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LAWRENCE ALLOWAY, ROBERT SMITHSON, AND EARTHWORKS

He was, according to his wife, the painter Sylvia Sleigh, “an old fashioned futurist,” a city dweller, whose impatience with the Arcadian extended to a dislike of plants and trees.

—Richard Kalina, “Critical Commentary: Imagining the Present,” 2006

In light of his preference for urban environments, it might seem surprising that Lawrence Alloway became interested in earthworks, an art form that when first reported on by the press in the late 1960s was dubbed, among other things, “dirt art” and was characterized as an escape from the city.¹ Given Alloway’s desire to be au fait with the latest cultural trends, however, it seems reasonable to assume that he would have taken an interest in earthworks when it was the talk of the town (that town being New York) in the fall of 1968 and through 1969.² But he did not write an extended discussion of the phenomenon (he called earthworks “a tendency”) until his “Site Inspection” article of October 1976.³

When Alloway first referred to earthworks, in the period from 1968 to 1971, he understood it as an aspect of a larger “zone” or “cluster” of art activity, as yet unnamed (or unnameable), that included conceptual art, documentary art, and happenings, as well as land art, ecologic art, and earthworks.⁴ Today, earthworks is most commonly understood as a subcategory of the larger phenomenon of land art.⁵ Alloway came into early contact with many of the American and European artists currently discussed under the nomenclature of land art, including Christo, Jan Dibbets, Michael Heizer, Nancy Holt, Peter Hutchinson, Richard Long, Dennis Oppenheim, Alan Sonfist, and Michelle Stuart, all of whom are represented in his papers at the Getty Research Institute (GRI). Indeed, he wrote about the work of Christo as early as 1968. But he didn’t view the work of all of these artists—including Christo—as earthworks. And it was earthworks, specifically, that became Alloway’s focus.

In the first comprehensive book-length survey of earthworks, *Earthworks and Beyond*, published in 1984, John Beardsley writes that “only sculptures in earth and sod can properly be described as earthworks.”⁶ Even by comparison with Beardsley’s definition, Alloway’s conception of earthworks in his 1976

article “Site Inspection” seems narrow. In Alloway’s thinking, earthworks was an American phenomenon characterized by monumentality, site-specificity, zero mobility, and long duration. For Alloway, it was largely the work of three men: Walter de Maria, Michael Heizer, and Robert Smithson.⁷

Alloway’s narrow focus was not for lack of knowledge of the wider scene (as his papers at the GRI, his regular reviews in *The Nation*, and the evidence of *Artists and Photographs* makes clear).⁸ This was not the reason, for example, for leaving European artists out, even in 1969 (when he published a brief definition of the movement in “The Expanding and Disappearing Work of Art”). The reason for his intentionally limited view was his relationship with Robert Smithson. In Alloway’s view, earthworks was not a genre or a movement, it was a theory, given by Smithson in his article “The Monuments of Passaic,”⁹ and this is why their relationship will be the main focus of this essay. For Alloway, earthworks and Robert Smithson were synonymous.

Alloway wrote two significant essays on Smithson: “Robert Smithson’s Development,” first published in *Artforum* in November 1972, and “Sites/Nonsites” in Robert Hobbs’s *Robert Smithson: Sculpture* (1981), the first book-length treatment of Smithson’s sculpture. Alloway also afforded Smithson a central role in his two-part essay “Artists as Writers,” published in *Artforum* in March and April 1974.¹⁰ My essay draws extensively from these published sources. It explores Smithson and Alloway’s developing friendship, its impact on the writings of both, and the implications of an unrealized but significant collaborative film project. I will speculate about what Smithson and Alloway each got from their relationship. What was or was not possible for each to do or think before they met? And what did they create together?

What is the basis for such an enquiry? There are, of course, the essays Alloway wrote about Smithson, although Alloway makes clearer allusions to their friendship in his writings after Smithson’s death than he did during the artist’s lifetime. This reticence went both ways: Alloway receives only one reference in the index to the 1996 edition of Smithson’s collected writings.¹¹ There is no correspondence between Smithson and Alloway in Alloway’s papers at the GRI. Alloway is not named in the papers of Smithson and Nancy Holt (the American sculptor and filmmaker, and Smithson’s wife) at the Archives of American Art, though in the General Correspondence folder there is a single letter and a postcard from Alloway to Smithson, both dated 1972.¹² However, two important archival sources for establishing their relationship do exist: Holt’s and Smithson’s calendars—month-to-a-page calendars recording their activities between 1966 and 1973¹³—and the week-to-a-page diaries of Sylvia Sleight (the British artist, and Alloway’s wife)

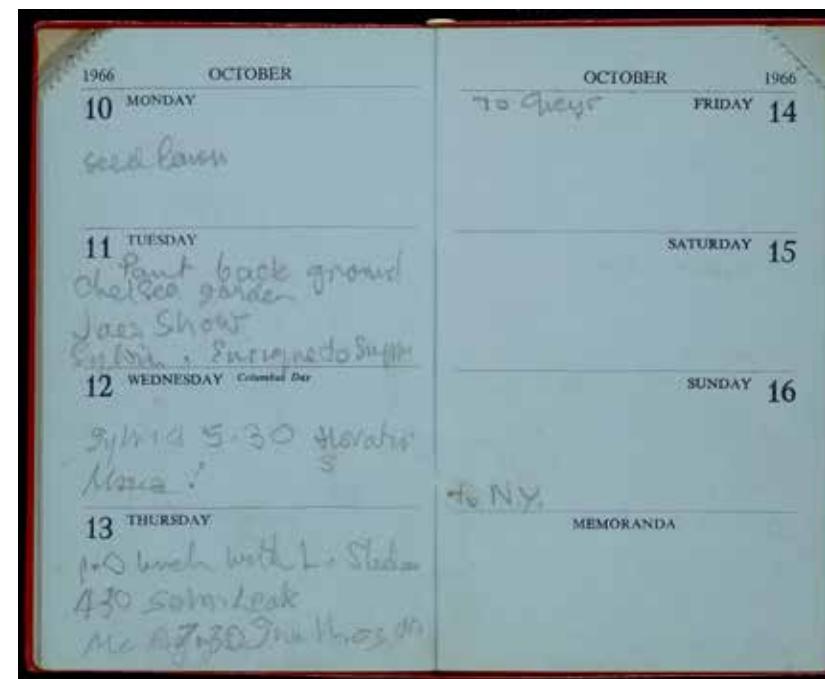


Fig. 1. Page from Sylvia Sleight's engagement calendar for 10–16 October 1966. Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute.

that recorded her activities, and many of Alloway’s (fig. 1).¹⁴ More than just traces of specific encounters, these calendars help establish the chronology of a developing relationship.

Alloway acknowledged the importance of establishing chronologies, and there is ample evidence within his papers of attempts to chart the historical arc of individual artists, including Smithson. In an interview from 1969, Alloway argues for the necessity of temporal reconstruction; although he’s talking about dating paintings, the principles apply more generally:

Now to date them right, you have got to know what order the artist painted them in. It is not just a matter of reading accounts of palaces in the old ledger books of cardinals. It is also a question of knowing that Dosso Dossi could not have painted like this until his brother had been to Rome and come back after seeing so and so. An art historian is really doing that kind of close analysis. He is reconstructing the creative thinking as well as the handiwork that went into the work of art.

It is just as important to know the meaning of the chronology of works, and their sources and transformations as it is to see them painted.¹⁵

In order to do that art historical task with regard to Smithson and Alloway’s joint activities, it will be necessary to establish some of their chronology, as

I have begun to do in the introduction to this essay. But it will also become apparent that constructing—rather than reconstructing—Smithson's creative thinking was something Alloway attempted in his writings.

Alloway and Smithson shared a point of personal affinity in that both had a stake in shaping the art history of the future. Earthworks was to Smithson what pop was to Alloway—their critical and creative heritage. For Alloway, the term *earthworks* was Smithson's coinage, and the concept was largely Smithson's creation: "It was Smithson who gave the Earthworks movement its name (the genetic moment is described in 'The Monuments of Passaic,' originally published in 1967)."¹⁶ In a twist that appealed to Alloway, who had a lifelong appreciation for genre fiction, earthworks was named after a novel by the British science fiction writer Brian W. Aldiss.¹⁷

The Development of a Friendship

Alloway witnessed Smithson develop earthworks not in the deserts of the West—though that was ultimately where Alloway went to find their legacy in 1976—but a decade earlier in New York City and in the artist's published writing. By 1966, Alloway and Smithson were moving in each other's ambit. In the chronology in *Robert Smithson: Sculpture*, Hobbs records for 1966: "Becomes friendly with Virginia Dwan; joins Dwan Gallery. Meets Ad Reinhardt, who asks him to plan '10' show at Dwan Gallery; also meets Lawrence Alloway, Jo Baer, Max Kozloff, Lucy Lippard, and Annette Michelson."¹⁸ Many of these people were in Alloway's social circle, so it is perhaps no surprise that they ran into each other.

Smithson and Alloway met in the same year, when minimal art was attracting considerable attention. And it is in this context that Alloway first encountered Smithson's work. It was a context that Alloway was paying close attention to, not least because he was directly involved in promoting minimalism in exhibitions and articles. *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors*, a show curated by Kynaston McShine and often cited as the first institutional survey of minimal sculpture, included work by Smithson and opened on April 26 at the Jewish Museum in New York; Alloway's own *Systemic Painting* opened at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum on September 22, 1966. Alloway quoted from Smithson's *Artforum* article "Entropy and the New Monuments" (June 1966) in his essay for the *Systemic Painting* catalog. Alloway wrote the catalog essay for a twentieth anniversary exhibition called *Pattern Art* at Betty Parsons Gallery; Smithson's work was included in the show. *Pattern Art* opened on October 4, 1966, the same day as the exhibition *10* at Dwan Gallery, which also featured work by Smithson. Virginia Dwan opened a New York branch of her LA-based gallery in 1965 and began representing Smithson in 1966; she was

also one of the first financial backers of the Park Place Gallery when it moved from 79 Park Place to 542 Broadway in November 1965. Alloway was close to the Park Place group—an artists' cooperative of sculptors and painters—from its beginnings in 1963.¹⁹ Work by Park Place sculptors was featured in *Primary Structures* and work by Park Place painters appeared in *Systemic Painting*. After an initial "members only" exhibiting period, the Park Place Gallery began to show work by invitation by nonmember artists, one of whom was Smithson. Evidently, by 1966, Alloway knew something of Smithson's work and writing, and their professional circles were clearly overlapping.

There were ample opportunities for Alloway and Smithson to meet during this period, but archival evidence indicates a point when their relationship became more deliberate. The first mutual calendar entry that it is possible to cross-reference between Sleight's calendar and that of Holt and Smithson is Thursday, 13 October 1966. Sleight notes: "7:30 Smithoson [*sic*]" (see fig. 1). Holt and Smithson: "7:30 DINNER ALLOWAY." Lawrence Alloway's name and phone number also appear (in Smithson's handwriting) in a space at the bottom of Holt and Smithson's October calendar, perhaps suggesting this was a newly acquired number.²⁰

The dinner date on 13 October 1966 coincided with interesting turning points in the careers of the two men. Both were enmeshed in the New York art world network, which Smithson made the subject of his art, and Alloway of his writing.²¹ Alloway's exhibition *Systemic Painting* was still up, but he had already resigned his position as curator at the Guggenheim Museum on 13 June 1966. He had recently embarked on an academic year as writer in residence at Southern Illinois University, a period described by Nigel Whiteley as Alloway's "exile in Carbondale," and would soon return to New York to posts first at the School of Visual Arts and then at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Stony Brook. That short period of absence from New York perhaps served to sharpen his views on, and his desire to be part of, the art scene there.²² Meanwhile, Smithson had just published his first substantial articles, "The Crystal Land" and "The X Factor in Art," in *Harper's Bazaar* in May 1966 and July 1966, respectively, and "Entropy and the New Monuments" in *Artforum* in June 1966.²³

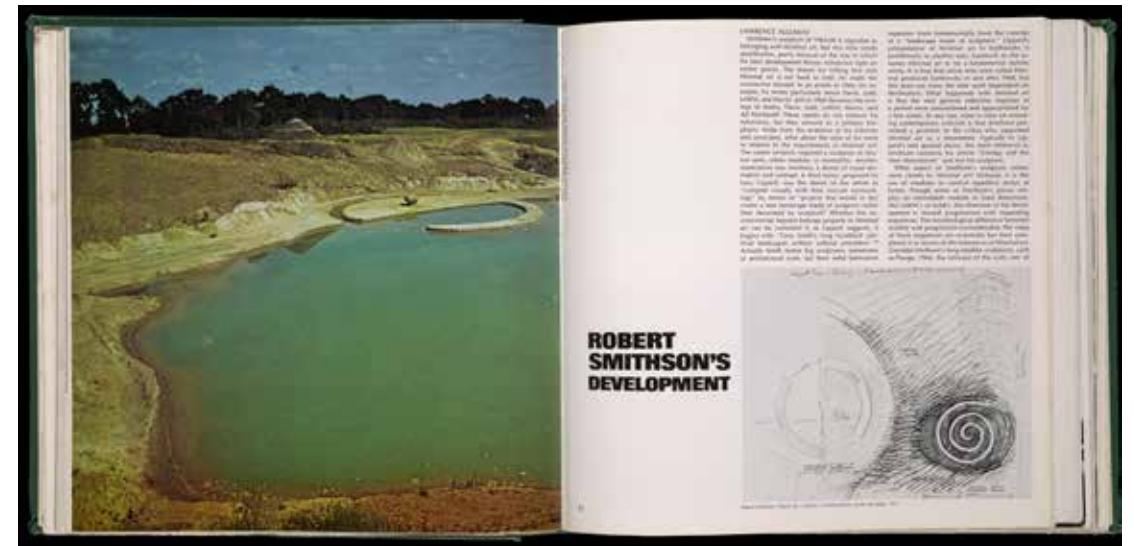
Alloway enjoyed the fact that earthworks, like pop art, had been picked up first by the popular magazines, rather than the art press, and that Smithson had published some of his first writings in *Harper's Bazaar*. In 1973, Alloway said in an interview: "Where do these things start? In journals like *Vogue* and *New York Magazine*. The first article on earthworks appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post!*"²⁴ These observations echo others he had made about pop art in 1966, when he pointed out that *Time* and *Life* provided information about pop

art in advance of *Art News* and *Art International*.²⁵ Alloway thought that the early attention by the popular press was a significant parallel between (his) pop art and (Smithson's) earthworks. Both Alloway and Smithson were committed to publishing in popular magazines and shared personal connections with the editorial staff of such publications: Holt and Smithson with Dale McConathy of *Harper's Bazaar*, where Holt worked part time as an assistant literary editor in 1966–67, and Alloway with *Time* magazine critic Rosalind Constable, whom he met on his first visit to the United States in 1958. In an interview in 2007, Holt commented: "In a mass magazine we could reach a huge audience, in beauty parlors, doctors' offices, and homes around the country. . . . Bob and I introduced Dale to many artists and others in the art world. Initially it was Bob's suggestion to get artists to write for the magazine, and we supported their articles."²⁶ These observations also attest to a more active role for Holt in the development of Smithson's writings than is generally acknowledged in the literature on Smithson.

More fugitive evidence of Alloway and Smithson's burgeoning friendship can be found in various published and unpublished written sources. For example, in a 1972 interview conducted for the Archives of American Art, Smithson alludes to a meeting that must have taken place during the course of Alloway's research:

ROBERT SMITHSON: His name [that of Smithson's great-grandfather] was Charles Smithson. Well, of course since then all the work has been torn out of the subways. I guess it was of that period that Lewis Mumford called The Bronze Decade; you know, that kind of work. There was an article written about him in an old journal from around 1900. *Lawrence Alloway is doing a very comprehensive piece on me for Artforum so I've given him that magazine. But it was interesting* (emphasis mine).²⁷

The piece that Alloway was writing, published in *Artforum* as "Robert Smithson's Development" in November 1972 (fig. 2), did not make use of this old magazine.²⁸ Nor, indeed, does Alloway discuss much at all about Smithson's biography or family background, apart from an allusion to Smithson's "early experiences in New Jersey, where he was born and raised," and an anecdote of Smithson's about an uncle giving him a crystal. Instead, Alloway's article begins with Smithson in the context of minimal art and his sculpture of 1964–66, precisely the context in which Alloway first encountered Smithson and his work. But this personal connection is not disclosed here or, indeed, anywhere in the article. As it turned out, this article became the only feature-length treatment of Smithson's work to appear in print during his lifetime. In 1975, it was



anthologized in Alloway's book *Topics in American Art since 1945*, a standard textbook for many university art history surveys. As a result, what Alloway chose to include, and to exclude, did important work toward establishing Smithson's artistic profile. It lends credence to the piece to know that Alloway and Smithson were close and that the article was published while Smithson was alive, but there is little in the article itself to give a sense of the extent of their relationship.²⁹

In "Robert Smithson's Development," intimacy is suggested but not explicitly stated. It does not say "when I first met him" or "when we visited the sites in Passaic together in 1972" (mentions that do appear in writings published after Smithson's death, most notably perhaps in the essay "Sites/Nonsites" in 1981).³⁰ Instead, Alloway writes of Smithson's famous Passaic text: "The 'monuments' have not survived to 1972, except for the bridge and The Sand-Box Monument (also called The Desert) in Taras Shevchenko Park." There is no footnote. Readers are not told that Alloway knows this from his trip with Smithson to Passaic sometime in 1972. Nor do they learn that Alloway's account of Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) is based on a visit to the site in Utah with Smithson in January 1972.³¹ Instead, Alloway writes, "Since I was a kid, Smithson remembers, he had been interested in crystals after an uncle, who worked for the Hammond Map Company, gave him a quartz crystal."³² There is no footnote, and the awkwardness of the phrasing—with Smithson appearing in the first and third person in rapid succession—is perhaps a result of Alloway struggling to record this observation without reference to a written source. Alloway goes on to explain that the landscape and its systems of ordering have been familiar to Smithson most of his life, but he does not disclose the origin of

Fig. 2. Opening spread. From Lawrence Alloway, "Robert Smithson's Development," *Artforum* 11, no. 3 (November 1972): 52–53.

the anecdote—presumably a conversation between the two during the preparation of the article, perhaps on one of their trips.

Alloway's article on Smithson outlines a context: a childhood in New Jersey and recent visits there, connections to minimalism, Smithson's developing theory of earthworks, and the importance of books on geology, travel, and science fiction. There is evidence in the "Development" essay, especially in the footnotes, of Alloway's habitual approach to writing on artists by immersing himself in their current reading matter. Shelley Rice, a student of Alloway's at SUNY Stony Brook around the time he was writing his article on Smithson, remembered that "Lawrence spent his weeks working with artists and reading the books they were discussing at the time. He insisted that I read them too and understand their relevance to contemporary creative practice. For him, the intellectual ambiance in artists' studios was as important to the creation, exhibition, and reception of art as the finished objects that came out of them."³³

The footnotes to "Robert Smithson's Development" reference books that were in Smithson's library and that Alloway had also read. But Alloway does not relate the immediate context of his relationship with Smithson: the one-on-one conversations in New York; the dinners with Smithson, Holt, and Sleight; the mutual friendship with Smithson's gallerist, Dwan; or the visits to New Jersey and Utah in Smithson's company. These details are fascinating to us now, as a lost dimension of Alloway's research process, though they did not seem relevant for Alloway to disclose at the time. His concept of a continuum of art and life had some boundaries, and they were ones that were conventionally accepted in the art writing of the time.

There are clues in the footnotes to "Robert Smithson's Development"—and in the article itself, particularly in parentheses in the text—to how this essay might have been less conventional and more revelatory had Alloway made more of the uniquely privileged view he had of Smithson's development through their friendship. Alloway had privileged access to Smithson and his unpublished writings (and to his varied collection of magazines)—"inside information" as Alloway would characterize artists' writing in part 1 of "Artists as Writers"—yet that access remained opaque. All that is revealed in the footnotes of "Robert Smithson's Development" is the following: parenthetically, in note 5, "(All books cited here are in Smithson's possession)" and, in notes 8, 12, 31, and 32, in references to dated typescripts from 1967 to 1972, the last two of which were untitled. These texts are now available to readers in the published writings of Robert Smithson. They were not available to readers of the article in 1972.

Art criticism, Alloway says, "originates its own theories and groupings."³⁴ The critic should present descriptive information rather than judgment, and

he wants to be seen as objective, not partisan. Alloway assumes this tone in the Smithson article, perhaps believing this would better serve Smithson's career (so tragically unrealized) and avoid accusations of nepotism.³⁵ He wants to get it into print that Smithson came up with the term *earthworks*—perhaps mindful of his own continual need to defend his coinage of *pop art*.

In this article, as in others, Alloway uses evidence from Smithson's writings. This seems significant, especially in light of Alloway's commitment to artists' writings. Smithson features extensively in Alloway's two-part article "Artists as Writers," written for *Artforum* in 1974.³⁶ For Alloway, clues to Smithson's art can be found in his writing. With regard to his use of the term *entropy*, for example, Alloway notes: "Here are some examples from his writings which, since they come from the same source as his art, may be considered to provide information about the art."³⁷ Smithson made the art world's support system, including magazines, galleries, dealers, collectors, and museums "part of the meaning of the work."³⁸ Art, writing, and the art world are coterminous. "It is I think indicative," wrote Alloway, "that his spell of maximum writing, 1966–69, coincides with the period when he was moving from an art of autonomous objects to an art penetrating the world and penetrated by sign systems."³⁹ Coincidentally or not, this is also the period when Smithson moved into Alloway's social circle.

Writing in *The Nation* after Smithson's death, Alloway was more candid about his relationship with the artist. But he still privileged Smithson's writings as the ultimate source for understanding his thought process:

Smithson's subjects include a guidebook treatment of a construction site in New Jersey, proposals for sculpture for an air terminal, a celebration of a planetarium, museums, a discussion of Art Deco architecture (in 1966 he called it Ultramoderne; the period style was not then named). His first article, "Entropy and the New Monuments," made rich use of his reading of science fiction. There is a common factor: the construction site, the air terminal, the planetarium, museums, skyscrapers, science fiction, are all models of world views, theories of how the world runs, condensed as artifacts. But they are all collapsing systems, under stress both internally and externally. Smithson had a zest for the ways in which our thought is labyrinthine but incomplete. It is as if he viewed all knowledge as a form of artificial intelligence, confined by the patterns and limits of our own systems.⁴⁰

Alloway was concerned with understanding systems; Smithson with their collapse. If Smithson got from Alloway an understanding of the art world as a system; Alloway learned from Smithson that all systems are entropic.

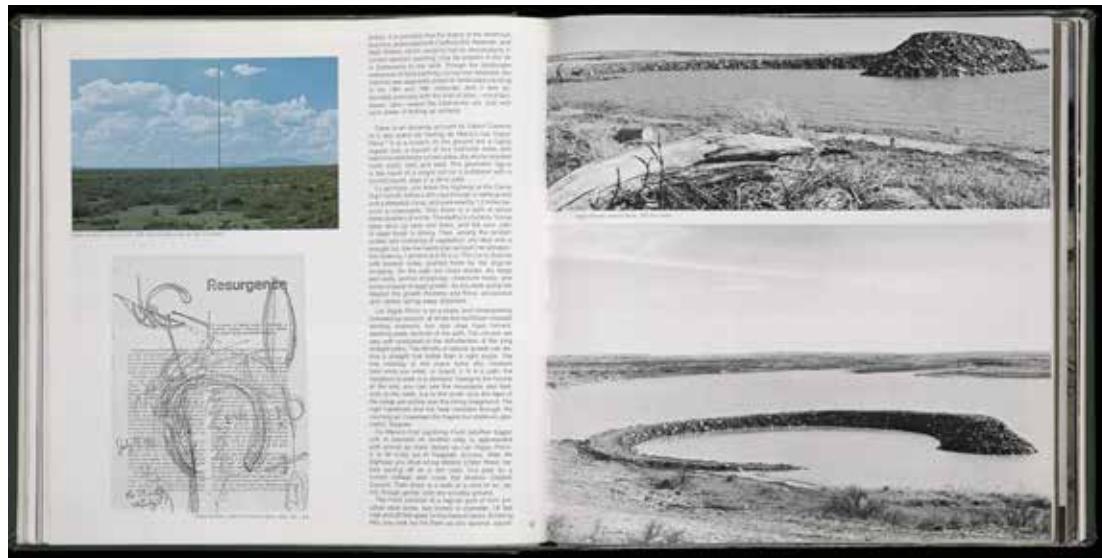


Fig. 3.
Interior spread.
From Lawrence Alloway, "Site
Inspection," *Artforum* 15,
no. 2 (October 1976): 52–53.

Alloway acknowledged the importance of writing in the development of Smithson's art, but he did not go so far as to collapse the roles of artist and writer, neither with regard to Smithson's work generally nor in relation to his personal connection to Smithson's work in particular. Ultimately, the *Artforum* article is a critical essay on the development of Smithson's art, a conventional account that traces the work in terms of movements and styles, from minimal art to earthworks—an example, in Alloway's words, of "short-term art history." As originally published in *Artforum*, the essay's opening spread included a large-scale color photograph of Smithson's most recently completed earthwork project in Emmen, Netherlands, *Broken Circle and Spiral Hill* (1971) (see fig. 2). Although illustrated, this project is afforded scant discussion in the body of the article. Instead, Alloway concludes with a lengthy discussion of *Spiral Jetty*, including a detailed analysis of the construction and materials of the jetty (what Alloway terms "the equivalent of a technical description"⁴¹) and of the film of the same name. Thus *Spiral Jetty* becomes the culmination of Smithson's oeuvre—a view reinforced in the anthologized version of the essay by including illustrations of only three works, the last of which is *Spiral Jetty*. The misleading view that Smithson's work culminates in the achievement of *Spiral Jetty* persists to this day, not least in the extensive focus on this single work in the literature on Smithson,⁴² and Alloway's essay can be seen as an early paradigmatic exegesis of this teleological narrative.

The essay is constrained by its time and by its author's concerns—the originating of terms, here *earthworks*; the idea of development in an artist's work (and beyond it, as their legacy), in artists' writings; and the question of film as art. Alloway's relationship with Smithson transformed his views of all of these

things, but those transformed understandings did not manifest clearly in this, his first important article on Smithson's development.

The most compelling account of Smithson's development of earthworks as a theory, implemented through his work on the Dallas–Fort Worth air terminal site, and named in "The Monuments of Passaic," appears in the second part of Alloway's "Artists as Writers," published in 1974. The importance of visiting sites, including visits made in the company of Smithson, is discussed by Alloway only in retrospect, in "Site Inspection," 1976 (fig. 3), and "Sites/Nonsites," 1981. All of these essays were published after Smithson's death.

Earthworks after Smithson

By 1976, the subject of earthworks might have seemed a little dated, hardly the subject for the "young man who feels that he is behind the times if he is no more than abreast of the moment," as Alloway had been described ten years earlier.⁴³ Part of his rationale for a return to the subject was his ongoing interest in the work of women artists, many of whom were making earthworks/land art. The existence of a "second generation" is asserted in the concluding paragraph of "Site Inspection," though no practitioners are named. Still, it does beg the question and opens the way for an article—perhaps planned/imagined—that would discuss these women in more detail. That opportunity was not to arise in the same magazine. Apart from a reply to correspondence about "Site Inspection" (published in the January 1977 issue of *Artforum*), Alloway wrote only one more article (on Blythe Bonnen, in November 1976) for the magazine. He did, however, discuss this second generation elsewhere: for example in an interview published in 1977, in which he uses the opportunity to not only name the second generation but also continue to reinforce the importance of Smithson's legacy. Alloway notes:

Smithson is different. Smithson, as the most brainy one among the earthworkers, continues to have a big influence. I mean there's a second generation earthworks going now—Nancy Holt, Alice Aycock, Cecile Abish, Mary Miss. He's dead, but nonetheless his ideas on site and non-site, continue to be absolutely basic to the development of another generation of artists. And that's one of the ways I guess you estimate someone's continuing legitimacy—if their ideas can still be used, but come out in new forms by the people that are developing them.⁴⁴

"Site Inspection" is not a survey of earthworks. Alloway discusses visits to works by just three artists: Walter De Maria, Michael Heizer, and Smithson (with brief

mentions of Carl Andre, Robert Morris, and Dennis Oppenheim). His stated reason for visiting these sites is that “some of the works I suspected were being embalmed in single images.” The word *embalmed* creates a somewhat sepulchral aura. The loss of Smithson, who was so central to Alloway’s understanding of earthworks, together with the discussion of the status of *Amarillo Ramp* (the work constructed after Smithson’s death at the location where he died in an airplane crash while surveying the site), adds to the article’s elegiac tone. Alloway illustrated the essay with a sketch Smithson made for *Amarillo Ramp*. The sketch is drawn on a page that appears to be from some kind of evangelical Christian tract titled “Resurgence” (see fig. 3). The connection of work and title is no doubt serendipitous rather than intentional, but it is nonetheless poignant when one realizes that the inscription on the sketch, “For Stanely [*sic*] + Wendy” (Stanley Marsh, the owner of the land where Smithson was building the work), is dated 18 July 1973—just two days before Smithson’s death.

The narrative of “Site Inspection” situates earthworks’ formative period as 1966 to 1967 and associates the work of Andre and Morris with this moment of origin.⁴⁵ Although it is not stated in the essay, this particular constellation of artists relates to the work Smithson undertook as an “artist consultant” to Tippetts-Abbett-McCarthy-Stratton (engineers and architects) for the Dallas-Fort Worth air terminal site.⁴⁶ Alloway locates the origins of earthworks firmly back with artists in New York City, even if he had to travel to Nevada, Texas, and Utah to experience the apotheosis of those ideas in the landscape. Just as the importance of making the trip “out West,” for both artist and critic, cannot be overestimated, the origination of the theory of earthworks cannot be adequately understood without acknowledgement of its early development in New York City.

Smithson had in fact argued against the idea that earthworks and land art necessitated an escape from the city when he wrote: “(Peter) Hutchinson, for instance, instead of going to the country to study nature, will go to see a movie on 42nd Street, like ‘Horror at Party Beach’ two or three times and contemplate it for weeks on end.”⁴⁷ The reference to movies on Forty-Second Street at this moment—it was published in June 1966—is tantalizing. Watching movies was a passion shared by Alloway and Smithson and one that developed into a collaborative venture that was significant to both men, as well as to our understanding of the nature and development of their friendship, Smithson’s work, and Alloway’s writing.

Alloway, Smithson, and *Violent America*

Later, in 1981, when Alloway was more open about his friendship with Smithson

in his writing, he contrasted their taste in science-fiction movies:

His taste for science-fiction included *The Man from Planet X*, a B movie of 1953 directed by Edgar G. Ulmer. The movie’s incomplete illusion troubled me: my taste was for more expensive films and also for mainline pro-technological science-fiction which had no place in Smithson’s library. What he liked about *The Man from Planet X*, and other movies of the genre, was its artificiality, the fact that its conventions could be seen falling apart as one watched the actor in an alien suit totter about the diminutive, foggy set.⁴⁸

The phrase “incomplete illusion,” used by Alloway in this article from 1981 to characterize the kind of movies Smithson preferred, is also found in an earlier typescript in Smithson’s papers, where it is used to describe a convention of popular movies that is “especially well demonstrated in low budget Science Fiction films.” This unpublished text is headed (in Smithson’s handwriting) “Violent America,” a title that is more familiar in the context of Alloway’s work than Smithson’s, and yet, the phrase has a shared history in a collaborative project that Alloway refers to in the introduction to his book *Violent America: The Movies, 1946–1964* (1971):

The origin of this book was a film series shown at the Museum of Modern Art from April 24 to June 6, 1969, under the title *The American Action Movie: 1946–64*. The title originally proposed, the one given [to] this book, could not be used owing to the refusal of one of the film companies to lend prints to a series so entitled. The series began as a collaboration with Toby Mussman and Robert Smithson, and we conceived it as a survey of several genres of popular American movies, but this was too broad. Smithson, whose particular interest is science-fiction movies, withdrew when that genre was regretfully dropped from the series as the Museum scheduled a separate one on the subject; and Mussman moved to California.⁴⁹

The typescript in Smithson’s papers is clearly an early draft of a description of the collaborative project when its scope still included science-fiction film.⁵⁰ But is the story so simple? Did Smithson’s withdrawal after the project’s science-fiction section was dropped mark the end of his participation in Alloway’s film project, or his influence on Alloway’s film criticism? And was Smithson’s own exploration of film influenced by his collaboration with Alloway?

Alloway and Smithson shared an interest in the experience of cinema. Directly opposed to disinterested critical viewing, they were self-proclaimed

ordinary moviegoers, immersed in the act of viewing: movie fans before movie critics.⁵¹ In his article “Entropy and the New Monuments,” Smithson contrasts the “crummy baroque and rococo of the 42nd street theaters” with the “‘padded cell’ look, the ‘stripped down’ look, or the ‘good-taste’ look” of the new art houses.⁵² This echoes the comparisons made by Alloway in a *Vogue* article from 1968, in which he contrasts a screening of a Frank Sinatra movie in an “elegant” Times Square theater with showing of an Andy Warhol film in a “grim movie house violently converted from an elegant legitimate theatre.”⁵³ But Alloway’s attention to the movie house as well as the movies also goes back to his first framings of film in the early to mid-1950s, as vividly detailed in letters to Sleight from his visit to America in 1958. His trip to see a movie with “Smell-O-Vision” is particularly striking not only for showing Alloway’s openness to the full experience of cinema, rather than just a purely visual media—“It was fun in a relaxed Wagnerian (involvement of *all* senses) sort of way” he wrote—but also for the sheer diversity of cinematic experience Alloway (like Smithson) was willing to expose himself to.⁵⁴

Comparing Alloway’s and Smithson’s published writings on film from a few years later, 1971–72, and knowing that they worked together on the *Violent America* project, reveals even more compelling correspondences. Smithson’s essay “A Cinematic Atopia,” which begins with musings on the experience of cinema as a “tangled mass” and the genre of classic westerns “taken as a lump,” could easily be seen to lightheartedly echo Alloway’s insistence on seeing films in terms of types or cycles. “The simple rectangle of the movie screen contains the flux, no matter how many different orders one presents” writes Smithson. “But no sooner have we fixed the order in our mind than it dissolves into limbo. Tangled jungles, blind paths, secret passages, lost cities invade our perception. The sites in films are not to be located or trusted.”⁵⁵ In “Robert Smithson’s Development,” published the following year, Alloway cited just the last phrase of Smithson’s observations, “the sites in films are not to be located or trusted,” in discussing the relationship between Smithson’s earthwork sculpture and his film of the same title, *Spiral Jetty* (1970). Alloway uses Smithson’s observation on sites in movies in general to question whether the same observation might apply to the sites of the work as represented in his film *Spiral Jetty*. Alloway notes that Smithson “declines to use the horizontal expanse of the site. As in his still photography he likes low-profile imagery. The typical camera angle is, so to say, slightly stooped, with little sky visible, or close up.”⁵⁶ In a rather literal way, Smithson’s filmic representation of the site of *Spiral Jetty* contradicts the experience visitors (including Alloway himself) have of the actual site and the work’s relation to its surrounding landscape. But there is another sense in which the site is not to be located or trusted if one follows Smithson’s observation back

to “A Cinematic Atopia” (1971), the source Alloway quotes from. As noted, the phrase occurs as Smithson is describing the ways in which the movie screen contains flux and creates orders and groupings that proliferate outside their original structure or meaning. The dizzying concatenation of imagery in the *Spiral Jetty* film confounds its function as a straightforward record of the work’s construction at a particular site. Alloway describes how the film contains reflections on time and occurs in real time. It references the history of the earth and prehistory, and, in a move “typical of Smithson’s double takes,” cites a quotation from “old-fashioned science fiction.”

In his book *Violent America*, Alloway writes that “the conditions of viewing complicate our responses to films still further. A film viewed in a cinema is perceived as light in darkness in a place entered solely for that purpose. The film is overwhelming, and suddenly it is gone.”⁵⁷ Smithson proposes rather more unconventional sites for cinematic experience. He imagines showing his film *Spiral Jetty* on the Staten Island Ferry: “The ferryboat could sail out to the middle of the harbor, then sail back to the port in a spiraling voyage while the film was showing.”⁵⁸ And he suggests building a cinema in a cave or an abandoned mine, where a film showing the construction of this underground cinema could be screened. Though the conditions of viewing each describe are so very different, Alloway and Smithson both stress the importance of the sites of cinema as intrinsic to its logic.

Alloway used one of Smithson’s favorite terms, *entropic*, to describe a material quality of film: “As a medium, films are subject to rapid fading; they have an entropic tendency in excess of most art forms. Apart from the complexity and elusiveness of a movie as an object of attention, the actual physical body of a film is subject to corruption.”⁵⁹ Alloway credited Smithson with bringing the word *entropic* into the literature of art.⁶⁰ Here Alloway himself uses the word in the context of writing on film as a medium. It is also fascinating to note how often Alloway’s observations about entropy in Smithson’s work are closely aligned with to references to science fiction—in “Robert Smithson’s Development,” entropy is discussed in proximity to H. G. Wells’s [*The Shape of*] *Things to Come* (1936) and *The Blob* (1958). In the case of Wells’s movie, the comparison is one Smithson made himself in his writing, and Alloway cites the source and makes a connection between “the obsolete future” in Wells’s film and Smithson’s notions of “ruins in reverse.” In the case of *The Blob*, Alloway is discussing works such as *Asphalt Rundown* (1969) and *Partially Buried Woodshed* (1970), where structures are inundated with substances—poured asphalt, mud flows, piled dirt. “In Smithson’s mind, among other things, as he set up this piece [*Partially Buried Woodshed*],” writes Alloway, “were those science-fiction movies in which amorphous beings inundate known structures,

and incorporate people, such as *The Blob*.⁶¹ Alloway cites no written source and the observation is in parentheses. How did Alloway know what was in Smithson's mind if not from their close acquaintance? And, of course, from the many hours they spent viewing science fiction movies in each other's company.

The collaboration echoes in the book *Violent America*, and when film serves as the denouement of Alloway's account of "Robert Smithson's Development." In Smithson's case, it seems possible that the intense focus on film afforded by the collaboration is one of the factors that led him to make films himself. One of the earliest film treatments in Smithson's (unpublished) writings is for a film, *The Monument*, that includes Alloway's and Smithson's shared milieu of New York galleries and openings, including Virginia Dwan's apartment as a location—and it was written at the time Alloway and Smithson were working on the MoMA screening.⁶² In his 1981 essay "Sites/Nonsites," Alloway refers to another idea Smithson had for a movie: "Consider the film of Connecticut's Merritt Parkway that Smithson talked about making. Driving along it after his death one speculated on what it might have been. Would it have been photographed from a moving car, like the dramatically charged opening sequences of *The Spiral Jetty*?"⁶³ There seems to be no published record of Smithson discussing the concept for this film. If Alloway is relying on a written source, he doesn't cite it. Instead, the idea for the movie exists only in Alloway's words, a memory of a conversation with Smithson. And in Alloway's account, the experience of driving on the Merritt Parkway after Smithson's death became both an elegiac motif and a way of "making" Smithson's movie posthumously in his imagination.

In the absence of the conventional archival sources such as written correspondence or openly acknowledged coauthored texts or exhibitions, this investigation has relied on tracking Alloway and Smithson's relationship between the lines of their respective writings and through their broader social networks, particularly those shared with their wives, who (certainly in Alloway's case) more diligently recorded their lives and networks in diaries and calendars than they did themselves. Meetings and moviegoing are recorded in Sleight's and Holt and Smithson's calendars, and it is from these sources that one can get some sense of the extent and period of time the two men devoted to their *Violent America* movie project. Meetings between Alloway, Mussman, and Smithson first appear in Sleight's calendar in 1967, shortly after Alloway's return from his writing residency at the Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. There are three meetings in quite short succession, on 22 September, 25 September, and 23 October 1967. This almost exactly covers the period when Smithson was writing "The Monuments of Passaic," the article in which Alloway identifies the "genetic moment" of the naming of earthworks, and whose narrative famously begins "On Saturday, September 20, 1967" when Smithson "went to the Port Authority

building on 41st Street and 8th Avenue, bought a copy of the *New York Times* and a Signet paperback called *Earthworks* by Brian W. Aldiss" and boarded the number 30 bus to make his tour of the monuments of Passaic. This episode thus marks both the moment earthworks got its name and the beginning of an intense period of collaborative activity that would have significant impact on the work of both Alloway and Smithson.

Postscript

In researching illustrations for this essay, I asked Nancy Holt if she had any photographs of Alloway. I'd hoped for a candid snapshot taken by Holt or by Smithson or, better still, a photograph of Alloway and Smithson together. What I got instead was an anecdote about a remembered image of Alloway. Holt asked Alloway if he would be one of the pallbearers at Smithson's funeral. Alloway expressed uncertainty because of his leg. Holt had not noticed this physical disability before; Alloway had perhaps done well to disguise it. (I don't know exactly what it was—an injury or an early indication of the onset of the neurological and spinal problems that would later affect him.) But Alloway did help to carry the casket. This tale of human weakness and fragility at a moment of tragic loss, in contrast with Alloway's famed public persona "perceived as supercilious, aggressive and arrogant,"⁶⁴ conjures a poignant mental image of the two men together. It is not embalmed in a single photographic image but lives on in Holt's words.⁶⁵ I would like to thank her for sharing this picture with me.

Notes

Epigraph: Richard Kalina, "Critical Commentary: Imagining the Present," in Lawrence Alloway, *Imagining the Present: Context, Content, and the Role of the Critic*, ed. Kalina (London: Routledge, 2006), 6.

1. For example, David Bourdon refers to "a new and controversial kind of sculpture known as 'earthworks' or 'dirt art'"; see "What on Earth," *Life*, April 25, 1969, 80. See also Howard Junker, "The New Sculpture: Getting Down to the Nitty Gritty," *Saturday Evening Post*, November 2, 1968.
2. The exhibition *Earth Works*, the first group show with that title, opened at the Dwan Gallery, New York, in October 1968.
3. Lawrence Alloway, "Site Inspection," *Artforum* 15, no. 2 (October 1976): 49–55. Alloway's first article on any of the individual artists associated with land art or earthworks was an article on Christo in *Art International* in 1968; see Lawrence Alloway, "Christo and the New Scale," *Art International*, September 1968. He also published a book on Christo in 1969; see Lawrence Alloway, *Christo* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1969). But it is clear from Alloway's definitions that he did not consider Christo part of earthworks. Alloway also reviewed Seth Siegelau's *One Month* exhibition and John Gibson's gallery/office; see Lawrence Alloway,

- “Projects for Commissions,” *The Nation*, 7 April 1969.
4. See *Options: Directions 1*, exh. cat. (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Center, 1968); “The Expanding and Disappearing Work of Art,” *Auction* 3, no. 2 (October 1969): 34–37, reprinted in Lawrence Alloway, *Topics in American Art since 1945* (New York: Norton, 1975), 207–12, 211; *Artists and Photographs* (New York: Multiples Inc., 1970); and “Art,” *The Nation*, 21 June 1971, 797.
 5. See Philipp Kaiser and Miwon Kwon, *Ends of the Earth: Land Art to 1974* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art; New York: Prestel, 2012), 17n1.
 6. John Beardsley, *Earthworks and Beyond: Contemporary Art in the Landscape* (New York: Abbeville, 1984), 7.
 7. Alloway discusses other (male) artists who were involved in earthworks early on, and then dismisses them as no longer relevant to the current (1976) definition: “Carl Andre and Robert Morris, though associated with Smithson in the formative years of 1966–67, have done only occasional works that can be considered Earthworks and neither has welcomed the label.” And “[Dennis] Oppenheim, whose name was closely linked with Smithson and [Michael] Heizer at first, has worked at the scale of Earthworks, but always with temporary materials. . . . His interest in process did not lead him to move from expendable configurations to monumental works of longer duration which is, I take it, an essential requirement of Earthworks.” See Alloway, “Site Inspection,” 55.
 8. For more on *Artists and Photographs* (1970), see the essay by von Bismarck, this volume.
 9. See Lawrence Alloway, “Artists as Writers, Part Two: The Realm of Language,” *Artforum* 12, no. 8 (April 1974): 30–31:

In 1966 Smithson published his first long article on “Entropy and the New Monuments,” also in *Artforum* which in the following year published his “The Monuments of Passaic” (a construction site in New Jersey toured like the Roman Forum) and “Towards the Development of an Air Terminal Site” based on his consultative role with an architectural firm. Big sculptural projects were proposed by Smithson as well as by [Robert] Morris and Sol LeWitt whom he brought in. This implemented the theory of Earthworks, given in the Passaic article.

See also Robert Smithson, “The Monuments of Passaic,” *Artforum* 7, no. 4 (December 1967): 48–51.
 10. Lawrence Alloway, “Robert Smithson’s Development,” *Artforum* 11, no. 3 (November 1972): 52–61, reprinted in *Topics in American Art since 1945* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975): 221–36 and *Robert Smithson’s New Jersey*, exh. cat. (Montclair, N.J.: Montclair Art Museum, 2014), 77–89. Lawrence Alloway, “Sites/Nonsites,” in Robert Hobbs, *Robert Smithson: Sculpture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 41–45.
 11. Jack Flam, ed., *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 387 [index], 35. On p. 35, Alloway’s name appears in a section headed “The Anatomy of Expressionism” in a discussion on the traces of the biological metaphor or “what Lawrence Alloway called ‘biomorphism,’”; see Robert Smithson, “Quasi-Infinities and the Waning of Space,” *Arts Magazine*, November 1966.

12. In the letter of 23 September 1972, enclosing “a copy of the concluding paragraph” and “a copy of the ‘major nonsites’ lists,” Alloway asks Smithson to check one of the entries in the list; and a postcard from Alloway, sent from Southold, Long Island, postmarked June 1972 [day unclear]. See “Correspondence General A. Miscellaneous,” Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt Papers, 1905–1987, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, box 1, folder 19.
13. Smithson and Holt Papers, box 1, folders 6–11.
14. Sylvia Sleigh Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, acc. no. 2004.M.4. There are appointment books and calendars in Sleigh’s papers dating from 1952 to 2010. For this essay, I consulted her calendars for the years 1964 to 1974, boxes 48 and 49.
15. “Lawrence Alloway on Art Education, as Interviewed by Diana David,” *Harvard Art Review* 3, no. 2 (Summer 1969): 49. Alloway did in fact write on Dossi, so this is a “real” example of writing on a historic artist whose work Alloway could not have witnessed in the making.
16. Alloway, “Art,” *The Nation*, 15 May 1976, 603.
17. Brian W. Aldiss, *Earthworks* (London: Faber & Faber, 1965).
18. Robert Hobbs, *Robert Smithson: Sculpture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 235.
19. Alloway Papers, box 45, folders 1–6. There is a considerable quantity of material related to the Park Place group among Alloway’s papers, including press clippings, exhibition invitations, and typescripts. Alloway wrote at length on one of the sculptors in the group; see “Peter Forakis Since 1960,” *Artforum* 6, no. 5 (January 1968): 25–29. See also the recent publication on the group, Linda Dalrymple Henderson, *Reimagining Space: The Park Place Gallery Group in 1960s New York* (Austin: Blanton Museum of Art, 2008).
20. They each spelled the other’s name incorrectly. Smithson wrote “LAREWCE ALLOWAY,” which might suggest unfamiliarity, though Smithson’s varied misspellings of Alloway’s name are characteristic of his calendar entries. Alloway wrote the catalog for the exhibition *Pattern Art*, held at Betty Parsons Gallery (which included work by Smithson); Smithson co-organized the 10 show at Dwan Gallery with Robert Morris and Ad Reinhardt. Both exhibitions opened in New York City on 4 October 1966, and both are recorded in Holt and Smithson’s calendar on that day. Alloway and Smithson could have met at the opening of one or the other of these shows.
21. Lawrence Alloway, “Art and the Communications Network,” in idem, *Imagining the Present: Context, Content, and the Role of the Critic*, ed. Richard Kalina (London: Routledge, 2006). See also the discussion of this article and Alloway’s idea of “network” in Courtney J. Martin, “Art World, Network and Other Alloway Keywords,” *Tate Papers*, no. 16 (1 October 2011), <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/art-world-network-and-other-alloway-keywords>.
22. Nigel Whiteley, *Art and Pluralism: Lawrence Alloway’s Cultural Criticism* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012), 223–26. Sleigh’s calendar records continuing involvement in their New York circles as well as a trip to Argentina during this period, making Whiteley’s notion of Alloway as an exile in Illinois seem a little exaggerated.

23. Robert Smithson, "Entropy and the New Monuments," *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (June 1966). (References to this article are from the version reprinted in Flam, *Smithson: Collected Writings*.)
24. James Reinish, "An Interview with Lawrence Alloway," *Studio International* 186, no. 958 (September 1973): 62–64.
25. Alloway, "Art and the Communications Network," 117.
26. Nancy Holt, "Interview with Nancy Holt," by James Meyer, in Alena J. Williams, *Nancy Holt: Sightlines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 220.
27. *Oral History Interview with Robert Smithson*, 14–19 July 1972, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-robert-smithson-12013>. The italicized passage in the quoted excerpt was edited out of the version of this interview published in Flam, *Smithson: Collected Writings*, 277.
28. Alloway, "Robert Smithson's Development."
29. The first publication date of "Robert Smithson's Development" is wrongly identified in Alloway's *Topics in American Art since 1945* as November 1973, a mistake that might have led some readers to assume that it was published after Smithson's death.
30. Lawrence Alloway, "Sites/Nonsites," 41–45.
31. Recorded in Holt and Smithson's engagement calendar, 25–26 January 1972, Smithson and Holt Papers, box 1, folder 10.
32. Alloway, "Robert Smithson's Development,"
33. Shelley Rice, "Back to the Future: George Kubler, Lawrence Alloway, and the Complex Present," *Art Journal* 68, no. 4, (Winter 2009), 80.
34. Whiteley, *Art and Pluralism*, 238.
35. Nigel Whiteley cites Alloway's acute awareness of accusations of nepotism as a reason why he seldom wrote about the work of Sleight; see Whiteley, *Art and Pluralism*, 38.
36. Lawrence Alloway, "Artists as Writers, Part One: Inside Information," *Artforum* 12, no. 7 (March 1974): 30–35; and Alloway, "Artists as Writers, Part Two," 30–35.
37. Alloway, "Robert Smithson's Development," 58.
38. Alloway, "Robert Smithson's Development," 58.
39. Alloway, "Robert Smithson's Development," 58.
40. Alloway, "Art," 603–4.
41. Alloway, "Robert Smithson's Development," 60.
42. See, for example, Lynne Cooke and Karen Kelly, *Robert Smithson: Spiral Jetty; True Fictions, False Realities* (Berkeley: University of California Press; New York: DIA Art Foundation, 2005) and the profusion of images of *Spiral Jetty* online.
43. John Canaday, quoted in Whiteley, *Art and Pluralism*, 221.
44. Lawrence Alloway, in Robert Arnold, "An Interview with Lawrence Alloway," *Midwest Art* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1977): 20.
45. Alloway also mentions Dennis Oppenheim as an artist "whose name was closely linked with Smithson and Heizer at first"; see Alloway, "Site Inspection," 55.
46. See Robert Smithson, "Towards the Development of an Air Terminal Site," *Artforum* 6, no.10 (June 1967): 36–40; and Robert Smithson, "Aerial Art," *Studio International* 177, no. 910 (April 1969): 180–81. Sol LeWitt was also involved in

- this project.
47. Smithson, "Entropy and the New Monuments," 16.
 48. Alloway, "Sites/Nonsites," 44.
 49. Lawrence Alloway, introduction to *Violent America: The Movies, 1946–1964* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1971), 7. Mussman contributed an essay to Gregory Battcock's *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Dutton, 1968) and edited a collection of essays on the nouvelle vague filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard. He moved to work in television and film production in Hollywood. His name appears in both Sleight's and Holt and Smithson's engagement calendars and there is correspondence between Smithson and Mussman in the Smithson and Holt Papers.
 50. Smithson and Holt Papers, box 3, folder 70.
 51. See the essay by Bradnock, this volume.
 52. Smithson, "Entropy and the New Monuments," 17.
 53. Lawrence Alloway, "More Skin, More Everything in Movies," *Vogue*, February 1968. See also Peter Stanfield, "Regular Novelties: Lawrence Alloway's Film Criticism," *Tate Papers*, no. 16 (1 October 2011), <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/regular-novelties-lawrence-alloways-film-criticism>.
 54. Alloway Papers, box 7, folder 8.
 55. Robert Smithson, "A Cinematic Atopia," *Artforum* 10, no. 1 (September 1971), reprinted in Jack Flam, ed., *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 141.
 56. Alloway, "Robert Smithson's Development," 60.
 57. Alloway, *Violent America*, 29.
 58. Robert Smithson, "... The Earth, Subject to Cataclysms, Is a Cruel Master," interview by Gregoire Müller, in Jack Flam, ed., *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 261.
 59. Alloway, *Violent America*, 29.
 60. Alloway, "Robert Smithson's Development," 57.
 61. Alloway, "Robert Smithson's Development," 59. Later in this essay, Alloway cites Rudolf Arnheim's recently published book *Entropy and Art: An Essay on Disorder and Order* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971) and aligns Smithson's ideas with a formulation of Arnheim's.
 62. Robert Smithson, "The Monument: Outline for a Film" 1967, in Jack Flam, ed., *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 356–57.
 63. Alloway, "Sites/Nonsites," 45.
 64. Whiteley, *Art and Pluralism*, 17.
 65. Nancy Holt, in conversation with the author, London, 16 May 2013. Holt read the manuscript of this essay and commented, "It was a joy to read the Alloway/RS essay. You displayed elegantly your powers of investigation in clear and precise language. I saw connections between the two which I was not completely aware of at the time, even though I was a frequent witness to their friendship at dinners and at film screenings/discussions"; Nancy Holt, email to the author, 29 September 2013. Nancy Holt died on 8 February 2014.