

the something else NEWSLETTER

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1., Yessir, ladies and gents, we's regrouping back East. Camille went farther East than the rest of us, all the way to Afghanistan again—but she's due to New York soon. Poor Emmett Williams is stuck in Los Angeles till June—send him get-well cards at 8215 Mannix Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90046. (We call it "Manic Drive," after watching the cars buzz along that one-lane road at 50 MPH.) Emmett and Ann Williams will head to Brownington, Vermont in June, where they're building a log house with Eugene Williams. Eugene's been madly translating Rühm and Schwitters, and staying with lucky Dick Higgins, who's already running the Press office "from his farm" (which is how he datelines his new writings). So these're the new Press addresses:

Orders and Bill Payments:

Something Else Press, Inc.
Elm Street
Millerton, NY 12546

and Anything Else:

Something Else Press, Inc.
c/o Dick Higgins
P.O. Box 26
West Glover, VT 05875

2., There wasn't anything wrong with California that we could see. But there were problems. Like the cheapest binding price we could get on the West Coast for the Gillespie **Collected Writings** was \$1.50 a copy. The cheapest on the East Coast was \$0.48 a copy, more than \$1 cheaper—and using the very same equipment (on top of which we'd have

to ship the books farther, to get them to our warehouse at Millerton). Gee, maybe we should go into West Coast binding at half the going rate. Those L.A. binders must be making a fortune! Another problem: the art scene was hurting pretty badly. In Los Angeles, collectors go (occasionally) to local openings to see important shows: then they head East to buy their latest pop dildos at Yvonne Krapp's in New Yuk-Yuk. This means that the local scene can't support much in the way of community or feedback, so there was little for us to do except learn about Barry McCallion (who's the realest Real Master in California—and not teaching at phoncy Irvine or UCSD or, well, you name it, but at San Bernardino, where he has a really great scene going with the students—they will be the voices of the 80's). Meeting Barry was great—he doesn't have a book for **us** just now, but you can get his **Art Maxims** from Abyss Publications, P.O. Box C, Somerville, MA 02143 for 1.75—still you can't build a whole scene on just one man, no matter how good his work is. It's fine things, but it's not an environment to live and participate in.

3., Part of what made it rough for us was the fact that a number of us taught at the CIA, California Institute of the Arts, which had a genius (Barry Hyams) running its publicity and getting articles in the **Saturday Review** and the like, and a fine set of ideas behind it, mostly originated by Herb Blau (America's only dramaturgist worth thinking about). But which placed its destinies in the hands of Robert Corrigan—"Wrong-Way Corrigan" the students called him—whose competence can be judged by the fact that he couldn't find

any better way to fire his Dean of Critical Studies, Maurice Stein (other schools call it "General Studies"), than in front of a meeting of the faculty at his house. You can imagine for yourself what demoralization that caused. Of course, the Disneys are the backers of Cal Arts, and are associated with very conservative politics in the Los Angeles area. But instead of pushing (e.g., the theory of the tax-exempt foundation is based on the idea that those who give money away do not remain in control of it, and the Disneys' close control of the school by threatening to close the purse while remaining on the board of directors and demanding that political radical Stein be fired is quite questionable, at least on the face of it), the school's top leadership became both tools and apologists. Eventually even Herb Blau left, which was Oberlin College's gain and the whole California community's loss—Blau was a West Coast man.

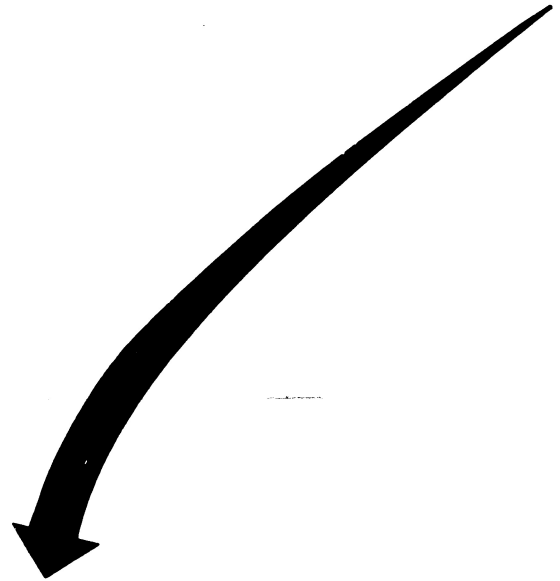
Now, the physical mausoleum of the Institute stands half empty and uncompleted, dominating and matching the skyline of Valencia, which is a sort of don't-plant-forbidden-trees-on-your-front-lawn Levittown-like housing development.

So the Something Else Press left too, and is settling in Vermont, which is the answer to some questions, though not to all. Vermont is the Kerala of America—very literate but very poor. But it has a fine iconoclastic tradition, its culture is not plastic, and many of us feel at home here. Good books should result. Among other things.

4., Maybe we're beyond the old idea of cities anyway. They depend on volume production, and a lot of what we like doesn't demand that. Volume has the implicit problems of over-centralization and vulnerability to any sort of chaos. In a technological society, therefore, it may be that diffusion and limitation are more appropriate than the old dialectic of overconsumption and overproduction.

The media have broken down the old distinctions between town and country. Young people in West Glover, Vermont (population has risen to 62) listen to the same music at their cousins in South Pasadena or Yorkville (Toronto or New York City). Those who come here or stay here do so because they want to, not because they somehow have to, like in the old days. Result: high morale. Meanwhile, back off the farm, downtown, people stay not because they want to but because they feel they should. It's noble or something. Or where the "action" is (is it?). They fight the economic collapse just as, until a quarter century ago, petty farmers fought the economic collapse of the family farm.

Core cities can regenerate, materially and spiritually, given the proper climate, political and social. Just as the country has. The problem of the next half century will be the collapse of the suburbs: till recently we saw the suburbanization of both country (more structures, unplanned development) and city "developments," low density occupancy areas, inefficient and inequitable use of land and other resources, commercially-derived zoning practices (self-contradictory, since the profits are then taxed off à la Suffolk



foew & ombwhnw

by dick higgins

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john gruen, writing in *vogue*, said "it's a m  le of avant-garde concepts that make clear higgins's incredibly inventive, not to say obsessive, mind . . . higgins is not an obscurist . . . he cajoles the mind." and jonas mekas, in *the village voice*: "i give it my book of the month award. all kinds of good and intelligent things in it, mostly on intermedia." *library journal*: "by all means buy." lita eliscu in *evo*: "what is inside is truthful and illuminating, and probably better for your constitution [than the bible]."

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W H Y M O T I O N S

County, New York). And this kind of destruction of land and people is analogous to building a temporary shed which, with the renovation of the main structure, one no longer needs. The problems of our core cities in 1972 are nothing compared to the problems of our suburbs by 1985.

Maybe someday the Press should do a book on the future.

5., But for now, we have some pretty exciting books. Our new catalog is enclosed. As long as the best books being written aren't being done, for one reason or another, we're needed. Here we are in the golden age of literature, and nobody seems to know it. Ridiculous. Don't blame the schoolteachers—they've been defenestrated enough. Blame the culture vultures that control media and enforce our bad habits. It's they who try to get us to feel that gobbling the good ideas (vis a book) isn't cool, that vacuous painting is a bit cooler, that gooping at the goobers in the sky is really where it's at. All the vultures can give us is the sweet smell of death. We're here for the sheer heck of it and joy of it, to enjoy the life of it which is the thought of it. And it is what you make it, so long as it has substance.

6., Any more gossip and newses? Just sort of some. Like Wolf Vostell came to the USA in March. He's going to build a technological maple tree beside Dick Higgins' farmhouse in Vermont. Karl Young is getting together an anthology of concrete—send to him at P.O. Box 5431, Shorewood, Milwaukee, WIS 53211. You can buy Ernest Robson's **Trans-whichics** (a random-determined word to describe Robson's sound poems) which is graphically exciting and has a very usable notation for transcribing such works, for \$4.95 from Dufour Editions, Chester Springs, PA 19425. One of the best visual poets (good heavens! he actually admits to being a concrete poet) is Michael Joseph Phillips: for various reasons he has to publish his own things. Write him for his catalog or listing at Flowers Publishing, 109 North Clark, Bloomington, Indiana 47401: buy his things or, if you have a magazine, include him.

7., And now to end on a fighting tone. The ignoring of Charlotte Moorman's 1971 New York Avant Garde Festival was a disgrace. The show was great, as nobody denied, but they all had theories (or nontheories) about it. The media were there in plenty but pretended they weren't. Freddie McDarrah (of the **Voice**) wrote a Jill Johnston article of the 1965 period about it—nice 'n narsty, ostensibly descriptive but ultimately personal. John Perrault, Esq., whose own work was not included (as was none of his protegés'), published a statement in the **Voice** about how he would not review the Festival, since it was not worthy of him somehow (his opinion wasn't—Perrault is a very fine event-maker and event-poet). Carman Moore finally did review the Festival, more tardily than one would expect of the **Voice**, but in the **Voice**, and he did it very well. Here's hoping the **Voice** has not become a hot-off-the-press newspaper where you can find out what just happened two years later. Be that as it

may—in two years we may find out what Jill Johnston (who was there more or less in person) thought about the Festival. Most of the critics who were present were bothered because the festival included so many young artists (okay—have a festival with ten of the best of us, it'll be a thriller diller but absolutely irrelevant on any large scale), and as a result it was too big and too noisy. They couldn't see the trees for the woods. And so, in the spirit of rejuvenating New York a bit past its **voicelessness**, Dick Higgins invited one of New York's shrewdest, if youngest, critics, Tyche Hendricks, to describe at least the very striking piece her father, Geoffrey Hendricks, did, in his wedding suit and with his ring buried in the pile of dirt Tyche describes, silent in the middle of the largely electronic hubbub:

Dear Dick

Geoff sat on top of a hill of dirt, he didn't talk, & he wore fancy clothes such as: a white shirt & a white vest & wore black shoes & black pants, & your mice were crawling all around him, over him & under him. He took notes about the people who looked at him. He didn't stay still I mean he did move around on his hill of dirt.

To Dick Higgins
From Tyche Hendricks

(and Dick Higgins secretly
ghost-wrote all this newsletter
except the above, since
Camille's away)

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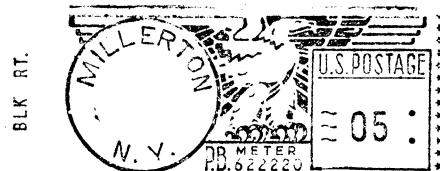
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