In the following article, Felicity Colman discusses artist Robert Smithson’s site-specific works as practices of autobiography written on space. In this thoughtful discussion, Colman assesses the role of the artist as cultural producer, pointing to the ways in which Smithson’s work creates "meaningful" spaces for subjects to consume.

**Passaic Boys are Hell:**

**Robert Smithson's Tag as Temporal and Spatial Marker of the Geographical Self**

Felicity Colman

It's our duration that thinks.

Paul Virilio

<1> Robert Smithson seductively created stories about his activities as an artist with attention to his "duration"; his time of existence. Born in 1938 in the New Jersey suburb of Passaic, Smithson lived in the New Jersey suburbs of Rutherford and Clifton with his family until 1957 when he moved to live in downtown Manhattan, New York (Hobbs 1981, 231-232; Tsai 1991, 6). Smithson's adult life was undeniably shaped by his Pascalian/Sopranos awareness of engaging the circumference by which to navigate the centre of everyday life. In 1972 Smithson described New Jersey as: "a kind of destroyed California, a derelict California."

<2> Smithson's texts, both literary and art critical, utilise a temporal strategy which attempts to account for the worlds of what is commonly referred to as the mind, or the memory -- consciousness, the self, the realms of matter, the historical space of the world -- in their physical and fictional constructions. His writing was informed by a variety of sources, ranging in their scope from advertising pulp to ancient philosophy. His hierarchical bias favoured the artist over the art critic, science over theology, and phenomenological experience over psychology. However, like most dialectic hierarchies, those oppositions resulted in a shifting mesh rather than adverse configuration.

<3> Instead of waiting to discover or revive any "definitive" or pre-existing body of knowledge, Smithson quite mechanically entered an everyday space, such as the New Jersey suburbia described in his essays "The Crystal Land" (1966), and "The Monuments of Passaic" (1967). In these quotidian spaces, he gathered temporal data that is then reported -- information on the human, geological, scientific, and perceptual factors of time. Such contrived and yet contingent journeys provided that temporal "turn" of the encountered environment for Smithson; the invention of a body of experience, activity, and work. The turn produced the determination of forms and enabled Smithson to reify his observations of duration, and the consciousness of a discontinuous, fragmentary duration, or movement. This was not a movement toward defining a future, or the past, rather it provided an activity that yielded juxtaposed information and elements of temporal structures.

<4> Conceptualising and articulating an oeuvre from the perspective of the temporal is complicated by the language of art history. Predominantly, art history focusses upon medium and formal shifts, and stylistic developments within media. However, as art historian Henri Focillon persuasively described the pursuit of an articulation of cognisance, "to assume consciousness is at once to assume form," the act of recognition leads the act of formalisation (Focillon 118). In other words, once the activity of consciousness is highlighted, then the forms of that activity, its relations within the world and to oneself, are made clearer. Smithson accounted for the multitude of temporal factors within his daily life in a way that surpassed the mere chronicling of an awareness of the mediating actions of the abstract "Time." This paper will discuss Smithson's concern with registering an individual's moment of perception in...
geographical and cultural time; in his practice, time is a personal and geographically determined expedition.

Smithson never made a work or wrote a text which did not in some way compel the viewer to undertake a journey. Whether physical or psychological, journeys take time. More specifically, journeys are temporal activities. Smithson's work alerted the viewer to the notion that temporality is shaped and structured by the journey itself, just as the subjective activity between art object and viewer produces a particular polemic. However, unlike a static object and subject relationship, the nature of the activity of a journey is one which gathers time in the form of memories, and one which must result in a narrative which is formed by that temporal gathering, or process of recollection of the memories of forms, experiences, events. The resultant relationships, as instigated, observed, or made by Smithson in the activities of ritualistic journey, physical markers, and their narrative description, all express something of the significance of time to our individual lives. The forms of Smithson's narratives are as many as individually and often quite ritualistic excursions. They are works whose meanings reflect the combined temporalities of consciousness at both meditative and everyday levels.

Smithson's focus on the entropic state of things in his "The Crystal Land" essay is a precursor to everything his later works and texts would encompass [1]. Smithson compares other artists' works and his own, with "real" structures of the world, as opposed to art historical ones [2]. Smithson's project was actively engaged in a polemic with his contemporaries and the modernist art history, but his own work was not solely concerned with the "monumental" structures of the "real" and the art world as Gary Shapiro has suggested (in Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art After Babel [1995]). Rather, Smithson was interested in describing the processes and procedures of the making of art -- the enwrapping of the narrative-as-representation's construction, which would result in forms which corresponded, comprehended, and encompassed the artistic and social norms and processes of the time. He was interested in the notion that temporality is shaped and structured by the journey itself, just as the subjective activity between art object and viewer produces a particular polemic. The forms of Smithson's narratives are as many as individually and often quite ritualistic excursions. They are works whose meanings reflect the combined temporality of consciousness at both meditative and everyday levels.

Smithson's responses to the transformation of time in his era was to hone new perceptual modes for understanding the temporal process. His creation of narratives and representations synthesised this comprehension in the face of a disjointed and heterogeneous time and space. The invention of an entirely new language of art that resists this perspective in a contemporary modernist history, but his own work was not solely concerned with the "monumental" structures of the "real" and the art world as Gary Shapiro has suggested (in Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art After Babel [1995]). Rather, Smithson was interested in describing the processes and procedures of the making of art -- the enwrapping of the narrative-as-representation's construction, which would result in forms which corresponded, comprehended, and encompassed the artistic and social norms and processes of the time. He was interested in the notion that temporality is shaped and structured by the journey itself, just as the subjective activity between art object and viewer produces a particular polemic. The forms of Smithson's narratives are as many as individually and often quite ritualistic excursions. They are works whose meanings reflect the combined temporality of consciousness at both meditative and everyday levels.

Smithson was an active member of a vigorous art scene in New York in the 1960s and early 1970s. This involved a considerable amount of physical time spent socialising, time for conversations, debates, and arguments, out of which grew friendships and collaborations (Tsai 1991). Smithson's daily engagement diaries from 1966-1973 provide a chronological account of this lived time of an artist's practice. Chronicled by Smithson in these diaries is a manifesto of art praxis in the 1960s conceptual scene: Smithson's expedition time, his time for writing, travel, movie time, gallery openings, meetings with artists, critics, writers, dinner time with his dealers and other artists, time to visit his parents in New Jersey, visiting other artist's studios, party time, time forMax's Kansas Bar, time for ordering materials, installing exhibitions (Smithson and Holt Archive, roll #3832). Smithson's social activities are frequently referenced in anecdotal accounts of the "art scene" of the era, for example as a single elusive photographic reference in Fred McDarrah's The Artist's World in Pictures (61). A description of another intangible moment in Smithson's world is in Jim Carroll's The Downtown Diaries: 1970-1973 (1987), and his presence at Max's Kansas Bar is related by Bruce Kurtz (1981) [3]. Robert Smithson's everyday time was enacted as a developing dialogue of modalities of environments, people, and art history. In Smithson's work, time is frequently represented as the quality of the mobility of discussion. The temporality of conversations is conveyed through such works as the mirror pieces, the metaphorical mounds of broken glass which both transport and mobilise thought. The splintering, fragmenting, producing, and enacting the time of conversations (Smithson and Judd "chipping away" at the quartz crystals in the quarry in Rutherford ("The Crystal Land")). Smithson's daily activities construct an art of chronos (referring to daily time) -- buying the newspaper, a bus ticket, looking out the window and recording the view, "Outside the bus window a Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge flew by -- a symphony in orange and blue" (qtd. in Flam 69). Smithson constantly points out the basic blocks of time for his viewers/readers -- the obvious quotidian blocks of time as they exist, without embellishment, or poetics. Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge signifies a specific stylistic moment in time, and Smithson eruditely links in every single piece of
The results of Smithson's trips are installed in the gallery, performing a dialogue with the gallery environment, museological time; Smithson's day, weekend, and week-long expeditions for rock gathering and site hunting taken as a whole amount to a significant part of the artist's practice. Smithson's chronos becomes kairos -- a period of accumulated time that can be narrated time, or organic, or seasonal. His trips to New Jersey are his daily chronos -- providing an artistic methodology of the activity of identifying, collecting, and collating the semiotic of the social-cultural landscape. Smithson identified his chronos as an entropic modality within a kairos timescape provided by the industrial, urbanised areas of Jersey and the immanent richness of the layers of geological and historical time. With his activities, Smithson invents his own stories, his own "once upon a time," and he notes that within the storehouse of kairos as accumulated time, there is inevitable decay, which effects the social use and experience of a particular site.

Third Reel -- To Be Shot

Although Smithson's intention in the late 1960s was to reveal the stoppage of time because of the fact of entropy, by the 1970s Smithson had, as his evolving views on the idea of entropy show, perhaps realised that this was in fact an episodic yet ongoing dialogue. Through dialogue (work, activity) with Passaic, New Jersey and the various sites he visited, Smithson expressed a sense of the temporality of place with various people -- trips with his commercial dealers (in New York, Rome, Germany), with Rauchenberg on the beach in Florida, with Serra drawing spirals together at the Great Salt Lake, with Heizer and Holt at Lake Tahoe, with Dan Graham in the graveyard at Rutherford, in Andy Warhol's studio, in allusions to the possible worlds contained at the Golden Spike Hotel (photographs reproduced in Hobbs 1981: 149, 48, 243; Graham 1993: vii). In all of these instances, Smithson's dialogical activity describes the language of the era, i.e. representative of the temporality of the epistemological structures in place within art categorisation, and signals the direction of processes at work within discrete modalities of subjectivity as well as temporality.

Just as William Carlos Williams' and Allen Ginsberg's respective works noted, Passaic has a dialogical temporality; a social sense of the spatial and temporal paradigms that give that site form, meaning, and direction is what their works describe. Passaic is not bound within one historical material time frame, it takes its forms (present, past, and future) from "living dialogic threads," as theorist Mikhail Bakhtin described the dynamic of the dialogical aspect of language (Bakhtin 1981, 276).

In giving form to Passaic's sounds and scales of entropy, Smithson gave Passaic a language, a dialogue that created a temporal condition of continuity. Temporality in Smithson's "geographic" New Jersey, "marginal," differed from the measured aesthetic of time snapped by Ed Ruscha in his immortalisation of Sunset Strip Boulevard (1966). Smithson's embrace of the decay in Passaic produced a discourse which exceeded, for example, Graham's cool photographic observations of the environment in New Jersey (Graham 1993, 17), which remain as static documents of an historical stylistic moment. Smithson examined the perceptual and physical processes of decay/dissolution and this enabled a potentially entropic figure to escape its temporal trap of sandbox mortality, and this allowed for inevitable change to occur at some subjective point. Hence his words regarding what you might see in the mainstreet of Passaic are still applicable for the individual's perception of the situation.

Smithson's concern with temporality can be read in one of his "manifesto" pieces of writing, "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects" (1968) (Flam 100-113). Originally published in Artforum, this essay outlined Smithson's strategy, methodology, his political, cultural and philosophical position in and of the art world (including references to Marshall McLuhan, House and Garden magazine, and Plato's "Timeaus"). The essay further reviewed the work of a number of fellow artists, took umbrage with an art critic's description of the work, and provided a philosophy for the viewer of works in 1968 with which they might thoughtfully apprehend the discussed artists' ideas. "Time" can be understood in the sense of what artists do, that is, the mental and physical processes that take place in time, and secondly, "time" should further be recognised as a constructed product of "a system independent of the artist." Throughout his work, Smithson would refer to both senses of time, framing his discussion with a qualifier of either cultural criticism or cultural action, as a modification of the type of temporality with which he engaged. From the beginning of his practice, Smithson placed his activities at what Bergson described as "the turn of experience" (185). Smithson's method was a conscious tracking of the development of cognisance of a site, through the intervention of a perceptual framework that attempts to separate and describe that knowledge.

Smithson differed from those artists who were investigating the properties of a readymade object/idea from their immediate everyday, such as in Donald Judd's art.
Smithson's work materialised the perception of geographical and experiential temporalities in a readymade space. The physical organisation of the spaces he used to install work (inside and out of the gallery) were reinscribed with the textuality of a temporally constructed artwork. This meant that Smithson was directing attention away from the actuality toward the idea and the action of art making. The places and installations became conceptualised temporalised territories.

<15> An art form for Smithson was the concentrated outcome of often long, systematic, speculative and thoughtful daily activities. The constant journeys to and around Manhattan and New Jersey refined himself, and with fellow artists (including Nancy Holt, Michael Heizer, Carl Andre, Robert Morris, Dan Graham), constituted a large part of Smithson's perception of the world (Flam 298; Alloway 1981, 41). Smithson's historical comprehension of the suburban landscape of New Jersey informed his later approaches to other sites, such as in the Yucatan, or in Utah, as moments in temporal conditions of the earth and human existence. The reality was that the place called "New Jersey" provided a visceral and reflective awareness of the nature of temporal construction and temporal divisions for him.

<16> Smithson's works, particularly his sites, petition the viewer to question their own assumptions regarding the objects and forms of time. They do this by the combination of their content, form, and strategy of exclusion and inclusion of accepted meanings of things, and memories of objects and places. Smithson demonstrated time and again how apparent relationships between things were surface illusions, and merely the function, partially at least, of cultural and subjective misperceptions. Robert Hobbs, in his essay "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic," disected the meaning in his reading of Smithson's interest in the "time" of the place of the landscape (27-29). Hobbs compared the work of Thomas Cole (1801-1848), an American born painter of the American "Hudson River School," with Smithson's interest in the "eternal" nature of the presence of time in places. This comparison is tenuous, as it involves the kind of lineage of "Time" that Smithson despised, and was at pains to discredit throughout his career as an artist. In his essay "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic," Smithson included a reproduction of another of the "Hudson River School" artists, Samuel F.B. Morse's "Allegorical Landscape," taken from the New York Times arts editor's column (Flam 68; Canady 1967; Canady 1959, 261). Morse and Cole's subjects are typical of an era of American artists who, as David Bjelajac has summarised, adopted an historical revivalist style to symbolize "the fulfilment of Western civilization" within the New World" (27). Smithson dryly dissected the meaning in this landscape, along with some wry commentary on critic Canaday's pronouncements concerning art (Flam 68-69). A strong contrast to Canaday's summary art history, Smithson looked at his landscape and tabled "The mental process of the artist which takes place in time" as a way of providing more than a formal correlation between final art object and meaning.

<17> Smithson discussed time as a "place" or "structure." Through a formative, early experience in Rome (where he visited for three months and staged an exhibition of paintings), Smithson dialectically formed what writer Robert Scholes termed as the "parts of the same, continuous geography" (5). This is an awareness of the sensory experience of reading the signs of the temporal zones of the spatial environment one is conscious of, and is constituted within [6]. For Smithson, the Passaic River is Atlantis, just as it is the Yucatan, which is the Quarry, which would retrospectively signify Rome, which is the museum, that is transported to Utah, is held within the 2nd Street cinema, and so on -- I too am continuously elsewhere, constituted by an iconic or sceptical pursuit or analysis of the past and in doing so, the representation of the future.

<18> This iconic temporal art-as-sign relies on the subjective and culturally contextual situation of temporal indexes, embracing the "happening" spirit of a Popist embrace of the environment, as personified in Claes Oldenburg's 1961 observation, "I am for an art that tells you the time of day, or where such and such a street is" (96). Oldenburg's iconoclastic manifesto is an index verborum -- an index of words which cannot, and do not signify "the original object" (Krauss, 208), as the art subject and object of the 1960s (and 1970s) was less concerned with the "traces" of physical morphology than the relationship of what Paul Virilio has described as the "processing of perception" (1988, 8), with the temporal organisation (not referents) of an art work. Smithson continually commented on this relationship as an activity of the perception of temporal formulation, such as in the following comments made within a curatorially framed discussion between Smithson and peers Michael Heizer and Dennis Oppenheim [7]:

- You know, one pebble moving one foot in two million years is enough action to keep me really excited. But some of us have to stimulate upheaval, step up the action. Sometimes we have to call on Bacchus. Excess. Madness. The End of the World. Mass Carnage. Falling Empires. (qtd. in Flam 251)

While Smithson's words contain a certain degree of ironic temper, they serve to describe his index of time, as one of being concerned to show (the Latin etymology of the index) "all aspects of time," as Smithson commented, in preamble to the above remarks (qtd. in Flam 249). Hence, in the sense I have employed these words here, an iconic index refers to the words, symbol, image, picture or representation of Smithson's temporal iconographies -- as representations that sought to represent various
Tag Time: Passaic Boys are Hell

The line between art and life should be kept as fluid, and perhaps as indistinct as possible.

Allan Kaprow

Smithson's works can be regarded as tags that sceptically commented upon their restricted contextual art world. A "tag" is the term for a graffiti signature [8]. It is a sign that uses an abbreviated code for a specific instant of duration or registration of a sociological temporal moment. This is a private, intensely expressive language, which appears to often just present a simple piece of information, that of a signature. The temporality of the tag is the time of information that presents itself as immediate and fixed, but contained within this exact moment is the presence of mortality, a timespan, and ultimately, death. Smithson understood this about time, commenting on how a solid temporal action can become continuous, and how an artist must be attuned to this potential hazard as he saw it, writing:

An artist is enslaved by time only if the time is controlled by someone or something other than himself. The deeper an artist sinks into the time stream [a reference to John Taine's book of the same name -- in Smithson's library] the more it becomes oblivion; because of this, he must remain close to the temporal surfaces. Many would like to forget time altogether, because it conceals the "death principle" (every authentic artist knows this) [a reference from George Kubler]. Floating in this temporal river are the remnants of art history, yet the "present" cannot support the cultures of Europe, or even the archaic or primitive civilisations; it must instead explore the pre- and post-historic mind; it must go into the places where remote futures meet remote pasts. (qtd. in Flam 112-113)

Smithson's activities (his artistic methodology) for gathering data was Beat-like, but his narration of those actions was determined through his modernist literary investigations, owning, importantly, a record of a spoken version of James Joyce's Ulysses (Tatransky, 265). As theorist Henri Lefebvre observed, within Joyce's site ofDublin (the setting of Ulysses), conglomerations of "co-existent" meanings occur within the "assimilated" temporalities (1971, 4-5). Further, these meanings "proliferate," and can be

literal, proper and figurative, analogical, symbolical, mythic or mystic, not to mention the ultimate unfathomable meaning (related perhaps to enigmas of wandering, death, absence), as well as the different levels of meaning familiar, historical, kindred, foreign and so forth. (Lefebvre 1971, 5)

Smithson mentioned Joyce in his essay "The Spiral Jetty" (1972), referencing Brancusi's drawing of Joyce as a "spiral ear" ("Portrait of James Joyce," 1929), and the conceptual capacity of the intertextual reference of Joyce as a spiral figure, which allows an apprehension of the "visual and auditory scale...no matter how unstable or fugitive" (Flam 147). Smithson's articulation of these fluctuating scales of meaning in all of his essays about specific sites was one of his key strategies for describing and accounting for the multiple temporal registers present in a singular location. Smithson's way of recording duration was to affix the temporal moment to a subjective sociology, so that then his invented modality or structure could be free to "explore the pre- and post-historic mind."

The tag is also a dialogical figure, it converses with other pieces, and other readers of the code. It is on this sense of time -- "tag time" as I will refer to it -- which Smithson continually based his work around (writing, art, film). Tag time is the everyday temporality of the conversation, and the way that a dialogue, a gesture, a recognisable action can become a "tag" that describes a modality of duration.

Smithson was engaged with the "logic" of the temporal tag even as he tried to describe its structure over the years of his art making. This logic is one where the tag demonstrates that everyday time has more than one tense -- that is, it is not just located in the present. Rather, everyday time may contain within it many temporal modes and different perceptions of experiences and memories of duration. Smithson's focus, or foregrounding of his everyday time -- the tag which identified his historical time (such as "Passaic Boys are Hell") -- has the effect of inflating, or dilating (in the Bergsonian sense), the temporal moment and severing that sense of the continuous structure of time.

In stopping chronology, Smithson created, and named entropic situations. This was a contradiction of other undeniable temporal states. Smithson's interest was within those created, infinitely dilating worlds, as in the created temporality of film, and particularly the world of the science-fiction narrative with its ability to exchange time frames effortlessly: one time is held within another in an infinite and continuous
series that is at the same time contained. This is what he appeared to strive for in his representative artworks. Smithson recorded the tags of his contextual time, his works recalling the gesture of the activity of marking a time.

In his "Monuments of Passaic" essay, Smithson restricted our view of the culture of New Jersey by framing the landscape for the reader, emphasising the fictive process with which he draws the reader's attention to such action, through descriptions such as "Noon-day sun cinema-ized the site" (qtd. in Flam 70). It seems that the reader is being allowed access to a decipherable code, but Smithson's intention is far from produced. The signature of the tag is explained, but the information given requires further speculative experimentation on the part of the reader of the tag to be able to fully partake in the knowledge being disseminated and this is all part of Smithson's acerbic joke on the art world. Smithson's dialectic of contrasting an everyday experience with an abstracted perceptual experience is at play. The Passaic essay simply used the organising principle of the camera to give form to temporal perception [3]. Smithson invited his readers to enter the closed structure he focused on, to traverse this "blank"-scape, which was revealed to be anything but blank, to literally become a part of an artwork. He wrote,

The bus passed over the first monument. I pulled the buzzer-cord and got off at the corner of Union Avenue and River Drive. The monument was a bridge over the Passaic River that connected Bergen County with Passaic County. Noon-day sunshine cinema-ized the site, turning the bridge and the river into an over-exposed picture. Photographing it with my Instamatic 400 was like watching a photograph a photograph. The sun became a monstrous light-bulb that projected a detached series of "stills" through my Instamatic into my eye. When I walked on the bridge, it was as though I was walking on an enormous photograph that was made of wood and steel, and underneath the river existed as an enormous movie film that showed nothing but a continuous blank. (qtd. in Flam 70)

Smithson's style of campy dramatic emphasis throughout the essay turns the balcan scape into a fecund site. History is highlighted, "Has Passaic replaced Rome as The Eternal City?" he sardonically speculated in 1967 (Flam 74). Smithson turns his readers into voyeuristic viewers, and we anticipate what will happen next in this text which plays upon the forms of the docudramatic, the emphatic and quite secular tones of art criticism of the late 1960s, Warholian dramatic emphasis (which Smithson admired), the episodic nature of the science fiction story, and other similar forms of the narrative construction of a textual work which plays upon observations structured by daily temporal forms.

Narrating his travels, Smithson's journeyman has the sometimes vague, sometimes sharp, selective focus of a somnambulist, whose reactions and relations with the environment have been sociologically and culturally predetermined, and are thus interdependent. The environment of the traveller is made strange through the magnification of its "reality," the details of its spectacularities, and the reader is invited to enter the constructed world of the narrator/traveller, and to further participate in the perceptual field of the quotidian elements framed by Aldiss and Smithson's narratives. It is a modernist game that shadows the protagonist's movements, partakes in playing the temporal games of speculation, youthful exploration, and makes implicit observations and meditations upon contemporary politics, religion, and the art world.

The closed world of the private tag contains information which may be viewed as dialogical (in the sense of the conversational narrative tone of Smithson/Knowle), but at the same time this information is shaped by our narrators into something which becomes episodic within the whole time frame of the author of the work(s). This was a conscious shaping of the temporal by Smithson, who comprehended that temporal information passed within the dialogical was something that could be utilised to shape this. Alliteration as the Passaic essay, Smithson wished to avoid the Romantic sense of History, a construction of History is unavoidable by this sense of the making of episodic time into recognisable forms. "The calamitous regions of time are far from the comforts of space" he remarked in 1966.
Conclusion

<28> Smithson used Passaic as the form of a quest, an odyssey of temporal discovery and inquiry. Unlike the Classical journey that stages its story in a distant, Romantic, or exotic territory, this quest began in Smithson's familiar suburban terrain. Smithson took a circular course through the layers of time, experience and imagination, and contrived an adventure in temporal modes for his tour of Passaic in 1967, a type of "coming of age" experience in terms of his art world engagement and in the Western sense of the traditional formal education of aristocratic males, who would embark on a "tour" of the "ruins" of the world as a form of tertiary education. As with any odyssey, Smithson is the element of the act of cognitive change taking place in the perception of the quester, who, through experience, subjectively alters the understanding of his originary environment. In other words, the future alters the perception of the past.

<29> Smithson's strategy of everyday temporal odyssey was one he continued to pursue throughout his writings and his art works. By the Spiral Jetty (1970) film and artwork, this playful and speculative exploration of temporal depths had become more proficient. However, another temporal journey, this quest began in Smithson's familiar suburban terrain. Smithson's "artificial ingenuity of time" referred to, acknowledged a sense of "trickery" that the temporal performs upon accepted social languages, and vice versa, and the shaping of that language by the unstable temporal quality and capacity of memory's "shifting perspective." Smithson's exploration of temporal modes was linguistically sited. Language provided a background stratum against which every mental and perceptual event takes place. Temporality was taken as a social condition by Smithson to be examined within the slender site of art.

<30> Smithson's conceptual "tag" may be considered along with works such as Robert Rauchenberg's collected art paintings (11), or Taki 183's literal tags (12). All three created forms of art that utilised a modality of everyday time. This everyday mode signalled a temporal durational motif, a representation of an exit (to other fictional worlds, states of perception), a transformative state that offered to represent an as yet unrepresented, even unthought, mode of duration.

Notes


[2] Robert Hobbs made a similar observation of Smithson's writing, in relation to his use of the concept of entropy. Hobbs wrote that for Smithson, modern art: "has become overrefined, insular, and incapable of being understood except by the initiated. Instead he tried to alter this course of development in his criticism" (21). [2]

[3] According to Kurtz, at Max's after 1969 "almost every night from 11 or 12 o'clock until closing, this was Robert Smithson's territory. Carl Andre, Richard Serra, Mel Bochner, Don Judd, Larry Weiner, Joseph Kosuth, Ted Castle, Michael Heizer, Keth Sonnier, Dan Graham and Dorethea Rockburne were also often there, and occasionally Sol LeWitt...relationships between language and visual images were a major concern of these artists" (28). [2]

[4] Smithson in his Smithsonian interviews described various expeditions (Cummings interview, 1972, reprinted in Flam 270-296) and Peter Chanetzky's bibliography in Hobbs details dates and names of various trips (Hobbs 1981, 231-243). Smithson began making regular trips to specific sites for work from 1965 (Smithson in Bear and Sharp interview, 1969-1970, reprinted in Flam). Hobbs (with assistance from Peter Chanetzky and Nancy Holt) noted that his companions on trips from 1966 to 1968 included Carl Andre, Ted Miebal, Virginia Dwan, Michael Heizer, Nancy Holt, Joan Jonas, Donald Judd, Julie Finch Judd, Howard Junker, Alan Kaprow, Von Kaprow, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long, Dale McConathy, Robert Morris, Claes Oldenburg, Patti Oldenburg, Mary Peacock, John Perrault, and Charles Ross (Hobbs 1981, 235). Smithson also made frequent trips from Manhattan to visit his parents in Clifton, New Jersey, as noted throughout his engagement diaries from 1966-1973. All of these trips were documented with a simple list of the activity of cognitive change taking place in the perception of the quester, who, through experience, subjectively alters the understanding of his originary environment. In other words, the future alters the perception of the past.

[5] Kairos can be further understood within its usage in the Greek phrase of "once upon a time": mia fora kal ena kairo. Interestingly, a discussion of these two ancient senses of time are to be found in a book from Smithson's library: Kermode's The Sense of an Ending (1967), chapter 1, particularly pages 46-50, where Kermode draws upon the theological historical usage of these two distinct notions of time, and their scholarly
interpretations, a distinction still maintained within the Modern Greek language. [^6]

[6] Scholes wrote: "In my childhood, Mt Olympus, The Emerald City, and the great world tree Ygdrasil were parts of the same, continuous geography" (5). Smithson's library has this book as well (documented in Tatransky 249). [^7]

[7] Discussions between these artists were organised and edited by the editors of Avalanche magazine, Liza Bear and Willoughby Sharp (Flam 242, 381, 383). [^8]

[8] For a brief historic, linguistic, and pictorial overview of graffiti, including a glossary of graffiti terminology, see Martha Cooper and Harry Chalfant, Subway Art (1984). [^9]

[9] Smithson staged the scene, "At the Golden Coach Diner (11 Central Avenue) I had my lunch and loaded my instamatic" (qtd. in Flam 72-3). Smithson's use of the camera, and the aesthetics of his photography have been well discussed with many reproductions by Robert Sobieszek in Robert Smithson: Photoworks (1993). [^10]

[10] Robert Hobbs has commented that Knowle Noland's name is "an obvious pun on a man who knows nothing of land" (89). Smithson carries this allusion in his narration, as he ignored any "historical" knowledge of Passaic, situated within the Paterson municipality. Paterson was the first industrial city in America, founded in 1791, and has many "historical" sites. Its primary industry was textile mills, powered by the Paterson Falls and Passaic River (Map and Guide, Paterson, New Jersey 1989). Although an urbanised landscape, Passaic is situated in a mineral rich geological area of the Watchung Mountains (Delo 1979, 11-15). See also Charles Stanfield's chapter on the historical "Cultural Landscape" of New Jersey (43-65). [^11]


[12] Taki 183 has a place in graffiti history as the first tagger who in 1970 went outside the mainly territorial tagging of earlier graffiti, marking his temporal presence all over Manhattan (Cooper 14). [^13]

Works Cited


