

MOTINTERNATIONAL

Dennis Oppenheim

Whirlpool. (Eye of the Storm).

1973

El Mirage Dry lake, Southern California. 3/4 mile by 4 mile schemata of a vortex (whirlpool), traced in the sky using standard white smoke discharged by an aircraft over El Mirage Dry Lake.

Whirlpool. (Eye of the Storm). was executed over El Mirage Dry Lake during the summer of 1973 in California. Two aircraft were used, one carrying camera equipment, the other discharging white vapor, produced by ejecting liquid nitrogen from a compressor tank. Instructions regarding the aerial maneuvers were given by the artist via a ground-to air short-wave radio. Instructions began with the execution of a circle, 3/4-mile in diameter, traced in the sky. The pilot was then immediately instructed to continue this formation, but with each revolution he was to close-in on the dimension

of the circle, reducing the perimeter, while at the same time flying downward. The configuration created by this pattern was similar to a vortex (whirlpool). The project was executed three times. The two initial attempts failed because of the inability of the aircraft to maneuver out of the tightly confined circle, at close proximity to the ground.

(Artist's Statement)

While *Whirlpool. (Eye of the Storm)* is unique to both the artist's practice and the Land Art movement, it is also paradigmatic of the then contemporary shift to dematerialized and conceptual practices, from the artists instruction of another agent, to the very real brevity and erasure of the action.

Recalling Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970), *Broken Circle/Spiral Hill* (1971) and Oppenheim's own *Annual Rings*, (1968) the spiral image is iconic of this period of experimentation outside the gallery, testing the tensions between natural and artificial elements. Yet while many of the Land Art works produced in this period could only be seen in their totality via aerial images, in *Whirlpool. (Eye of the Storm)* Oppenheim moved beyond marking the landscape, and projected the work itself up into the air. Transferring the depiction of a tornado, he opened up the limitless surface of the sky for intervention.

A key figure of American Conceptual Art, Oppenheim's pioneering contribution to Land Art was of huge significance, as part of a vanguard of artists featured in the important 1968 exhibition 'Earthworks' at Dwan Gallery, New York. The most recent exhibition of his work, 'Dennis Oppenheim: Thought Collision Factories', was held at the Henry Moore Institute in 2014, and his many solo exhibitions include the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Tate Gallery, London. He exhibited extensively in group shows at venues such as The Museum of Modern Art, New York; PS1 Contemporary Art Center; National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Tate Modern, London; Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany, and the Venice and Sao Paolo Biennales.



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Photodocumentation:
Color and black and white photography, aerial map.
8 panels
Total size: 170 x 70 in / 431.8 x 177.8 cm



installation view, Henry Moore Institute



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Film installation:

Color, silent

5:01 min

Super 8 print converted to Betacam and .mov

Installation at the Kitchen Center, New York, 1975

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film stills

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Additional materials:

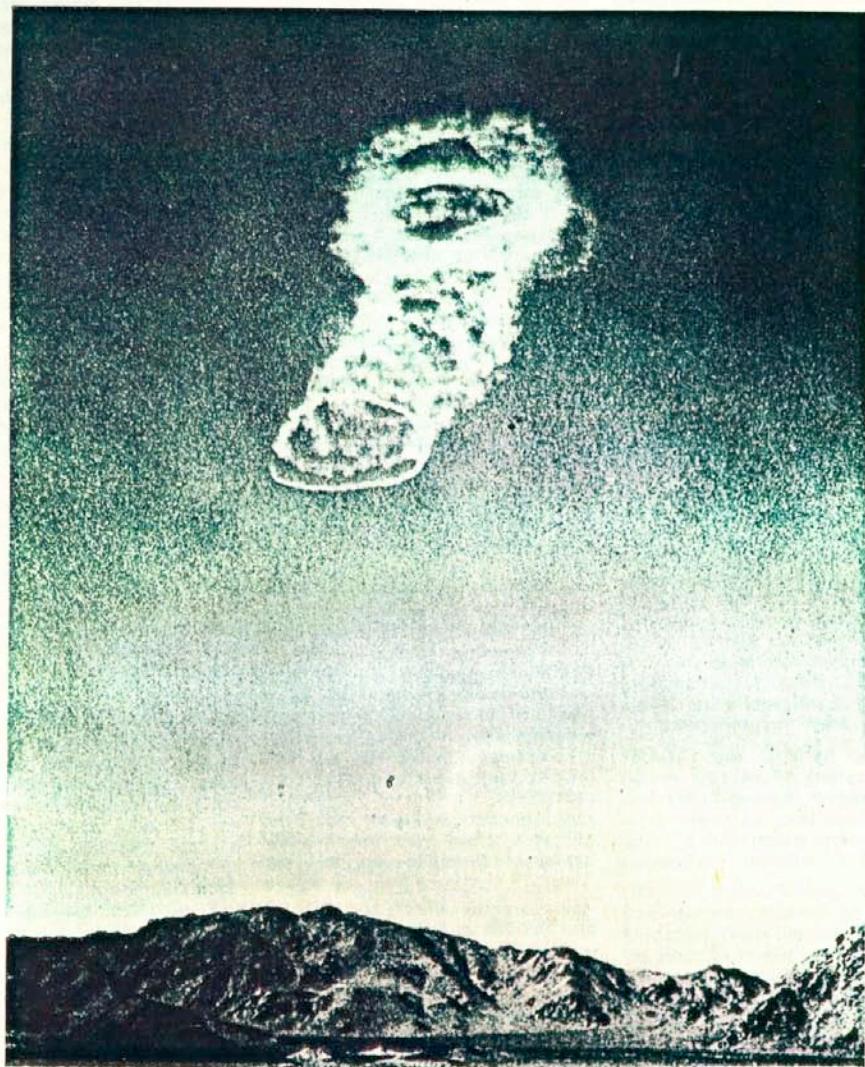


Dennis Oppenheim on site
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Magazin KUNST

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Das deutschsprachige Kunstmagazin - 14. Jahrg. - Nr. 4/1974 - DM 12.50



„Whirlpool - Eye of the Storm“ - Interview mit Dennis Oppenheim auf Seite 114

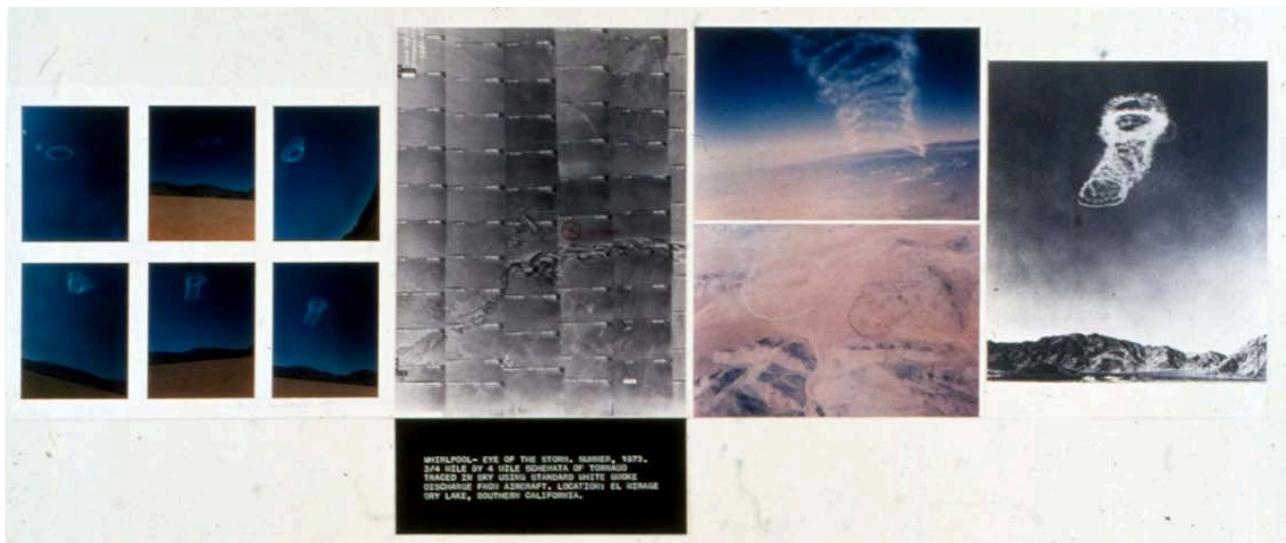
VIDEO

Ein neues Medium in
der bildenden Kunst

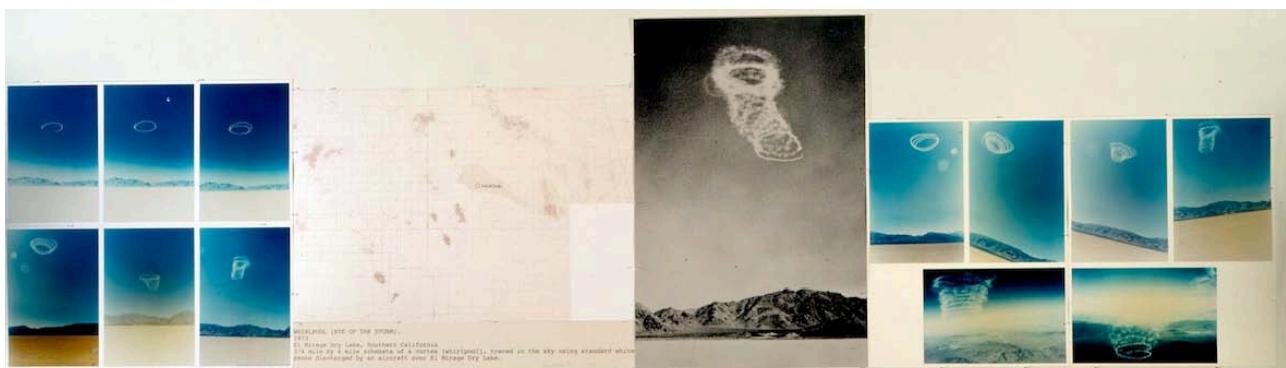
3 Farb-Monographien
Daniel Buren
Franz Ringel
Emilio Tadini

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Dennis Oppenheim produced a small number of the photo-documentation works relating to each of his early Land and Body Art pieces and performances. Each is considered unique. The following are the only other versions of *Whirlpool*. (*Eye of the Storm*); all are currently held in museum or private collections.



Collection: The Metropolitan Museum of Art



Collection: Private Collection, Italy



Collection: Winnipeg Art Gallery

