

## NEW YORK BYLINE

Recently, Mierle Laderman Ukeles began a performance piece which will take four to five months to complete, a piece called *Touch Sanitation*, working all of the Sanitation Department districts in every borough in New York, trying to shake hands with each of the 8,500 sanitation workers who deal with the New York City garbage. This is not the first time she has done maintenance art pieces, but this is the most extensive, funded by two private foundations and the National Endowment.

The project, running through February, has now made her quite famous among the San men themselves, who look forward to her handshake and her "Thank you for keeping New York City alive."

■ *Artists and Architects of the New York Subway* exhibition at the New York Historical Society celebrates the 75th anniversary of the New York subway, focusing on the construction and decoration of the system's first 9.1 miles of track. Photographs, mementos, original designs for the mosaic trim, plans, correspondence, etc. are in the show.

■ A Manhattan artist, John Halpern, who called a news conference to announce he had arranged to have an explosive device placed atop a tower of the Brooklyn Bridge was recently arrested on charges of possessing a bomb.

Later the artist said that the contraption was a relatively harmless work of art. The actual object, found by the Police Department bomb squad, was a five-gallon paint can, inside of which was a plastic pail containing two batteries, a radio receiver, an amplifier and two pounds of loose gunpowder, rockets and cherry bombs.

Halpern insisted he wanted to create a kind of environmental statement, but the police said the "statement" might have exploded at any moment. The remote control device to detonate the bomb had failed to go off.

At a SoHo gallery, other items used to assemble the device were found.

Later in August, John Halpern was indicted by a Manhattan grand jury on a charge of criminal possession of a weapon. He is eligible for up to 7 years in prison if convicted.

■ *City Gates*, an installation which can be experienced for the next three years, is now available for viewing at Gate 3 in Battery Park City. Conceived by artist Merle Temkin, 1500 plastic mirrors fill the holes in a chain-link fence.

*City Gates* is sponsored by the Urban Development Corporation and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.

■ The 1978-79 season at Peter Nadin, 84 West Broadway, concluded with attempts to possess space altogether. In 1979-80, that possessed space will be considered in its elements, as material, and will undergo thorough reorganizations of its elements. The reorganizations will function as models for actions in the political environment.

As reported recently in the May issue of *Umbrella*, the walls were the first subject of inquiry. Daniel Buren questioned the conventional juncturing of wall with ceiling and floor; Sean Scully obfuscated the usual solidity of walls, especially at corners; Jane Reynolds installed condensed visual passages to outlying rooms through the walls, and Peter Fend set up a machine that would over time enclose

the entire space—without relying on the walls. The machine, an iron lung, literally breathed in and out the atmospheric contents of the space: the room could be defined less by its walls than by a pump; its character appeared less as a void than as a gaseous mixture of particles, as a substance.

Subsequent actions confirmed this sense of space. Two people came to live there, and their presence was recorded as a participation in and metabolic processing of the space. Musician Rhys Chatham performed there until the walls, ceiling and floor all reverberated sympathetically. He transformed the entire space into a three-dimensional synchronized ripple tank; the room's boundaries became membranes for vibration and percussion; the room became a musical instrument. Many of those present for vibration and percussion; the room became a musical instrument. Many of those present responded by pressing their bodies into the walls and floors as they tremored. To conclude, four artists surveyed the space, reviewed what had gone on before, and determined to label the space with their names. The space altogether, like a labelled painting or sculpture, became property. The property would be defined not on its walls but at its foundation, its gravity base, its absolute limit to exertion within the gravity field of earth; the floor. A body defines itself in the sensation of pressing down under gravity; so the space, as property like the body, would be defined and sensed.

In 1979-80 reorganization of space as property begins. The ends are political; the space becomes a model for the environment we share in cities and other, still larger political systems. Peter Nadin aims to help organize political space. He plans models and methodologies for action. The space at 84 West Broadway, or maybe elsewhere throughout the world, is considered in its elements and those elements will be reorganized to better suit the needs of human bodies experiencing that force devolving from the relative position of bodies in space: gravity. The reorganization will function as "points of reference for action." What occurs under the impetus of Peter Nadin, at his New York space or in Los Angeles or at desert sites out West, prefigures what might occur or ought to occur in the earth space we, as human animals, now occupy.

—Peter Fend

