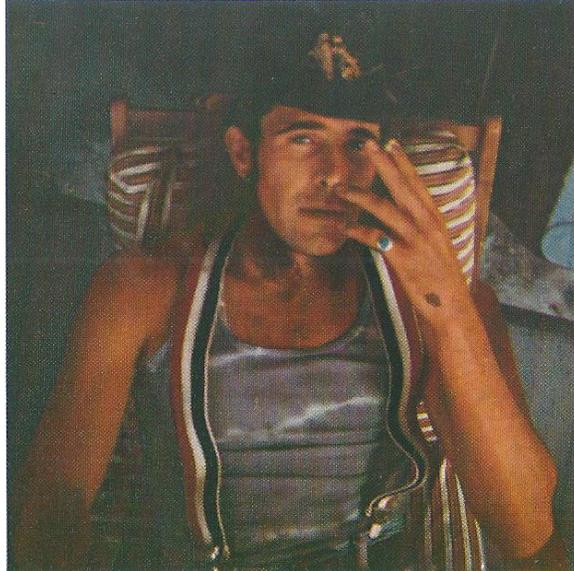


VAN DOREN WAXTER

Alan Shields

Special Online Presentation

April 29 - May 12, 2020



Alan Shields, from Galleria dell'Ariete Catalogue, 1972, Courtesy of the Estate of Alan Shields

As I was looking through my high school scrapbook, I came across this tear sheet from *Women's Wear Daily* in 1968 with the headline: *The Year of Extremes*. The war in Vietnam was raging, Martin Luther King, Jr was assassinated, and Richard Nixon won The White House. Protesters were out in force demonstrating against the war on college campuses at the same time as the rise of Black Power. The events of the time were ushering in a new resistance to the status quo in many facets of life, art most especially. Artists were revolting against the high culture of gestural abstraction in favor of embracing pop culture and consumerism by incorporating images and using tools that were part of everyday life.

Alan Shields, aged 24, had arrived in New York City. He was eager to define himself, energized by his full commitment to an artistic life. He immersed himself in the downtown scene, meeting and getting to know artists whom he had read about in periodicals and books. This collection of typewriter drawings is amongst the first artwork that he made. The hand of the artist is camouflaged by the strike of the typewriter key yet he gleefully signs his name in large looping script. The objects he describes are today among the most enduring: Colgate toothpaste, Monopoly, Hershey's candy bar, Reese's Peanut Butter Cup, and Real Lemon, many of them products of the post-war boom. Ten years earlier the artist Carl André known for using materials such as metal and wood in standardized, repetitive forms had produced poetry by cutting and pasting words on paper that could be read as poetry or drawing. Perhaps in hindsight Alan Shields is the next generation of artists who mixed media in their artistic life, trying to inject content from their own perspectives. Shields would go on to make drawings, paintings, sculpture, prints and beaded wearable art mixing his love of materials and color in radical forms exhibiting widely for decades before his untimely death in 2005.

- Dorsey Waxter