

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

Chicago

“Experiments in Environment: The Halprin Workshops, 1966–1971”

GRAHAM FOUNDATION

4 W. Burton Pl., Madlener House

September 19–December 13

Spend a day in silence. Descend a hill blindfolded. Build a village out of driftwood. Such were the sense-expanding (if common-sense confounding) activities that the dauntless young dancers and designers who attended Anna and Lawrence Halprin’s late-1960s cross-disciplinary workshops in the San Francisco Bay area could expect—if one could ever really have known what to expect from a curriculum “scored” for maximum kinesthetic effect by the pioneering choreographer and her landscape architect husband. The Halprins were standouts in their respective fields, and this exhibition highlights the vital but overlooked collaborative inquiries into movement awareness, participatory techniques, and process-oriented pedagogy that emerged from their recognition of the environment as a common medium: both a support for works of art and a portal to untrammelled perceptual territories.



Anna Halprin and Lawrence Halprin, *Movement Session—Walk in the Woods*, 1966. Part of “Experiments in Environment Workshop,” July 11, 1966. Photo courtesy Lawrence Halprin Collection, The Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

Organized with the Architectural Archives of the University of Pennsylvania, the delightfully mounted presentation brings together materials—scores, schedules, letters, applications, notebooks, photographs, posters, rosters, announcements, films—related to three such workshops with detailed architectural documentation of two of the spring-summer workshops’ primary sites: the Halprins’ cliffside Sea Ranch cabin and wooded Mount Tamalpais residence, home to their famed tree-trunk punctured “dance deck.” Seen against today’s carbon credit-counting ecological consciousness, these open-ended forays alert us as much to the gauntness of our compulsory environmental “awareness” as to the Halprins’ immeasurable and estimable faith in art’s capacity to imagine other, more collective and creative worlds through tactile explorations of everyday life. Take a final lesson from *City Map Score*, 1968: “Imagine yourself in a place of fantasies and act accordingly.”

— David Huber