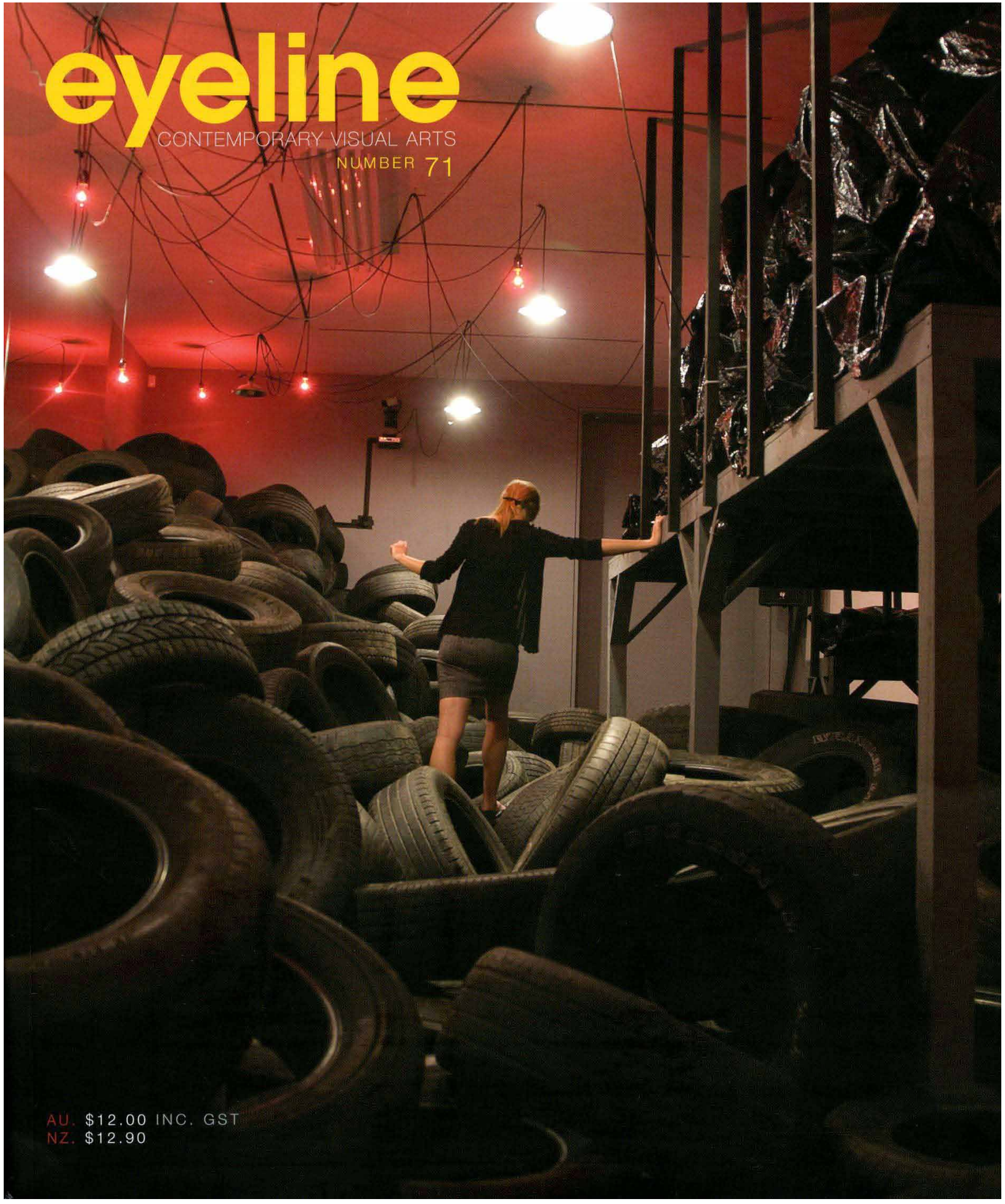


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Allan Kaprow: *Yard (To Harrow)*, 1961/2009
Version by William Pope.L, 2009
 Hauser & Wirth, New York
 23 September – 24 October 2009

Allan Kaprow: *Yard (Junkyard)*, 1961/2009
Version by Josiah McElheny
 Queens Museum of Art, New York
 23 September – 4 October 2009

Allan Kaprow: *Yard (Sign)*, 1961/2009
Version by Sharon Hayes
 New York Marble Cemetery, New York
 2 October – 4 October 2009

In 1961, Allan Kaprow filled the outdoor courtyard of the Martha Jackson Gallery in New York with car tyres, wrapped the Hepworth and Giacometti sculptures in tar paper and invited gallery-goers to heft the tyres about. Kaprow, who is forever associated with the 'Happening', a term he coined in 1957, called this work *Yard*. Forty-eight years later William Pope.L re-did *Yard* indoors, adding Vaselined body bags, mirrors, strobe lights and a taped voiceover. Commissioned by Harvard University Art Museum's Curator of Contemporary Art, Helen Molesworth, and produced in conjunction with the Kaprow estate, Pope.L's *Yard (To Harrow)* announced the New York presence of European gallerists Hauser & Wirth, who are installed in the same Upper Eastside townhouse as the Martha Jackson Gallery had been earlier.

Kaprow, who died in 2006, was attuned to the ironies of artworld success. In the same year of that first *Yard*, he wrote that fame—his 'answering the increasing telephone calls from entrepreneurs'—threatened to overtake the great moral urgency of Happenings. In his essay 'Happenings in the New York Art Scene' he suggested that Happenings, having been publicised well beyond the range of the very few who had seen them, had already entered contemporary mythology and thus, were defused. Shortly afterwards he relinquished the form he had helped invent and in 1966 in the first of his 'Education of the Un-Artist' essays he argued that the artist's task was no longer the making of good art: the artist was 'to avoid making art of any kind'. This would not be the end of art so much as what Jeff Kelley, in his introduction to Kaprow's collected writings, called 'an experimental ground where artists might forget their professional identity and art might lose itself in the paradox of being whatever else it is like, whether sociology, therapy, or shopping. The prolongation of this paradoxical condition was the un-artist's goal'.

Contemporary art continues to approximate sociology, therapy and shopping, but with an ever-diminished sense of this paradox. Inasmuch as artists cannot forget their professional identity, Kaprow's experimental ground is not where contemporary art makes its home. (Shopping might be the sticking point here.) He realised this of course, but seems to have been untroubled by it. A closing passage in his 1961 essay suggests the possibilities in being bypassed by currency and what he called the 'silly melodrama' of avant-garde success. 'I shouldn't really mind, for...the artist may achieve a beautiful privacy, famed for something purely imaginary while free to explore something nobody will notice.'

All of Kaprow's work will be up for notice now with Hauser & Wirth representing his estate, and with his notes and documentation available—the gallery has already produced several publications



*clockwise from top left: Allan Kaprow, *Yard (To Harrow)*, 1961/2009. Version by William Pope.L 'Allan Kaprow Yard'. Hauser & Wirth New York, 2009. Mixed media installation, dimensions variable. Courtesy Allan Kaprow Estate and Hauser & Wirth. Photography Hannah Heinrich; Allan Kaprow, *Yard*, 1961. Installation view at Martha Jackson Gallery, New York. Tires (environment), dimensions variable. Courtesy Allan Kaprow estate and Hauser & Wirth. Photography Ken Heyman; Allan Kaprow, *Yard (Sign)*, 1961/2009. Version by Sharon Hayes at New York Marble Cemetery. Mixed media installation, dimensions variable. Courtesy Allan Kaprow Estate and Hauser & Wirth. Photography Sharon Hayes; Allan Kaprow, *Yard (Junkyard)*, 1961/2009. Version by Josiah McElheny at Queens Museum of Art. Large scale panoramic projection, dimensions variable. Courtesy Allan Kaprow Estate and Hauser & Wirth. Photography Hannah Heinrich.*

devoted to him—his much commented role as grandfather of participation art and relational aesthetics might be investigated rather than simply celebrated. Instead of seeing Kaprow solely in the light of the now, it could be possible to better understand the ramifications of his own 'beautiful privacy'. A hint was given in the floor upstairs from Pope.L's re-invented *Yard* where a selection of material from Kaprow's various projects was on display. Included here among the framed ephemera was a poster for 'Six Ordinary Happenings', a series of activities he performed with others in a tumultuous Berkeley in 1969. In 'Charity', the only one of the six which did not involve some form of documentation, Kaprow and volunteers bought used clothes, washed them in laundromats and then returned them to the stores where they were purchased. Like the other Happenings in the group of six, this kind of apparently purposeless activity, a looped sequence of ordinary enough tasks, took place

outside an art context—the staging ground for Kaprow's earlier Happenings. The 'pointlessness' of Happenings, as Kaprow put it, was always the point for him, but pointlessness in an art context is very different to pointlessness outside.

Kelley argues that Kaprow was keen to shift the site of aesthetic experience from the specialised domain of art to life itself, to what Kelley calls 'the places and occasions of everyday life'. (The street-based activities of most of the 'Six Ordinary Happenings' fit this objective better than the earlier *Yard*.) Key here was Kaprow's reading of John Dewey, but just as important was his take on Jackson Pollock. After Pollock, according to Kaprow, the only place an artist could go was out, beyond the canvas that had scarcely contained the painter, to become 'preoccupied with and even dazzled by the spaces and objects of our everyday life'. The paradox of a work like *Yard* and many of its iterations is that this hoped-for dazzlement takes place within a space given over

to art. Paradox or no, on the opening night of *Yard (To Harrow)*, gallery goers queued outside for the opportunity to toss tyres about inside. A reception at the Frick followed.

Kaprow's conception for *Yard* sketched something between a funhouse and a junk pile. Pope.L, who famously chained himself to a Chase Bank in midtown Manhattan wearing a skirt of dollar bills in his *ATM Piece* (1997), struck a more somber tone. In the gallery a heavy rubbery smell, body-bags and a black voiceover—Obama, an impersonator, Pope.L himself?—hinted at the hit parade of contemporary political issues without committing itself. It was more

fun, and possibly more to the point, to watch people in the space, negotiate the tyres, sit on them, doze.

In his lifetime Kaprow re-worked *Yard* ten times, declaring in 1998 that *Yard* must always change. While Pope.L retained the gallery context the piece can be re-imagined outside it and to this end, Molesworth commissioned two other artists, Sharon Hayes and Josiah McElheny, for short-term projects at other sites. At the New York Marble Cemetery, the city's oldest non-denominational burial ground, Hayes installed a wide-ranging group of signs on the sward, and called the piece *Yard (Sign)*. McElheny made a giant photo-projection from an image of a

soon-to-be-redeveloped precinct of salvage and scrap yards, which was screened on the nearby Queens Museum of Art, the home of the 'Diorama of New York', a handmade scale model of the city dating from the 1964 World's Fair. Perhaps less invitational than Pope.L's *Yard*—there was nothing for viewers to throw about—these two nevertheless suggested the almost endless possibilities in those spaces of the everyday.

Ingrid Periz