

Seligma

Incomplete  
Requiem  
for W. C. Fields

by Al Hansen



1966  
A Great Bear Pamphlet  
New York

**This work is dedicated to my daughter  
Bibbe Anne Hansen  
(who in so many ways is just like me)  
as was the original performance  
at the E·pit'o·me Coffee House  
165 Bleecker St.  
Greenwich Village  
New York City**

I have no idea during what week or day or month of 1958 the original performance of the **Incomplete Requiem for W. C. Fields** occurred. The poem—if you could call it that—was written sometime during the preceding year. The coffee shop boom had peaked and the New York backwash from the San Francisco Poetry Revolution was terrific. Kenneth Rexroth was reciting to jazz at the old Five Spot on Third Avenue, and Corso, Ginsberg, Kerouac and Lamantia were everywhere.

Where are Turk and the rug kids who lived in the sub-basement of the Sullivan Street Playhouse?

Three neo-plastic painters—Don (Max) McAree, Lawrence (Larry) Poons and Howard Smythe—ran the E•pit'o•me Coffee Shop at 165 Bleecker Street in Greenwich Village. They rented it from an old man named Pepe who later killed the owner of the Cafe Rario (which is now where the E•pit'o•me used to be) in front of the liquor store across the street.

Whatever became of Jaimee Pugliese?

A large number of young artists were going through all the doorways Dada had posited, though no one had called it Neo-Dada yet. Everyone who Hans Hoffmanned at Provincetown was talking about Red Grooms' Happening at the Sun Gallery there. Earlier, the rage had been Allan Kaprow's Happening-environment at the Hansa Gallery on Central Park West. (Ivan Karp and Dick Bellamy worked at the Hansa until it folded, then they landed in Martha Jackson's.) And the Living Theatre was under construction at 14th Street and Sixth Avenue.

Whatever became of Sharon Hurley?

Kaprow almost drowned that summer. Grooms, Karp, Bellamy and others were making a film at Provincetown. It was full of German shots, Russian shots, Italian shots, French shots, Japanese shots. Allan's part was to come up out of the bay made up like the creature from the deeps. He had chains wrapped all around him. He shot up out of the water, it was beautiful, then toppled over backwards and the heavy chains bore him under.

When is lovely Hazel Ford coming back to New York?

Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine had taken over the Judson Gallery, under Rev. Howard Moody's Judson Church. The assistant minister, Bud Scott, was quite sure that Claes, Jim, Kaprow and myself were devils returned to earth. And there was John Cage's class in composition at the New School, where I met Steve Addiss, George Brecht, Earle Brown, Morton Feldman, Dick Higgins, Kaprow, Dick Maxfield, George Segal and many others. Later that year Kaprow and I had a series of intense conversations about a workshop-atelier-cum-Happenings gallery. Somehow these wonderful ideas became the old Reuben Gallery on lower Fourth Avenue, where only the surface of the ideas was scratched. I love to digress.

by Al Hansen

( 4 )

As I was saying, Max McAree, Larry Poons and Howard Smythe ran the E·pit'o·me. All the coffee shoppes at the peak of the boom were featuring poetry readings, so Don asked me to get some poets. Most of the reading cliques were predominantly male, but since we were straight eclectics I went out and got all the girl poets I could find—Diane Di Prima, Hazel Ford, Diane Wakoski and many others. To further pep things up we used experimental performance pieces. One of these was Dick Higgins' *Canzona*. Spotlight on a small table. Higgins is announced, enters, sits down at the table, takes a notebook out of a briefcase, opens book on table, keeps eyes on book, reaches into briefcase, takes out left glove, eyes still fixed on book, fits glove snugly on left hand, takes another glove from briefcase, carefully fits it to right hand, eyes still on book, then takes off left glove, replaces it in briefcase, removes right glove, replaces it, closes notebook, replaces it in briefcase, closes briefcase, stands, exits.

Larry Poons used to go to the "John Cage" (the toilet of the E·pit'o·me, painted "Op" in red and green stripes) and dress for his performance: plastic bowl on his head, my Harris tweed overcoat buttoned up to his chin, neckties hanging down and the toilet seat around his neck. (Once in a while some timid uptown type would complain that he couldn't use the potty while Poons had the seat around his neck.) Poons would then go to a table, place a chair on it, climb up, sit down and read from the Motherwell Dada book for an hour. That book was our Bible, and

we had all been caught swiping copies of it and **View and transition** from the Gotham art book archive repository on 46th Street. Poons always ended his readings with "Roar," the Tristan Tzara poem. During one recital, Howard Smythe nailed Poons' shoes to the table. A big policeman entered and ordered Poons down to the floor. "I can't," said Poons. "Why not?" asked the cop. "My feet are nailed to the table."

And like that....

I did the **Incomplete Requiem for W. C. Fields** without rehearsals, splicing and editing the films that were to be projected on my chest up to the last minute. No time to memorize the text. I was ready. The lights went out. The projector was turned on. I couldn't read a word of the text, even though it was typed out in capital letters, because it was silhouetted by the movie beam and the light was in my eyes. I kind of held the manuscript overhead, awkwardly twisting my neck and squinting to try to make out the words. Then Poons, with a sense of timing that was beautiful, handed me a flashlight and lowered the projector so that the light was no longer in my eyes, and the **Requiem** began.

— Al Hansen  
New York  
May 1966

INCOMPLETE REQUIEM FOR W. C. FIELDS  
WHO DROPPED A BUCKET OF NAILS  
OR MAYBE A SHOVEL  
ON HIS FATHER'S HEAD  
AND LEFT PHILADELPHIA

GOD KNOWS WHAT CRIME HE COMMITTED  
TO GO HIDE OUT  
IN LONG-AGO AUSTRALIA

HE BECAME A CARNY STIFF  
A BEEFY GUY HIP TO MITT CAMPS  
AND NAIL JOINT HURLY-BURLY

by Al Hansen

JUGGLING CIGAR BOXES DEFTLY

(6)

SHARP EYE ON THE MEARZ ID WEARZ AY

IN ALL THOSE GRAPE SUNSET  
AUSTRALIAN SATURDAY AFTERNOONS

YELLOW DESERT OUT BACK DEALS  
ALL HIS HUMOUR

YESTERDAY BROOKLYN DIED  
AND WHEN THE BIG MUSHROOM  
CLOUD WENT UP  
IT SPELLED DRINK

AND IN LONG-AGO AUSTRALIA WILLY  
READ THE MESSAGE  
DRANK HIS WAY UP THE BINDLESTIFF  
COMICS TRAIL

SAW THE WRITING IN THE SKY  
OVER DEVASTATED FLATBUSH  
AND THE TWISTED WRECKAGE

OF THE CONEY ISLAND LINE  
WHERE SANDPAPER-SKINNED HANDS  
SCRATCHED THE SITE OF THE LAST A & P

PAYING DUES FROM THE JUGGLER BIT  
TO THE CANE-SPLIT CLOTH LAWN  
OF A MILLION BURLY STAGE POOL TABLES

DEVELOPING THE SUCKING SICKNESS  
GETTING FUNNIER  
ON MILES OF CELLULOID CHARGE

FAT FUNNY MAN FULL OF HELL  
I DUG YOU

THE DOCS SAID STOP DRINKING OR DIE  
AND YOU

YOU SNEERED

STEERED FOR THE BAR

SNAPPING YOUR FINGERS FOR

“SPIRITUS FERMENTI”

Incomplete

THEY SAID “YOU’VE HAD IT, QUIT!”

AND YOU

CLAUDE WILLIAM DUKINFIELD

THE ORACLE OF PHILLO-DELPHI-A

WRITING FILM TREATMENTS ON

ENVELOPES AND NAPKINS

YOU MIXED THEM ONE FOR THE ROAD

SOME PEOPLE TALK ABOUT DYING

YOU DID IT

YOU DID YOUR OLD MAN IN WITH

A BUCKET OF NAILS

FROM THE BARN ROOF

OR WAS IT A COAL SHOVEL

ON SOME POST CIVIL WAR PHILADEL-

PHIAN PRE-ATOMIC FARM

AND BECAME

THE OMNISCIENT

CASTRATED

FATHER OF US ALL

WHEN THE SIPPING SICKNESS CAME

YOU SAID “YES!”

Requiem

for W. C. Fields

(7)

WE LAUGHED OUR UNSURE  
PARENT-INDUCED HYSTERIA  
OUT AT YOU FROM THOUSANDS  
OF NEIGHBORHOOD ITCHES  
ON BARROOM SUNTAN SATURDAYS

YOU DISMISSED CHAPLIN AS A  
SISSY BALLET DANCER  
YOU THE FAT MAN WITH THE LONG  
SISSY PHALLUS

CANE

POOL CUE

DANGEROUS LOOKING

LIKE A LONG PENAL DAGGER

WHICH BENT IMPOTENTLY

RUBBERLY

WHEN YOU WANTED THE EIGHT BALL

IN THE SIDE POCKET

MENACING BLACK BELT STRAW HAT

CLOWN

YOU SHOWED US THE IMPOTENT

FATHER FULL OF HATE

WHEN WE WANTED TO SEE HIM MOST

AND WE DIDN'T FEEL GUILTY OR ANGRY

YOU WORE THE BELLS IN OUR FAMILY

OF MAN

IF THINGS GOT ROUGH YOU JUST SNEERED

AND PLAYED IT A LITTLE DIRTIER

THEN THE SIPPING SICKNESS WON

BUT YOU TOOK A TURN FOR THE NURSE

BIG BROWN TEATS

FOUR-FIFTHS FULL OF WHISKEY

STEPPED IT UP

USED YOUR SONOROUS KARATE MONOTONE

ON EVERYTHING

by Al Hansen

( 8 )

THE BODY STARTED TO GO

THE ROUTE  
BECAME GOUT

WITH COMPLICATIONS  
FEET SWOLLEN LIKE ERUPTING  
THUNDERCLOUDS  
OF GAUZE TAPE  
PAIN ROLLING YOU OUT OF BED AT NIGHT  
SCREAMING

AT THE FIRING SQUAD  
THEY ASKED YOUR LAST WISH  
YOU MURMURED CALMLY  
FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE  
"I ALWAYS WANTED TO SEE PHILADELPHIA  
BEFORE I DIE..."

Incomplete

Requiem

for W. C. Fields

(9)

YOU FOUGHT BACK FROM A KING-SIZE CRIB  
AND BOUNCED AGAINST THE BARS  
YELLING  
"ELECTROCUTE THE LANDLORDS!"

BIG DRINKING FUNNY BABY CRYING  
WHISKEY TEARS  
AND GIN-SOAKED SOBS  
WHITE CAP AND NIGHTGOWN  
QUEEN VICTORIA IN THE PAIN SCENE

BT

BT

BT

BT

GREAT COMIC GOD OF THE CENTERLESS  
UNIVERSE  
IN THE GALAXY OF ALL-NIGHT  
LAFFMOVIE WILDNESS  
IN FORTY-SECOND STREET MOVIE JOHNS  
AND KETCHUP BOTTLES  
ON SALMON-TOPPED WALDORF  
MIDNIGHT TABLES

OUR FATHER IN FIELDS COUNSELS US:  
"IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED  
TRY TRY AGAIN  
THEN QUIT  
NO USE BEING A DAMN FOOL ABOUT IT"

WE REMEMBERED ALL YOU TOLD US  
ON SUNLIT LONG AGO SATURDAYS  
AND SKINPOPPED SMACK IN THE  
NEON RUSTY BALCONY

WE DRANK WINE IN ROW ONE  
SO WE COULD LOOK UP YOUR GIANT NOSE

by Al Hansen

THOU GREAT DOUGH-FACED  
SNARLING BROTHER

( 10 )

OF GROUCHO

GROUCHO THE PARANOID DADDY MARX  
OF THE BROKEN-BACKED

SCUFFLING

SHUFFLING

CRAB WALK

LOOKING OVER FRIGHTENED SHOULDERS

FOR THE CHILD WHO BROKE HIS SPINE

LOOKING OUT FOR THE SON'S RETURN

TO FINISH THE JOB

YOU HATED KIDS

LITTLE BABY LEROY CARRIED

FROM THE LOT

PARALYZED

FROM THE GIN YOU SLIPPED INTO

HIS ORANGE JUICE

SNEERING AFTER HIM

"THE KID'S NO TROUPER,

SEND HIM HOME..."

UNCLE OF BILLY DE WOLFE IN DRAG

AND SUMPTUOUS ALASTAIR SIM

GIGANTIC ENFANT TERRIBLE  
IN A PAIN TRICKING CRIB  
THE GOUT SNEAKS UP  
ON THE SLEEPING BABY  
SHAZAMING PAIN FROM TOE TO TUSCHE  
RATTLES BIG BABY AGAINST THE BARS

THE VALET INSERTS A TUBE  
IN THE LARGE LEFT BREAST  
FOR THE SLIPPING SOOTHING VELVET  
INTRAVENOUS GIN

WITH A HI AND A HO  
AND A HEE HEE HEE

TURN THE TRICK

THE TIP IS IN

WILLY WAS WITH IT

TILL IT GOT WITH HIM

Incomplete

Requiem

for W. C. Fields

( 11 )

HOW'S THAT, MY LITTLE CHICKADEE?

W. C.

COOL AS MORNING GRASS

WHILE SAFES FALL

BULLETS WHISTLE

AND BUILDINGS TOPPLE

WIMPY'S FATHER BOOSTS A FIFTH

FROM A LIQUOR STORE

DOES THE MARYELLEN WITH A

BYPASSER'S WALLET

ENTERS A FANCY HOTEL CALLING

"TAXI, TAXI?"

HE SNARLS AT KINGS AND KIDS

AND MAKES A VISCOUS SWIPE

WITH HIS CANE

AT AN OLD LADY WHO BUGS HIM

THE FATHER OF JACKIE GLEASON  
AND WILLY MULLINS  
BELLIES THE BAR  
AND SPINS A QUARTER

“CHICKENS DO HAVE PRETTY LEGS  
IN KANSAS —  
YASSS...”

EVERYBODY'S HAD IT  
THEY PUT THE WHOLE FREE LUNCH  
ON HIM—

FIND OUT HE'S NOT THE MAYOR  
OF LONDON

by Al Hansen

CHASE HIM DOWN THE STREET  
THE BARTENDER'S GORGEOUS WIFE  
MEETS HIM ON THE CORNER

( 12 )

ALL THE MONEY FROM THE TILL  
PINCHING OUT OF HER BOSOM  
W. C. FIELDS GRABS THE DOUGH  
KNOCKS HER DOWN  
FACE TWITCHING  
HE HOPS A STREETCAR  
TO SOME ROCKAWAY IRISHTOWN BAR

BIG WILL LEFT HIS MONEY IN EIGHTY  
GOD KNOWS HOW MANY  
U. S. BANKS AND ELSEWHERE  
UNDER FALSE NAMES  
SO NO RELATIVES COULD GET THEIR  
HANDS ON IT

SAID IF HE COULD BUT KNOW THE HOUR  
DEATH WOULD ARRIVE  
HE'D STACK HIS DOUGH IN BIG BILLS  
ASSEMBLE HIS KIN  
AND TEAR IT TO CONFETTI

JUST AS THAT FELLOW IN THE  
BRIGHT NIGHTGOWN  
STEPPED OUT OF THE CHECKER CAB  
FROM HELL

THE DOC SAID "YOU'RE DYING, DAD"  
W. C. FIELDS SAID  
"LET ME FIX YOU ONE FOR THE ROAD, CHUM.  
SOME PEOPLE TALK ABOUT DYING —  
I'M GONNA DO IT."

LAFFRIOTS IN HEAVEN, STARRING  
W. C. FIELDS

Incomplete

TEXAS GUINAN ROTATES HER BELLY  
IN A SLOW-MOTION TWIST  
AND HOWDY-SUCKERS EVERYBODY

Requiem

W. C. Fields

MARILYN MILLER IN A BILL  
AT THE PALACE

( 13 )

DIKE'S TEDDY ROOSEVELT'S SISTER  
FRED ALLEN IN HIS ALLEY  
AL JOLSON ON ONE KNEE  
NOSEDIVES BY FATTY ARBUCKLE  
THE ICEPACK KID  
JOE PENNER AND HIS CELESTIAL DUCK  
SLOW-BURN KENNEDY  
SONGS BY FANNY BRICE

THE LITTLE GIRL ON THE PIANO  
IS HELEN KANE  
MAKING BOO BOO BA BOO

SANFORD WHITE SAYS  
"I DON'T MIND YA FOOLIN' AROUND  
BUT IF YOU MARRY THAT GUY  
I'M GONNA SHOOT YOU RIGHT OFF  
YOUR VELVET SWING  
ONE OF THESE NIGHTS"

ALTERNATING RHYTHMS

BY GLENN MILLER AND HAL KEMP

W. C. FIELDS ON A LADDER OF LOVE  
CLIMBING UP A LADDER OF LOVE  
("GOT A DATE WITH AN ANGEL")  
TO FIND AN ANGEL'S ASS TO PINCH  
OR A KID TO KICK

W.C. FIELDS SITS UP IN A FUSTY  
DRUMMERS HOTEL BRASS BED  
LOOKS AROUND FOR HIS SOCK

by Al Hansen

DIG IT, HE CAN ONLY FIND ONE SOCK

( 14 )

SO DIG IT: HE SAYS

"THAT DAMN ONE-LEGGED MAN  
HAS BEEN THROUGH HERE AGAIN"

## Al Hansen

was born in 1927 in Queens, New York, and educated publicly from an early age in the ways of filling stations, Norwegian sea-families and heavy machinery. From 1946 to 1948 he served in the U. S. Army, during which period Sam Turnbull, artist and bohemian extraordinaire, recalls the pioneer of Happenings pushing pianos off third stories of open-walled buildings in bombed-out Frankfurt.

After he left the Army in 1948 he attended as many schools as possible on the GI Bill, including Brooklyn College, the Art Students' League, New York University, University of Miami at Coral Gables, Tulane and the Hans Hoffman School of Art. When his taste for education slaked in 1951, he joined the Air Force and became a special communications parachutist.

In 1955 he was back in New York, working in commercial art and graphic design. In 1958 he founded, with Dick Higgins, the Audio-Visual Group, and launched his first happenings, multiscreen projections and pre-pop constructions.

In 1962 Hansen founded the Third Rail Gallery of Current Art. A one-man show at the Judson Gallery in the winter of 1964 and a second at the New York Six (which first featured his Hershey Bar wrapper collages) established his reputation as a pop artist. His work hangs in the Chrysler Museum and in many private collections.

Hansen is the author of *A Primer of Happenings & Time/Space Art* (Something Else Press), a chatty, copiously illustrated document that has been called a "journal by the chieftain of the art underground." He is currently at work on a new book, *New Trends in Art Today*, manages a New York gallery, and remains the most active practitioner of Happenings in America.

## A checklist of Great Bear Pamphlets

**Bengt af Klintberg, The Cursive Scandinavian Salve.** Short, lyric Happenings by the brilliant Swedish anthropologist/poet. \$0.80

**David Antin, Autobiography.** As the title suggests, these are informal recollections and collages by the well-known Brooklyn poet. \$0.80

**George Brecht, Chance-Imagery.** This 1957 article remains the basic one for the techniques and philosophy of chance in the arts. \$0.80

**John Cage, Diary: Change the World (You Will Only Make Matters Worse) Part 3 (1967).** The latest in a series of essays in which Cage reflects lyrically on social questions. Printed in two colors structured by chance by the author. \$1.50

**Philip Corner, Popular Entertainments.** The largest collage composition by the brilliant young composer. \$1.00

**Robert Filliou, A Filliou Sampler.** Typical short works by the only poet among France's nouveaux realistes. \$0.80

**Al Hansen, Incomplete Requiem for W. C. Fields.** The gorgeous poem read by the artist in an early (1958) Happening while Fields' movies were projected on his bare chest. \$0.60

**Dick Higgins, A Book About Love & War & Death, Canto One.** The earliest (1960-1962) section of Higgins' largest work, designed to be read only aloud. \$0.60

**Allan Kaprow, Some Recent Happenings.** Typical scenarios by the father of the Happening. \$0.60

**Allan Kaprow, Untitled Essay and Other Works.** The historic statement which accompanied the text of the first published Happening (1958) with a sampling of characteristic scenarios. \$0.80

**Alison Knowles, by Alison Knowles.** All the early performance pieces and events by the pioneering printer/artist of *Four Suits* fame. \$0.40

**Jackson Mac Low, The Twin Plays.** Two of this most inventive poet's most exciting experimental



dramas, using identical linguistic formal structures but in different versions of English. \$0.80

**Manifestos.** Calls-to-arms by Ay-o, Philip Corner, the W. E. B. DuBois Clubs, Oyvind Fahlström, Robert Filliou, John Giorno, Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, Allan Kaprow, Alison Knowles, Nam June Paik, Diter Rot, Jerome Rothenberg, Wolf Vostell, Robert Watts and Emmett Williams. A double pamphlet. \$1.00

**Claes Oldenburg, Injun and Other Histories.** Two very early scenarios (1958) from before Pop-art. With two drawings. \$1.00

**Diter Rot, a LOOK into the blue tide, part 2. die blaue flut** ('the blue tide') is this Icelandic innovator's hugest work, and part 1 is a book in itself. These are selected pages from part 2. Heavily illustrated. \$0.80

**Jerome Rothenberg, Ritual: A Book of Primitive Rites and Events.** A delightful anthology of Polynesian, Melanesian and American Indian events and performance pieces selected and adapted by the well-known poet, translator and editor. \$0.60

**Luigi Russolo, The Art of Noises.** This Futurist is generally credited with being the father of noise music, and his classic 1913 manifesto, *L'Arte dei Rumori*, has till now been difficult to obtain. \$0.80

**Wolf Vostell, Berlin and Phenomena.** Two characteristic Décoll/age-Happening scenarios by Europe's best-known Happener. \$0.80

**Emmett Williams, the last french-fried potato and other poems.** A small bouquet of typical recent works by one of the founders of Concrete Poetry. \$0.80

**A Zaj Sampler.** Examples of the highly original and inventive concept performances and non-performances by Spain's first avant-garde group of international importance since the Spanish Civil War. Works by Jose-Luis Castillejo, Ramiro Cortes, Javier Martínez Cuadrado, Juan Hidalgo, Walter Marchetti, Tomas Marco, and Eugenio de Vicente. \$1.00



Combination price for the whole series: \$15.00