Crossroads Community (the farm) is

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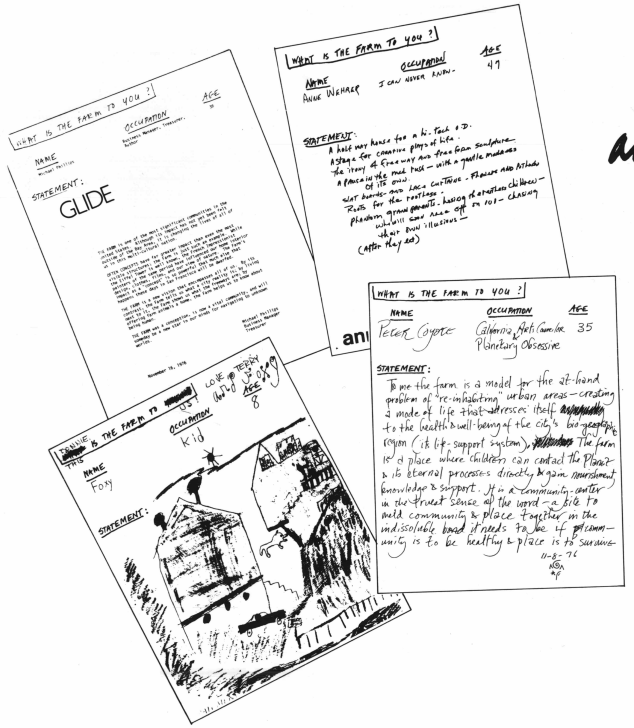
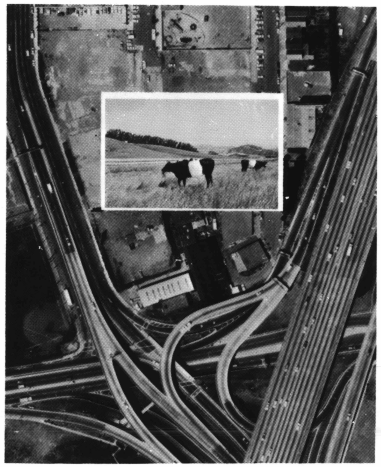
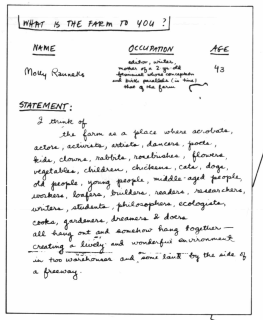
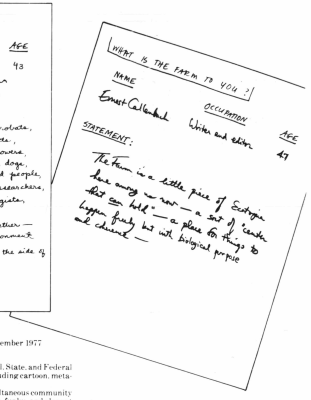
A Non-profit Corporation

an alternative to alternative art spaces.









Center for Critical Inquiry Position Paper

San Francisco Art Institute, November 1977

It seems that some clues to our possible, positive survival as a species can be found by involving ourselves in the human creative process (art) and by re-examining our place as human creatures in relation to other life forms, and by understanding and communicating with those life systems and forms in a more sensitive and conscious way. Very generally, people of our civilization tend to be extremeley presumptuous and naive about their relationship to the universe. Some symptoms of this adolescence are: racism and sexism; renovating much of the earth with concrete and basing our modern lives on confused computer categories and bureaucratic ballgames; insensitivities to native intelligences of plants, animals, and children; mass disregard and disrespect for the uniqueness of individuals; bias against feeling states; and the overwhelming greed, waste, and territorialism of huge numbers of people, corporations, and governments. If we are to continue on this planet and grow as conscious beings we must attain a more spiritual and ecological *balance* within ourselves and among larger groups and nations. How can we do this?

Each of us has the potential for discovery and may have solutions for these grave problems. If we can learn to trust and share, and relax and flow we will be able to receive the magic which surrounds us every moment and which we are.

In my own life I have strived to understand and act on these issues and qualities which to me are connected to the essence of being. I have experienced through art and the observation of natural processes the wholeness of life and the interconnectedness of different states of being/knowing/loving.

The creation of art is akin to the spirit and attitude of country in its logic of wholeness and process. Everything found in the country is implicit in the city. Urban environments today, however, due in part to technological excesses, fragment our spaces and lives so that we have difficulty experiencing whole systems. This fragmentation guides us towards the disintegration of our personalities and the loss of our identities.

As an artist, I have tried to expand the concept of art to include and even be life, and to make visible, connections among different aesthetics, styles, and systems of knowledge. The most recent and devotional vehicle for this coming together is a multicultural, agricultural collaborative art work called Crossroads Community (the farm), or more simply, The Farm. This life-scale environmental, performance sculpture, which is also a non-profit public trust, and a collage of local, State, and Federal sources, exists on a multitude of levels including cartoon, metaphor, contradiction, and action.

Physically, The Farm is a series of simultaneous community gathering spaces: a farmhouse with earthy, funky, and elegant environments; a theatre and rehearsal space for different art forms; a school without walls, a library; a darkroom; a pre-school; unusual gardens; an indoor outdoor environment for humans and other animals; and a future cafe, international parlor, and nutrition healing center. Within these places many people come and go, participating in and creating a variety of programs and artworks which richly mix with the life processes of plants and animals. All of these elements are integrated and relate wholistically with fascinating interfaces. It is these interfaces which may indeed be the sources of emerging new art forms.

The Farm, as a life frame, is particularly unusual, however, because it justapposes symbolically and actually, a technological monolith with an art farm life complex. Crossroads Community sits adjacent to a major freeway interchange on its southern side where four high need neighborhoods and three creeks converge. On its northern boundaries, The Farm edges on a 5.5 acre open space of land which the City of San Francisco has just acquired for a neighborhood park. (The Farm was instrumental in calling attention to the availability of this land and convincing The City to buy it.)

Part of The Farm's dream is to uncover the natural resources of the earth, like the water which flows underneath, and to recycle the concrete which currently covers the land to create rolling hillsides, meadows, gardens, windmills, ponds, play and performing spaces, etc. This lush, green environment would connect The Farm with the public elementary school that borders the future park on the north, blur the boundaries between land parcels, and act on new possibilities for fluid interchange.

The potential for this project which involves the creative integrity of its surrounding neighbors and school children is astounding: as a model for other places; and as a possible series of solutions for the many urban errors specific to this site.

Bonnie Sherk

The Farm is a social art work and incorporates the divergent fields of all the arts and literature, education, appropriate technology, community service, public health, the environment, economics, city planning, politics, and real estate. It is a vehicle for connecting life scale elements of physical form, spirituality (feeling states), and ideas, all of which are interconnected. The whole Farm is a metaphor for civilization. It is a microcosm. The Raw Egg Animal Theatre (TREAT) at The Farm is a microcosm of The Farm, and so on. And because The Farm is really small and framed, you can see a myriad of different relationships—struggles, differences, similarities, and coincidings. You can see large swelling forms and very flat shapes—technological and non-mechanized. The Farm is a painting and a theatre piece. It's a play, a sculpture, and a sociological model. There are also elements of plumbing. The Farm has to do with finding a way to survive and making it wonderful.

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