NYU Lecture "The Artist in the First Person"



Angiola Churchill, New York 2005

On January 16, 1985, Angiola Churchill, co-director of the International Center for Advanced Studies in Art at New York University, and chairperson of the Department of Art and Art Education of New York University, invited Sandro Dernini for a lecture that he entitled *The Artist in the First Person*. He briefly introduced his experience as a cultural organizer, from Plexus performance space to The Shuttle Theatre. Then he left the podium by leaving the space to the artists, who have collaborated with him in the past, to perform in "the first person" their own presentation, one after the other one performed.: Ralston Farina, Paolo Buggiani, William Parker, Ken Hiratsuka, Peter Grass, Joan Waltermath, Willoughby Sharp, Luca Pizzorno, Arleen Schloss, Julius Klein, Leo Panar, James Mc Coy, Amir Bey, Liz and Val, Snoky Tate. It ended with a general feast when Gianni Villella, a socioligist friend of Sandro, arrived with two plates of traditional "freselle" bread, with fresh tomatoes, hand made mozzarella and fresh olive and basil, creating an interactive art environment in which students, artists and audience interacted together. After this lecture, Angiola Churchill invited Sandro Dernini to join her Department as graduate assistant with a NYU grant for a Ph.D. study in his field of interest of "eating art".



Valery Oisteanu, New York 2005

In February, at the Shuttle, Valery Oisteanu presented *DADA*, a two weeks poetry music multimedia workshop, with music by Otto Von Ruggins and Lubisha Ristici at the guitar.

In that occasion, Nilda Cortez, director of C.U.A.N.D.O. (Culturas Unidas Aspireran Nuestro Destino Original), a community civic cultural center in the Lower East Side, met Sandro Dernini and invited him to organize some community events. at C.U.A.N.D.O. It was located on 9 Second Avenue, on the corner of Houston Street and the Bowery, in a 5 floors building, where in the mid of the century there was the Church of All Nations. After the Church stopped its activities, the building was left in abandon. The huge building was in very bad conditions. There was a big gym, kept in good shape, a chapel with an organ from the old church, an incredible long dry swimming pool in the basement, a roof garden with a playground with a cover gate, and many other rooms In early 70's a group of Puerto Rican community people, among them Carlos Diaz and Tony Feliciano, moved in and they started to develop there C.U.A.N.D.O., with recreational activities for children. Some cultural groups, like The Family Theatre Company of Felix Camillo and the Alfa Omega 1-7 Theatrical Dance Company of Donald Prat then joined them.

C.U.A.N.D.O. Cultural Community Centre







Nilda and Virginia Cortes, New York 1988

Artwork by Joe Lewis, 1985

In the chapel of C.U.A.N.D.O., in May, it was held the *Third Lower East Side Music Festival*, in collaboration with Sound Unity, Plexus/Shuttle and the Lower East Side Community Music Workshop.

It featured: Roy Campbell and Wiliam Hooker Duo, Jeanne Lee and Voices, William Parker Septet, Christi-Hellen-Kral Trio, Jeemel Moondoc Quartet with Bern Nix-William Parker-Ed Blackwell, Luther Thomas Quintet, Bangception with Billy Bang and Dennis Charles, WilberForce with Eli Fountain-Vincent Chauncy-Wilber Morris, Trio with Wayne Horvits-Bobby Previte-Butch Morris, Frank Lowe Trio, Rashid Al Akbar Trio, James Oliver Jones, Jr. and Ethica with Myrna Renaud-Rashid Al Akbar, Roy Campbell, Dennis Charles, Mabo Suzuki.

Plexus ArtOpera "Goya Time, 1985, New York"

PLEXUS GRETTA, SANDRO DERNINI, BUTCH MORRIS

## GOYA TIMĚ, 1985, NEW YORK

LA MAJA by GRETTA
LOS CAPRICIOS by BUTCH MORRIS
TIME: A WAY TO FLY by SANDRO DERNINI





C.U.A.N.D.O.New York 1985

Goya Time, 1985, New York, the first Plexus Art Opera, was presented at CUANDO, on June 13, as a multi artforms event made by three collaborative pieces: La Maja by Gretta Safarty; Los Capricios by Butch Morris and Time a Way to Fly by Sandro Dernini, with the participation of more than 80 artists, among musicians, poets, singers, dancers, actors, visual artists, focused on freely conducted interpretations of the same theme: La Maja.

The impresario, Sandro Dernini

Il Maestro, Butch Morris



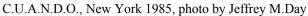




photo by Lynne Kanter

It was performed as an art opera play with the script, the libretto, written by Sandro Dernini, acting as artistic director, with the collaboration of Butch Morris writing the music score and conducting an 11 pieces orchestra at the center of the gym space. Butch Morris, photo by Lynne Kanter

## The Orchestra



C.U.A.N.D.O., New York 1985, photo by Jeffrey M.Day

In the gym there was in progress an *atelier des art* where artists Pedro Cano, Franco Ciarlo, Baldo Deodato, Michael Keane, Anne Jepsen, Julius Klein, Jrelle Kraus, Raken Leaves, Judy levy, Joe Lewis, Mike Lewis, Luca Pizzorno, Jill Lynne, Mekki Schmidt, Berns Naber, Vernita Nemec, Robert Parker, Barnaby Ruhe, Eve Vaterlaus, Robert Younger, were working on the Maja's theme, while on the stage Gretta was posing as la Maja model.

## Los Capricios



Choreography by Gloria McLean, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York 1985, photo by Jeffrey M. Day

Dancer /choreographer Gloria Mc Lean performed with her dance company LifeDance on the theme of *los Capricios* by Goya while a theatrical group, directed by Rajaa Fischer, made by Lynne Kanter, Antonia Iacchia, Karen Kuykendall, Melva Max, Michael Mayers and others, performed the Spanish Royal Family dressed with XVII century's costums, borrowed from the Costume Collection of the New York Opera House.



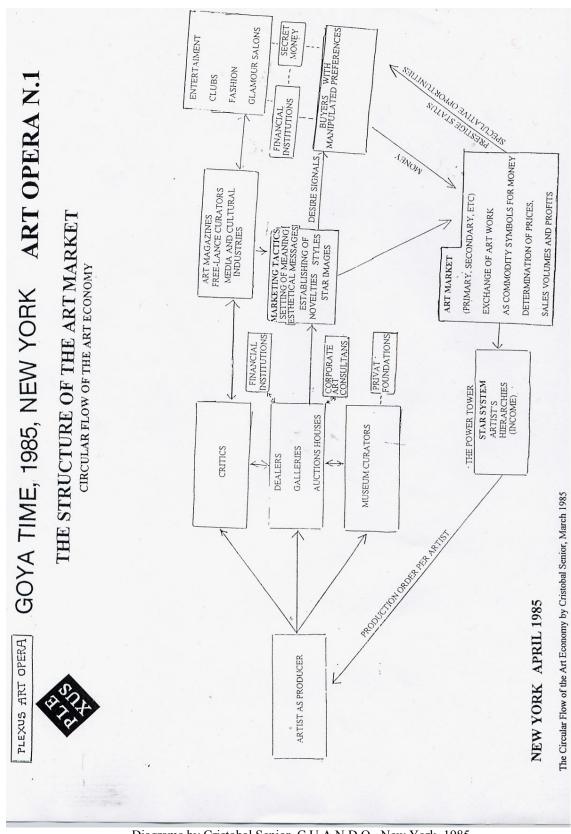
While images of famous historical paintings of a reclined nude figure were projected, against the walls of the gym, as stereotype model utilized in art schools, in the atelier free interpretations of *La Maja* were made on the issue of the limitation of the artist's freedom of expression, raising the challenging question about who was the subject and who was the object in the artworld of New York in 1985, the artist or the artwork?



La Maja by Pedro Cano, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York 1985

To present a view of the current state of art as a commodity symbol, following indications by Paolo Maltese, there was a slide projection against the wall of economic diagrams made by Cristobal Senior, an economist, on circular flow of the art economy.

The Structure of the Art Market



Diagrams by Cristobal Senior, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York, 1985

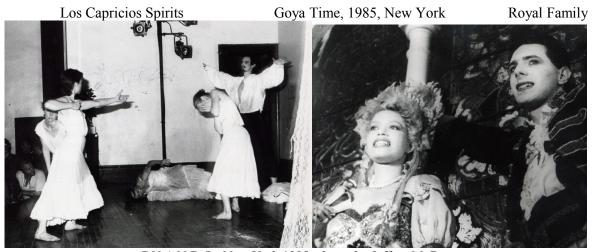
This art market structure was projected at the same time with the slide projection of *Eighth of May*, the famous Goya's painting while the Royal Family performed the act of killing all

artist of the "atelier des arts". The art opera was a compression of actions, historical references, metaphors, symbols and people. The script of this artopera was dedicated by Sandro Dernini to Ralston Farina, who died in Berkeley few months before and creator of "Time Art" concept, related to time, art and gravity. From his experience with "Goya Time New York 1985", Leonard Horowitz created later the concept of "Plexus compressionisme".

"Compressionisme by Leonard Horowitz", 1988

I first experienced 'compressionisme' in the Spring of 1985, where I was suddenly engulfed by a "Total Theatre" environmental spectacular Opera called "Goya Time," a continuous and extremely compressed dramatization of three paintings by Francisco Goya: "The Nude Maja," "The Royal Family," and "The Eight of May." This avant garde "Co-opera" was conceived, produced and directed by Dr. Sandro Dernini, an accomplished biologist from the island of Sardinia, in collaboration with Gretta Safarty and Lawrence "Butch" Morris. By dramatizing these three Goya painting and having this cast of Goya costumed artists literally run through the audience, it destroyed the normal sense of separation of staged theatre, since all at once you were not only the observer, but a participant.

In order to really catch the total and unexpected actions taking place, one had to constantly shift one's view from the Royal family on the balcony and further physically follow their descent through the amazed milling crowd below. The Royal Family pushed their way through the packed gymnasium, past thirty artists doing their simultaneous versions of the Nude Maja, and brushed past me, almost knocking me down. The whole spectacle was tied together and totally reified by modular music created and conducted and orchestrated by Butch Morris and further amplified by the dancing of Gloria McLean and company.



C.U.A.N.D.O., New York 1985, photos by Jeffrey M. Day

The whole Opera lasted an hour chronologically .... but... psychologically seemed to be over in ten minutes. So we can say that because of the concept and the simulsensuous presentation, that there was an intense compression of time, of events, of experience, of total unexpectedness. If one agrees with the theory that art should contain elements of surprise, then this plexus process and operas by Robert Wilson, by Meredith Monk and the Ontological-Hysterical process of Richard Forman is that Robert Wilson, Meredith Monk and Richard Forman tend to suspend time, to Surrealize it, and certainly in Robert Wilson work, to stretch time into a suspended "Dream State," a psychedelicate state. If we have been subconsciously influenced by the motion picture (and now television), as I believe we all are, then the obvious differences between the plexus process and especially any of

Wilsons masterpieces (Einstein on the Beach) is that Robert Wilsons ouvre has a strong sense of slowed motion and Plexus has the quality of Pixillation, of jump cut, of extreme compression.

A Polish mathematician, Klaus Wyborny, working in Hamburg, Germany, a number of years ago (and using a timing devise on his camera), automatically pixillated frames from Citizen Kane and compressed this famous film into three minutes! The result is a very short film that compresses the images to the extent that the people disappear and the images are transformed into an atomic type mushroom cloud with a peculiar black dot that seems like an insect flying in and out of the cloud. This is a transformation of the original classic into a totally abstract process and sculptural vision. And that has been the Plexus Process, whether we have dealt with the theme of Dante's Purgatorio, with the symbolic universal Serpent and with Eve in the Garden of Eden. The very idea of "Modern Art" has to do with this 'compressionistic' process, since time certainly speeded up psychologically and physically for the French Impressionists, who invented modern art by: Improvising, by having a speeded-up moment to moment interaction with the last brush stroke and with the reified overall effect. They did it to the extent that the real subject matter of all modern art becomes the process itself, and any visual subject matter really becomes a vehicle employed in this amazing compressionistic process. (The tail wags the dog).

No painter who has been sensitive and aware of "Whats been going on" has failed to be positively influenced by this direct improvised process. If we draw a line from the cubist space of Cezanne, we can extend this modern compass through Picasso and into the New York School of "Action-Painting," the so called Abstract Expressionism, especially early DeKooning. We can draw another line from Gaugin through Matisse and into Color Field painting, into more interactive color-shapes in space. This flattening out of the picture plane not only compresses space, but... returns it to a universal 'primitive' sense as envisioned by Gaugin and even Mark Rothko.

(if you have a guest and a host, then you have a GHOST... Marcel Duchamp)





Lenny Horowitz, New York 1989

## La Maja by Gretta Safarty, New York 1985

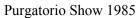
In the beginning of June, a group of friends of Ralston Farina, made by Leonard Horowitz, Arleen Schloss, Willoughby Sharp, Albert DiMartino and Sandro Dernini, after several meetings at Willoughby Sharp studio, decided to organize at C.U.A.N.D.O. a large community art event dedicated to Ralston and to his dream to escape from time and gravity. On July 17, in the night of no moon, *Purgatorio Show '85, New York* was performed by 350 artists as a 3 hours exhibition open call for a future cultural community house in the Lower East Side. directed by Leonard Horowjtz, Willoughby Sharp, Arleen Schloss, Al Di Martino, Sandro Dernini, with associated producers: Ivy Winick, Ray Kelly.

Purgatorio Show '85



CUANDO, Lower East Side, New York 1985, photo by Leonard Horowitz

It was a 3 Hour Exhibition of over 350 Artist's Work, conceived by Sandro Dernini, presented by Plexus, produced by W.A.S., Inc., and dedicated to the memory of Ralston Farina.

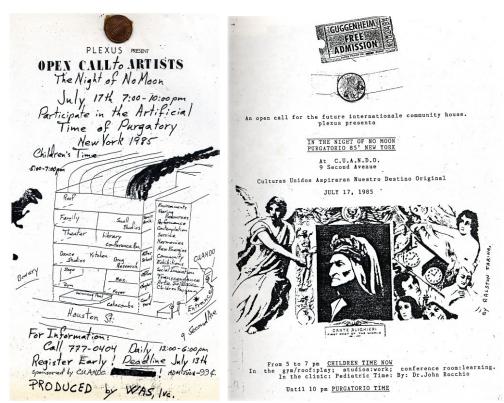




Ray Kelly, Sandro Dernini, and Ivy Winick, at Sandro's studio, New York, 1985

Participant artists were: Ralston Farina. John Rocchio, Tessa Huxley, Saint Mark's Women's Health Cooperative, Billy Sleaze, Ruben Lopez, Kyong, L.A.N.D., Max Hardeman, Frank Shiffreen, Rolando Briseno, Fred Floyd, Johnny Edward, Georginne Lopez, Franco Ciarlo, Bacha Plewinska, Russel Epprecht, Lindy Well, Luis Batances, Cadets Of Cuando, Tracy Sherman, Landy Wells. Vincent Grp., The Sophist, Cemi Art Folklorico: Puertoricana, Jose Rolon, Richard Geigel. Gilberto Reyes, Stevie Flores, Kathleen & William Laziza, Richard Heisler, Hillary Mostert, Adam Noildt, Michele Siboun, Peter Cummings, Christa Gamper, Solvig, Casa Nada, Anita Steckel, Jill Fleischman, Lynne Kanter, Nancy Aacron, Grady Alexis, George Reynolds, Joe Strand, Teresa, Christofia, Sophy Pujedet, Patsy Parker, William Parker, Jemeel Moondoc, Richard Bruce Nuggent, Greta Sarfaty, Ray Kelly, Eric Miller And Company, Alan Saret, Butch Morris, Henry Threadgill, Maya Eizen, Katie Sutphin, Eddie Tafel, Chris Ieexa, Silka X, Peter Honchaurk. Steve Hugglund, Mike Zwicky, Penelope Wehrli, Lairice Persica, Persica, Orski Drozi, Charles Alleroft., Eve Teitelbaum, Andy Somma, Leslie Lowe, Rip Hayman, Martin Wheeler, Eve Vaterlaus, Inghild Karlsen, Yakya Alail-Majial, Doctor Hart, Steve Mill Fein, Amanda Marr, Aekim Knispel, Marcel Fieve, Ken Montgomery, Katie O'looney, Tepi Rosen, Eli Alli, Mitch Corber, Aigar Kildiss, Gretta Soke, Howie Solo, P.Michael Keane, Sharon Take, Jan Schmidt, J.D. Rage, Krzysztos Zarebski, Krystyna Jachniewicz, Jared Shithead, James Oliver Jones Jr., Sachie Akizawa, Brian Bacchiocchi, Henry Benvenuti, Felix Campos, David Channon, Sandra Clothier, Aurora Corteses, Michael Coulter, Carla Davis, Ronnie Farley, Richard Gins, Lauen Hancher, Leonard Horowitz, Sonia Irizarry, Eric Johnson, Chieni Kawshima, James Nares, Ashim Kinspel, Melinda Levokove, Ramu Lunda, Buddy Mailander, Jerry Pagane, Lizz Paris, Teppi Rosen, Salvador Rosillo, Angel Ibanez, Andy Smith, Diane Spanagona, Wolfgang Staehle, Barbra Yoshida, Francis Alenikoff, Maria Cutrona, Gloria Mclean, Yves Musard, Myrna Renaud, Viola Viscardi, Enos, Katie Korngold, Storme Webber, S.A. Martin, M. Spencer Richards, Jim Wasserman, Rob Brown, Charles Compo, Feron Dolce. John E. Edwards, Ronnie Farley, Haki Jami, Jasper Mcgruder, Sally Whit, Judy Stewart, Leo Panar, Margot Leverett, Steve Wodson, Mark Wolf, Matt Shipp, Peggy Yunque, James Gill, Dragon Illic, Ricardo Geigel, Nisei Goju, Ruju Doju, Foster Perry, David Brill. Arnold Wechsler, Louis Lopes, Carlton Bright, Marilyn Minter, Calvin Thompson, Sheldon Moskovici, Robert Bery, Ivan Jensen, Mindy Gluck, Nancy Sullivan, Isak Ladegrad, Willy Van Derlinden, Frank Rabino, Nicola Naimo, Ellen Levine, Patrice Lorentz, Habib Tiwoni,

Purgatorio Show '85 Open Call



C.U.A.N.D.O., New York 1985

Marcel Fieve, Suzanne Halvorson, Hope Martin, Lilliana Luboya, David Hatchet, Curtis Woods, Jeanie Bruno, Grady Alexis, Frederick Kohl, Penny Ward, Sybil Goldstein, Miguel Ferrando, Cindy Luggery, Bri Hurley, Bonnie Van Allen, Joe Alfredo, Noel Mapstead, Ken Montgomery, Jim C., Margarite Massa, Brian Goodfellow, Margaret Bazura, Felix Mckennedy, Shindy Henry, Ebba Elander, Michael Carter, Sarina Bachino, Bill Rabinowitz, Orsina Sforza, Tod Evan, Ronnie Farcey. Christof Kohlhofer. James Romberger, Mara Leader, Geoff Gilmore, Michael Ross, Takao Saito, Red Spot, Alex Pinkerson, Tom Warren, Dave Gesualdi, Melva Max, Vesna Golubovic, Michael Ron, Andre Roskovich, Robert Arson, Patrice Thompson, Martin Wong, Takako Azuma, Niko Smith, Amy Paskin, Maya Eizen, Maureen Eckert, Alex Rottner, Michael Carter, Selwyn Garraway, Albert De'pas, Shuder Henry, Linus Corragio, Mark Kostabi. Liz and Val, Dean Benesh, Swieta Barrinko, James Daglish, Gregor Hanoyok, Bernd Naber, Fredda Mekul, Matte Madsen, Mekki Schmitt, Mona Schmitt, Arturo Lindsay, Ken Hirayuma, Antoine Desparchis, Manada Ma, Nikki Ma, Pamela Kladzyh, Cris And Homo, Conrad Vogel, Diane Dunbar, Luca Pizzorno, Robert Parker, Joseph Nechvatal, Rhys Chatham, Bradley Eros, Aline Mare, Anne Jepsen, Tenesh, Amir Bey, Fabio Della Sala, Wes Power. Snuky Tate, Hanne Laurdisen, Sandro Dernini, R.T. Livingston, George Chaikin, Ellen Christi, Mark Hooper, Willem, Samoa, Julius Klein, Dave Street, Luis Tropia, R.T., Yuri Karpalov, Colin De Land, Nina Connolly, Vincent Chancey, Judy Levy, Alpha And Omega Dance, Taher Shafie, The Family Theatre, Maxim Felix, Arleen Schloss, Camillo, Kali Susan Faistenau, Melody D'arnell, Dana Simon, Susan Britton, Zwicky Hagglum, R.V. Ardsol, Al Dimartino, Willoughby Sharp, Courtney Harmel, Sal Frinzi, Paul Fanfarillo, Richard Malone, Dab And Angela, Debbie Crowell, Suckcess, Regina Smith, Chief Nelson Oceundy.

Simultaneous performances occupied the entire 5 floors building of C.U.A.N.D.O., including the ruined basement with an old dry olympic size swimming pool and the sidewalk in front the building, 350 artists transformed the community centre into a cultural art adventure, billed as "The Artificial Time of Purgatorio in New York, 1985".



Max Hardeman, Bruce Richard Nuggent, Willoughby Sharp Lenny Horowitz, Sandro Dernini, Al DiMartino

In honor to the Ralston Farina's TimeArt idea, the CUANDO space was divided in "Time Areas". At the entrance from the street, it was performed MoneyTime, where 99 cents was charged as admission fee. It was painted in yellow a large quantity of pennies as money art to be given back as admission change against a dollar.





Purgatorio Show, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York 1985, photo Albert Di Martino

In the Chapel, it was held "Contemplative Time", an art installation by Franco Ciarlo, and "Learning Time: The Future of C.U.A.N.D.O.", a discussion panel with Willoughby Sharp as time moderator of short presentations by: Bruce Richard Nuggent on "From Harlem 1926 to Now"; Carlos Diaz on "How C.U.A.N.D.O."; Mohammed on "University of the Streets"; Max Hardeman on "Shelters for People"; Paul J. Goldstein on "N.D.R.I"; Maxim Felix Camillo on "The Family Theatre"; Kyong on "Storefront for Art and Architecture"; saint Mark's Women on "Health Cooperative"; Cristobal Senior on "The Trade Off of Art"; Jemeel Moondoc on "The Lower East Side Community Music Workshop"; David Boyle on "Barbarian Historia"; Willoughby Sharp on "Artificial Intelligence"; Leonard Horowitz on "The Voice"; Nilde Cortez on "C.U.A.N.D.O. Now"; Wess Power on "No Moon on July 17 1985"; James Oliver Jones on "Time Suspended in Air"; Eve Vaterlaus on "Nude in Watercolor"; Billy Bang on "String Instruments"; Tessa Huxley on "Green Gorillas Gardens"; Arleen Schloss on "New Language"; Yuri Karpalov on "7 Loaves"; Sandro Dernini on "Mephistopheles: The Artist in the First Person"; Karen Yager on "How to Catalogue Contemporary Art".



Purgatorio Show, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York 1985, photo Albert Di Martino

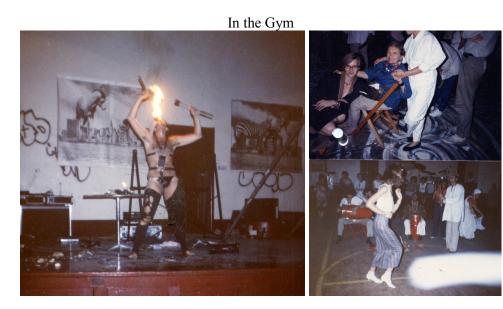
The event started from the sidewalk on Second Avenue, where David Boyle and his Outstanding Renewal Enterprises (O.R.E.) placed the Purgatorio of the homesteaders.

All artists involved in "Purgatorio Shows" expressed a great range of personal visions and aesthetic commitment. One of the common denominators was that the current East Village art explosion hadd to be enjoyed not only by the wealthy uptown patrons, but also by the people in the neighborhood. Responding to a gentrification crisis in the Lower Eastside, in the long hallway and the large lobby, before the gym entrance it was created an exhibition space devoted to the plight of the homeless and to collect signatures for a petition by L.A.N.D. (Local Action for Neighborhood Development) of Mrs. Farley, in support of the homesteader movement in the Lower East Side.

Purgatorio Show



David Boyle and Rolando Politi, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York 1985, photo by A. Di Martino In the huge Gym there was "Body Machine Time" curated by Arleen Schloss and "Moving Time" and "Before and After Time" made by installations and performances displaced around along staircases among all 5 floors.



In the basement, there was "Eros Time", "Alien Time", "Electric Time" and "Fluxus Time"; "Time Now for Ralston" was performed in the dried swimming pool, where Eve Varterlaus installed a large photo exhibition.

In the swimming pool





Installation by Eve Vaterlaus C.U.A.N.D.O., 1985 performance by Gloria McLean, photo by J.Day



perfomance by Ken Hiratsuka and Ellen Christi, photos by Albert Di Martino





Installation by Joe Strand

Purgatorio Show, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York 1985, photo Albert Di Martino



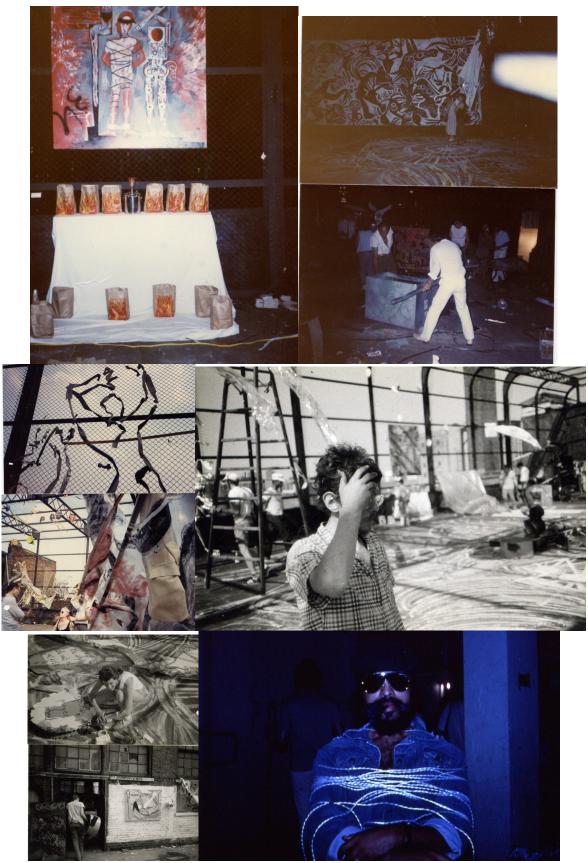
Marta Stuart



Purgatorio Show, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York 1985, photo Albert Di Martino In the courtyard there was the "Onion", an installation by Hanne Laurdisen, while Amir Bey, Fabio della Sala and Wess Power measured the "No Moon in the time of New York July 17, 1985". In the roof was placed "Time suspended in Air".



Onion performance by Hanne Laurdisen, photos by A. Di Martino



Photos A. Di Martino, Purgatorio Show, C.U.A.N.D.O., New York 1985, performance by Arturo Lindsay

At the end of November 1985, the entire building at 523 East 6<sup>Th</sup> Street was burned by a fire accident, exploded in the apartment of Sandro Dernini, who lost all things and his house. The Shuttle Theatre and the entire building was closed by the Fire Department.





523 East 6 Street, New York 1988 Shock Troop Theatre Avenue B Garden, 1985 photos by Joanee Freedom

David Boyle, who was one of the most active participant in the Purgatorio Show and director of the Shock Troop Theatre, invited Sandro Dernini to continue his Plexus effort within the Lower East Side community and to be guest in the studio, on 93 Avenue B, on the corner of East 6<sup>th</sup> Street, that he had with Joanee Freedom, a very active member of the Rainbow Family, was living in the same building, and with David taking care to develop the ruined block as as community garden initiative: the Avenue B Garden Project.



Steven Di Lauro, David Boyle, Michele Bartonomen New York 1997

Anna Jensen, Sandro, Joanee Freedom 93 Avenue B, New York, 1988





200

Avenue B Garden, East 6th Street and Avenue B, New York, photos by Joanee Freedom