

Light Years: an Anthology on Sociocultural Happenings (Multimedia in the East Village, 1960-1966)

Edited and with an Introduction by Carol Bergé

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Over 650 pages re the nascent beat poetry scene in 1960s Manhattan.

Memoir chapters by 36 artists who were "there", including:

Ward Abbott: Ginsberg's fame was that of a super-star. It was with all the wide-eyed awe of the 18-year-old acolyte that I approached him... Later, Ed Sanders came by. I sat at a small table sipping tea while the gathering talked excitedly of the coming orgy...

Nancy Ellison: How odd and provocative it felt: to be painting for deKooning... a psychic strip tease, right down to my bare aesthetics!

Serge Gavronsky: When I walk in, Anais Nin holds out her hand... At one of her gatherings, I see Norman Mailer leaning on the mantelpiece.

Robert Newman: I had spent 1961-2 at Harvard, where I had become friends with Tim Leary and Frank Baron... It was a charming situation to me that Frank thought I was an outstanding poet, young as I was, and Tim's magic pills [small round pink tablets of psilocybin-- Ed.] put a powerful spin on the situation...

Robert Wilson: Much was made at the time of the so-called "unsavory" character of the Beats... Sure, pot was smoked, and sometimes hard drugs were used... Meanwhile, the "acceptable" poets, the ones endorsed by The Establishment, were busy either drinking themselves to death, or committing suicide, or at the least having repeated nervous breakdowns.

Hannah Weiner: I QUIT MY FULLTIME JOB AFTER THE SUMMER CONFERENCE IN BERKELEY (POETRY) IN 1965 & WORKED PART TIME UNTIL THE WORDS I SAW MADE ME ILL... MICKEY RUSKIN I GOT TO KNOW LATER AND I DID TWO PERFORMANCE PIECES AT MAX'S KANSAS CITY...

Steve Kowit: On the evenings of those open readings there'd be a formidable mob haunting the place: an assortment of hustlers, hoodlums, deadbeats, artists, students, bongo players, hipsters and out-and-out sociopaths—the greasy, zit-ridden habitues of late-nite donut shops and 24-hour cafeterias.

Lorenzo Thomas: While race remained a powerful engine of social upheaval, the artists seemed able to work together almost in spite of it... the avant-garde artists became a community.

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