
The Brooklyn Museum’s exhibition and accompanying catalog Materializing Six Years: Lucy R. Lippard and the Emergence of Conceptual Art reexamine the ideas presented in Lippard’s highly influential compendium Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972. Considering the overwhelming observation, if not criticism, of this text at the time of its publication in 1973 was the disappearance of the authorial and critical voice, it is notable that curators Catherine Morris and Vincent Bonin have taken on the task of refocusing the discussion of the material in relation to this experimental and pivotal moment of Lippard’s production as a curator, writer, and according to some, artist.

While the exhibition and the book it references chronicle the emergence of conceptual art in a seemingly straightforward manner, both Lucy Lippard and the Brooklyn Museum’s director Arnold Lehman, in their forewords, are careful to situate the exhibition in the context of the next more overtly political phase of Lippard’s career focused primarily on feminist art. Specifically, the trajectory that can be traced following her activity in a public forum held at the museum called “Are Museums Relevant to Woman?” in 1971 to Lippard’s current involvement in the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art is brought to the forefront with regard to the evolution of Lippard’s career.

In her essay “Six Years as a Curatorial Project” exhibition co-curator and inaugural Sackler Center Curator Catherine Morris embarks on a critical discussion of the various curatorial projects that are revisited in the book and exhibition, particularly vis-a-vis their potential for radicality. In a complementary fashion Vincent Bonin, in his essay “Lucy R. Lippard’s Writing in And Around Conceptual Art, 1969-73,” reconstructs how truly experimentally Lippard asserts her authorial voice in various projects in those years, playfully disrupting the established conventions of curating, art criticism, and the creation of politically minded art. Julia Bryan-Wilson’s essay “Still Relevant: Lucy R. Lippard, Feminist Activism, and Art Institutions” brings the historical conversation of Lippard’s political engagement full circle.

Following the contributors’ essays, the Materializing Six Years catalog features a selection of illustrations and commentary by the curators, comprising over 150 pages, arranged chronologically, in unison with the exhibition. These reproductions of conceptual artworks, photo documentation of exhibitions, and primary source materials and ephemera from the author’s archives successfully capture the impact of the physical exhibition. This attractive volume of 275 pages, including an extensive bibliography, successfully chronicles an extremely useful reexamination of an artistic period.

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