On April 1, 1971 Salem State College commissioned me to do an art work that would coincide with the inauguration of its new president. The college is located in the city of Salem, Massachusetts (population 40,000) famous as a New England port city and infamous for its witch trials.

The art work consisted of requesting that at 12:00 o'clock noon on Saturday, the first of May, every person in the city of Salem come out into the streets and parks to greet his neighbors. I asked towns-people with cameras to photograph the greetings and afterwards display their photographs in the best places for people to see them - such as stores, gas stations, churches, schools, bars and clubs. I also asked non-residents who participated to send me photographs for a subsequent exhibition.

During the month prior to May 1, the process necessary to accomplish this event, which I called "Hello Day," required that I introduce information into as many urban communication systems as possible. I spoke with clergy, businessmen, newspapermen, politicians, educators, doctors, and anyone who was willing to generate information and energy. My wife and I recorded a series of five minute programs which were broadcast on the local radio station. The mayor proclaimed May 1st "Hello Day" and asked all uniformed city employees to leave their stations to greet people. High school and college students passed out printed announcements.

Soon the information reverberated throughout the whole city so that on the morning of Saturday, May 1st, someone telephoned me to say that everywhere he went in the downtown shopping area people were excitedly talking about saying hello at noon.

At noon I was on the Salem Common where a group of about 150 people were listening to a band playing and children were dancing around a May pole. The mayor and his family, the president of the college and his family, television crewmen, newspaper and magazine reporters and photographers, and many of my friends came to the common.

More spontaneous events occurred in other neighborhoods. I heard about some of them later. A group of about 60 young people went to the police station and exchanged friendly hellos with the policemen. A group of ladies in hair curlers left their hair dryers to greet everyone outside of the beauty salon. A whole family with four little daughters all dressed in blue walked down the center of a highway waving hello to passing cars. People snake-danced through a department store and down the street. A 75 year old lady held an open house lunch of baked beans and hot dogs and welcomed everyone in the street to join her.

The information generated new information. I was interviewed by telephone for "talk shows" in Los Angeles and Greenville, South Carolina and people sent greetings to me from all over the country including Hilo, Hawaii. Some suggested that "Hello Day" should happen every year.

Cultural behaviour can be viewed as a mechanism of human adaptation to the natural and man-made environment for the purpose of survival. A group's survival is often dependent upon its capacity to be in harmony with itself and its environment. The group's harmony and coherence is related to its ability to obtain information from observation of environmental changes and adapt to the new conditions. Art, when it is

responsive to change, functions to provide new observational conventions and offers cultural models to reintegrate the group within the new environment.

There is no single way art works exist and no inherent meaning to them; they derive their existence as art and meaning from the audience which forms their cultural context. The audience and the artists form an "agreement" about the nature and meaning of art in the aesthetic experience. Valuable works renegotiate the category of art by probing the limits of cultural agreement. Artists, therefore, perform an adaptive service by testing the boundaries of the culture so as to provide the necessary feedback information about its changing values. Hellos ("agreements") demonstrate individuals' interdependence and integrate the community on the levels offered by the art. The people of Salem who did not say hello defined the art work's boundaries as much as the "agreeing" people. The human energy and hello information sources, exchanges and reverberations mapped the boundaries of the city's cultural space and physical space; and, therefore, formed the aesthetic space of the art work.

Donald Burgy
May 14, 1971