

Recovering and Rendering Vital *Blueprint for Counter Education* at the California Institute of the Arts

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At heart of the California Institute of Arts' campus is a vast, monolithic concrete building, containing more than a thousand rooms. Constructed on a sixty-acre site thirty-five miles north of Los Angeles, it is centered in what at the end of the 1960s was the remote outpost of sun-scorched Valencia (a town "dreamed up by real estate developers to receive the urban sprawl which is Los Angeles"),¹ far from Hollywood, a town that was—for many students at the Institute—the belly of the beast. Divided into six schools (art, music, theater/dance, film, design, and Critical Studies), CalArts was the nation's first degree-granting institution of higher education devoted exclusively to the performing and visual arts. "What Caltech is to the sciences," reported the *Los Angeles Times*, "CalArts intends to be to the elusive study of painting, music, drama."²

A fifteen-minute promotional film about CalArts from 1964 is full of placid and reassuring imagery of a string quartet rehearsing, and artists in their studio earnestly at work on their paintings. It was screened for the first time, as a fundraiser, at the Los Angeles premiere of the Walt Disney-produced feature *Mary Poppins*, and describes the changing face of Southern California, apparently soon to be transformed into "the cultural center of the new age."³ The entire CalArts project was funded by Disney, who had died in 1966 and who, in the years before his death, considered the Institute a vital part of his legacy. Like the films and theme parks, it was one of his "deeply personal creations."⁴ Historian Bob Thomas describes CalArts as one of his "obsessions" toward the end of his life.⁵ "It's the principal thing that I hope to leave when I move on to greener pastures," said Walt.⁶ Disney associate Harrison "Buzz" Price recalls that at Disney's last board meeting, held the day he went into the hospital where he died, the Institute was discussed at length. In those final years of dealing with bequests, it was, says Price, "dominant in his life."⁷

Despite Disney's money and his hopes for the place, CalArts was a troubled venture from the start, beginning with an immediate and sometimes debilitating ideological

clash that erupted between the staid, conservative Board of Trustees and the raucous experimental work and attitudes put forth by students and faculty (the latter oftentimes more militant than the former). The full story of the Institute during its first few years requires (and deserves) an entire book,⁸ but lines from a 1970 letter by Maurice Stein, founding Dean of the School of Critical Studies, written a few months before the first students arrived on campus, gives an indication of the conflicts and delectations to come: "This is the most hectic place in the world at the moment and promises to become even more so. We seem to be testing some complex soap opera proposition about the durability of a marriage between the radical right and left liberals. My only way of adjusting to the situation is to shut my eyes, do my job, and hope for the best."⁹

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An important component of CalArts' pedagogic practice and philosophical approach to learning was the School of Critical Studies, of all the schools perhaps the most agitational, even by the Institute's already charged standards. Designed as an analytic, ideological complement to the practice-based operations of CalArts' other schools—an intellectual, philosophical, and historical foundation for work being done by artists, dancers, musicians, actors, and filmmakers spread across campus—Critical Studies was to be the glue that bound together all artistic disciplines of CalArts, the circuit board connecting the Institute's underlying currents. Its original name was the School of Academic Studies, a term "purposely used to contrast the nature of the academic-type courses with those which are basically professional in nature ... Generally speaking, artists with a high degree of *motivation* toward their art have little interest in academic courses, and their absorption of the material is disappointing. After experiments in several colleges, it is now established that by 'tailoring' the academic studies to the attitudes and framework of the artist, the courses can take on special and pertinent meaning for the student. Hence, all the courses listed are carefully planned for the professional student in the Arts."¹⁰

A CalArts publicity catalogue from 1969 explains that the school was to be "directed toward exploration of the common ground between knowledge and the imagination." Political activist Michael Rossman, part of Critical Studies' faculty, considered it CalArts' "vital core" and "not simply a 'general education' division to satisfy accreditation requirements, but a place where the most gifted of the culture's young dream-makers and prophets would be brought to confront the critical thought of the social and

1 Herbert Blau, *Take Up the Bodies: Theater at the Vanishing Point* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), p. 109.

2 Art Seidenbaum, "CalArts to Concentrate on the Pros." *Los Angeles Times*, January 15, 1967.

3 *The CalArts Story* (<http://calarts.edu/about/history>).

4 John Bright, "Disney's Fantasy Empire." *The Nation* (March 6, 1967), p. 300.

5 Bob Thomas, *Building a Company: Roy O. Disney and the Creation of an Entertainment Empire* (New York: Hyperion, 1998), p. 267.

6 "His Own Label Saluting Disney." *Variety* (December 28, 1966).

7 Interview with Chris Meeks, December 11, 1992. CalArts archive.

8 See the present author's forthcoming *Exasperation and Curiosity: Alexander Mackendrick at the California Institute of the Arts*, which will be published alongside four volumes of primary material relating to the life and work of Mackendrick, founding Dean of CalArts' film school. *Exasperation and Curiosity* offers details of the educational philosophy of CalArts (which Stein and *Blueprint* were comfortably allied to), the clashes between faculty and the Disney Board of Trustees, and the attempted hiring by Stein of Herbert Marcuse to the faculty of Critical Studies, plus resulting fallout (including, ultimately, Stein's dismissal).

9 Letter from Maurice Stein to Mark Harris, March 2, 1970. Mark Harris Papers, University of Delaware, Manuscript Collection Number 101, Box 22, Folder #287, "California Institute of the Arts, July 31, 1969–April 30, 1971."

10 "Planning Manual: California Institute of the Arts." CalArts archive, S2-B38-F1.

behavioral sciences, and through this the human problems of the day, as a condition of their art.”¹¹ As far as Herbert Blau, ideological overlord and primary shaper of CalArts, was concerned, Critical Studies would offer an environment where “vision can be connected to enquiry ... We’re going to try to connect other forms of knowledge as closely as we can to the development of craft and technique.” The key question to be asked, he suggested, is “What should an artist study other than the making of art?”¹²

For Maurice Stein, the school’s *raison d’être* was simple: “to offer a patina of liberal learning.”¹³ He described Critical Studies as a “retrieval system at the disposal of anyone at the Institute who wants access to a body of knowledge, from myth and totem to the physical sciences, that would ordinarily be covered in a liberal arts college.”¹⁴ Stein’s mission, as he understood it, was to create a flexible and eclectic course of study, a traditional survey of Western civilization rooted in early twentieth-century modernist thought (Marx, Weber, Freud, et al.), coupled with something more irreverent: a study of ideas and movements germane to the concerns of young Americans coming of age in the second half of the 1960s, at all times taking into consideration the needs of the working artist. In doing so, he was developing his own wide-ranging concerns, as well as assuming a challenge laid down by Blau. As early as 1952, in an article about the impoverished structures behind the education of playwrights in the United States, Blau (first Dean of CalArts’ School of Theater as well as founding Provost), advocated for the exposure of creative artists to a range of liberal arts, to “the lyric poem and the powers of the short story, not to mention the essay and the scientific treatise.”¹⁵ (In the interdisciplinary spirit of the Institute, Blau’s first choice for Dean of Critical Studies was physicist Robert Fuller, who turned down the job and, in 1970, became President of Oberlin College.)¹⁶

For Blau, the focus of Critical Studies was to be “not so much on criticism—there was that, too—but on what was critical at the time, critical to know and think about. It was also a matter of interest and need. We said, look, students today are concerned with the Vietnam War, drugs, the opening of new sexual possibilities, alternative lifestyles, etc. So we tried to get first-rate scholars, orthodox and unorthodox, to engage them on these issues.”¹⁷ The school was, says Blau,

one of CalArts’ great inventions, a place that anticipated the discipline of “cultural studies” by light years. The primary structure of classes, as usual, came from students and whatever they wanted to explore more about beyond their own particular form of artistic expression. I wanted CalArts

theater, film, music and design students not only to cross-over from their own disciplines to all others, but also to have an education that kept them up with what was happening within the humanities, especially the things that activists of the ’60s were obsessed with. There would be real thought given to all of the insurrectionary ideas of the moment.¹⁸

As far as Blau was concerned, Maurice Stein was the perfect choice for leadership of the School of Critical Studies. He is, wrote Blau in 1969, to his friend the novelist Mark Harris,

the real stuff intellectually, and a good warm person to be trusted. Politically he’s more radical than either of us, and that may or may not be a problem at some later impasse, but it will be a good argument in principle. At Brandeis he was as responsible as anybody for cooling the recent black [student activist] turmoil (for which the president, as presidents do, took the credit). His ideas cross barriers in every direction by associative leaps and bounds. He’s as well read as any man I’ve ever met, and knows what’s happening. He knows where he needs leavening and will be responsive to variant minds.¹⁹

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Born in 1926, Maurice Stein was raised in a Jewish community in Buffalo, New York. “Sometimes history hits you in the face,” explains Stein. “In my case, the Holocaust and fundamental Judaism were dominant. It’s fair to say that I became highly politicized at an early age.”²⁰ His father was a master craftsman, and Stein attended a vocational high school in Buffalo (modeled after the renowned Bronx High School of Science), where he studied design, industrial chemistry, and metallurgy, before matriculating as an undergraduate in physics at the University of Buffalo. An immediate influence on him there was Professor Nathaniel Cantor, whose sheer range of academic interests—he made substantive contributions to numerous disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, criminology, and industrial psychology—was captivating for the young Stein. Equally appealing was Cantor’s hope that students at all times acknowledge personal involvement in their studies, and in turn explore how their intellectual investigations might contribute to personal development. Cantor was, Stein explained in a 2011 interview, “a radical experimentalist” whose “method was to assume that you couldn’t force anyone to learn; their habits of passivity first had to be overcome by any means possible before students could assume responsibility for their own learning.”²¹

By railing against the structures of traditional pedagogy in his books *Dynamics of Learning* (1946) and

11 Michael Rossman, “The Fool of Sociology.” *Sociological Inquiry*, vol. 46, no. 3–4 (1976), pp. 163–64.

12 “CalArts: Disney’s Dough Takes Flight, Part 1.” Recorded January 6, 1970, broadcast KPFA (Berkeley), March 7, 1970.

13 Author interview with Maurice Stein, November 13, 2011.

14 “The Concept.” CalArts archive, S2-B29-F4.

15 Herbert Blau, “The Education of the Playwright.” *Theatre Journal* (March 1952), pp. 7–8.

16 Author interview with Herbert Blau, September 23, 2008. “Herb liked the idea of throwing something into the mix that no one else would have done, like having my run the School of Critics Studies. I have broad interests, but would have been the wild card, and probably wouldn’t have lasted long at CalArts.” Author interview with Robert Fuller, November 26, 2013.

17 Bonnie Marranca and Gautam Dasgupta. “The Play of Thought: An Interview with Herbert Blau.” *Performing Arts Journal* (September 1992), p. 24.

18 Author interview with Herbert Blau, September 23, 2008.

19 Letter from Herbert Blau to Mark Harris, March 7, 1969. Mark Harris Papers, University of Delaware, Manuscript Collection Number 101, Box 4, Folder 100.

20 Author interview with Maurice Stein, November 13, 2011.

21 Steven P. Dandaneau and Elizabeth A. East. “The Sociology of Birth and Death: An Interview with Maurice R. Stein.” *Humanity and Society* (February/May 2011), p. 182.

The Teaching ↔ Learning Process (1953), Cantor—under the influence of works by John Dewey—makes clear his advocacy for an educational process rooted in self-discovery, self-realization, and self-education. Permissive learning environments will be populated with un-authoritarian instructors and fearless students, who willingly respond to, integrate, and organize data and facts in relation to their own experiences, beliefs, and frames of reference. A student responds, by and large, only to “those experiences which at any given moment can be used by him, to serve some need.”²² This is a process far from the usual “mechanical, usual performance” of education.²³ Rigid prescriptions are rejected and knowledge/information is made continually relevant, a far cry from the usual business of inert facts handed lifelessly from figures positioned at the top of the hierarchy down to those below. “What is the significance of this knowledge in the life of the student?” pleads Cantor. “What do the facts in a given course mean to him? What real needs are they satisfying?”²⁴ For Cantor, the healthiest school or college is one in which all are partners in learning, where there are no traces of the insecure and defensive instructor, where knowledge is never overly organized and classified in advance. As Cantor notes: “The word discipline is derived from the Latin *discere*, which means ‘to learn.’ A pupil is disciplined not when he is compelled to attend class by threat of bad grades and failure, promise of stars and medals, parental or school pressure, or competitive striving. A pupil disciplines himself when he uncovers difficulties and discovers himself.”²⁵ Motivation to learn, therefore, can come only from the student.

Individual pupils acquire insight on different levels. The rate, quality, and range of learning, and the rate of assimilation of facts, will differ for every pupil. Facts, to be meaningful, must be seen in relation to the problems of the pupil and to his behavior. Teachers who accept this orientation will find evaluation no easy task. The change-over from the traditional examination, which covers pre-arranged goals and predigested materials, to an evaluation of the experience that the pupil is undergoing requires that the examiner believes in a different set of educational outcomes.²⁶

The pupil must discover for himself in the process of learning, as *structured by the teacher*, what, if anything, he *really* wants. What takes place between teacher and pupil provides the dynamic conditions which will be used by the pupil in precisely the way he wants to use them. Whatever genuine learning takes place occurs when the help offered by the teacher is willingly accepted by the pupil. The teacher provides the aid, but she cannot motivate the learning. She

can communicate to the pupils that is it their course, or class, or project. But they alone must answer the question “What do they want to do about it?”²⁷

Cantor’s ideas are strikingly similar to those unveiled at CalArts a few years later by Stein (and others). A line from *Dynamics of Learning* brings to mind CalArts’ working philosophy: “Probably the greatest single mistake parents make in training their children is to project adult meaning into the experience of the child long before it has the need for or the capacity to understand what the adults are talking about.”²⁸

Stein’s time at the University of Buffalo was interrupted by the Second World War and his service as a radio operator on Okinawa (where he arrived just as the major battles of 1945 were ending), then later in Allied-occupied Korea. He became intrigued by Korean society and its powerful ancient culture. Fascinated by both communism and Buddhism, Stein made attempts to connect with the Korean Communist Party because he was so dismayed by the way the American soldiers were relating to the Korean populace. “I was reading about politics and imperialism,” he says, “and even set-up a Marxist study group with two other soldiers from my battalion. I had been a physics major at Buffalo, but with the dropping of the bomb in Japan, physics suddenly appeared to be instrumental in the potential destruction of the world. For me, the question was: how had we got to the point where we had weaponry capable of killing everyone on the planet?”²⁹

On his return to Buffalo, Stein studied in the sociology department with Jerry Wolpert, who told Stein about his time as a student at Black Mountain College (“I didn’t have the guts to go there,” says Stein, “because I didn’t think I had any artistic talent”).³⁰ Stein also worked as a field researcher for Alvin Gouldner,³¹ before starting a Ph.D. at Columbia University in 1949, where his natural interdisciplinary tendencies were allowed and encouraged to come to the fore. While at Columbia, he made contact with various representatives of the Frankfurt Institute in New York, including Herbert Marcuse, Leo Löwenthal and Max Horkheimer, as well as Alfred Kroeber and Marvin Harris, both on the faculty of Columbia’s anthropology department. Stein also took classes with art historian Meyer Schapiro (“a Marxist who could also think brilliantly about Medieval and abstract art”)³² and for a time considered writing his thesis on abstract expressionism. Notably, new horizons opened up for Stein during his years (1949–52) in New York, which involved a sustained immersion in the city’s cultural delights, including the vibrant jazz scene, frequent trips to the Museum of Modern Art (where

22 Nathaniel Cantor, *The Teaching ↔ Learning Process* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953), p. 302.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 294.

24 Nathaniel Cantor, *Dynamics of Learning* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Henry Stewart, 1961), p. 15.

25 Cantor (1953), p. 67.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 201.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 227.

28 Cantor (1961), p. 17.

29 Author interview with Maurice Stein, November 13, 2011.

30 *Ibid.*

31 See Maurice Stein, “Field Work Procedures: The Social Organization of a Student Research Team” in Alvin Ward Gouldner, *Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy* (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1954) and Maurice Stein, “Alvin W. Gouldner: The Dialectic of Marxism and Sociology during the Buffalo Years.” *Theory and Society* (November 1982).

32 Author interview with Maurice Stein, November 13, 2011.

Stein discovered the Bauhaus), the Thalia Theater (home to the cream of foreign arthouse cinema), Amos Vogel's weekly film club Cinema 16, and George Balanchine's New York City Ballet. It was, for Stein, all profoundly stimulating.

In 1958, Stein received his Ph.D. from Columbia's sociology department, where C. Wright Mills was teaching (his critique of the prevailing tendencies in sociological theory and practice, as articulated in *The Sociological Imagination*, published the following year, was especially compelling to Stein), and where Robert Merton served as Stein's supervisor. Merton believed that empirical research/fieldwork about practical societal problems initiates, reformulates, deflects and clarifies theoretical investigation.³³ His recognition of the value of testing accumulated data against a theory, and belief that the two approaches need not be "ranged *against* each other,"³⁴ made a lasting impact on Stein. Just as for Stein "the platitudes of organizational Marxism ... seemed to bear little relationship to the realities it purported to explain,"³⁵ so the discipline of sociology was, by the mid-1960s, hopelessly closed off, overly regimented, ruled by formal theories, too often vacuum-sealed within rarified professional associations and, most generally, the academy. (Wrote sociologist Richard L. Simpson in 1961: "Stein has no patience for disciplinary boundaries or for abstract systems of theory; he wants to see life whole and describe it concretely.")³⁶ The sociologist of standing, explained Stein and Arthur Vidich in 1963, must be able to step outside "the world of his own experience" and by doing so "project himself into the centers of life and institutions with which he does not in the ordinary course of life have direct experience." The job of the sociologist is analysis, an act which when done properly "exposes the glue that holds the joints of society together," forcing us to consider how we live "within what is at best a fairly precarious social order."³⁷

In 1955, Stein—always in search of new frameworks in which to explore material usually presented within an academic context—arrived at Brandeis University, which had been established seven years before as the nation's first Jewish-sponsored, nonsectarian university, and where Marcuse, Irving Howe, Abraham Maslow, Stanley Diamond, Morris Schwartz, Everett Hughes, Kurt Wolff, and Paul Radin were on the faculty. Stein also recalls meeting a host of illustrious individuals on campus like Lewis Mumford, John Cage, and Merce Cunningham. Between 1963 and 1969, Stein was chairman of Brandeis' sociology department, which attracted a number of students and faculty sympathetic to the anti-war and Civil Rights movements. ("I always took the side of the protesting students against the university," says Stein.)³⁸

33 Robert Merton, "The Bearing of Empirical Research on Sociological Theory" in *Social Theory and Social Structure*. London: Collier-MacMillan, 1968, p. 157.

34 Robert Merton, "The Bearing of Sociological Theory on Empirical Research" in *Social Theory and Social Structure*. London: Collier-MacMillan, 1968, p. 139.

35 Maurice Stein, *The Eclipse of Community* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 349.

36 Richard L. Simpson, Review of *The Eclipse of Community* (*Social Forces* [May 1961]), p. 361.

37 Maurice Stein and Arthur Vidich, *Sociology on Trial* (Englewood Cliffs N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1963), p. 1. Consider animator and artist Jules Engel, on the faculty of CalArts' School of Film, as he discusses the radicalism of the School of Critical Studies during the Institute's first few years: "That's where the problem came, because I think at that time the idea was to go out into the street and have some kind of confrontation with the local police in Glendale. And then once that would take place, then everybody would run back to the school, and then they would have something to talk about." Lawrence Weschler, and Milton Zolotow, "Los Angeles Art Community Group Portrait: Jules Engel." Oral History Program. Los Angeles: University of California, 1985, pp. 91.

38 Author interview with Maurice Stein, November 13, 2011.

39 Maurice Stein and Larry Miller, *Blueprint for a Counter Education* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970).

40 "CalArts: Disney's Dough Takes Flight, Part 3." Recorded January 6, 1970, broadcast KPFA (Berkeley), March 13, 1970. Writing in *The Wedding Within the War* (Garden City: Anchor, 1971), p. 287, Michael Rossman offers an example of creative protest. The idea of the "jam-in" at the University of Illinois was "to paralyze the telephone lines, deans' offices, cafeteria, library, and so on, simply by using their own weight of numbers to overload them beyond capacity. Legal disruption, in a word, the first serious experiment with a new tactic to replace the sit-in." Note the similarity between this and any number of examples described by Abbie Hoffman (one of Maurice Stein's students at Brandeis) in *Steal This Book* (New York: Pirate, 1971), not least (p. 212): "By getting masses of people to use electricity, phones or water at a given time, you can fuck up some not-so-public utility."

41 Author interview with Maurice Stein, November 13, 2011.

42 Lynn Sherr, "Brandeis: a Breeding Ground for Rebels?" *Chicago Tribune*, December 6, 1970.

43 Author interview with Maurice Stein, November 13, 2011.

Several of Stein's students headed south in the mid-1960s to assist with voter registration drives and brought several activists back to the department, including Bob Zellner, the first white southerner to serve as a field secretary for SNCC (the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee).

Stein wasn't in the least concerned with the disruption that activities, as ignited by revolutionary students, were bringing to campuses worldwide. After all, as he and Miller write in *Blueprint*, "Most people seem to agree that most genuine learning occurred while revolts were in progress in such widely separated settings as the Sorbonne, Columbia, Berkeley, and Hornsey, than at earlier or later points."³⁹ In an interview recorded in 1970, Stein suggested that the culture of CalArts was likely to be a perfect breeding ground for a unique form of campus protest. "One thing this place can guarantee during whatever kind of occupations and [police] busts that occur is a great deal of art ... We have the best facilities for producing everything from mimeographed leaflets to massive triptychs ... I'm not sure we could go into business for other colleges, but when we have our protests—as we inevitably will—at least they will be aesthetic as well as political. Hopefully with our writing program we'll have enough people who can write coherently so that we can even find out why the protest is in process."⁴⁰ It wasn't just the students hoping to push past textbooks and take up the struggle. This sense of agitation was shared by Stein and his colleagues, and by the mid-1960s, the Brandeis sociology department was full of a young faculty—including Philip Slater and Irving Zola—who were teaching a range of political courses. This was a cohort, says Stein approvingly, "anxious to take to the streets."⁴¹ So inflammatory did the hyper-politicized atmosphere at Brandeis become that a headline from the *Chicago Tribune* in December 1970 screamed the question: "a Breeding Ground for Rebels?"⁴²

With impressive professional accomplishments under his belt, Stein could have continued with a conventional route through academia, but though grounded in the social sciences, he was feeling increasingly divorced from the big theories of the day. "My line is that I should have done my Ph.D. with Thomas Merton, not Robert Merton," he quips.⁴³ Besides, Stein had developed a deep interest in the arts, especially the Bauhaus, with its integration of design and politics (he was much taken with Josef Albers, and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's book *Vision in Motion* was for a time his bible), and when the call from Herbert Blau came, Stein jumped at the chance. He could immediately see that Disney's new educational initiative had the potential to be a wondrous blend of theory and activity, of intellect and performance, of analysis and

artistic creativity. After all, for Stein, an idea might be of worth, but it became more valuable when applied to an undertaking that could be actualized. Ideology was beneficial only insofar as it was a condition for some further—and often immediate—happening or “action project.”⁴⁴ This was especially true during the months of 1968, when Stein and Miller were nailing down the content of *Blueprint for Counter Education*, a period of intense political, social and cultural upheaval in American society.

Yearning for the “realization of concrete possibilities” beyond the boundary of the campus, Stein sought to establish two primary streams within the “energetic and broad-gauged” School of Critical Studies. One was “meditative and intellectual,” wherein major figures of politics, the arts and modernist thought would be set against “a backdrop of whatever significant representation these styles of thought have now,” and presented in an “immediately relevant way and practical context.” The second—a bridge to the design school—was participatory, “the planning side, more or less practical. What can you do? Ecology action, Women’s Liberation, and so forth. We’re not the first generation to be worried about population [growth].”⁴⁵ Stein was by now consumed by popular culture and the arts, which made his move to California all the more natural.

What Herb Blau saw in me was an academic, a department head, and someone who had published a successful book. He didn’t notice that I was totally in revolt against any kind of organized authority, and at Brandeis had been fighting for a radical department that the administration was continually trying to undo. I emerged into the California sunshine from a welter of political mishegas where a great deal of my time had been spent trying to convince the administration not to fire the junior faculty, trying to convince the junior faculty not to resign, and trying to hold the senior faculty together as a coherent group, as they were split over whether classroom disruption was justified. All of them were against the war in Vietnam, but many were resistant to the tactics of radical students, and it was a real handful keeping them on board at Brandeis. At one point there was talk of the entire sociology department moving to the University of Massachusetts.

I was trying to get out of the academic bind, which is something I never concealed from Blau, who to me was a kind of Jewish Artaud, and as far as I could see at CalArts thought he was directing us as an enormous theater company, transforming us into various characters. Although I was always upfront about everything, and while the idea of involving myself in all those non-linear events was exciting to me, Blau somehow misunderstood my true character. He was directing this enormous production, but didn’t notice

44 “CalArts: Disney’s Dough Takes Flight, Part 3.” Recorded January 6, 1970, broadcast KPFA (Berkeley), March 13, 1970.

45 Ibid.

that I quickly slipped out of my role. At the time my working principle was from Groucho Marx: any organization that would have me as a member isn’t one I would care to join. The real reason I was so excited at the prospect of being a part of CalArts was because Chuck Jones was involved. I was a big fan of Bugs Bunny and considered Jones a great artist. I took the job also because I figured I could learn how to make silk screens in the art department. Blau kept encouraging me to push my most outlandish vision, but perhaps he didn’t know just what I was really capable of. Nam June Paik put his finger on it when he said to me, “You’re not an academic, you’re some kind of performance artist.” Allan Kaprow said the same thing. I was going increasingly Dada as the people running CalArts were forced to move in an increasingly bureaucratic direction. I was a provocateur, and when it came to my dealings with Blau and CalArts, I got what I deserved. Towards the end I took to wearing a Mickey Mouse T-shirt, to make the point that no one really wanted to face up to: we were all under the control of the Disneys.⁴⁶

In addition to a devotion to animation (an area of filmmaking that the Institute’s film school, under the leadership of Alexander Mackendrick, excelled at) and the other appeals just adduced, what led Stein to CalArts was a search for a viable community within which he could exercise his skills as an educator. In his 1960 essay “Identity and History: An Overview,” he writes that schools of the period “mirror the dilemmas and anxieties of the larger society far more effectively than they provide shelter from them.”⁴⁷ Stein looked upon the Institute as something of a haven, though he was realistic about its prospects, and had what Judith Adler described as “a fatalistic belief in CalArts’ disintegration.”⁴⁸ It did not go unnoticed that Stein—described in 2005 by poet David Antin as someone congenitally predisposed “to stir the pot”⁴⁹—never gave up his tenured post at Brandeis when he accepted the CalArts job. Stein may have been a provocateur, but today he is circumspect about how those actions might have unsettled his life in the academy. “I always felt a collision with the Disneys would likely take place at some point,” he said in 2011.⁵⁰

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Faculty of the School of Critical Studies—most hired by Stein—had free reign, and Stein rarely apprised himself of the specifics of a faculty member’s curriculum (insofar as such things existed) or mode of teaching. “The unbelievable degree of academic freedom there meant there were no requirements on us to teach anything in particular,” says Critical Studies faculty member Jeremy Shapiro.

46 Author interview with Maurice Stein, November 13, 2011. In a 2011 interview, Stein stated: “In some ways, I have been doing theatrics all my life. Isn’t that what teaching is?” Steven P. Dandaneau and Elizabeth A. East, “Listening to Sociological Elders: An Interview with Maurice R. Stein,” *American Sociologist* (March 2011), p. 130.

47 Stein and Vidich (1960), p. 20.

48 Judith Adler, *Artists in Offices: An Ethnography of an Academic Art Scene* (New Brunswick N.J.: Transaction Books, 1979), p. 88.

49 David Antin, *I Never Knew What Time it Was* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 122.

50 Author interview with Maurice Stein, November 13, 2011.

“During those first couple of years, we taught courses on what interested us, and didn’t even need to tell Maury what we were planning. His modus operandi was probably the wildest of any of the deans.”⁵¹ Classes offered by the school during the academic year 1970–71 include Contemporary American Social Movements, Intermediate German, The Plays of Chekhov, and Elementary Botany and Ecology (held in the Frank Zappa Lounge). Alongside these were unorthodox courses that pushed against tradition: An Ethnography of the Creative Act, The Dramaturgy of Existential Psychology, Chinese Sutra Meditation, Experiments in Tribe (gathered on the front lawn behind the grotto), Chess and Chess Aesthetics (convened in Walt’s Malt Shop), and Basic Car Repair⁵² (conducted in the parking lot near the swings). In 1970, Deena Metzger—recently fired from Los Angeles Valley College for using in a freshman English composition class a poem she had written entitled “Jehovah’s Child”⁵³—taught Alternative Education. Two years later Hans Proppe and Jeremy Shapiro led The Coffeehouse Project: Fun and Sociology, where students would “locate, design, finance, and run an off-campus coffeehouse.” Class times were always contingent on the “needs” of the project.

“CalArts was a unique and explosive experiment, a university without walls, a mix of thought, the fine arts and the counterculture of the late ‘60s,” says James Hurtak, who taught in the School of Critical Studies from 1970 until 1973.

It was designed to feed creative artists both the scientific and philosophical knowledge of a world undergoing vast change. This was a period when textbooks were up for grabs, when people were redefining reality from one week to another. The artistic ambiance thrived as the Disneys took a deep breath and provided us with the opportunity to tap into the undercurrents of the period, when people were seeking new experiences and looking for an entirely new ontology of meaning, a novel kind of renaissance experience, a redefining of truth in the context of the quest of the soul. It was an exploration of the artistic side of the psyche, of the issues that concerned young artists and society as a whole. CalArts was one of the first modern attempts at finding a blueprint for the education of the soul. Critical Studies was the heart that pumped blood through the campus.⁵⁴

Among the 1971 class listings, Hurtak’s classes include Mystery Religions of the Far East: Comparative Archetypal and Transcendental Experience (“Encoding and decoding the symbolic planes of the Eastern Mystery Religions by using the original texts”); Alpha-Projection and Eastern and Western Psychotherapy (“What is the

physical basis of the memory trace? How are the evanescent ion fluxes of nerve impulses, over and done with in few milliseconds, converted into a trace that may last a lifetime?”); and Kabbalistic, Jewish Mysticism, and the Phenomenology of the Mystical Light in the Eastern Scripture (“The experience of Hebrew flame projections or Sephiroth in the alternate states of inspiration”). “I tried to bring together the study of Eastern non-structured philosophy and structured, Western thought,” says Hurtak. “I also taught classes in parapsychology and physics. Mort Subotnick, Nam June Paik, and I connected students to video synthesizers, connected electrodes from their brain into the synthesizer, and looked at how their brainwaves could produce certain geometric forms on the screen. My classes were very popular.”⁵⁵

Beryl Bellman, who had conducted research for his doctoral thesis in Liberia, taught Cultural Anthropology and African House Building and Community Organization. For Bellman, the best way for students to immerse themselves in the direct experience of African culture was coming together “To build a model African community on 10 acres of land near CalArts ... employing the actual techniques of traditional African house builders.”⁵⁶ (The class was an example of the interdisciplinary possibilities of the Institute. The Ghanaian brothers Alfred and Seth Ladzepko, on the faculty of the School of Music, alongside their wives, who taught dance, and several students from the School of Design, all worked on the project, which became a year-long catalyst for bridge-building and cooperative engagement between schools.⁵⁷) In Mark Harris’ Critical Studies class The Two-Mile Course, students who wanted “to write fiction or non-fiction prose will receive experienced assistance in doing so ... At a simpler level we will also engage in a program of physical fitness, running (jogging) on a regular basis, and feeling better.”⁵⁸ Saul Landau taught America’s Unwritten History, a class based on his two-volume book *To Serve the Devil*, also importing his political filmmaking skills (the 1972 schedule of classes states that Landau will conduct a seminar on documentary cinema, “the content of which will be determined by the mutual interests of the group”).

Sociologist John Seeley, a colleague of Stein’s from Brandeis who believed that the role of education is to assist in recognizing the uniqueness of and development of free expression in each and every student,⁵⁹ taught Liberation and Resistance (“a discussion of the movements for human freedom”) and Racism and Education. Daniel Foss led a class about finding the best hamburger in Los Angeles,⁶⁰ and Michael Aldrich, with a Ph.D. in English, and from the early 1970s a

55 Ibid.

56 See Mike Goodman, “Students Strip to Waist, Mix Mud for Native Village.” *Los Angeles Times*, April 27, 1972. Beryl Bellman, *Village of Curers and Assassins: On the Production of Fala Kpelle Cosmological Categories*. (The Hague: Mouton, 1975) is his published thesis. Bellman’s teaching on this subject stretched into the 1973 academic year. In the schedule of classes for that year is listed African Village: “This is a continuation of the African Village project. The class is involved in constructing, on a hill overlooking the campus, various huts typical of those found in villages in the West African forest belt culture area. In addition to the actual construction we study the rituals associated with house building, and the social organization and structure of the peoples indigenous to this region. A field expedition to West Africa is planned for selected students.”

57 Author interview with Beryl Bellman, January 20, 2012.

58 “Starting at a given point at a given time, appropriately dressed, students and I ran two miles together, if only to prove to them that they could do something they hadn’t known they could; that they could *complete* something, if only a run beside the golf course. I also offered Writing to a Finish, in which the student was requested (since nothing was *required*) to complete at least something, if only to prove to himself (herself) that he could.” Mark Harris, *Best Father Ever Invented* (New York: Dial Press, 1976), p. 261. Another of Harris’ classes, from 1973, was Speed Reading.

59 John R. Seeley, *The Americanization of the Unconscious* (New York: International Science Press, 1967), pp. 331–37.

60 Author interview with Hans Proppe, February 14, 2012.

51 Author interview with Jeremy Shapiro, March 1, 2012.

52 Ben Lifson was a photography teacher in the School of Critical Studies: “I asked Maurice Stein about this one, and he said that in Los Angeles, car repair was most definitely a critical study.” Author interview with Ben Lifson, January 11, 2012. Under the mentorship of Edwin Schlossberg, on the faculty of the School of Design, in 1971 student Stephen Nowlin received academic credit for rebuilding the engine of his VW bus. Author interview with Stephen Nowlin, April 16, 2015.

53 Paul Eberle, “Mrs. Metzger’s Filthy Poem.” *Los Angeles Free Press*, August 1, 1969.

54 Author interview with James Hurtak, February 10, 2012.

pioneering campaigner for the legalization of marijuana, taught Advanced Drug Research, which included a voluntary guided psychedelic session in nearby woods, and Cannabis Myths & Folklore (Aldrich was described by *Newsweek* as “a self-styled White Panther,” ready to teach students about “dope, peace, and group grope,” a line adapted from a Fugs song).⁶¹ Nam June Paik offered Video-Videa-Vidiot-Videology (“Exploring various aspects of alternative T.V.”),⁶² and music critic Robert Christgau’s class Popular Culture, held in his living room, lasted throughout the night “and required every student to pre-prepare dinner for the group once a term,”⁶³ as well as to read Richard Schickel’s recently published and critical study of Walt Disney, *The Disney Version*. The critique—and playfulness—of the School of Critical Studies reached all the way to the Dean’s office: the school was administered by Stein from departmental offices nicknamed the Franz Kafka Executive Suite.

“From a student’s point of view, the School of Critical Studies was intended to be an interactive environment where ideas were generated,” says film student Steve McAdam, who like every student at the Institute was required to take a number of classes offered by the school.

We would often attend class and discover that the instructor had no agenda. We had to strike up a conversation, which became the content of our discussion for the next three hours. Some students thrived in that environment, but for others it was uncomfortable. In one class I remember sitting in complete silence until someone said something. In another, Nazi propaganda was projected on the wall of a classroom. No explanation, no introduction, no specific intended outcome. We sat for probably two hours watching these films, at the end of which the instructor asked us to write a paper about our responses to what we had been looking at. One day we were asked to arrive dressed in only black and white. We did this, and each one of us had to explain why we chose more white than black, or vice versa. The instructor explained that dominance of one color over another is an indicator of personality. Even though for most people choosing one color over the other was probably just due to whatever they happened to have in their closet, such things, we were told, communicate either a dark forbidding character or more positive, outgoing thoughts.

Critical Studies was where students were subjected to unexpected experiences beyond their regular comfort zone as both individuals and artists. It was about new perspectives, about gaining an understanding of self and work and the world around us. The instructors would try to trigger anything in us that would break the train of our everyday thought

and lead to bold insights and ideas. They guided us, but it was always us students who did the actual exploration.⁶⁴

• • •

In the late 1960s, Maurice Stein began work on what became *Blueprint for Counter Education*, eventually published in 1970, a project that exemplifies the radical pedagogies of the period, as well as offering hints about what he was planning to implement at the School of Critical Studies.

Brimming with provocations, critiques and correctives, the esoteric *Blueprint* was a response to what Stein described in a 1967 essay as the “conventional academic settings where there are strong pressures to accept the norms regulating methods of instruction, modes of collegiality, and styles of research and reporting.”⁶⁵ For Stein, a sociologist’s desire to maintain barriers between political beliefs and “emotional hang-ups”⁶⁶ could only bolster the tedious, overly-ordered and detached academic world. This was a far cry from his favored applied sociological practice, one that by looking beyond the discipline’s traditional frontiers (including into one’s “personal dimensions”)⁶⁷ and anchoring itself “deeply in the process of social change”⁶⁸ of the 1960s, would likely “liberate human potentialities.”⁶⁹ As one commentator wrote, Stein’s approach “reaffirms, in both intent and effect, the intimate connection between event and observer and the inevitable way in which each influences the other.”⁷⁰ The School of Critical Studies was Stein’s attempt to put into practice a new and transparently subjective sociology, one that was known as imaginative and “humanistic”—almost poetic—instead of “scientific.”⁷¹ CalArts could become a hub where all ideas and arguments were welcome, where the painful and atomizing bureaucratization, industrialization and urbanization of modern society (a process analyzed by Stein in his 1960 book *The Eclipse of Community*) could be countered, where some kind of introspection, tribal unity and egalitarianism could be achieved. All this, with *Blueprint* as an indeterminate yet still guiding manifesto.

Stein’s *Blueprint* project—a stunning example of how, even in print form, information and knowledge can be presented interactively and open-endedly, in a creative and non-linear way—took root years before CalArts existed. The idea first came to life in one of his long-standing Brandeis classes, Sociology of Literature, which he had been teaching for several years, taking students from the oral tradition of storytelling through Shakespeare to theorists like Walter Ong.⁷² Stein’s co-author on *Blueprint* was Larry Miller (born 1946), a native of suburban Boston

64 Author interview with Steve McAdam, September 10, 2011.

65 Maurice Stein, “On the Limits of Professional Thought” in Kurt H. Wolff and Barrington Moore, Jr. (eds.), *The Critical Spirit: Essays in Honor of Herbert Marcuse* (Boston: Beacon, 1967), pp. 364–65.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 Murray B. Meld, Review of *Reflections on Community Studies*. *Social Work*, October 1965, p. 118.

71 Maurice Stein, “The Poetic Metaphors of Sociology” in *Sociology on Trial* (ed. Maurice Stein and Arthur Vidich). Englewood Cliffs N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1963.

72 Author interview with Larry Miller, November 13, 2011. For Jeremy Shapiro, on the faculty of the School of Critical Studies, *Blueprint* was “a representation of the way Maurice’s mind works, a reflection of his way of knowing and learning. When I was at Brandeis, I would go his house and he would have ten books open at any one time on his desk. He would read whatever one he happened to grab at any one time. Maurice had a particular way of assembling knowledge. *Blueprint* is an intellectual model, but it’s also a highly personal model of learning.” Author interview with Jeremy Shapiro, March 1, 2012.

61 “Disney’s Dream School.” *Newsweek*, November 8, 1971, p. 67. Don Levy: “Aldrich [had] done incredibly good research into cannabis and the whole drug scene. This was incredibly important to have in an art school because there’s almost no student who hasn’t smoked marijuana and hasn’t tasted LSD, methedrine, everything that’s going on. And it’s important that people should know about this and its effect on arts right throughout the world, the history of art.” Don Levy, “Interview with Don Levy.” *Cantrill Filmnotes*, August 1973, p. 19. John Baldessari recalls a class on “joint rolling.” Oral history interview with John Baldessari, April 1992. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

62 This title mirrors that of Judson Rosebush, *Nam June Paik: Videa ‘n’ Videology 1959–1973* (Syracuse, NY: Everson Museum of Art, 1974), an illustrated anthology of writings by and about Paik.

63 Robert Christgau, *Going into the City* (New York: Dey Street Books, 2015), p. 220.

who at high school had been involved with Friends of SNCC and then, after dropping out of college in 1966, in the New England office of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). He was one of a handful of Brandeis graduate students who accompanied an enthusiastic Stein to CalArts, where he served as Assistant Dean.⁷³ Miller explains:

Maury already had a working manuscript—one revised countless times based on suggestions from students—when he called on me for editorial assistance. It was shaggy and shapeless, a vast study of higher education and how modernism had become embodied in the academy as a repressive caricature of itself, and about how what Maury called “post-modernism” was a continuation of the real energies of modernism by other means. Nonetheless, what Maury showed me was an indispensable predecessor of *Blueprint*. The themes were all there. The shift from a book about modernism and education to charts focusing on student processes was something that happened during our collaboration.

There is no doubt in my mind that a straight line exists from my time with SDS and as an activist and *Blueprint*, and from there to the School of Critical Studies at CalArts. I felt that SDS’s lack of theory—its lack of comprehension of what we as a group were doing, of what was happening to us—was extremely significant when it came to the fragmentation and ultimate demise of the organization. I had left Brandeis as an undergraduate history major to work with SDS, but returned as a sociology major. I was trying to find a locus for everything I needed to know, for everything we as a movement needed to know if we were to remain coherent and relevant.⁷⁴

An important starting point for Stein and Miller’s conception of *Blueprint* came after they visited a gallery in Harvard Square, where both were entranced by Scottish artist Eduardo Paolozzi’s 1967 Surrealist-influenced multi-colored collage project *Moonstrips Empire News*. Comprised of one hundred unbound pages, some made of clear acetate, and packaged in a brightly colored formed acrylic box, Paolozzi’s book—a “psychedelic compendium of texts and images”⁷⁵ that was inspired by Marcel Duchamp’s 1934 *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Green Box)*—was published in London in an edition of five hundred. With its vibrant assemblage of texts (newspaper articles, tables of contents, etc.), illustrations, photographs (film strips, Disney characters, advertisements, etc.), and abundance of typefaces, the work is a provocative synthesis of word and image. As Deborah Wye and Wendy Weitman explain, “Paolozzi presents the sheets without a predetermined

order, inviting the owner to arrange and rearrange them, editing or curating the book as they see fit.”⁷⁶ For Stein and Miller, the notion of a linear book for their own project was soon rejected. While the source of *Blueprint*’s contents was their own enthusiasms and concerns, the idea of pages randomly placed together in a box, thus enabling each reader/viewer/participant (r/v/p) to arrange them as required, in a hierarchy and structure of their choosing, took hold. After spreading their work out on a table in Stein’s attic, says Miller, “it occurred to us that integrating our ideas into a series of large charts made sense, even more than the intermedia form of Paolozzi’s book. Maury and his wife went away, and over that weekend I came up with the first sketch of the first chart. From then on our conception of what we doing changed completely.”⁷⁷

Blueprint is slipcased, containing a two-hundred-page (unnumbered) book alongside three large (37 ¼ × 45 inches) folded posters. The posters, designed by Marshall Henrichs, are highly visualized and intricately designed, each packed with a mass of names, shapes, and lines. Individuals (Picasso, Reich, Veblen, Moholy-Nagy, Fromm, Neumann, Trilling, Myrdal), books and publications (*Partisan Review*, *Ramparts*), place names (Madison Ave., Africa, Esalen), eras (Primitives, Middle Ages, Renaissance), political concepts (Vanguardism, Women’s Liberation), artistic movements (Abstract Expressionism, Guerilla Theater) and visual puns (the Pentagon is surrounded on five sides by General Electric, General Foods, General Motors, General Education, and General Dynamics) are included in what Stein described as “an implosion of typography and graphics.”⁷⁸

All text is printed either black on white or white on black, in a variety of evocative typefaces, surrounded by splashes of red, laying out what Stein and Miller considered to be primary fields of influence on contemporary philosophy, culture and society. “Inside this box,” it is written on the back, “are three charts and a book, the tools for creating a new educational environment. This counter-university makes obsolete the traditional university process. Surrounded by the polyphonic charts, the participant will be confronted by ideas and issues that compel him to interact with everything going on around him—from movies, to riots, to political campaigns. There is no text book, no syllabus, no final exam; and the ‘faculty’ includes Marcuse, McLuhan, Eldridge Cleaver, and Jean-Luc Godard. THE REVOLUTION STARTS HERE.”⁷⁹ In the opening lines of the introduction to their book, Stein and Miller set the tone by questioning whether they should even be named as “authors” of their project, cheekily explaining that it is an “authority-laden term.”

73 This title, in other schools of the Institute, was Associate Dean. As Miller reports: “I was structurally equivalent to an Associate Dean but, because of my youth and vast inexperience, among other things, clearly slotted in at a lower level.” Other Brandeis students who followed Stein to CalArts include Sherry Weber Nicholson, Donna Huse, Daniel Foss, and Jeremy Shapiro. Shapiro, a graduate student, recalls attending a lecture about CalArts given by Stein on the Brandeis campus in 1970 called *The New Bauhaus*. Shapiro taught at CalArts between 1970 and 1975 in the School of Critical Studies. Author interview with Jeremy Shapiro, March 1, 2012. Mark Harris, on the faculty of the School of Critical Studies in 1970, writes that Stein spoke of those students who accompanied him from Brandeis as his “constituency.” Harris (1976), p. 262.

74 Author interview with Larry Miller, November 13, 2011.

75 Deborah Wye and Wendy Weitman. *Eye on Europe: Prints, Books & Multiples, 1960 to now* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2006), p. 40.

76 Ibid.

77 Author interview with Larry Miller, November 13, 2011.

78 Author interview with Maurice Stein, November 13, 2011.

79 Stein and Miller (1970). Larry Miller says these lines were written by someone at Doubleday, *Blueprint*’s publisher, probably William Whitehead.

For Stein and Miller, *Blueprint* was “planned as a highly participative series of art-life-politics games.” Taken together, the three charts (“they tried to depict the whole body of Western Thought in an effort to somehow focus it in the form of a critique of current affairs,” says Stein⁸⁰) are a highly visualized, if gnomic, embodiment of CalArts’ pedagogic philosophy—“no information in advance of need”—with the r/v/p obliged to find his own highly subjective route through this mapping of ideas, creating endless combinations of engagement by moving (preferably, suggest Miller and Stein, in concert with others) from concept to concept, slogan to slogan, from one ideological movement and historical process to another, discovering names and books and ideas along the way and at his own pace. A process of self-education is thereby initiated as the r/v/p draws his own conclusions, inevitably choosing to spend more time investigating one area of a chart than another. The rigor of the entire project is determined ultimately by the willingness of the r/v/p to move beyond three the charts. From today’s point of view and current technology, *Blueprint* represents a carefully plotted set of analogue connections and interactions, anticipating the predominance of the digital hyperlink. It is the Internet long before its time.

Blueprint is also a vivid attempt to attack the corporatization of higher education and what Stein and Miller called “the bureaucratization of the imaginative” (a line borrowed from literary theorist Kenneth Burke, whose books *Attitudes to History* and *Permanence and Change* were an influence on Stein). In search of new conceptions of the university, digging away for an antidote to the anomie, the question Stein and Miller asked themselves was: is there an intellectual underpinning that can be brought to bear in the classroom which will engage students and inform the clarion calls being heard across campus emanating from the radicals’ bullhorn? A memo by Stein and Miller from 1970, sent to the Deans of the other CalArts schools, sheds light on how, in theory, they felt that *Blueprint* and, more generally, the School of Critical Studies, might function within the overall Institute. Every faculty member of the school, they write, “will, for the first 12 week period, undertake the following responsibilities. They will first work with five students from the several art schools in a group devoted to establishing the contours of intellectual history. This course will meet in one of two large sections where Larry and I will use the charts as a basis for recovering and rendering vital the documents of modernism.” Making venerable texts relevant to the contemporary scene was the name of their game.

Like every engaged faculty member at CalArts, Stein and Miller’s emphasis was on developing their

school’s curriculum around students, rather than inserting students into a preconceived structure or imposing a preexisting canon of content. Theirs was a rejection of fixed templates and predigested programs, as well the traditional hierarchy of the academy. At CalArts, all were students with varying degrees of experience. As Stein and Miller explain in their memo, faculty of the School of Critical Studies were free to work with students on whatever project they wanted to, with an expectation that each faculty member

will offer an individual project of his own for students to participate in. This is the closest we will come to offering formal courses and will be instituted during the second period of the Institute’s first year. Close contact with a small number of students plus involvement in the art programs should equip our people to know the kinds of projects that will interest the art students and therefore provide [for] students interested in these offerings when they are arranged. We also plan to provide the opportunity for teaching such workshops in areas of their choice to all participants in the Institute. We plan to permit almost any time span or teaching rhythm, leaving scheduling in the hands of the person leading the group ...

We have tried to provide a matrix of resources and a group of people who will be able to sustain mutual education without the formal apparatus ordinarily associated with schools. We are trying to avoid the language of courses, credits, grades, work load, teaching load, and the like. Our aim is to permit anyone with a set of serious intellectual concerns to make these concerns visible and to make the appropriate arrangements for sharing them.

The charts of *Blueprint* reflect the task Stein and Miller hope the r/v/p will rise to: reflecting on what in 1963 Stein described as the fantastically complex “ever-changing collage”⁸¹ of modern society, as well as finding a personalized way of navigating through the mass of data that the informed citizen of the period should be familiar with. The hope, for Stein and Miller, is that every r/v/p—in bringing their specific interests, predilections, pursuits and biases to bear—will undertake this engagement in their own particular way. One requirement of Stein’s original Brandeis class was that students produce an alternative reading list, a task that reflects a crucial line from *Blueprint*: “We urge the reader to do the same thing that many of our students did: design your own wall charts as soon as you finish learning from ours.”

In a 1966 essay, Marshall McLuhan explained that education “has to move from packaging to probing, from the mere conveying of dates to the experimental discovering of new dimensions of experience.”⁸² McLuhan’s

81 Stein (1963), p. 180.

82 Marshall McLuhan, “Electronics and the Psychic Drop-Out” in Satu Repo (ed.), *This Book is About Schools* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), p. 389.

80 Dandaneau and East (2011) (*Listening to Sociological Elders*), p. 138.

method involved what he called “probes:” “I’m making explorations. I don’t know where they’re going to take me. My work is designed for the pragmatic purpose of trying to understand our technological environment and its psychic and social consequences. But my books constitute the process rather than the completed product of discovery; my purpose is to employ facts as tentative probes, as means of insight, of pattern recognition, rather than to use them in the traditional and sterile sense of classified data, categories, containers. I want to map new terrain rather than chart old landmarks.”⁸³

Blueprint is a creative example of how McLuhan’s “probes” dig deep enough to issue forth a tantalizing spectrum of ideas, names and concepts, yet still leave the process sufficiently open to encourage the r/v/p to move in directions most useful and appealing for further investigation.⁸⁴ Stein made efforts to assist CalArts students in this respect. “Even the arrangement of titles at the campus bookstore was made according to the charts,” he says.⁸⁵ *Blueprint* opens with an essay of some thirty pages by Stein and Miller, followed by approximately one hundred pages of indices (some of which include the names of several members of the School of Critical Studies faculty, including Jeremy Shapiro, Michael Aldrich, and Sherry Weber), all a guide to future exploration. “The manifold tables of contents from books and magazines,” write Stein and Miller, “must be viewed as invitations.”⁸⁶ (The two were aware of their project’s deficiencies and lacunae, at least by time they received “many valuable and powerful counter-charts ... The subject area explored most widely by students and neglected most shamefully by us is music.”)⁸⁷

Blueprint was Stein and Miller’s attempt to catalogue the ubiquitous cultural and political ideas at play during the period, an appeal to young radicals who they hoped would take time to venture into the extended body of thought that had contributed to the contemporary debate, to the varied and often conflicting present day considerations of society. Perusing their recommended reading list, we find a comprehensive survey of modernist thought, with McLuhan and Marcuse—“the central unifiers,” as Stein calls them (both men were friends of his)⁸⁸—at its center. These were two figures essential to Stein’s teaching at Brandeis, where he created precursors of the charts on blackboards (“It was all about putting these ideas and authors up against the wall, to use a phrase of the time.”)⁸⁹ For Stein and Miller, Marcuse and McLuhan’s ideas—“Two Critical Responses to Advanced Industrial Society”—were powerfully complementary, and by including their ideas side by side on the same piece of paper, a creative friction emerged. On an early iteration

83 Eric Norden, “The Playboy Interview: Marshall McLuhan.” *Playboy*, March 1969.

84 See Gordon (2010), p. 23: “McLuhan’s probes were drills. He used them to piece the crust of mankind’s dulled perceptions, but his principal interest was rarely, if even, in getting a hole finished, for that would be a goal-orientated and linear activity. The drill, after all, is a spiral, and what it churns up was the important matter for McLuhan.”

85 Author interview with Maurice Stein, November 13, 2011.

86 Stein and Miller (1970).

87 Stein and Miller (1970). Stein and Miller continue: “We expect that a music blueprint will soon be forthcoming and indeed, from other materials collected at Brandeis and at Clark, we expect that high-information, counter-educative blueprints will appear shortly. These charts will parallel ours but will be oriented to such diverse fields as the cinema, alchemy, astrology, consciousness-expansion, black culture, photography, clothing, and women’s liberation.” Says Stein: “We should have mentioned John Cage, the Beatles, and any number of others.” Author interview with Maurice Stein, November 13, 2011. Larry Lipton’s review of *Blueprint* points out that another massive swath of work and ideas left out is the “whole West Coast movement,” which is “merely penciled in, so to speak, for future consideration.” Lawrence Lipton, “Education Diseducation Reeducation.” *Los Angeles Free Press*, June 5, 1970.

88 Author interview with Maurice Stein, November 13, 2011.

89 Author interview with Maurice Stein, November 13, 2011.

of one of the charts (compiled in July of 1968, a few weeks after the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy, and President Johnson’s announcement that he would not seek renomination in the forthcoming election⁹⁰) appears a list of “themes” that—given further investigation, suggested Stein and Miller—would enable the commonalities between Marcuse and McLuhan to reveal themselves. It is also, not coincidentally, a catalog of some of the key political and social issues that preoccupied the United States in the second half of the 1960s.

Each Post Modern Theme can be Poured through
TWO Thought-Funnels

MARCUSE	McLUHAN
Repressive	The Emerging
Desublimation	Audio-Tactile Environment

Vietnam—The War—The Draft
Campus Revolts—Berkeley, Columbia, Nanterre
Black Power, Riots
Poverty amidst Affluence
The Non-Western World (Poverty amidst squalor)
Violence—Non-violence
Drugs and Drug Subculture
Media, T.V., Movies, Pop Music, Painting
Search for New Life Styles—Radicals in Professions,
Hippies, The New Woman
Repressive Tolerance
Information Explosion
Destruction of the Environment—Smog, Pollution
Generation Gaps
Credibility Gaps
Language learning
Migration

Other names included on the three charts include Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Susan Sontag, Norman Mailer, Clement Greenberg, Paul Goodman, Eldridge Cleaver, Jean Genet, Lewis Mumford, George Steiner, and Norman O. Brown. The work of these authors and thinkers, wrote Stein and Miller, in reshaping the traditions from which they drew, was “interdisciplinary in the most profound sense of that much abused term. They rest upon and carry forward the reorientation of entire bodies of thought, ordinarily associated with a given scientific social scientific or humanistic discipline, around problems of radical criticism and radical reconstruction.”⁹¹ Crucially, cinema plays a significant role in Stein and Miller’s fields of influence and inquiry, with Chaplin, Eisenstein, Griffith, Resnais’ *Hiroshima Mon Amour* and *La Guerre est Finie*

90 Some of these early versions of the charts are contained in the *Blueprint* book.

91 Stein and Miller (1970).

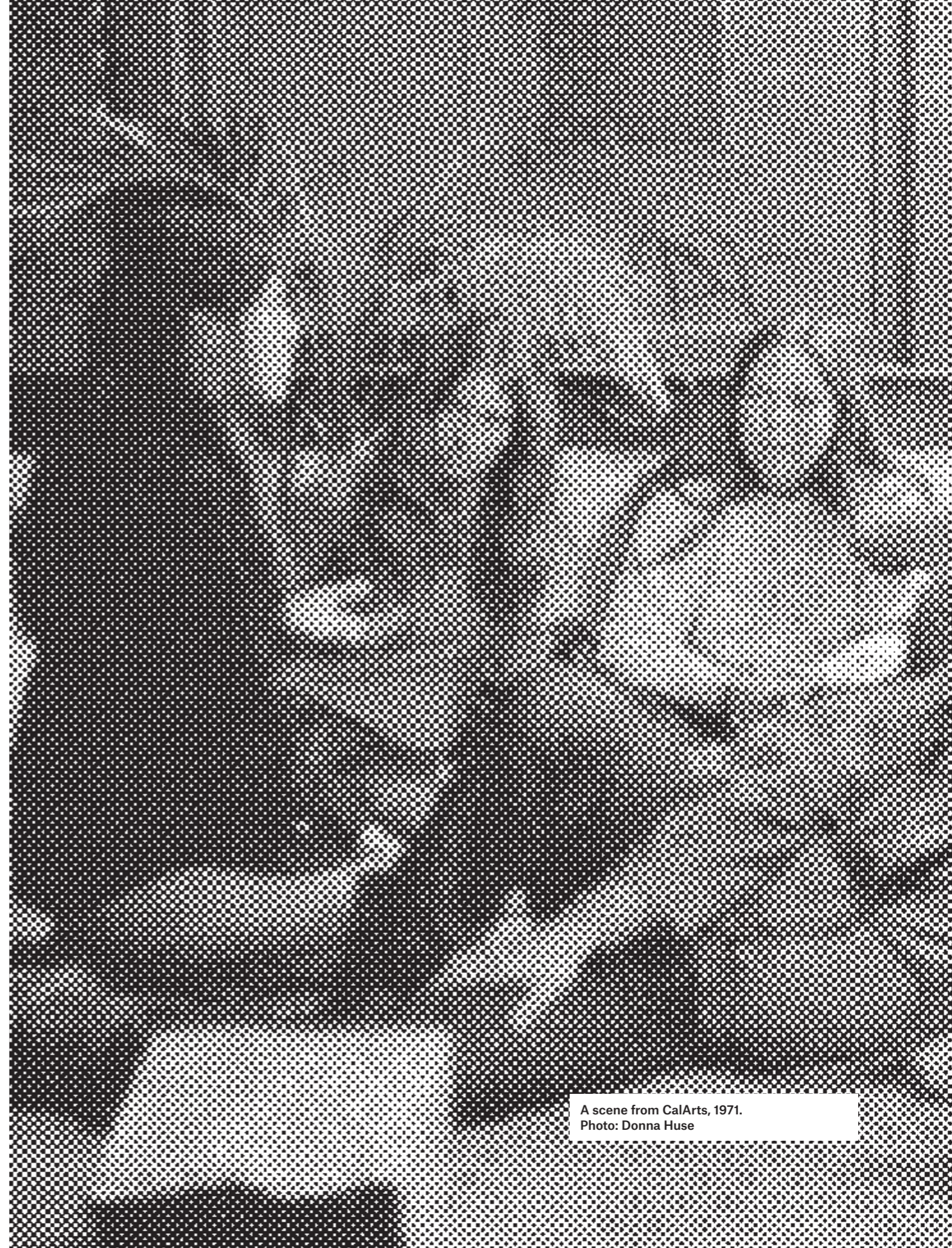
all duly paid homage. *Blueprint* is, notably, dedicated to Jean-Luc Godard, whose work, for Stein and Miller, represented a combustive confluence of the aesthetic and political, of pop and high culture, of what they describe as contributing to “a powerful synthetic socio-aesth[et]ic-political criticism.” Look no further than the memorable intertitle appearing in Godard’s 1966 feature *Masculin Feminin*: “We are the children of Marx and Coca-Cola.” Jump forward a year, and *Blueprint*’s charts are an explicit reference to the blackboards of Godard’s student revolt-themed *La Chinoise*.⁹²

On one of the rough drafts of the charts appears a list of “suggested faculty,” and includes Claude Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, Claes Oldenberg, John Cage, Norman Mailer, Gunner Mydral, Charles Olson, and Leroi Jones. No wonder, then, when offered the opportunity to put *Blueprint* into action at CalArts, Stein and Miller were stirred into action, for the charts were always meant only as a starting point. In 1970, Miller told an interviewer that the idea for CalArts’ School of Critical Studies “flowed quite naturally” from his and Stein’s collaborative work on *Blueprint*. “In some ways the school is simply a concrete realization of some of the ideas we’ve developed as ideals for a plausible educational structure outside of the university. Then along came this possibility, and we grabbed at it.”⁹³ Just as the charts folded inside *Blueprint*’s slipcase—especially when collated to form a single entity—are an iconoclastic representation of a college campus map, of an environment capable of nurturing all manner of thought and expression, so that boundless building at CalArts was, for a short time, an inventive manifestation of Stein and Miller’s structural, linguistic and idea-driven approach to radical experiences in education.

The narrow outlook is forbidden when Stein and Miller are presiding. Day after day, project to project, you are encouraged to walk the extended corridors, stop when something grabs you, and explore. Should your attention wander, if you feel overwhelmed with indifference or debilitating confusion, slip into an adjacent space, slide across into a performance chamber, film studio, music practice room or library, join a political rally or therapy session, and bask in fresh conversation by engaging in group dialogue on a subject wholly other, perhaps utterly beyond your expertise, before contemplating—in the corner, on your own—and continuing on your way, at all times generating “counter-positions” and establishing your own synthesis. Repeat as necessary.

⁹² Author interview with Larry Miller, November 13, 2011. Stein and Miller write: “The reasons behind the dedication to Jean-Luc Godard should be obvious, especially to those who have seen *La Chinoise*. For those who have yet to do so, suffice it to say that he taught us to scribble names on walls.” Today, Stein says that he would most likely dedicate *Blueprint* to Stanley Kubrick, to acknowledge his anti-war films *Paths of Glory* (1957) and *Dr. Strangelove* (1964).

⁹³ “CalArts: Disney’s Dough Takes Flight, Part 3.” Recorded January 6, 1970, broadcast KPFA (Berkeley), March 13, 1970. In Dandaneau and East (2011) (*Listening to Sociological Elders*), p. 138, Stein says it was because of *Blueprint for Counter Education* that he was recruited to teach at CalArts. See Real (1971), p. 24, for comments on Stein and Miller’s controversial “non-book.” James Real, “It Was Walt Disney’s Dream,” *Change*, January/February 1971, p. 18, discusses the hiring of Stein as a CalArts faculty member. See also “Dialogue on counter education,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, September 11, 1970, for comments from Maurice Stein, Larry Miller, Herbert Blau and others, which is a recording of a roundtable discussion about *Blueprint for Counter Education*. For Mark Harris, on the faculty of the School of Critical Studies, *Blueprint* was “an orgy of self-indulgence in the name of a new kind of education.” Harris (1976), p. 263.



A scene from CalArts, 1971.
Photo: Donna Huse