

February 1976

(Peter Frank)

**Newton and Helen Mayer Harrison** (Ronald Feldman Fine Arts): This husband and wife team from La Jolla exhibited maps, diagrams and texts concerning their ecological proposals, specifically one about the conversion of a saltwater lake into a life-supporting ecosystem with both direct and indirect benefits to humankind. Called *The Fifth Lagoon*, the project not only encompasses the technical means of effecting this conversion, but expresses its purposes and its implications in social, political, economic, philosophical and esthetic terms. The lake in question is the Salton Sea in south-central California, which has been polluted by the run-off of water from irrigation of the Imperial Valley farmlands. The Harrisons propose to provide the Salton Sea with an output channel for desalinization and the elimination of natural wastes, and then to breed edible life forms in controlled situations analogous to the fruit and vegetable farming nearby. In their pictures and statements the Harrisons demonstrate: how the project can be accomplished; how they devised the process (then brought in scientific consultants, mapped and scouted the region in question, extrapolated from their other projects). In addition they put forward the argument for their methodology (as opposed to a 1969 government proposal) and even how and why their proposal should be viewed as, among other things, art. The Harrisons are earnest, careful and dedicated didacts determined to communicate on every level. On the level of art, their presentation works rather magnificently in both graphic and metaphorical terms. Details from other stages—other *Lagoons*—were also included in the exhibition.