



THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Some Art

IGNORING people—that's a terrible thing to do. Perhaps you haven't heard of Barry Le Va. In his 1969 art work "Velocity Piece (Impact Run)," Mr Le Va ran back and forth as fast as possible between two walls fifty feet apart, crashing into them, until he collapsed. Mr Le Va is not one of the conceptual artists taking part in the current show at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, "Choices: Making an Art of Everyday Life," but he has had an effect on the other artists, and now that you know about him he has had an effect on you. You may not exactly realize how Mr Le Va is affecting your life, but that just shows his subtlety. Are you jittery? Mr Le Va may be the cause.

Michael Osterhout, who *is* in the show, used to tattoo people, but he wanted to go beyond that, conceptually "A brand on a cow seemed like a logical choice," he writes in the show's catalogue. "I bought a cow, branded her, and arranged for her to be boarded on a friend's farm. My cow was accidentally hit and killed by a truck. I pulled prints from the steaks and eventually dried them into art objects."

Marina Abramovic and Ulay (his full name) are also taking part. They are the pair who braided their long hair together one day in Bologna, in 1977, and sat back to back for seventeen hours. "Tree," done in Wiesbaden a year later, employed a python that hadn't eaten in two weeks. "The space was warm; we stretched piano wires across the floor, which we made sounds with—vibrations for the snake," Ms. Abramovic recalls in the show's catalogue. "The snake followed me for a long time, coming very near. She put her tongue out and I put my tongue out. The tension was

so strong; I felt that at any movement she would jump around my neck to strangle me. After four hours and fifteen minutes, for no visible reason, the snake turned and went away. And that was the end."

One would have expected Tehching Hsieh to be included in the show—he's the man who remained in a cage for a year, and who punched a time clock every hour on the hour for a year, and who tied himself to Linda Montano with a rope for a year. He is there, but in a very quiet way, because his current performance involves not looking at, making, reading about, or talking about art for twelve months. It is in that capacity that he is not there.

It is a little like what's going on with James Lee Byars. James Lee Byars is the man who during last fall's hurricane telephoned a number of people to announce that seven gold men would be smelling six museums and the *Times* building that day. Although the museums were closed, and very few passersby witnessed the performance, it actually did happen.