we didn't really want to find them after the show. We wanted them to go out ecstatic. And that's what we did later.(12)

TR: It was this mystical tendency of USCO that Jonas Mekas thought distinguished the intermedia environments of USCO from the Exploding Plastic Inevitable [EPI] show that Andy Warhol orchestrated.(13) In Mekas's eye-witness account from 1966, "Whereas in the case of [the] Plastic Inevitables the desire for the mystical experience is unconscious, the USCO is going after it in a more conscious way. They have arrived somewhere, and gained a certain peace, certain insights, and now they are beginning to meditate. [...] If at the USCO show I feel surrounded by tradition, by the past, by the remnants of oriental religions—at the Plastic Inevitables it is all Here and Now and the Future."(14) In an interview with Mekas that same year, you stated that you "felt sorry" for Warhol and his group, who seemed dogged by loneliness and fear.(15) Could you elaborate further on your relationship to Warhol and the EPI?

GS: USCO and Andy Warhol, and Andy's crew, the Factory, were at opposite ends of a certain number of spectra. One of them was drugs: we were into pot and acid, and they were into hard drugs. One was society: we were punky,

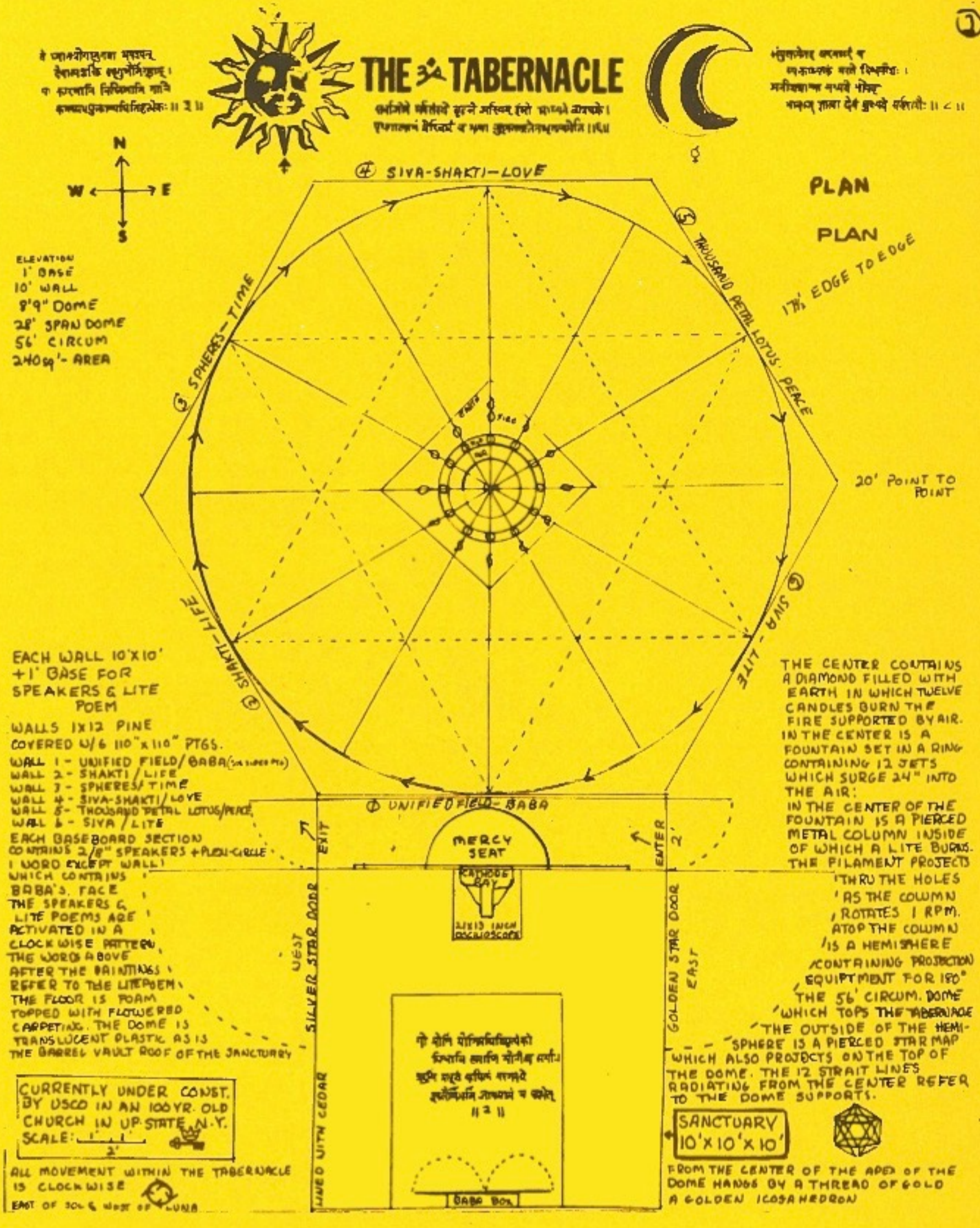


Fig. 5 Steve (Nooruddeen) Durkee, drawing for USCO's Tabernacle, Garnerville, New York, c. 1966

and they were into uptown. We weren't into money; they were into money. Et cetera, et cetera. We competed for the first media discotheque, "[Murray the K's] World," and it's us and Andy and Ken Dewey and Bob [Robert] Whitman. When we got [the contract for] the World, Andy was so pissed.(16) This is the kicker of the story: I went to Andy. (The art world at that time isn't the way the art world is now.) I went to the Factory, and I said, "Andy, you know, they named us to do the World; how about we do it together?" And he looked at me with that supercilious attitude he had, and he said, "Together?"

TR: Warhol's antipathetic response makes sense, for the reasons both you and Mekas have outlined, but it belies the fact that both of you were explicitly interested in media. That said, it does seem like your relationship to media was much more theoretical, informed by the writings of Marshall McLuhan, in particular, who even participated in some of your shows. By your account, you discovered his work quite early, having read his 1960 report for the National Association of Educational

Broadcasters (an early draft of his best-selling book of 1964, Understanding Media). (17)

GS: Marshall was a friend of mine; we met in 1962. I feel that Marshall was a prophet, and we still believe what he showed us. I think people don't think about the advance of technology; everybody's more concerned about the problems that it causes. You know, fifty years from now—who's talking about that? Marshall talked about fifty years from then. And then was quite a while ago! I introduced him to art critic Harold Rosenberg, and he wrote one of the best pieces ever written about Marshall. (18) He was a nice man, unlike [Clement] Greenberg.

TR: The fact that you were familiar with McLuhan's media theory years before video technology became available to artists seems like an important corrective to the technological determinism that pervades some accounts of video art's history. These accounts implicitly or explicitly claim that artists began to think about media only when it became more practical for them to make it themselves, which is typically tied to the introduction of the Sony Portapak.

GS: When the Sony Portapak first came out, Nam June [Paik] and I were both standing in front of C.Y. Lee's door on Canal Street. We had heard that he was going to have the first Portapaks, in black and white. We each bought one, in cash. The myth now is that Sony gave him this Portapak. It's not true, though maybe they gave him one later. (19) I used my Portapak to make dozens of tapes in the early '70s, including one of Marshall McLuhan, along with a coauthor of his, which I think is the best thing that's been done in media on Marshall. I also did tapes on my good friend, Huey P. Newton, and on Edward T. Hall, about proxemics. Those were heady times. (20)

TR: Around that time, you were teaching at Harvard on the subject of how intermedia could be used by educators and businesses alike; you also ran your own company, Intermedia Systems Corporation. From the perspective of the present, one of the more provocative aspects of intermedia is the fact that it moved so seamlessly between the worlds of fine art, entertainment, and commerce. The producer John Brockman, in particular, pioneered the use of intermedia in business and advertising. Reporting on this trend, the New York Times noted that his intermedia presentation to the sales force of the Scott Paper Company increased sales by eleven percent. (21) Yet Brockman also helped organize the 1965 festival of expanded cinema; cowrote a report with you on the state of intermedia for the New York State Council on the Arts in 1967; and subsequently produced the program Intermedia '68, which showed works by USCO and

other artists at cultural sites across the state. In a 1968 interview, he argued for the importance of intermedia as an art form, noting that "discothèques are O.K., but they just offer what people expect.[...] Without this kind of work we are stymied by technology. This gives us a chance for feedback, a chance to do something to the environment." (22)

GS: John Brockman was intimately involved with USCO. He brought the World [project] to us. We did probably at least a half a dozen projects together, before he was a literary agent. He was big into USCO and intermedia. Intermedia Systems was a public company, of which I was president. It was associated with professors from Harvard, and we did media productions. We made hardware; we made the first audiovisual programming hardware—old style, paper tape, punch tape, the first dissolve units, and things like that, by Michael Callahan. At one point, Ken Dewey did a piece with Terry Riley as part of the Expanded Cinema Festival, which John Brockman was deputized by Jonas Mekas to head, because Jonas and Adolphus [Mekas] had to go to Lithuania because somebody died. Terry and Ken did a piece called Brides, with five brides in bridal gowns, standing, and the tape says, "That's not me! That's not me! That's not me!" After Ken died [in 1972], I convinced the Guggenheim Museum to do it in their theater as a memorial to Ken. I couldn't get the tape; it was a nightmare. I finally found Terry in Berkeley, California; I went out, and he gave me a copy of the tape. He's in a little apartment, and Pandit Pran Nath is sitting there, eating a snack and watching on a portable television "Hollywood Squares" and laughing his head off. And Terry says to me, "Gerd, here's the tape. Now, don't you dare tell anybody about Pandit laughing at 'Hollywood Squares.'" Of course I told everybody—I thought it was a great story. It was so human, compared to that iconic image LaMonte [Young] has given him.

TR: That really is such a human image, and it reminds us that instead of assenting to the zero-sum game that pits complicity against critique, or technophilia against technophobia, USCO pursued the paradoxical positions in between those poles—using tools such as humor, or eroticism—in order to envision new roles for media and technology in a more humane future.

Notes

1. Cited in Gene Youngblood, Expanded Cinema (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1970), 348. For a more extended discussion of the history of intermedia, see Tina Rivers Ryan, "The Proliferation of the Sun: ZERO and the Medium of Light in Late 1960s America," in The Medium of Light and the Neo-Avant-Garde of the 1950s and 1960s, ed. Andrea von Hülsen-Esch and Dirk Pörschmann (Düsseldorf: Düsseldorf University Press, 2013), 75–109.
2. The 1966 Riverside Museum show is discussed in Jonas Mekas, "May 26, 1966: On the Plastic Inevitables and the Strobe Light," Movie Journal: The Rise of the New American Cinema

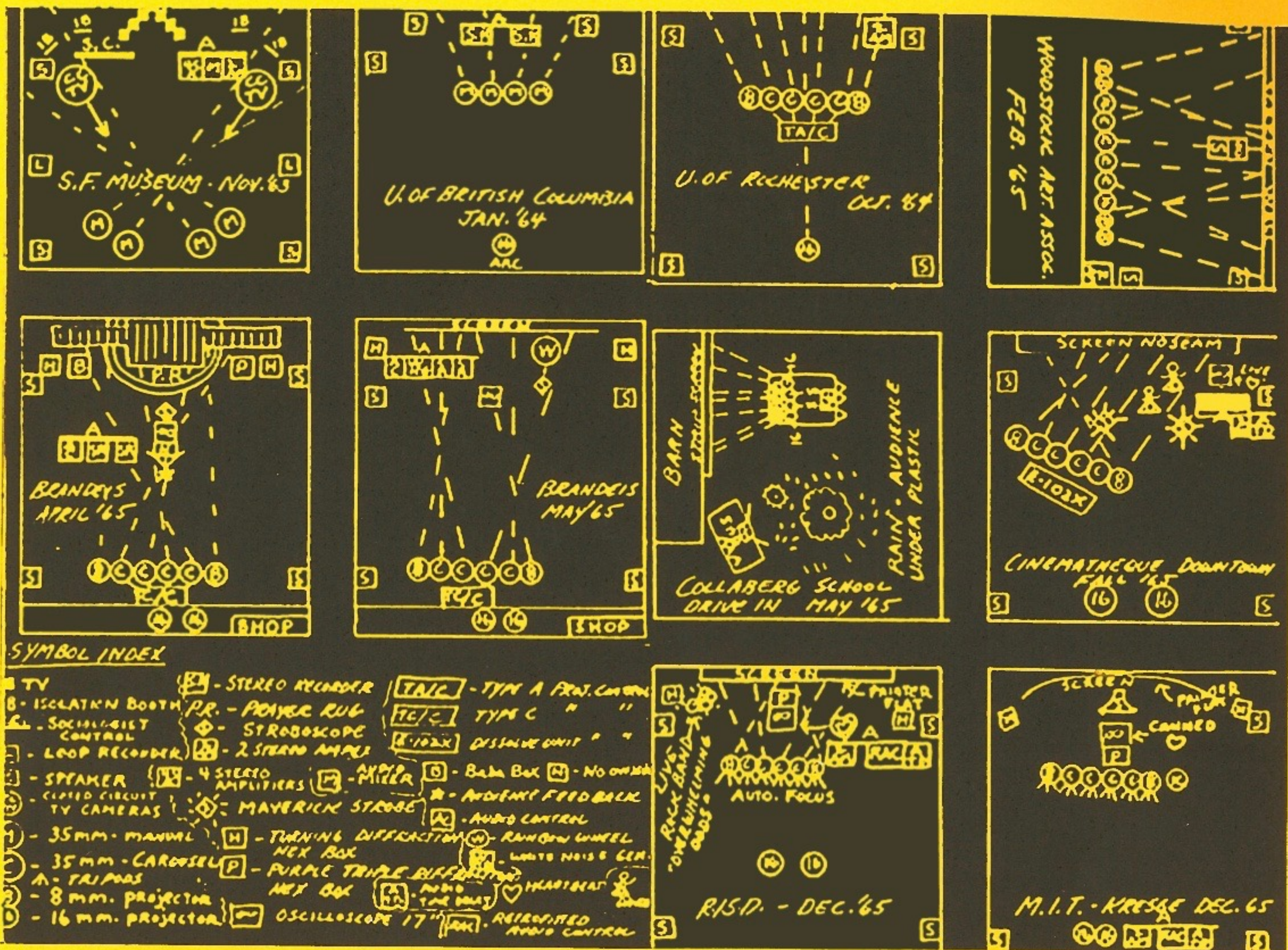


Fig. 6 USCO, installation diagrams of performance equipment and projection throws at various venues, c. 1966

1959–1971 (New York: Collier Books, 1972), 242–244; Colta Feller Ives, "In the Museums: Be-in," *Arts*, September 1966, 51; "Psychedelic Art," *Life*, September 9, 1966, 60–69; and Naomi Feigelson, "We Are All One. Who R U?," *Cheetah*, May 1968, 30–35. I would like to thank Paige Rozanski for bringing the Feigelson article and book (note 3) to my attention. The show is also documented by USCO filmmaker Jud Yalkut's short color film *Down by the Riverside* (1966).

3. USCO's history is recounted in "U.S.C.O.," *Film Culture* 43: Expanded Arts (Winter 1966): 9–10; Naomi Feigelson, *The Underground Revolution: Hippies, Yippies, and Others* (New York: Punk and Wagnalls, 1970); Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Felicity D. Scott, "Acid Visions," *Grey Room* 23 (Spring 2006): 22–39; and Michel Oren, "USCO: 'Getting Out of Your Mind to Use Your Head,'" *Art Journal* 69, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 77–95. See also Zabet Patterson, *Metamorphose Yourself: USCO, Techno-Utopia and Technocracy* (forthcoming).

4. The relationship between the historical counterculture and the art world is explored by a number of recent books; for example, see Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner, eds., *West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965–1977*, exh. cat. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). See also Tina Rivers Ryan, "Through the Looking Glass, Darkly," *Art Journal* 72, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 87–89.

5. Don Morrison, "Don Morrison' 2 Cents' Worth," *Minneapolis Star*, April 12, 1967, 16B.

6. As unofficial spokesman of USCO, Stern has been interviewed repeatedly over the years. See Jonas Mekas, "USCO: Interview with Gerd Stern," *Film Culture* 43: Expanded Arts (Winter 1966): 3; Richard Kostelanetz, "USCO," *The Theatre of Mixed-Means: An Introduction to Happenings, Kinetic Environments and Other Mixed-Means Presentations* (New York: Dial Press, 1968), 243–271; Douglas M. Davis, "Gerd Stern and USCO: The Experiential

Flow," *Art and the Future: a History/Prophecy of the Collaboration between Science, Technology, and Art* (New York: Praeger, 1973), 157–160; Stewart Kranz, *Science & Technology in the Arts: a Tour Through the Realm of Science/Art* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1974); and Gerd Stern, *From Beat Scene to Psychedelic Multimedia Artist in San Francisco and Beyond, 1948–1978*, an oral history conducted in 1966 by Victoria Morris Byerly (Berkeley, CA: Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2001). For interviews with Stern's fellow members of USCO, Michael Callahan and Jud Yalkut, see Sabrina Gschwandtner, "Between Film and Video: The Intermedia Art of Jud Yalkut: An Interview," *Millenium Film Journal* 42 (Fall 2005): 69–84; Michelle Kuo, "Special Effects: Michelle Kuo Speaks with Michael Callahan about USCO," *Artforum* 46, no. 9 (May 2008): 133–134, 136; and Thomas M. Welsh, "Michael Callahan," in *The San Francisco Tape Music Center: 1960s Counterculture and the Avant-Garde*, ed. David W. Bernstein (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press/Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 2008), 178–197.

7. The full-page review being referred to here is David L. Shirey, "Art is Light," *Newsweek*, February 20, 1967, 101.

8. The official E.A.T. account of the notorious production is Billy Klüver et al., *Pavilion* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1972).

9. In addition to the above-cited works by Turner, Scott, and Kuo, see also John Markoff, *What the Dormouse Said: How the Sixties Counterculture Shaped the Personal Computer Industry* (New York: Viking, 2005) and Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969).

10. Mekas, "June 16, 1966: More on Strobe Light and Intermedia," *Movie Journal*, 245.

11. Piri Halasz, "Techniques: Luminous Music," *Time*, April 28, 1967, 85.

12. Using interviews with USCO's members, Michael Oren narrates their transition away from the concept of overload: "after

[the] December 1965 performances, the group began to feel that overload was not only causing audiences pain but failing to guide their experiences" (Oren, "USCO," 78). The group themselves explained to Richard Kostelanetz that "it's easy to overload people; but it's hard to bring them down to the point where they'll leave the theatre peacefully" (Kostelanetz, "USCO," 266), an idea echoed recently by Michael Callahan (Kuo, "Special Effects," 134). By contrast, Warhol's EPI consistently aimed to produce the experience of psychological and physical pain in their audience.

13. The two major studies of Warhol's EPI are Branden W. Joseph, "'My Mind Split Open': Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable," *Grey Room* 8 (Summer 2002): 81-107 and David Joselit, "Yippie Pop: Abbie Hoffman, Andy Warhol, and Sixties Media Politics," *ibid.*: 63-79.

14. Mekas, "May 26, 1966," 243-244.

15. Mekas, "USCO: Interview with Gerd Stern," 3.

16. USCO's intermedia environment for "The World" appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine on May 27, 1966, as well as in that issue's article "Bedlam at the Discothèques": 72-76. Michael Callahan remembers the competition differently, claiming that they received the commission because "everyone except us had the sense to bail out early" (Kuo, "Special Effects," 136).

17. See Marshall McLuhan, *Report on Project in Understanding*

New Media (New York: National Association of Educational Broadcasters, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1960).

18. The reference is to Harold Rosenberg, "Philosophy in a Pop Key," *New Yorker*, February 27, 1965: 129-36.

19. In the literature on Paik, the typical account is that the artist purchased his Portapak in October 1965 from New York's Liberty Music Store; the footage he shot of Pope Paul VI on his way home is often cited as the first work of video art, though not without controversy. See, for example, Deidre Boyle, *Subject to Change: Guerrilla Television Revisited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4.

20. Stern wrote about the history of early video art, and particularly the importance of public funding to the movement, in Gerd Stern, "Support of Television Arts by Public Funding: New York State Council on the Arts," in *The New Television: A Public/Private Art*, ed. Douglas Davis and Allison Simmons (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press/Electronic Arts Intermix, 1977), 140-156.

21. Grace Glueck, "Multimedia: Massaging Senses for the Message," *New York Times*, September 6, 1967, 35.

22. Eleanor Lester, "Intermedia: Tune In, Turn On—And Walk Out?," *New York Times*, May 12, 1968, SM30.

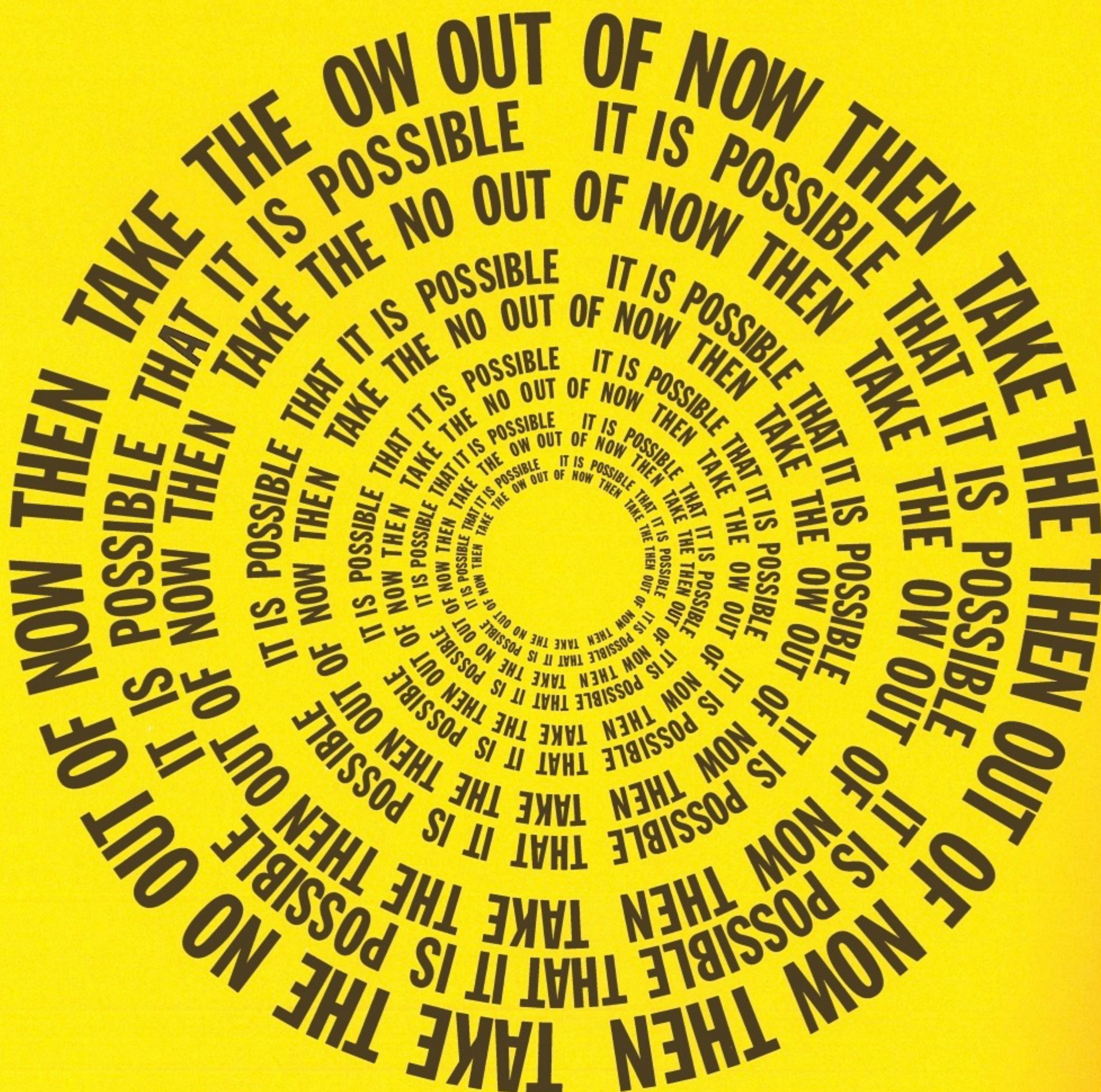


Fig. 7 Gerd Stern, *NO OW NOW, USCO Two Mantras*, 1962