

Alice Hutchins (1916-2009), an American based in Paris between 1950 and 1980, began her artistic career there as a painter at the age of 40. Critical to her artistic development was her inclusion in a group of avant-garde artists, musicians, and poets in Paris in the 1960s and her involvement in the Fluxus movement in New York City beginning in the latter part of that decade.

In 1967, prior to her first stay in New York, Hutchins began experimenting with three-dimensional magnetic work and involving the viewer as participant. Influenced by the social ideals of the 1960s, she had grown dissatisfied with painting and was looking for another form of communication, something that could be more easily understood and enjoyed.

She found it with magnets and soon abandoned a promising painting career to devote her full attention to transformable magnetic assemblages and constructs. The Paris based art critic and author, Pierre Schneider, wrote in the *New York Times* in 1970 "If the role of the artist is to clarify society's attitudes, few have done so more effectively than Alice Hutchins."

Hutchins' art is interactive, a collaborative aleatory event involving the artist, the viewer and the magnetic field. It begins with the artist's assemblage of a magnetic field and carefully selected complementary parts susceptible to magnetism. Viewers are invited to freely interpret these lively materials as they wish and as the magnetic field permits. When moving a part, unexpected changes accompanied by sound lead to spontaneous rearrangement, giving the work an indeterminate quality. The artist encourages this life-like quality as a way to find new forms and relationships using chance and change. Once an arrangement is found that meets the aesthetic needs of the participant, the object can remain stationary until one feels a desire to make a change. Hutchins' intention is to leave thought behind and be open to what happens. Through direct experience the participant discovers the possibilities of a piece and what it is saying.

In 2009, the last year of her life, she was included in *Inventing Marcel Duchamp: The Dynamics of Portraiture* at the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian and in the year-long permanent collection show *elles@centrepompidou* at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Alice was featured in the issue of *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* v. 19, no. 3, (November 2009): 411-432. "In the Field with Alice Hutchins." And she was shown in the front room at D'Amelio Terras gallery in Chelsea, as an appendage to *Tables and Chairs* where she was reviewed in the *New York Times*, July 24, 2009.

*Merrily Peebles*

*Curator, Alice Hutchins Collection*

*2012*

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Alternative Traditions for Contemporary Arts

Alice Hutchins Collection, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa

Berkeley Art Museum, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, California

Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Barbara and Peter Moore Fluxus Collection, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Jean Brown Collection, Santa Monica, California

Greater Lafayette Museum of Art, Alice Baber Collection, Lafayette, Indiana

Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo, Norway

Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire

La Société des Amis du Centre National de l'Art Contemporain, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, Lyon, France

Museum of Arts and Design, New York, New York

Museum of Contemporary Art, Françoise Conz Collection, Zagreb, Croatia

Museum of Modern Art, Belgrade, Yugoslavia Porin Taidemuseo, Pori, Finland

Queensland Art Gallery, Françoise Conz Collection, Brisbane, Australia

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, California

Staatsgalerie Archiv Sohm, Stuttgart, Germany

Tate Modern, Fluxshoe Archive, London

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota