

Oxbow 2017: The House of Dust

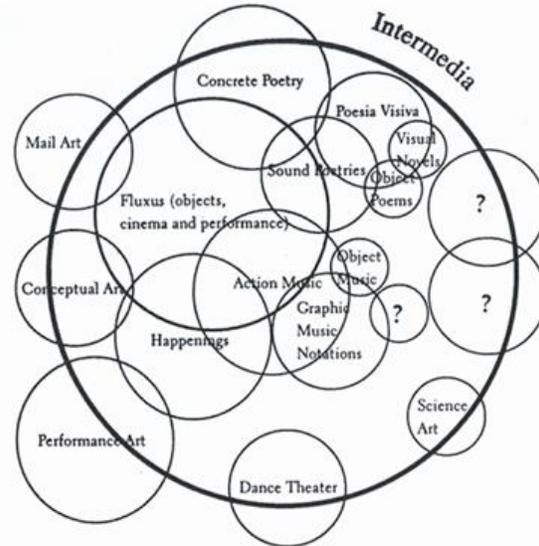
July 2-14, 10-5 daily

Prof. Judith Rodenbeck

We are interested in intermedia.

The House of Dust is a poem assembled according to specifications provided by the artist Alison Knowles to her friend James Tenney in 1967, generated by a small FORTRAN program, and produced by a plotter printer. Comprised of quatrains in which lists of variable terms were inserted into fixed phrases —“A house of [X] / In [Y] / Using [Z] / Inhabited by [A]”—the computer-generated poem had the potential to reach a non-repeating set of 41,800 quatrains. But the poem—whose poem? Knowles’s? Tenney’s? FORTRAN’s?—was also a generator of projects,

for multiple “houses” were made in response to the quatrains: the *House of Dust* became a printout, an artist’s book, a sequence of physical buildings, a performance score, a pedagogical structure. Drawing on resources (including archival materials) assembled by Art by Translation for the 2016 exhibition “*The House of Dust* by Alison Knowles” as well as supplemental materials, we will explore the project and others related to the exploration of intermedia in the 1960s.



The term *intermedia* was used in 1965 by Knowles’s then-partner, the Fluxus artist Dick Higgins, to identify and theorize a developing current in experimental creative practices “that fall conceptually between media that are already known.” From this exterior-yet-pendant position, such practices have the critical potential of what the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari dubbed the “minor”: deterritorialized, always already political, and “charged with the role and function of the collective.” Furthermore, if, by definition, *intermedia* (pl.) lie in-between established mediums (including “the media”), we might also note, from the originating Latin, that the word when used in the singular is the feminine form of the neutral “-medium.” Our exploration of intermedia, therefore, will execute a gesture of historical recursion: we will examine projects and proposals by contemporaries of that theorizing who adopted intermedia strategies in the late 1960s, some of whom are still practicing artists. We will be asking what they have done, how, why, and to what ends. All are women, some are friends, each has wisdom to share.

Syllabus

Sunday	Evening (8pm)	Introductions.
Monday	morning	Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, “What is a minor literature?” <i>Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature</i> (UMNP, 1986): 16-27. Umberto Eco, “The Poetics of the Open Work,” <i>The Open Work</i> (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989): 1-24.
	afternoon	Dick Higgins & Hannah Higgins, “Intermedia,” <i>Leonardo</i> 34:1 (Feb 2001): 49-54.
Tuesday	morning	Maud Jacquin & Sebastien Pluot, “Poetry in Translation,” <i>House of Dust Journal</i> (August 2016): 1-2. Hannah Higgins, “An Introduction to Alison Knowles’s <i>The</i>

House of Dust," in Hannah Higgins & Douglas Kahn (eds.), *Mainframe Experimentalism* (UCP, 2012): 195-199; reprinted in *House of Dust Journal* (August 2016): 3.

Benjamin Buchloh, "The Book of the Future: Alison Knowles's The House of Dust," *Mainframe Experimentalism*: 200-208; reprinted in *House of Dust Journal* (August 2016): 4-5.

	afternoon	Screening: Alison Knowles, various shorts.
Wednesday	morning	Nicole L. Woods, "Object/Poems: Alison Knowles's Feminist Archite(x)ture," <i>X-TRA</i> 15:1 (Fall 2012): 6-25. Ian Wallace, "Stop making sense: House of Dust and the aesthetics of techno-utopianism," <i>House of Dust CUNY Journal</i> (August 2016): 3-5. Iris Cushing, "Book/house/machine/mind: A House of Dust's conditions," <i>House of Dust CUNY Journal</i> (August 2016): 5-6.
	afternoon	Praxis.
Thursday		Janet Sarbanes, "A school based on what artists wanted to do: Alison Knowles on CalArts," <i>House of Dust Journal</i> (August 2016): 6-7. Hallie Scott, "The house of pedagogy," <i>House of Dust CUNY Journal</i> (August 2016): 6-7. Gillian Sneed, "Play sculptures and public art: Alison Knowles' the House of Dust and the failure of community engagement," <i>House of Dust CUNY Journal</i> (August 2016): 9-11. Praxis.
Friday	morning	Alison Knowles, <i>Journal of the Identical Lunch</i> (Nova Broadcast, 1971). 32pp. Philip Corner, <i>Identical Lunch</i> (Nova Broadcast, 1973), 46 pp. Christopher Green, "A house of dust... inhabited by American Indians," <i>House of Dust CUNY Journal</i> (August 2016): 8-9.
	afternoon	Praxis.
Saturday		Johannes Birringer, "Imprints and Re-Visions: Carolee Schneemann's Visual Archeology," <i>Performing Arts Journal</i> 15:2 (May 1993): 31-46. Screening: Carolee Schneemann, various.
Sunday		Judith Rodenbeck, "Schneemann's Crystal: <i>Water Light/Water Needle</i> ," in <i>Carolee Schneemann: Kinetic Painting</i> (Salzburg: Museum der Moderne & Munich: Prestel,

		2015), 158-164.
Monday		Julia Bryan-Wilson, "Simone Forti Goes to the Zoo," <i>October</i> 152 (Spring 2015): 26-52.
		Catherine Wood, "Spirit Moves: The Art of Simone Forti," <i>Artforum</i> (Jan 2015) (Rivera)
		<i>Screening:</i> Simone Forti, various.
	afternoon	Praxis.
Tuesday		Simone Forti, <i>Handbook in Motion</i> (NSCAD, 1974).
	afternoon	Praxis.
Wednesday		Douglas Crimp, "De-Synchronization in Joan Jonas's Performances," in Douglas Crimp (ed.), <i>Joan Jonas: Scripts and Descriptions, 1968-1982</i> (University Art Museum, UC Berkeley, 1984): 8-10.
		Pamela Lee, "Double Takes," <i>Artforum</i> (Summer 2015), online at MIT.
	afternoon	<i>Screening:</i> Joan Jonas, various.
Thursday		Praxis.
Friday		Praxis.

Structure

Each day will be structured by critical and historical texts, which will be complemented and supplemented by other references and by creative assignments; in addition, we will all keep daily journals. Research will be conducted both indoors and outdoors at Ox-Bow, so come prepared.

You will: keep a daily journal of responses to the reading and artwork; bring at least two discussion questions on each text to each class; actively participate in our collective praxis.

Writing

We will each be keeping a daily journal of our investigations. In addition, participants taking the course for MAAH credit will devise a research topic in consultation with Judith Rodenbeck and complete a 4000-word scholarly paper on that topic; paper is due July 14th. Purchase a pack of 3x5 **index cards** and be sure to bring some with you to each class session, along with a functioning writing implement. We will be using these cards for various assessment tasks as well as for in-class writing exercises.

Reader

An electronic reading packet is available on Dropbox. Please read and prepare questions from the texts; if there is a topic you are interested in pursuing for your research be sure to do a careful reading of the relevant texts from the reader.

Be ready to participate and enjoy the Michigan summer.