

# MANIFESTO!

## MAINTENANCE ART

Proposal for an exhibition 'CARE'

NICKIE LADERMAN 4/82  
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### I. IDEAS

- A. The Death Instinct and the Life Instinct.  
The Death Instinct: separation, individuality. Avant-Garde  
par excellence, to follow one's own path to death—do your  
own thing, dynamic change.  
The Life Instinct: unification, the eternal return, the  
perpetuation and MAINTENANCE of the species, survival  
systems and operations, equilibrium.
- B. Two basic systems: Development and Maintenance. The soulful  
of every revolution, after the revolution, who's going  
to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?  
Development: pure individual creation, the new, change,  
progress, advance, excitement, fight or fleeing.  
Maintenance: keep the dust off the pure individual  
creation, preserve the new, sustain the change,  
protect progress, defend and groom the advance,  
renew the excitement, repeat the fight.

WORLD LADERMAN UNLES

4

MAINTENANCE ART

museum director, baseball player, salesmen "child, criminal,  
bank president, mayor, monster, artist, etc. about"

what you think maintenance is,  
how you feel about spending whatever parts of your  
life you spend on maintenance activities,  
what is the relationship between maintenance and  
freedom,  
what is the relationship between maintenance and  
life's dreams.

### 2. Interview Room—for spectators at the Exhibition.

A room of desks and chairs where professional (T) interviewers  
will interview the spectators at the exhibition along same questions  
as typed interviews. The responses should be personal.

These interviews are taped and replayed throughout the exhibition  
area.

### C. Part Three: Earth Maintenance

Everyday, containers of the following kinds of refuse will be delivered  
to the Museum:

- the contents of one sanitation truck,
- a container of polluted air,
- a container of polluted Hudson River,
- a container of ravaged land.

Once at the exhibition, each container will be serviced

purified, de-polluted, rehabilitated, recycled and conserved

by various technical (and / or pseudo-technical) procedures either  
by myself or scientists.

These servicing procedures are repeated throughout the duration of the  
exhibition.

WORLD LADERMAN UNLES

3

MAINTENANCE ART

show your work—show it again  
keep the contemporary museum: groovy  
keep the home fires burning

Development systems are partial feedback systems with major  
room for change.  
Maintenance systems are direct feedback systems with little  
room for alteration.

- C. Maintenance is a drag, it takes all the fucking time (it).  
The mind boggles and chafes at the boredom.  
The culture confers lowly status on maintenance jobs =  
minimum wages, housewives = no pay.

clean your desk, wash the dishes, clean the floor,  
wash your clothes, wash your face, change the baby's  
diaper, finish the report, correct the typo, mend the  
fence, keep the customer happy, throw out the stinky  
garbage, switch out don't put things in your nose, what  
shall I wear, I have no sex, pay your bills, don't  
litter, save things, wash your hair, change the sheets,  
go to the store, I'm out of perfume, say it again—  
he doesn't understand, say it again—it leaves, go to  
work, this art is dusty, clear the table, call him again,  
flush the toilet, stay young.

### D. Art:

Everything I say is Art & Art. Everything I do is  
Art & Art. "We have no Art, we try to do everything  
well." (Surrealist saying).

Avant garde art, which claims utter development, is infected  
by strains of maintenance ideas, maintenance activities,  
and maintenance materials.  
Conceptual & Process art, especially, claim pure development  
and change, yet employ almost purely maintenance processes.

- E. The exhibition of Maintenance Art, "CARE," would see in  
on pure maintenance, exhibit it as contemporary art, and  
yield, by utter deposition, clarity of issues.

WORLD LADERMAN UNLES

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**MANIFESTO**  
**FOR MAINTENANCE ART 1969!**

*Proposal for an exhibition "CARE"*

MIERLE LADERMAN UKELES

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archives  
currently  
for the  
dead

— The Death Instinct: separation; individuality; Avant-Garde par excellence; to follow one's own path to death—do your own thing; dynamic change.

— The Life Instinct: unification; the eternal return; the perpetuation and MAINTENANCE of the species; survival systems and operations; equilibrium.

they  
could be for  
the living.

B. Two basic systems: Development and Maintenance. The sourball of every revolution: after the revolution, who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?

Development: pure individual creation; the new; change; progress; advance; excitement; flight or fleeing.

Maintenance: keep the dust off the pure individual creation; preserve the new; **sustain the change**; protect progress; defend and prolong the advance; renew the excitement; repeat the flight;

show your work—show it again  
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 on pure maintenance, exhibit it as contemporary art, and  
 yield, by utter opposition, clarity of issues.

## II. THE MAINTENANCE ART EXHIBITION: "CARE"

Three parts: Personal, General, and Earth Maintenance.

### A. *Part One: Personal*

I am an artist. I am a woman. I am a wife.  
I am a mother. (Random order).

I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking,  
renewing, supporting, preserving, etc. Also,  
(up to now separately I "do" Art.

Now, I will simply do these maintenance everyday things,  
and flush them up to consciousness, exhibit them, as Art.  
I will live in the museum and I customarily do at home with  
my husband and my baby, for the duration of the exhibition.  
(Right? or if you don't want me around at night I would  
come in every day) and do all these things as public Art  
activities: I will sweep and wax the floors, dust everything,  
wash the walls (i.e. "floor paintings, dust works, soap-  
sculpture, wall-paintings") cook, invite people to eat,  
make agglomerations and dispositions of all functional  
refuse.

The exhibition area might look "empty" of art, but it will be  
maintained in full public view.

MY WORKING WILL BE THE WORK

### B. *Part Two: General*

Everyone does a hell of a lot of noodling maintenance work. The  
general part of the exhibition would consist of interviews of two kinds.

#### 1. Previous individual interviews, typed and exhibited.

Interviewees come from, say, 50 different classes and kinds  
of occupations that run a gamut from maintenance "man,"  
maid, sanitation "man," mail "man," union "man," construction  
worker, librarian, grocerystore "man," nurse, doctor, teacher,

museum director, baseball player, sales"man," child, criminal, bank president, mayor, moviestar, artist, etc., about:"

- what you think maintenance is;
- how you feel about spending whatever parts of your life you spend on maintenance activities;
- what is the relationship between maintenance and freedom;
- what is the relationship between maintenance and life's dreams.

2. Interview Room—for spectators at the Exhibition:

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