

reviews: new york

Allan Kaprow

Hauser & Wirth

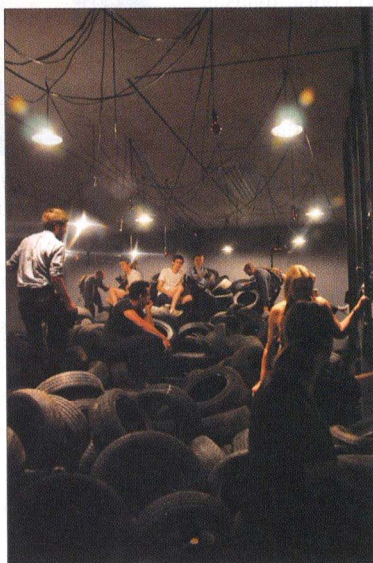
In May 1961 the artist-theorist Allan Kaprow (1927–2006), inventor of the term “Happening,” was in a key exhibition in the evolution of a movement—or sensibility—that would lead to Pop art. The show was called “Environments, Situations, Spaces,” and included, besides Kaprow, Claes Oldenburg, Jim Dine, and Robert Whitman. It took place at the Martha Jackson Gallery, and Kaprow’s contribution was the environment *Yard*. The artist filled the backyard of the elegant town house with hundreds of used-car tires and invited gallery visitors to climb on them as they wished.

This fall, the same building opened as Hauser & Wirth, the New York outpost of the Zurich- and London-based gallery. By way of celebration, a “reinvention” of Kaprow’s historic work by the New York artist William Pope.L was installed in the gallery’s main space. In keeping with Kaprow’s characteristically precise use of language, the word “reinvention” was carefully chosen. Although he resisted the idea that Happenings—or anything else that he made—should be restaged or

reenacted, Kaprow was enthusiastic about their providing stimulus for new, closely related pieces.

In this spirit, Kaprow reinvented *Yard* repeatedly during his lifetime, without ever departing quite so far from his original as Pope.L did here. The original yard, which gave Kaprow’s piece its name, is no more, though the indoor location was the least of the wonderful changes that Pope.L introduced. More obvious were the lights flashing off and on, the strange Obama-esque monologue that was piped into the gallery, and the greasy body bags piled high toward the back of the space (in the original installation, similar bags held sculptures). By his own admission, Pope.L discovered a much darker, more political spirit than is usually recognized in Kaprow’s original, and he gave it full rein. It made for an unforgettable piece (it bore the subtitle *To Harrow*) and would undoubtedly have met with Kaprow’s wholehearted approval.

—Robert Ayers



William Pope.L, *Yard (To Harrow)*, 1961/2009, mixed media, dimensions variable. Hauser & Wirth.