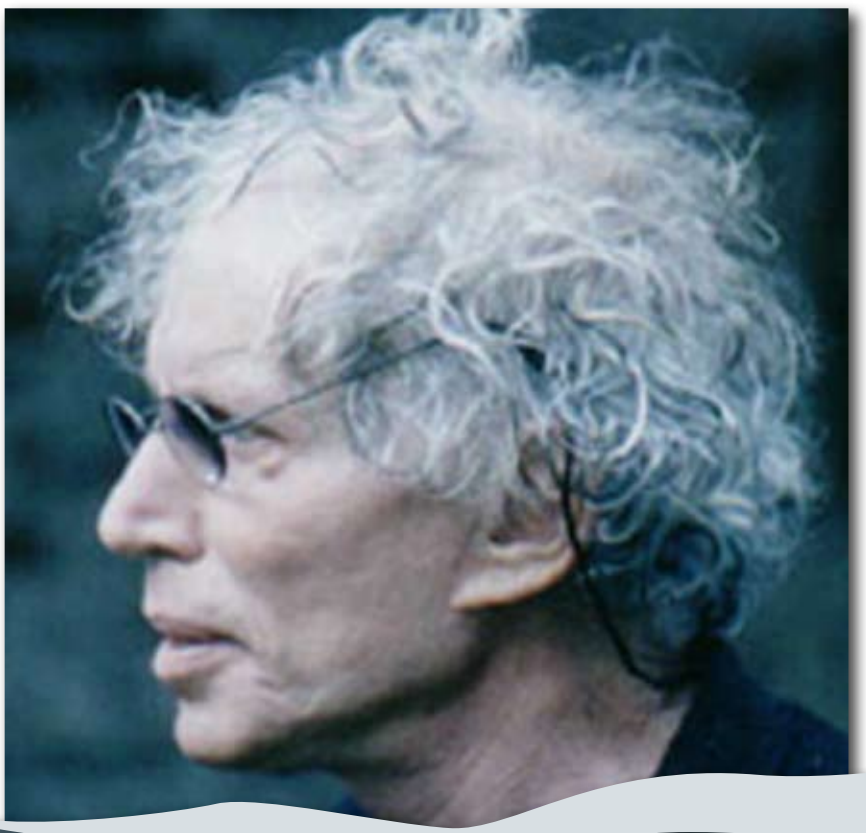
Art Speak

Let's Talk about this and learn about the artist.

Dennis Oppenheim was born in Electric City, Washington in 1938. His mother possessed a strong interest in literature, poetry, arts, and music, and his father was an engineer. He studied at the California College of Arts & Crafts and then received his Master's Degree in painting at Stanford in 1965. He moved to New York in 1966, where he continues to live and work today.

Oppenheim became known early in his career for his participation in the land art and body art movements, and has since been recognized as an influential figure in the development of contemporary conceptual art. His work covers a broad range of projects and activities, from large-scale landscape alterations, to self-inflicted sunburns, puppet theatre, and monumental fireworks displays. His prints, often quasi-scientific mechanical drawings, are plans for fantastic machines and site-specific installations, many of which were eventually constructed. These works often deal with environmental issues, exaggerating attitudes toward the natural world through elements of violence and absurdity. The machine-works are representations of the internal thought processes of the human mind, as projected outward onto a physical environment, a visual manifestation of the incongruities of these co-existing realities.



Oppenheim has had a major retrospective at the Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, has exhibited at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington D.C., the Tate Gallery, London, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, the Pompidou Centre, Paris, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Project Art welcomes viewer comments and questions. Please contact Marsha Howe at marsha-howe@uiowa.edu