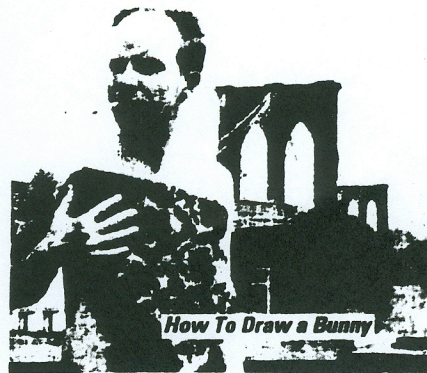


HOW TO DRAW A BUNNY

Of all the artists who came of age in New York's 1960s bohemia, Ray Johnson was perhaps the most resistant to categorization. Johnson made beautiful, intricate, elusive collages — the perfect form for the fragmentary *geist* of the late 20th century. He dropped footlong hot dogs from a helicopter on Long Island (people ate them). He staged a "reading" for which he hopped around on one foot, whipping a cardboard box. He founded the New York Correspondence School, a network of artists and poets who mailed their works to each other through the postal system. Unlike most documentaries about arty types, John Walter's wonderfully capricious, wittily edited film about Johnson seeks to make precise all the different ways in which the artist managed to remain opaque, even to his friends and colleagues (among them Christo and Roy Lichtenstein), who remember him with bemused appreciation. "Ray wasn't a person," says one. "He was a collage or a sculpture." Another dubs Johnson, whose pocked, anonymous face appears here and there in old footage, a "Zen master." A frustrated gallery owner recalls trying to explain to Johnson that an exhibit about "nothing" might do nicely downtown, but wouldn't work uptown. Best of all, a sensitive police officer in charge of the investigation of Johnson's unexplained disappearance into the waters of Sag Harbor at age 67 describes how he formed a relationship with the artist after his death, which itself was all of a piece with his fruitful, isolated, uncompromising life. (Also see Art Pick of the Week.) (*Sunset 5*)/Ella Taylor



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