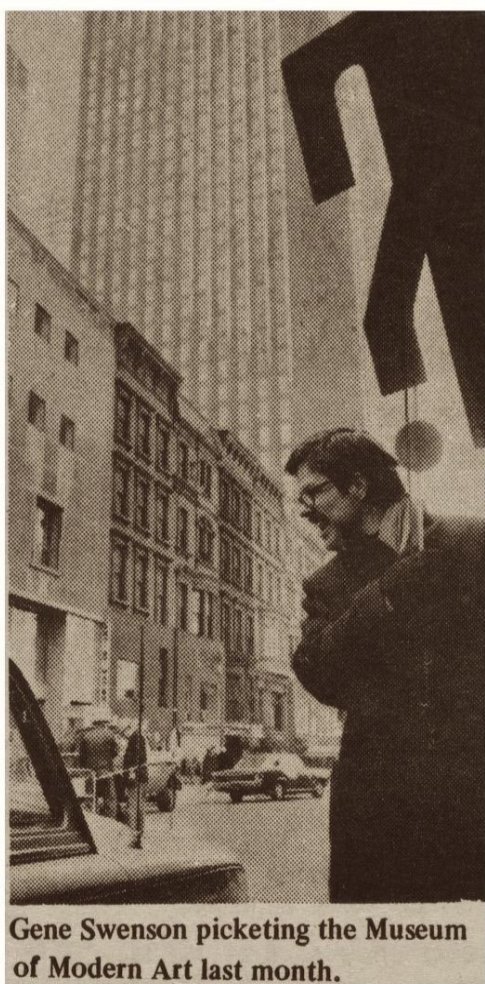




The Disintegration of a Critic: Gene Swenson, Jill Johnston, and Antipsychiatry

Jennifer Sichel (University of Chicago)

ABSTRACT: This talk follows the intertwined paths of Gene Swenson and Jill Johnston—art critics who were prominent voices within New York’s art world in the sixties, but who tend to occupy only the margins and footnotes of art history. Drawing from a rich archive of underground newspapers, recordings and photographs, I trace how Swenson and Johnston used antipsychiatric insights to experiment with ways of being unintelligible and disintegrated in response to a world that demands clarity and punishes difference. I analyze how they marshalled art world spaces and the pages of underground newspapers to assemble queer lives in an inhospitable world.



Gene Swenson picketing the Museum of Modern Art last month.



JILL JOHNSTON will be analyzed by John de Menil, Walter Gutman, Ultra Violet, Carolee Schneemann, Lil Picard, Dr. John Atchley, Andy Warhol, Gregory Battcock, and moderator David Bourdon in a panel discussion, “The Disintegration of a Critic,” on Wednesday, May 21, at 8.30 p. m. at NYU’s Loeb Student Center, 566 LaGuardia Place.

Jennifer Sichel is Preceptor and Lecturer in the MA Program in the Humanities at the University of Chicago, and Postdoctoral Affiliate in the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality. She holds a PhD in Art History from the University of Chicago. Her research probes how art manifests queer modes of attachment and belonging, with a focus on 20th-century art of the United States. She is currently working on two book projects in-progress: a monograph titled *Criticism without Authority: Gene Swenson and Jill Johnston’s Queer Practices*, and a co-edited anthology titled *Queer Work / Queer Archives*.

**Thurs 28th Jan
5.30pm GMT
Online via Zoom
– register [here](#).**

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