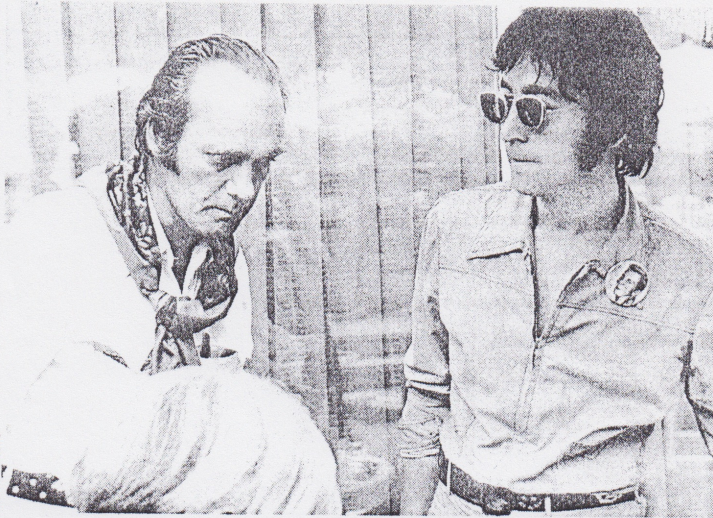


the Village
VOICE

STAGE LEFT



Al Hansen and some musician

Looking Backward

Last May in Santa Monica, Beck Hansen and his brother Channing performed in a Happening that celebrated the work of their grandfather, Fluxus pioneer Al Hansen. "We had a six-foot dolphin come out with a four-foot penis, and after that I chainsawed a DX7 keyboard," says Beck from his recording studio in California. "I look at it as trying to get into the mind of the monster." The bizarre sacrificial rite helped open "Beck and Al Hansen: Playing With Matches," a show of the Hansens' artwork that arrives in New York at Thread Waxing Space on September 15, with a companion Happening to be held at the Roxy that night.

The underrecognized elder Hansen, who died in 1995 at the age of 68, profoundly influenced post-World War II bohemia with his free-form art ideas. He was also a bit of an invisible hand—he helped introduce John Lennon to Yoko Ono, accidentally provided a name for the Velvet Underground, and was the first person to reach Andy Warhol after he was shot. A paratrooper in the war, Hansen staged the first Happening in 1945 by pushing a piano out of an abandoned building in Frankfurt.

The Yoko Ono Piano Drop, as Al Hansen eventually called it, was re-created by Channing at the Santa Monica Happening. "There was this sound of a piano being ripped apart and torn to shreds," Beck explains. "It was like the piano shipwreck, and the audience became the wave pounding it onto the beach."

Next Tuesday's Happening will be "directed" by Channing and features appearances by Beck, his mother Bibbe, singer Marianne Faithfull, Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore, and performance artists Larry Miller and Rebecca Moore, among others. In the chaotic tradition of Al Hansen, who once said Fluxus is a one-man show that gets out of hand, the Happening has no set plan.

"If you ever really knew what was going to happen, it wouldn't be experimental theater," Channing says. "I supply a skeleton structure for the piece, and it's the artists and other performers who have the instructions and put the meat on." Channing will also be performing his *Elegy to the Fluxus Dead*, in which he wraps himself in tape and is accompanied by a video image of his grandfather.

Al Hansen used life as his canvas, and the detritus around him for materials. He also used performance as a cheap way to get his ideas about the beautiful accident across. Beck, known to accept the limitations of "two turntables and a microphone," has long since given up on the idea that art is something you can control. "In art, the mistakes, the accident is always much more of a turn-on," he says. "In life nothing ever turns out how you plan it."—ED MORALES

September 15, 1998 VILLAGE VOICE

PG 152