



# Allan Kaprow, Robert Smithson, and the Limits to Art

*By Philip Ursprung*

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**Allan Kaprow, Robert Smithson, and the Limits to Art** By Philip Ursprung

This innovative study of two of the most important artists of the twentieth century links the art practices of Allan Kaprow and Robert Smithson in their attempts to test the limits of art--both what it is and where it is. Ursprung provides a sophisticated yet accessible analysis, placing the two artists firmly in the art world of the 1960s as well as in the art historical discourse of the following decades. Although their practices were quite different, they both extended the studio and gallery into desert landscapes, abandoned warehouses, industrial sites, train stations, and other spaces. Ursprung bolsters his argument with substantial archival research and sociological and economic models of expansion and limits.

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### Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

"Dr. Ursprung's exquisite research yields valuable knowledge concerning two of art history's most underserved artists, Allan Kaprow and Robert Smithson, to propose that the assumed contiguity of traditional art history has marginalized both Kaprow's Happenings and Smithson's oeuvre. Moreover, the author reveals the importance of photography and writing in both of the artist's works, and how their expansion of the artwork as textual and discursive has been thus far ignored by traditional art historian definitions."

**Mark Cameron Boyd**, Professor of Art Theory, Corcoran College of Art + Design

"Although few post-1945 American artists more nimbly pushed the limits of art than Allan Kaprow and Robert Smithson, their multivalent practices in which writing figured prominently seldom have been considered in relation to each other. In this scrupulously researched, methodologically heterodox, and highly readable book, Philip Ursprung snaps off the handcuffs "happenings" and "earthworks" and allows his subjects to walk free so as to juxtapose their achievements and present the most nuanced and illuminating account of them we have to date. The result is a landmark study of the reconfiguration of the environment of art and a fearless contribution to understanding the present, not least of all the role of institutions and historians in monopolizing cultural meanings."

**Edward Dimendberg**, author of *Diller Scofidio + Renfro: Architecture after Images*

About the Author

**Philip Ursprung** is Swiss National Science Foundation Professor for Art History at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, Visiting Curator at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, and an elected member of the Swiss Federal Commission for the Arts.

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