

# TURN ON, TUNE IN, DROP OUT

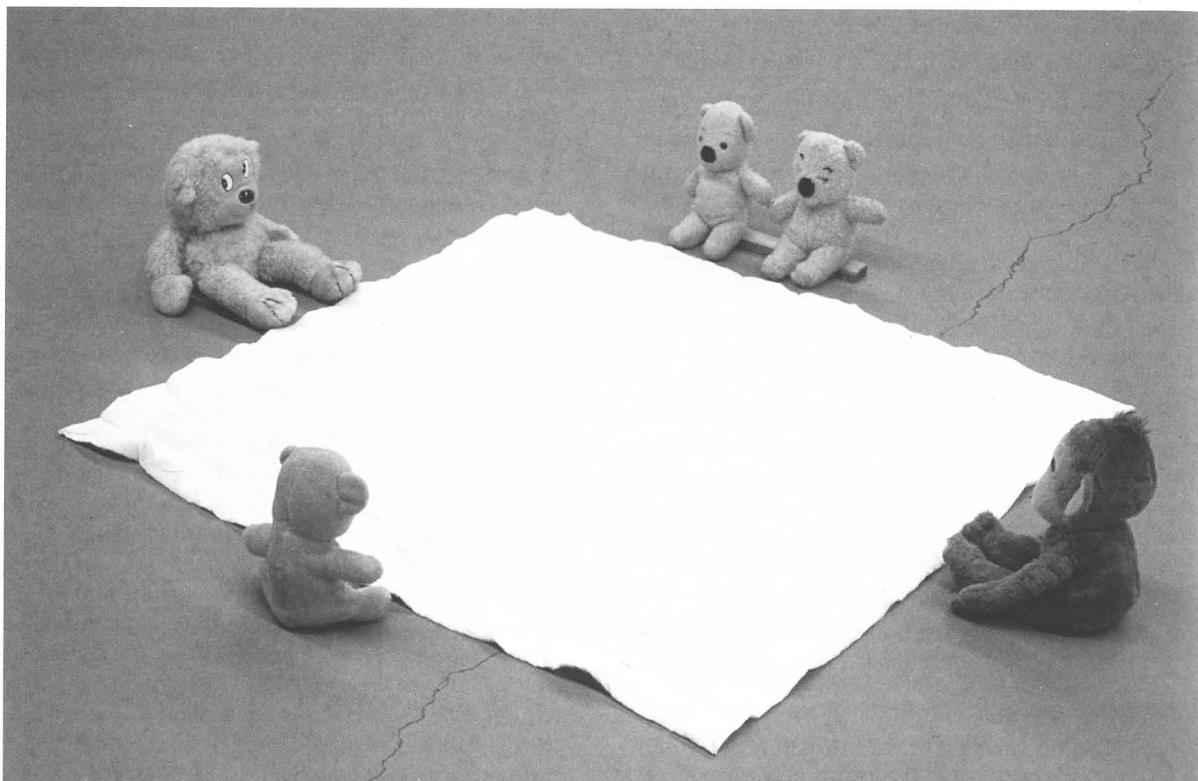
In September we started going regularly to a two-story bar/restaurant on Park Avenue South off Union Square that Mickey Ruskin had opened in late '65. It was called Max's Kansas City and it became the ultimate hangout.

Opiates play a very important role in the body's chemistry. The surprise for us is to find them turning up in the context of grooming. Research has shown that monkeys who have been groomed have higher endogenous opiate levels than those who have not.

Max's Kansas City was the exact place where Pop Art and pop life came together in New York in the sixties—teeny boppers and sculptors, rock stars and poets from St. Mark's Place, Hollywood actors checking out what the underground actors were all about, boutique owners and models, modern dancers and go-go dancers—everybody went to Max's and everything got homogenized there.

Moreover, minute doses of morphine were sufficient to suppress grooming behaviour; when the brain's opiate receptors were flooded, the monkeys were no longer interested in grooming. And when the natural production of endogenous opiates was blocked by giving the monkeys small doses of naloxone, a drug that neutralizes morphine, they were more irritable than normal and kept asking to be groomed by their cage-mates.

Max's became the showcase for all the fashion changes that had been taking place at the art openings and shows: now people weren't going to the art openings to show off their new looks—they just skipped all the preliminaries and went straight to Max's. Fashion wasn't what you wore someplace anymore; it was the whole reason for going.





The mechanisms that make grooming an attractive activity seem directly related to its ability to induce a state of relaxation and mild euphoria. This, if you like, is the reinforcer that makes monkeys willing to spend so much time in what would otherwise seem a pointless activity. Even though grooming ensures that the fur is cleaned and the skin kept free of debris and scabs, the time devoted to it by species like baboons, macaques and chimpanzees far exceeds that actually needed for these simple purposes.

But there is more to grooming than just hygiene, at least in the monkeys and apes. For them, it is an expression of friendship and loyalty.

The event itself was optional—the way Max's functioned as a fashion gallery proved that. Kids would crowd around the security mirror over the night deposit slot in the bank next door ("Last mirror before Max's") to check themselves out for the long walk from the front door, past the bar, past all the fringe tables in the middle, and finally into the club room in the back.

Language seems ideally suited in various ways to being a cheap and ultra-efficient form of grooming.

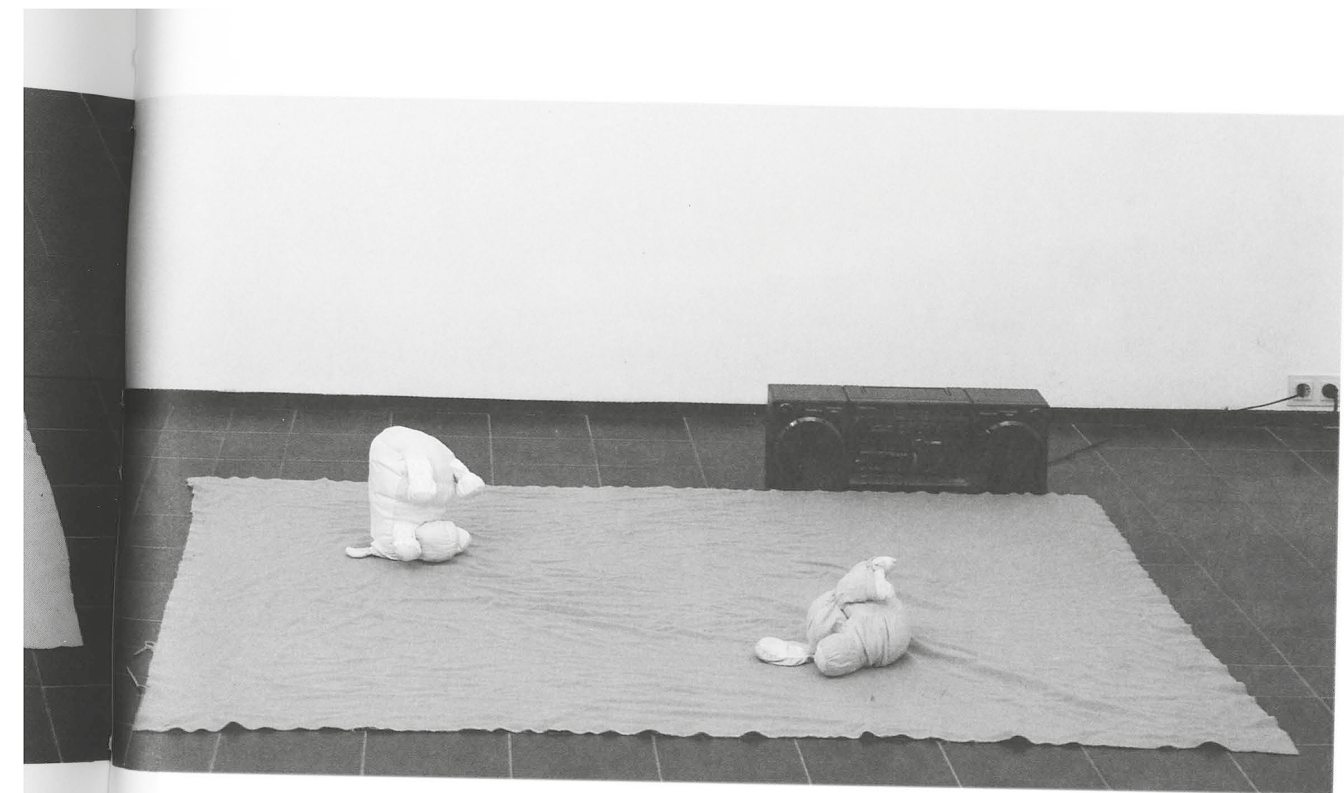
Language allows us to exchange information over a wider network of individuals than is possible for monkeys and apes. If the main function of grooming for monkeys and apes is to build up trust and personal knowledge of allies, then language has an added advantage. It allows you to say a great deal about yourself, your likes and dislikes, the kind of person you are; it also allows you to convey in numerous subtle ways something about your reliability as an ally or friend.

In many traditional cultures, dance is very central and absolutely essential to any sort of group decision-making. It is a way of cementing bonds and relationships among members of the community. In our culture, dance hardly has any function except as a means of self-display. It's very much about appearance, and how we look, and not very much about what the experience means.



One of the more intriguing features of human behaviour is the extent to which song and dance feature in our social life. No known society lacks these two phenomena. But when you stop to think about them, they are both very odd activities.

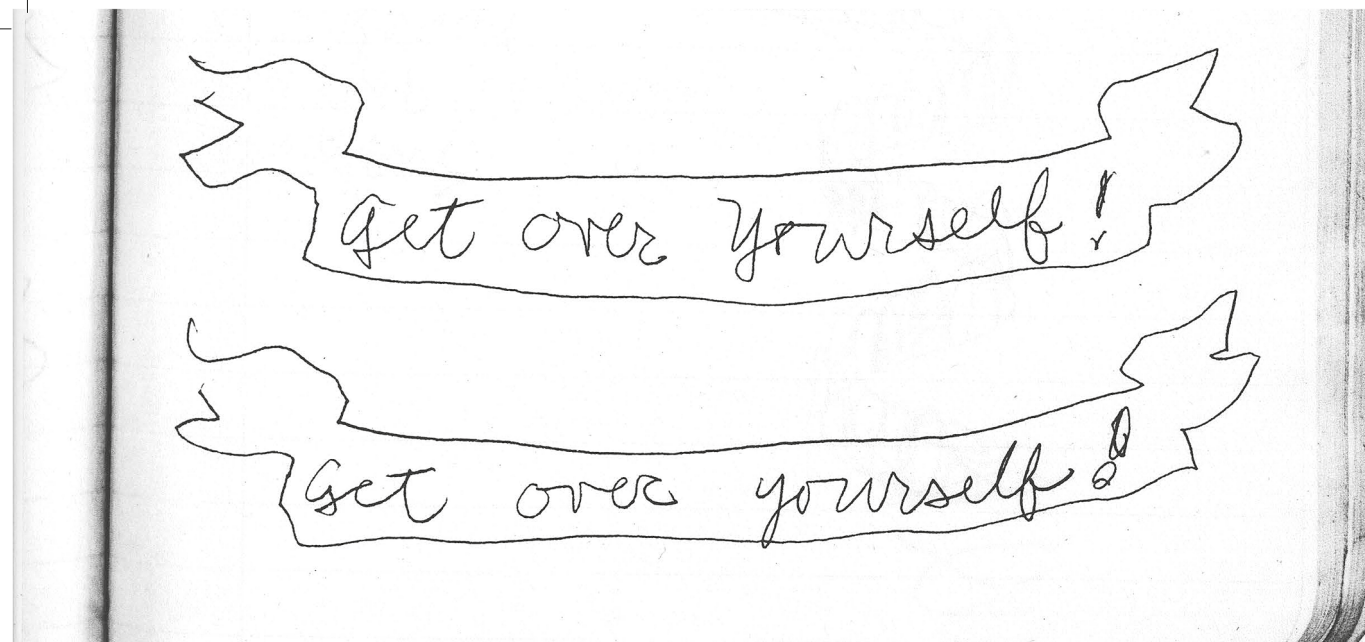
We reserve all experiences having to do with rhythmic bodily sensation to sex. It allows us to loose ourselves, loose our sense of inhibition, escape or circumvent our constrained conceptual categories that means by which we make sense of the world. It enables us to put it all together and make it coherent so that we can get through the world on a daily basis. In fact, dance and sexuality are very closely interconnected. The point of dancing is to ground ourselves, as an individual, in this basic, fondamental and universal rhythmic pulse.



MDMA's users neither trip nor dream. They are immersed, entranced, possessed, as nameless as the planes to which the drug takes them, as faceless and anonymous as the warm airs and cool clear breezes washing through the skin. They are dancers, rhythms, speeds and beats, disorganized and dispersed beyond their own individuation, overwhelmed by their own connectivity. This is a world of rhythm, repetition, an oceanic sound which, as Deleuze and Guattari wrote, 'invades us, impels us, drags us, transpierces us. It takes leave of the earth, as much in order to drop us into a black hole as to open us up to a cosmos. It makes us want to die.'

The anthropologist Chris Knight has argued that the use of ritual to co-ordinate human groups by synchronizing everyone's emotional states is a very ancient feature of human behaviour, and coincides with the rise of human culture and language.





Imagine trying to coordinate the lives of 150 people a quarter of a million years ago out in the woodlands of Africa. Words alone are not enough. No one pays attention to carefully reasoned arguments.

Here, song and dance play an important part: they rouse the emotions and stimulate like nothing else the production of opiates to bring about states of elation and euphoria.

MDMA is one of the most influential inside tracks of the digital, sampled, cybernetic world that came on line in the late 1980s. It steals identity away, but it also throws its users into new connective tissues of dance, movement, rhythm, sound, and there's none of the terror encountered by Daumal, Michaux, Artaud, Poe: the drug makes it all feel easy and taste so nice. MDMA takes the fear of death away.

It makes us feel good to sing and dance. It generates euphoric highs, as well as feelings of happiness and warmth. Both activities are hard work; and both are ideal activities to generate surges of opiates from the brain - which is almost certainly why we feel so good after performing them. So why should we have latched on to this curious effect and taken up these activities with so much enthusiasm?

If the person comes from a background in which rhythmic dancing is not part of their experience, it can produce estrangement and alienation. If the person does, then it can produce a bond. And I think that bond has to be there before we can have any important and necessary abstract discussions about our problems, about politics, race, economics and unemployment. If we start with words, we're just gonna end with words. We have to start with something more particular, more foundational that all of us have, independently of language, independently of concepts, that can subvert and soften our conceptual schemes.

Paradoxically, it seems that just as we were reaping all the advantages of language, we had to back-pedal on abandoning the more primitive processes. Just as we were acquiring the ability to argue and rationalize, we needed a more primitive emotional mechanism to bond our large groups and make them effective.

It's really important for us not to always be thinking in abstractions, in terms of concepts, language and categories. Because those modes of thoughts, constrains us to stereotypes. In order to go beyond them and beneath them, we have to go to the realm of concrete particularity, a term that philosophers like to use. It means that each thing, each individual, each spatial temporal object in the world and each experience is completely unique and different from everything else. No concept, no thought, no analysis, no essay, no big fat book can ever possibly capture it.

This was not a means of escaping the body, but a way to let the body escape the structures and boundaries that keep it organized. In the first wave of the drug's popularity, it felt as though it was melting everybody down. And if music had once been an accompaniment to the effects of drugs like LSD, dance music learned how to enhance and intensify these visceral, rhythmical, bodily effects of MDMA. 'Organized around the absence of crescendo or narrative progression, rave music instils a pleasurable tension; a rapt suspension that fits perfectly with the sustained pre-orgasmic plateau of the MDMA high.'

Each thing we discuss or analyse is necessarily replete with stereotypes. That's just the way the mind works. There's nothing anyone can do about it. It's a lot harder to maintain those rigid stereotypes when we actually have first-hand, direct, non-conceptual, visceral experience of the person, community or situation we are talking about. The more we hold the self insulated from contact with these visceral experiences of others and of other things, the easier it is to hold stereotypes. And then we are at some cocktail party where everybody's educated. Then we're supposed to have an opinion about Bush's latest gaff or the recent horror on the world stage, it becomes a lot harder to come out with a 25-word summary that makes one look good when our experience of the complexities is so refined, so subtle, so many-sided. We just can't encapsulate it. I think it's a good thing for us, to experience speechlessness, and not having the analysis at our fingertips on every occasion. Because the more we do that, the stronger and more powerful the ultimate analysis will be in the end.





Not everyone was convinced that LSD was so full of revolutionary potential. 'Drugs are an excellent strategy against society,' wrote Jeff Nuttall, 'but a poor alternative to it.' Political activists and tripping hippies often shared nothing more than mutual distrust. Revolutionaries ascribed tripped-out talk of inner revolution to bourgeois indulgence and escapist fantasy. Jack Kerouac, who took LSD just once, was 'sure that it had been introduced to America by the Russians as part of a plot to weaken the country', and there were many suggestions, not so improbable, that the drug had been deliberately popularized by the CIA in an effort to depoliticize its 1960s users and undermine their ability to organize, co-ordinate or even simply think straight.

GO WITHOUT GRASS FOR THE SAME AMOUNT OF TIME AS GRASS PIECE, WHICH TURNS OUT TO BE 33 DAYS. START IMMEDIATELY AFTER GRASS PIECE. (MAY 4, 69) [PIECE ENDS JUNE 6, 69]. PARANOIA STARTS, (MAY 4, 69) OTHER PRE-GRASS SYMPTOMS NOTICE SUCH AN INTENSE FLOW OF ADRENALIN THAT I GET HIGH ON IT. (MAY 5, 69) GET HIGH ON A SMALL GLASS OF WINE. (MAY 5, 69) SLEEPLESS NIGHT <sup>LAST NIGHT</sup> ANOTHER PRE-GRASS SYMPTOM. (MAY 6, 69) EXCESSIVE DREAMING. (MAY 7, 69) HALF-AWAKE DREAMS. EVERYTHING SEEMS FUNNIER. (MAY 9, 69) TONIGHT I FELT TENSE & HAD A HEADACHE & WANTED TO TURN ON FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THIS PIECE. (MAY 9, 69) IF SOMEONE HAD OFFERED ME GRASS I WOULD'VE TURNED ON. SLEEPLESSNESS CONTINUES; FITS OF PIQUE. (MAY 10, 69) UNCONTROLLABLE SADNESS. (MAY 10, 69) DEATHNESS.

BUT I DON'T GET

Max's was an Art Environment, replete with Art Consciousness and Self-Consciousness about Art Consciousness. To even walk into Max's was to be absorbed into the collective Art Self-Conscious Consciousness, either as object or as collaborator. I didn't want to be absorbed as a collaborator, because that would mean having my own consciousness co-opted and modified by that of others: It would mean allowing my consciousness to be influenced by their perceptions of art, and exposing my perceptions of art to their consciousness, and I didn't want that.

APRIL 5, 70

(114)

IT WAS INEVITABLE, SINCE I WORK IN SETS OF COURSE THAT I DO THE DROPOUT ~~(NOTE)~~ (NOTE ~~THE~~ PUN) PIECE. IT HAS BEEN ~~CHURNING~~ CHURNING FOR A LONG TIME BUT I THINK IT'S ABT TO BLOW.

DROPOUT PIECE IS THE HARDEST WORK I HAVE EVER DONE.



Order of appearance: TIMOTHY LEARY, *Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out*, album cover, 1966; ANDY WARHOL & PAT HACKET, *Popism, The Warhol '60s*, New York: Harper & Row, 1980; ROBIN DUNBAR, *Grooming, Gossip and the Evolution of Language*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996; MIKE KELLEY, *Arena #7 (Bears)*, 1990; ADRIAN PIPER, transcript of the video *Shiva Dances with the Art Institute of Chicago*, 2004; ADRIAN PIPER, stills from *Funk Lessons*, 1983; MIKE KELLEY, *Dialogue #7 (Ambiguity and Amorphousness)*, 1991; SADIE PLANT, *Writing on drugs*, London: Faber & Faber, 1999; PAUL THEK's notebook #81, n.d.; LEE LOZANO, Notebook 8, 5 April 1970; ADRIAN PIPER, "Untitled Performance for Max's Kansas City" in *Out of Order, Out of Sight, Volume I Selected Writings in Meta-Art 1968-1992*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996