

# ARTFORUM

## Geoffrey Hendricks

### RENE BLOCK GALLERY

Zen gives the compulsive achiever something better to be—enlightened. And Geoffrey Hendricks, for whatever reason, works the vein of Sartori art.

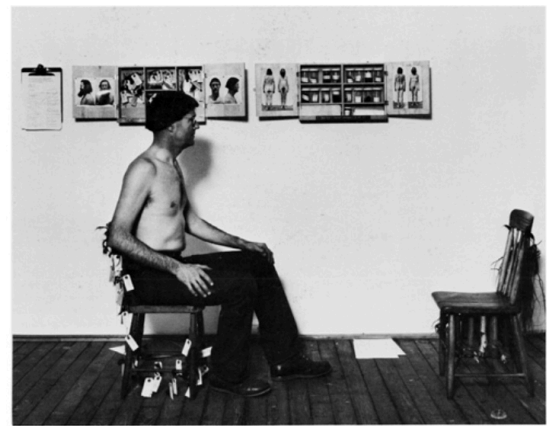
His friend John Cage's compositions of silence are the kind of work one might casually expect of a Zenroshi—a sort of illustration of the doctrine (Cage said resisted sound was noise, accepted sound music). Hendricks might be flattered but probably not *too* surprised if one characterized his work as coming on like correct answers to ninth-Century Zen koans. He meditated on a mound of earth on top of his wedding ring in the architectural omphalos of the 69th Regimental Armory during the 1971 Avant Garde Festival, then published a journal of the event, *Ring Piece*, that described his resistance to the fiendish attempts to break his concentration which took the form of his friend John Lennon saying "Hello," or a pushy journalist trying to get a statement.

*Stones: Dreams* is a large pine chest full of sacks of rocks and a transcript of the artist's dreams, of which the rocks are a representation. Hendricks' attempts to weave a transcendental poetic out of such things as stones, dreams hair, the sky, etc. must invariably be compared with those of his friend Yoko Ono, who uses the same symbols to a similar end. Ono's *Fish Piece* from 1964 chosen practically at random from *Grapefruit*: "Take a tape of the voices of fish on the night of a full moon. Take it until dawn" may succeed in creating a sort of quietist mood in her audience while Hendricks' 1974 piece *SKY ROOTS for Norway on Summer Solstice* "Chop wood/saw wood. Become blue at sunset. Keep fire through night & knock stones together. Watch sunrise. Climb highest tree. Wash off blue in/

near mountain stream" merely creates fatigue.

Hendricks' labored accumulations of mystic symbols and activities rarely succeed in focusing the viewer's mind on a reality outside the material; rather they seem to focus on Hendricks' claim to a privileged (enlightened) sensibility. This is the uncomfortable impression one gets from his work; it almost completely obscures his endeavors in existential murkiness.

- Ross Skoggard



Geoffrey Hendricks, performance, 1976, Rene Block Gallery