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The Aesthetic Philosophy of John Cage and the Visual Arts of the Twentieth Century

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by

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THESIS: THE AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY OF JOHN CAGE AND THE VISUAL ARTS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Abstract

This thesis presents a biographical analysis of the role of American composer, writer, and artist John Cage (1912-1992) in the evolution of visual arts in the twentieth century. The origins of Cage's aesthetic stance are discussed, particularly his melding of Marcel Duchamp's Dada orientation with philosophical positions derived from the study of Zen Buddhism. The influence of His views on painters, sculptors, and performance artists of the postwar period is documented, along with the aesthetic foundations of his own work in the visual arts.

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Introduction: On Saying Something About Saying Nothing

The significance of John Cage's challenge to traditional notions of creation and expression has long been recognized in the field of twentieth century music, but only recently has his importance to the evolution of the visual arts received comparable attention. Within the last several years, textbooks and standard references in art history have increasingly begun to give at least passing mention to his contributions, but during the course of my own research it became apparent that the scope of his influence was worthy of more than an historical footnote, and that several relevant questions had never been adequately explored. What was the origin of his philosophical stance, and what made it so compelling for artists in the late twentieth century? How did his articulation of a radical aesthetic coincide with the spirit of his times, and how did it manifest itself in the works of those visual artists who followed his lead?

As I investigated further, I came to greatly admire the way Cage played the role of genial provocateur to the art establishment. His primary motive, the breakdown of artificial distinctions that separate the world of artistic creation from the world of daily experience, was made evident not only through his music, his writings and teachings, and his own explorations in the graphic arts, but also in the very way he led his life. Cage presented a daring (and in the mind of some colleagues like Pierre Boulez, dangerous) remaking of the artist's role in the world, but more importantly, he truly tried to live and work by the difficult principles he espoused, demonstrating a personal integrity rarely found among artists or anyone else.

Writing about Cage does put one in the mood for unorthodox creative process, and in some ways a linear, biographical exposition of his life's work seems antithetical to the sense of what that work represents. The mind runs to more radical and indeterminate possibilities--a thesis with blank pages, for example, or a thesis of pages to be read in random order—but I will feel successful if the formal analysis presented herein manages to communicate the flavor, if not entirely the form, of Cage's ideas.

Many of the best and most accessible expressions of Cage's views are contained in his own numerous writings, which are characterized by a sense of humor that frequently evokes the revelatory absurdism of a Zen koan. Whether he was relating the tale of becoming an Italian quiz show champion by answering questions about mushrooms, or recounting how Yoko Ono's prescription of a macrobiotic diet had cured his arthritis. Cage was a master storyteller who saw in his life experiences a personal content that nonetheless spoke to the universal. It is my hope that some of the sense of joy and wonder that so powerfully inspired those who knew him has rubbed off onto the pages of this essay.

I. Early Influences on the Aesthetic Philosophy of John Cage

I believe that the use of noise to make music will continue and increase until we reach a music produced through the aid of electrical instruments which will make available for musical purposes any and all sounds that can be heard.[1]

John Cage (1937)

John Cage was born in Los Angeles on September 5,1912. Chief among his earliest influences was his father John Milton Cage senior, a prolific inventor who had created a submarine-locating device during World War I.[2] Throughout his life. Cage cast himself as an inventor like his father, saying "I value the faculty for inventing more than anything," a personal value which would come to include the faculty for self-invention as well.[3] His mother Lucretia Harvey Cage, known to her friends as Crete, was a pianist and former Los Angeles Times columnist who was active in local women's clubs, and who also ran an art supply store. Crete fostered her son's interest in music and art, taking him to his first symphony concert at the age of five.[4] The boy showed exceptional promise, graduating from Los Angeles High at age 15 with the highest grade point average in the school's history. That same year, he won an oratorical contest at the Hollywood Bowl with a speech on global nonintervention that turned out so well, he gave it again 60 years later at an event celebrating his 75th birthday.[5] Cage attended Pomona College for two years before he became disillusioned with traditional academic structure, dropping out to study painting and architecture in Europe.

In Paris in 1930, a chance meeting with a former professor landed him a job with a modem architect named Ernö Goldfinger. Far from designing modem buildings, however. Cage found himself answering phone calls and making drawings of ancient Greek pillars (drawings Cage later referred to as his "ironic columns").[6] One day he overheard Goldfinger saying that to be an architect, one must devote one's life solely to architecture. Cage quit his job the next day, explaining that his interests were much too varied to make such a commitment.[7]

After another year in Europe spent painting, writing poetry, and composing his first musical pieces, a change in the family fortunes obliged Cage to return to Los Angeles. He supported himself for a time working as live-in manager of a Santa Monica trailer court, and giving lectures on modem art and music to local housewives in the room above his apartment. He sold tickets to the lectures door-to-door, cheerfully admitting that he knew little about these subjects, but was willing to enthusiastically learn before each week's presentation.[8] At twenty-five cents a head, he managed to turn a profit, notwithstanding the Depression.[9] Through the lectures, he also made the acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Arensberg, owners of an important collection of works by the seminal Dada figure Marcel Duchamp, who would later assume a prominent role in Cage's aesthetic development.[10]

In trying to focus his career path on either painting or music. Cage sought advice and criticism from the Arensbergs, as well as from Galka Scheyer, another Southern California collector whose interest centered on the group of Munich painters known as the "Blue Four."[11] Already, however, he could see that the rapid evolution of modernist aesthetics was beginning to make the traditional boundaries between different creative disciplines less and less important. He summarized this realization in an essay he wrote in the 1950s, when he said, "just as formerly when starting to be abstract, artists referred to musical practices to show that what they were doing was valid, so nowadays, musicians, to explain what they are doing, say, 'See, the painters and sculptors have been doing it for quite some time/"[12]

Through the trailer court lectures. Cage also met Richard Buhlig, a locally celebrated pianist who became his teacher, and who introduced him to composer Henry Cowell. Cage studied in New York with Cowell and Adolph Weiss, earning a scholarship to the New School for Social Research, where he took all of Cowell's classes in theory and composition.[13] This was to be his first introduction to the Eastern aesthetics which would assume such importance in his later work, and through Cowell's teaching. Cage

found himself "attracted by the rhythmic structure and rhythmic complexity of North Indian music."[14] Together, the two discussed Cage's future, and decided "that of all the living masters, the best one for me would be Schoenberg."[15] Arnold Schoenberg, the great Viennese pioneer of 20th-century serial atonality, was living in Los Angeles at the time. Cage drove west with Cowell and met Schoenberg, who asked if Cage could afford the cost of his lessons. When Cage replied that he would be unable to pay anything at all, Schoenberg then asked him if he would be willing to devote his life to music. Just as he had years before with the architect Goldfinger, Cage now faced a decisive moment. This time he said yes, and Schoenberg accepted him as a pupil free of charge.[16]

"My purpose in teaching you is to make it impossible for you to write music," Schoenberg told his pupils.[17] Cage faced the challenge squarely: "My father told me ... that if someone says 'can't,' that shows you what to do."[18] Schoenberg would ultimately become frustrated with his student's inability to learn the basic principles of harmony. Cage later wrote, "I explained to him that I had no feeling for harmony. He then said that I would always encounter an obstacle, a wall through which 1 could not pass. I said, 'In that case I will devote my life to beating my head against that wall.'"[19] Schoenberg is once said to have remarked of his former pupil that Cage was "not a composer, but an inventor--of genius."[20]

Cage saw harmony as an "outdated and abstract" attempt to "regulate the otherwise continuous field of sound,"[21] and Schoenberg's serialist methods as, at best, a conscious attempt to avoid harmonic structures using musical materials that had evolved over centuries precisely for the purpose of creating harmony. Cage set about trying to define a music that was "just sounds, sounds free of judgments about whether they were 'musical' or not."[22]

One key to the new music would be Cage's approach to silence, which he saw as a structural element equal in importance to sound. Since sound is comprised of pitch, timbre, duration, and loudness, of which silence can possess only duration. Cage

reasoned that a proper approach to musical structure should be based, not on pitch, as is traditional in the West, but on units of time.[23] He came to believe that among the leading figures of Western classical music, this kind of time-based structural system was closest to the compositions of Erik Satie, and Cage would later become one of the leading advocates for a revival of interest in Satie's work.

Another musical clue came from an association with the film maker Oscar Fischinger, who remarked, "Everything in the world has its own spirit which can be released by setting it into vibration."[24] Cage searched the city's junk yards, banging on brake drums, trolley springs, and metal sheets in search of these inner spirits. By 1936 he was writing the first American music for percussion orchestra, and was moving ever further from long-standing ideas of acceptable musical sounds and harmonic language. In his bold rejection of music's traditional tonal foundations, he felt a sense of liberation: "I never really worried about losing anything; rather, I was concerned with the need to accommodate all possible noises within the body of musical structure. Tonality was what was a loss. To my eyes it represented a waste. A closed door!"[25]

Atonal percussion music was only the first of many revolutionary musical inventions by John Cage. In 1939 he produced one of the first-ever pieces of electronic music, the Imaginary Landscape Number 1. The piece was written for variable-speed turntables playing test-oscillation records, ten years before the introduction of tape recording to America.[26] When tape arrived in the late '40s, Cage was again the first American composer to write for the new medium. He would later become the first to introduce natural and found sounds into music, and would develop the most comprehensive and thoroughgoing approach to the use of chance-based procedures in composition.

A valuable colleague during this formative period was Cage's wife, the former Xenia Andreyevna Kasheveroff, an art student whom he had met while working at his mother's shop in 1934. Cage had been so smitten that the next time he saw her he asked her out, and over dinner, proposed marriage. After a brief hesitation, she accepted, and

the two were wed shortly after Cage's return from New York. The marriage, which would prove to be a fruitful artistic collaboration as well, would last eleven years.[27]

In 1937 John and Xenia Cage moved to Seattle, where Cage was employed as accompanist for Bonnie Bird's modem dance classes at the Cornish School, a leading center for progressive artists. It was here that Cage was introduced to the painters Morris Graves and Mark Tobey, and made the acquaintance of one of Bird's students, a phenomenal young dancer named Merce Cunningham. Graves met the composer after the Seattle premiere of Cage's percussion orchestra on December 9,1938, where his response to the concert was so disruptive, he was forcibly ejected from the auditorium. The next day, he asked Cage if he could become a member of the orchestra, and was accepted. He later shared a flat for a time with John and Xenia Cage.[28]

Tobey, who would one day be recognized as an important harbinger of the New York Abstract Expressionist movement, also had a strong early influence on Cage's developing aesthetic stance. Although Cage in the 1940s and '50s would remain generally cool to the intense emotionalism and existentialist posturing of the New York group, he always admired Tobey for the way his work seemed to reflect aesthetic qualities in the everyday environment, foreshadowing the breaking down of barriers between art and life that would become a hallmark of Cage's own work and teachings. Years later, he related the story of leaving an exhibition of Tobey's paintings, finding himself in a state of heightened awareness of the beauty of random patterns and stains in the sidewalk outside the gallery. Commemorating the event, he composed a "mesostic" poem, in which the artist's first name can be read vertically across the lines of text:[29]

waiting for the bus, i happened to look at the paveMent
i wAs standing on;
noticed no diffeRence between
looKing at art or away from it.

By far the most eager audience for Cage's early compositions were modem dance ensembles. It was while writing a percussion score for a dance by Sy villa Fort entitled Bacchanale (1938) that Cage made what was perhaps his most influential musical

discovery. Arriving at the theater, he noticed that it had no orchestra pit and no room to set up his percussion instruments. only a small stage with a grand piano. Remembering something that Henry Cowell had shown him. Cage began placing objects between the strings of the piano.[30] Attaching bolts, screws, clothespins, rubber erasers, and other items at specific points on the piano strings. Cage was able to coax from the piano a surprising array of thumps, plinks, gongs, and chimes reminiscent of Javanese gamelan music. The prepared piano was born (Fig. 2). In addition to its surprising new tonal possibilities, the invention of the prepared piano awakened Cage to another area of exploration which would have far-reaching consequences in his work, for he discovered that no matter how carefully he specified the precise materials, placement, and preparation, no two pianos would ever end up sounding exactly the same. As his biographer Richard Kostelanetz notes, this discovery formed the basis of his later turn toward indeterminacy, for "bolts and nuts, alas, are not as precise as timed strings."[31]

By 1939 Cage was in the San Francisco Bay Area, teaching at Mills College, where he wrote and performed percussion works with avant-garde composer Lou Harrison, another disciple of Henry Cowell. Cage also hatched a plan to found a center for the study of experimental music: "I wrote to companies like Westinghouse and General Electric. And I wrote to universities, like all of them ... and to, you know. Bell Telephone Laboratories.... And I got nowhere."[32] Although the idea attracted the interest of a number of prominent educators, including Dr. Carl Seashore of the University of Iowa, Dr. Aurelia Henry Reinhardt, President of Mills College, and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy of the School of Design in Chicago, "none of these people had any money. They said if I could raise the money to establish it, they would be willing to have it as part of their activities. For two years I kept trying to do that and that's when I, so to speak, didn't get anywhere."[33]

A break seemed to arrive when the Hungarian refugee artist and teacher Moholy-Nagy invited Cage to Chicago to teach a class in experimental music. Moholy-Nagy's

Chicago School of Design was modeled after the Bauhaus, the legendary German school of art and design that had been one of the leading centers of the European avant-garde until its closure under Nazi pressure in 1933. In addition to Moholy-Nagy, the faculty included former Bauhaus members Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Josef Albers, as well as Americans Mark Tobey and the microtonal composer Harry Partch. The goings-on in Cage's experimental music classes apparently led to a number of noise-abatement complaints.[34]

While in Chicago, Cage was commissioned by CBS to write a score for a radio play by Kenneth Patchen titled The City Wears a Slouch Hat. Cage's first submission was a 250-page score for an auditory collage of "urban noises, which I treated not as sound effects, but as materials for music," a music that he felt would be linked through its naturalistic character to the themes of the play's text.[35] The CBS engineers told Cage that while his ideas were interesting and technically possible, they were entirely impractical within the constraints of the show's schedule and budget; Cage wrote a new score for percussion and electronics. Although the show received a generally favorable reaction when it was broadcast,[36] the hoped-for offer of a full-time sound production job at CBS was not forthcoming, nor was any progress made toward Cage's goal of a center for experimental music. Disappointed, John and Xenia Cage set their sights on New York.[37]

Through Moholy-Nagy, Cage had met another European expatriate, the Surrealist painter Max Ernst, who had just arrived in the United States in 1941. Ernst was famous for beginning his paintings with random textures formed by rubbing, stamping, and transferring paint from various found objects. These unplanned textures would then serve as the basis for highly imaginative and visionary finished works--a process substantially analogous to the compositional use of found sounds that Cage was trying to develop.[38] Ernst invited the Cages to New York to stay at the historic home at 440 East 51st St. he was sharing with his then-wife, Peggy Guggenheim. Known as Nathan Hale House, the building was located on the site of the Revolutionary patriot's hanging, and was a major

gathering place for the New York artists' community. By mid-summer of 1942, John and Xenia Cage were happily settled in their new surroundings.

Cage recalled, "I was just flabbergasted by the whole situation. Somebody famous was dropping in every two minutes, it seemed.[39] Here Cage met such luminaries as Piet Mondrian, André Breton, and Virgil Thomson. Guggenheim took a liking to Cage, and proposed a concert of his music for the opening of her new Art of This Century Gallery on West Fifty- Seventh Street. Cage, meanwhile, unbeknownst to Peggy Guggenheim, was making his own plans for a percussion concert to be held at the Museum of Modem Art. When Guggenheim discovered that her premiere was to be preempted, she was livid. She angrily canceled the planned concert at her gallery, rescinded her offer to pay for the shipping of Cage's percussion instruments from Chicago, and forcefully informed John and Xenia that they would have to find somewhere else to live.[40]

Stunned by Peggy Guggenheim's outburst. Cage retreated to another room, collapsed into a chair, and began to weep. For the young composer, penniless and without tangible prospects, this was to be the beginning of a series of events which would dramatically alter the direction of his life. From across the room. Cage heard a voice tell him to cheer up, that one mustn't always depend on the Peggy Guggenheims of the world. Through his tears he looked at the figure seated across from him: "It was Duchamp,... He was by himself and somehow his presence made me feel calmer."[41] Cage would always remember this moment of his first unexpected meeting with the person who, more than any other, would shape his work and thought, and who, via Cage, would change the face of modem art.

Notes for Chapter I

[1] "The Future of Music: Credo" (1937). Rpt. in Silence: Lectures and Writings (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), pp. 3-4.

[2] Alan Rich, American Pioneers: Ives to Cage and Beyond (London: Phaidon, 1995), p. 142.

[3] For the Birds, ed. Daniel Charles (Boston: Marion Boyars, 1981), p. 69.

[4] David Revill, The Roaring Silence (New York: Arcade Pub., 1992), p. 23.

[5] Rich, p. 145.

[6] John Cage. Musicage: Cage Muses on Art and Music, ed. Joan Retallack (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan UP, 1996), p. 84.

[7] Cage, Silence, p. 261.

[8] Cage, Silence, p. 273.

[9] Calvin Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors (New York: Penguin, 1968), p. 81.

[10] Revill, p. 39.

[11] Revill, p. 4.

[12] Cage, Silence, p. 144.

[13] Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors, p. 84.

[14] John Cage, M: Writings '68-'72 (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), p. 132.

[15] Cage, For the Birds, p. 70.

[16] Cage, Silence, p. 261.

[17] Quoted by Cage in A Year from Monday: New Lectures and Writings (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), p. 45.

[18] Cage, in Revill, The Roaring Silence, p. 21.

[19] Cage, Silence, p. 261.

[20] Quoted in Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors, p. 85

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[21] Branden W. Joseph, "John Cage and the Architecture of Silence." October 81 (1997), 81.

[22] Cage, M, p. 5.

[23] Cage, Silence, p. 13.

[24] Quoted in Rich, p. 147.

[25] Cage, For the Birds, p. 73.

[26] Richard Kostelanetz, ed. "Not Wanting to Say Anything About John Cage." Chicago Review 38 (1992), 171.

[27] Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors, p. 86.

[28] Revill, pp. 57-8.

[29] Cage, M P-190.

[30] Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors, p. 86.

[31] Kostelanetz, John Cage (Ex)plain(ed) (New York: Schirmer Books, 1996), p. 9.

[32] Cage, Musicage, p. 91.

[33] Quoted in Kostelanetz, John Cage (Ex)plain(ed), pp. 62-3.

[34] Revill, p. 75.

[35] For the Birds, p. 193.

[36] Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors, p. 93.

[37] James Pritchett, " John Cage's The City Wears a Slouch Hat," 1995.Princeton University http://www.music.princeton.edu/~jwp/texts/slouch.html.» 12 April 1999.

[38] Revill, The Roaring Silence, p. 78.

[39] Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors, p. 94.

[40] Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors, p. 95.

[41] Calvin Tomkins, Duchamp: A Biography (New York: Henry Holt, 1996), pp. 330-1.

II. The Influence of Marcel Duchamp

> *[Duchamp] does it more clearly for me, still does, than anyone else. Say the museum puts up their permanent collection, as MOMA is doing now, you can tell perfectly well when you're with Duchamp. The rest of the time you aren't. The whole feeling changes. It's not one world. It's either art or Duchamp, really.*[1]
>
> John Cage (1992)

Searching for a home following their eviction by Peggy Guggenheim, John and Xenia Cage made a fortunate connection through an old friend from the Cornish School, Merce Cunningham. Cunningham, now a rising star with the Martha Graham Company, was living in New York and working on one of his first original productions, a collaboration with Jean Erdman titled Credo in US. for which Cage wrote the music. Through the summer of 1942, the Cages stayed in the large Waverly Place apartment Erdman shared with her husband, the mythologist Joseph Campbell.[2] Cage's parents were also now living in New York, and over the next several months the composer supported himself doing library research for his inventor father. In addition to supplying some much-needed cash, the move helped Cage avoid the draft, owing to his father's numerous government contracts.[3]

The New York debut of Cage's percussion orchestra at the Museum of Modem Art on February 7, 1943 gave the composer a new prominence in avant-garde circles and brought his name to the attention of the mainstream public for the first time. Life magazine covered the concert in a two page spread in its issue of March 15 (Fig. 3), summing up Cage's musical philosophy as follows: "Cage believes that when people today get to understand and like his music, which is produced by banging one object with another, they will find new beauty in everyday modem life, which is full of noises made by objects banging against each other."[4]

Cage maintained his association with Marcel Duchamp, who was working on his Boîte, a limited-edition multiple consisting of a hand-made green box containing

miniature replicas of the artist's best-known paintings and sculptures. Duchamp initially worked with the American Surrealist Joseph Cornell as his assistant, but in the words of Duchamp's biographer Calvin Tomkins, "the arrangement seems not to have been entirely satisfactory ... because Duchamp soon turned over the making of his boxes to Xenia Cage... who became the fabricator of record for the first series— approximately sixty boxes."[5] During this period Duchamp also made a brief appearance in a Surrealist film by Hans Richter entitled Dreams That Money Can Buy. For the Duchamp sequence, a reenactment of the artist's best- known painting. Nude Descending a Staircase. John Cage contributed an "atonal collage of found sounds."[6]

Based on what Duchamp would later describe as "a spiritual empathy and a similar way of looking at things."[7] Cage must have felt close to the older artist's aesthetic philosophy, which had been formed in the climate of World War I's Dada movement. Duchamp had read Tristan Tzara'a seminal Dada work Antipyrene in late 1916 or early 1917, finding much that was parallel to his own views. As Tomkins explains,

> Dada's rejection of all traditions, its nose-thumbing attitude toward social values (including art), its indifference, and at a deeper level its denial of art's interpretive function—Dada demanded that art be a part of life rather than a commentary on life or an improvement on life—all this was very close to Duchamp's thinking.[8]

The value of such an aesthetic for Cage lay in its acceptance of the changing meaning provided to art through the participation of a spectator, and it placed Duchamp, along with Cage's favorites Erik Satie and James Joyce, among a group of artists whose works "have resisted the march of understanding and so are as fresh now as when they first were made."[9]

Even to the veteran European Dadaists and Surrealists, Marcel Duchamp's iconoclasm seemed exceptional. The leading Surrealist André Breton said:

> I have seen Duchamp do extraordinary things: toss a coin in the air and say, 'Heads I leave for America this evening, tails I stay in Paris.' And this without the *slightest* indifference; no doubt he would have infinitely preferred either to go or to stay. But Duchamp is one of the first people to have proclaimed that choice must be independent from individuality, which he demonstrated, for example, by

signing a manufactured object...."[10]

This last gesture, which Duchamp dubbed the "Readymade," would ultimately become his best-known challenge to the traditional status of the art object, symbolically redefining art's fundamental creative act from one of manufacture to one of recognition. Through the Readymades, Duchamp mounted his challenge to the authority of the artist, while moving art beyond the self-referential visual confines that had defined modernism. "I was interested in ideas, not merely visual products," he said. "I wanted to put painting once again at the service of the mind."[11]

For Duchamp, one attraction of the Readymade was the possibility of freeing the creation of art from reliance on the habitual tastes of the artist, no easy task, since even a choice among manufactured objects is liable to be an act conditioned by taste. In 1963, Duchamp commented on the potential pitfalls of choosing:

> It chooses you, so to speak. If your choice enters into it, then taste is involved. ... Taste is the enemy of art, A-R-T. The idea was to find an object that had no attraction whatsoever from the aesthetic angle.... I wanted to change the status of the artist or at least to change the norms used for defining an artist. Again to de-deify him.[12]

Even an object that evoked no response initially, Duchamp found, could eventually come to seem an aesthetic statement. "I had to beware of its ‘look,'" he said. "It's very difficult because at the end of fifteen days, you begin to like it or to hate it. You have to approach something with an indifference, as if you had no aesthetic emotion. The choice of the Readymades is always based on visual indifference and, at the same time, on the total absence of good or bad taste."[13] Pressed by a critic to further define "taste," Duchamp replied: "A habit. The repetition of something already accepted."[14] Thus it was through the Readymades that Duchamp tried to eliminate the influence of confining habits, a lesson which Cage would absorb wholeheartedly. Duchamp's statement that "I have forced myself to contradict myself in order to avoid conforming to my own taste."[15] was later echoed in the words of Cage, who said, "obviously, the things that it is necessary to do are not those that have been done, but the ones that have not been done. If

I have done something, then I consider it my business not to do that, but to find out what must be done next."[16]

In eliminating habits of taste, Duchamp also wanted to eliminate the dominating personality of the creator in his art, a move fundamentally opposed to the modernist belief in art as an expression of the artist's vision. "My intention was always to get away from myself," said Duchamp, "though I knew perfectly well that I was using myself. Call it a little game between 'I' and 'me'"[17] Although the Readymades were important precursors of Pop Art, their context was more personal, less social. Cage explained: "He didn't do what we have since done—extend the notion of the Readymades to everything. He was very precise, very disciplined. It must have been a very difficult thing for him to make a Readymade, to come to that decision."[18] At the same time, the ultimate fact of the Readymades' acceptance as museum objects is today proof of Duchamp's thesis regarding the role of the spectator in determining the meaning of art. When he was asked by the New York Museum of Modem Art's Alfred Barr, "But, oh, Marcel, why do they look so beautiful today?" Duchamp could only reply: "Nobody's perfect."[19]

"Please note that there doesn't have to be a lot of the conceptual for me to like something," he once said. "What I don't like is the completely nonconceptual, which is purely retinal; that irritates me."[20] He spoke of signing the Woolworth Building, and thus creating the world's tallest Readymade. He never did it, but one night at the Café des Artistes, while dining with Walter Arensberg, he did further confound the issues of authorship by signing a large bombastic painting of a battle scene which hung over their table—thus converting an original work of "art" into a Readymade. In a similarly Dada vein, he also once proposed the idea of a "reciprocal Readymade," using a Rembrandt as an ironing board.[21] "I'm afraid I'm an agnostic in art," he explained, "I just don't believe in it with all the mystical trimmings. As a drug it's probably very useful for a number of people, very sedative, but as a religion it's not even as good as God."[22] Often accused of trying to destroy art, Duchamp shrugged: "I don't want to destroy art for anybody else but

myself, that's all."[23] What Cage learned from Duchamp was that art was to be seen not as a one-way communication between artist and viewer, but as a mutual creative act with transformative powers. "They taught us art was self-expression," said Cage, "You had to have 'something to say They were wrong: you don't have to say anything. Think of the others as artists. Art's self-alteration."[24]

Ultimately, Cage would find that his greatest ally in removing personal expression from his work would be the use of chance operations, which he would begin to explore in the 1950s. By then Duchamp, like the other Dadaists, had been exploiting the idea for over thirty years, as in his Three Standard Stoppages (1917), in which he took strings exactly one meter in length, and traced the curves they made as they were haphazardly dropped onto sheets of paper. Just as in the later work of Cage, Duchamp found chance useful in opposing the habits of taste:

> The intentions consisted above all in forgetting the hand.... Pure chance interested me as a way of going against logical reality: to put something on a canvas, on a bit of paper, to associate the idea of a perpendicular thread a meter long falling from a height of one meter onto a horizontal plane, making its own deformation. This amused me.[25]

One important piece by Duchamp from which Cage drew inspiration directly was the work titled The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors. Even, also known as The Large Glass (Fig. 5). A combination of representational and abstract forms with symbolic sexual imagery painted and collaged onto two mounted glass panes, the work incorporates chance features, while also acting as a window through which its environment can be seen. Cage found both of these aspects of the work appealing, and mutually reinforcing when applied to his own work and his desire to awaken the listener's experience of the present moment. Chance, he wrote, by helping to eliminate the composer's intentions, "acts in such a way that one can 'hear through' a piece of music just as one can see through some modem buildings or see through a wire sculpture by Richard Lippold or the glass of Marcel Duchamp."[26] As the painter Jasper Johns later commented, "It's very much in the present tense… Many paintings try to place you

somewhere else, but The Large Glass doesn't do that. It involves you with yourself and with the room you're in, and it seems to require a kind of alertness on your part. If s not just something you look at, although the forms and the spatial arrangements are interesting visually."[27] "[It allows] the changing focus of the eye, of the mind, to place the viewer where he is, not elsewhere."[28]

After he had worked on The Large Glass for eight years, its identity as a symbol of the power of random events to alter aesthetic awareness was further underscored for Duchamp in a curious accident that has become part of the work's lore. As Duchamp told the story.

> While I was gone, it was shown in an international exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum. The people who sent it back to Katherine Dreier, to whom it belonged, weren't professionals, they were careless. They put the two glasses one on top of the other, in a truck, flat in a box, but more or less well-packed, without knowing whether there were glass or marmalade inside. And after forty miles, it was marmalade. The only curious thing was that the two pieces were one on top of the other, and the cracks on each were in the same places.[29]

When it was reassembled (and reinforced by being sandwiched between two other sheets of glass), Duchamp discovered that the symmetrical network of cracks had provided a linear web which tied the composition together in an unexpected and aesthetically pleasing way. Satisfied, he pronounced the piece "definitively uncompleted."[30] "It’s a lot better with the breaks," he said, "a hundred times better. It’s the destiny of things."[31]

Cage was very interested in the idea of a work of art’s diverting attention from itself to call attention to the rest of the world, and he identified it as a key difference between Duchamp and the other Dada artists of his generation. Drawing a comparison with the German Dadaist Kurt Schwitters, who began in 1916 to assemble his *Merz* works from discarded cigarette wrappers, bus tickets, and other detritus found on the streets of Hanover (Fig. 4), Cage wrote:

> So a great Dadaist is Schwitters, whose work is actually beautiful, hmm? ... and unfortunately *remains* beautiful.... Because you get caught in art... in such a way that you stay with it, rather than bringing yourself out of it into your life. And if you stay in it, well we have all sorts of words for that—it becomes something you

would like to "own." Or that you value "in itself," apart from brushing your teeth.[32]

Cage often related how he had had a sudden realization of this distinction between Duchamp and other artists while attending a Dada retrospective in Dusseldorf. "All of it had turned into art with the exception of Duchamp," he said.[33] Cage's description of the sensation of sudden awareness recalls his similar comments about his response to the work of Mark Tobey:

> In the case of the Duchamp ... his work acted in such a way that my attention was drawn to the light switch on the wall, away from—not away, but among-the works of art. So that the light switch seemed as attention-deserving as the works of art.... [The other art works] didn't do that. Art in their cases became separate from life. In the case of Duchamp and Tobey they became *identical* with life.[34]

> I like Schwitters too-but the work of Duchamp is so shocking in the context of the museum that if s effective in the context of life. You can go to an exhibition of Duchamp when if s all alone—when there's no Schwitters around—and you can suspect that you're not seeing art. You wonder, well, what is this? It seems to be more than art, it seems to be memorabilia.... Just think of the dropped strings, and now think of Malevich-the white on white-which is a painting we love; and we would think we would love it as much as Duchamp, but if s different. It really is a *painting.* The dropped strings—what are they? They're memorabilia of dropping strings!... That's how it *was....* Or, that's how it happened, hmm[35]

The ultimate impact on Cage would be to convince him that art is not simply an object created by an artist for the purpose of expression, but is a kind of strategy for awakening the spectator's awareness to the aesthetic qualities present at the moment of encounter, and by extension, to moments of experience beyond direct contact with art objects.

> The effect for me of Duchamp's work was to change my way of seeing so that I became in my way a Duchamp unto myself. I could find as he did for himself the space and time of my own experience. The works signed by Duchamp are centrifugal. The world around becomes indistinguishable. In Dusseldorf it began with light switches and electric outlets.[36]

The Duchamp-Cage notion of shifting responsibility for the creative act onto the spectator denies the authority of the artist in creating meaning in art. This is in opposition to one of the key tenets of modernism, and prefigures much contemporary post-

structuralist criticism in the arts. The perceiver's process becomes more important than the artistic product, for as Cage said, echoing Wittgenstein's view of meaning, "We are involved not in ownership but in use,"[37] adding, "I would go along with Duchamp, that the final speaker is the listener. And how the listener is listening we don't know because he or she hasn't done it yet. So we don't really know what the significance of anything is until it's heard."[38] Cage felt it right that the final authority should rest with the listener, since the idea was in accord with what he had been taught since childhood: "The daily warmth we experience, my father said, is not transmitted by Sun to Earth but is what Earth does in response to Sun. Measurements, he said, measure measuring means."[39]

Even Duchamp himself, whose work had always been based on a cultivated and resolute indifference, began to seem more and more curious in later life about how his work would ultimately be judged. This belated concern with public acceptance of his ideas was noted by an interviewer shortly before his death:

> Pierre Cabanne: This preoccupation is a bit strange for you.
> Duchamp: No, it isn't. Posterity is a form of the spectator.
> Cabanne: The "posthumous" spectator...
> Duchamp: Certainly. It's the posthumous spectator, because the contemporary spectator is worthless, in my opinion. His is a minimum value compared to that of posterity, which, for example, allows some things to stay in the Louvre.[40]

Though profoundly influenced by Duchamp's work and thought. Cage remained mostly an acquaintance and occasional collaborator in the 1950s and '60s, not wanting "to bother him with my friendship, though I admired him."[41] One night around New Year's of 1966 Cage was at a party with Duchamp and his wife Alexina (known as Teeny), and noticed that the older artist's face had undergone a change in complexion. Cage suddenly became aware that Duchamp might not have long to live. Duchamp was an expert chess player who had once been nationally ranked, and Cage had worked with both Duchamp and Ernst on an exhibition of art works devoted to chess (see Fig. 31) at the gallery of Duchamp's chess pupil Julien Levy.[42] Understanding that their opportunity to spend time together might be running out. Cage asked Duchamp if he would mind giving him chess

lessons.

> I came once a week to, quote ... study chess with him. And you know, he got quite cross with me finally, because I wasn't winning. He expressed his disapproval, by saying. Don't you ever want to win? ... And he was really, really disappointed. What I wanted to do was to be with him!... That was all.... Chess was simply a pretext.... I wasn't really playing chess, I was just being with Marcel.[43]

> I was living in the country then ... and I would bring wild mushrooms that I had gathered and a bottle of wine, and Teeny would cook dinner. The way Marcel taught was to have Teeny and me play chess.... He sat and smoked his cigar and didn't even follow the game. Now and then he would come over and remark that we were playing very badly. There was no real instruction. Sometimes we would talk afterward, but it was never about art or ideas. Oh, but I do remember him saying one thing, several times. He said, "Why don't artists require people to look at a painting from a specified distance?" It wasn't until his last work was finally revealed that I saw what he meant.[44]

By the late 1960s, the influence of Duchamp's ideas on younger artists was unmistakable, but most people believed that, apart from a few reproductions of his earlier Readymades and a handful of collaborative works, Duchamp himself had stopped producing art. Cage tells the story of the old master's final provocative gesture:

> He had two studios. One was the one he was working in and the other was the one where he had stopped working. So that if anyone came to visit him they went into the studio where he wasn't working, and there everything was covered with dust. So the idea was spread around that he was no longer working. And you had proof of it!--dust collected where he worked.[45]

Unbeknownst to anyone but his wife Teeny, Duchamp had actually been working for nearly twenty years in secret, on a final work that would be both the culmination and the contradiction of everything his prior output had seemed to mean. Said Cage,

> When I knew him toward the end of his life, he was often talking about, why don't artists tell people where they should stand in relation to a work, why don't they say where you should look? Because if s clear, isn't it, that if you're ten feet away it's different than if you're twenty feet away. So why don't they *say* where you should stand, hmm? ... And he brought this up over and over again.[46]

> I thought it wasn't very interesting, you know.... I didn't really have anything to say about that. But other people would come in the room, and if he hadn't asked them what they thought about that, he would. He would turn the conversation to bring up a discussion of that question.[47]

The work, entitled Etant Donnés: 1) la chute d'eau 2) le gaz d'éclairage, which

remained a secret until after the artist's death, is installed today in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. To a visitor in the gallery it appears to be a simply hewn rustic wooden door set in a brick frame in the wall (Fig. 6).

wall (Fig. 6). Moving closer, the viewer can see that a pair of small holes at eye level allow a vista into an astonishingly real tableau, a diorama in which a cascading waterfall and a natural landscape form the backdrop to a three- dimensional reclining female figure, only partially visible, and positioned so that her widely spread genital region occupies the entire extreme foreground of the spectator's viewpoint (Fig. 7). The heightened and quite literal realism of the work, and its purely "retinal" impact, are almost as shocking in the context of Duchamp's oeuvre as the blatancy of what it depicts. Much of its sexual symbolism, in fact, had already been treated in the Large Glass, but in the Etant Donnés the presentation seemed almost calculated to contradict the meaning of Duchamp's earlier works, in a way that only Duchamp himself could have achieved. As Cage said:

> The experience of being able to look through the glass and see the rest of the world is the experience of not knowing where the work ends. It doesn't end. In fact, it goes into life. Whereas you have to look at the Etant Donnés from a particular position, and you only see what Duchamp put there for you to see. In fact you can't see it other than one way—the way he prescribed. So it moves all the way from not prescribing anything to prescribing everything. That makes a great gamut.[48]

Unlike the earlier works in which Duchamp had proclaimed the unity of art and life, "It, has, rather, the most exact separation," said Cage.[49] For Cage, who saw Duchamp's willingness to contradict himself as one of the artist's greatest strengths, the Etant Donnés was a signpost for the unity of opposites that he had come to appreciate through his study of Eastern philosophy. "Only a great body of work could include such an extreme reversal," he said.[50] Compared to Duchamp's earlier work, "It seems almost the opposite.... *But,* what is marvelous is that the opposites are not opposite. And that's part of what we might call the spirituality—art in life."[51] For even in its heightened

portrayal of the self-conscious manipulation of forms by the artist, Duchamp makes us aware-even uncomfortably aware—of the reality of our presence as viewers in the overall artistic equation. Said Cage, "The extraordinary contradiction between this work and the world around us—to which Duchamp's willingness to sign anything was the best of all possible introductions—is the contradiction within which we have room to live."[52]

Cage was producing an event in Urbana, Illinois in May of 1968 when he received a telegram from Teeny Duchamp. Marcel had died. Cage hurried back to New York:

> One day after he had died Teeny Duchamp was taking me to see the Etant Donnés when it was still in New York before it went to Philadelphia. We were walking east along 10th street. I said, needing some courage to do so: You know. Teeny, I don't understand Marcel's work. She replied: Neither do I. While he was alive I could have asked him questions, but I didn't. I preferred simply to be near him.[53]

Duchamp had been meticulous in the work's construction, and had left a set of precise directions for its disassembly and reinstallation. Cage saw the potential inspiration for a commemorative musical work:

> Well the first time I saw it he had made an experiment of taking it from 14th Street where he made it... to 11th Street.... He rented a space to put up Etant Donnés. In other words he was taking it down and putting it up in order that when he died someone else would be able to do that too, and he made a book which is called Approximation Démontable. And that turns it, as far as I'm concerned, since it's a prescription for action, turns it into a piece of music. Because in music, all we do is give is give directions for the production of sound; and if you follow the directions of how to take Etant Donnés apart and put it back together, you will of course produce sounds, and they will be music, hmm? How could they not be?[54]

Cage felt that the reassembly instructions were not only valuable as a kind of musical score, but should in their own right be considered as one of Duchamp's significant artistic works. He pressured the director of thePhiladelphia Museum to publish them. "If s a book largely due to my insisting that it exist," he said.[55]

> I pointed out to Anne d'Harnoncourt that if Marcel wrote a book, being himself in relation to us in the twentieth century, many of us feeling that anything he did was of the utmost importance, hmm?—if that book was not published that there was some kind of a crime being looked upon favorably by a person like herself, who owned! in her museum! this work! and who possessed the book! and who did not

release it!... So she finally did it.[56]

The Approximation Démontable was ultimately adapted by Cage as the score for a work in which the sets are disassembled and reassembled during the course of the performance in a way consistent with Duchamp's book of instructions. The sound of the construction becomes the musical accompaniment to the performance. Cage entitled the piece, completed in 1988, Noh-Opera, or the Complete Musical Works of Marcel Duchamp.[57]

Because of Cage's advocacy of Duchamp's aesthetic theories, younger artists had begun to take notice. Duchamp was a quiet, mysterious, and somewhat reclusive figure whose work was thought to be all in the past. Cage was of a younger generation, and was more in touch with the American artists of the '50s and '60s who were trying to find an alternative to the dominant Abstract Expressionist aesthetic of the New York art scene. As it happened, he would show them two alternatives. The Readymades' fusion of art and life would inspire Cage's student Robert Rauschenberg and others to move toward mixed media works ranging from found-object assemblage to performance art. At the same time, the notion of the spectator as creator would inspire others to develop art's conceptual side, exploring the nature of meaning itself, and moving art, in the words of Jasper Johns, "through the retinal boundaries ... into a field where language, thought and vision act upon one another."[58]

For Cage himself, the search for meaning had taken another turn, and the composer began, as the result of a series of life changes, to pursue an interest in Asian thought. By the 1950s, he had found what was for him the perfect complement and justification for lessons he had gleaned from the work of Duchamp. Increasingly his work began to reflect, both in philosophy and practice, his devotion to the study of Zen Buddhism.

Notes for Chapter II

[1] Musicage, p. 109.

[2] Revill, p. 80.

[3] Revill, pp. 81-2

[4] Quoted in Richard Kostelanetz, John Cage: An Anthology (New York: DaCapo Press, 1991), Fig. 7-16.

[5] Duchamp, p. 339.

[6] Tomkins, Duchamp, p. 351.

[7] Cited by Otto Hahn, "Passport No. G255300," Art and Artists 1 4 (July 1966), p. 7. Quoted in Sandler, The New York School: The Painters and Sculptors of the Fifties (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 41.

[8] Tomkins, Duchamp, p. 192.

[9] John Cage, X: Writings 79-'82 (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), p. 53.

[10] in Littérature. Oct. 1922. Quoted in Tomkins, Duchamp, p. 247.

[11] Quoted in Pierre Cabanne, Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp (New York: Viking, 1971), p. 11.

[12] In Art News. Quoted in Kostelanetz, ed. John Cage: An Anthology, p. xvii.

[13] Quoted in Cabanne, p. 48.

[14] Quoted in Cabanne, p. 48.

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[15] In Harriet and Sydney Janis, "Marcel Duchamp, Anti-Artist," View. 5 1, Mar 1945, Rpt. in Motherwell, ed. Dada Painters, p. 18. Quoted in Tomkins, Duchamp, p. 419.

[16] Quoted in Kostelanetz, John Cage (Ex)plain(ed). p. 7.

[17] Cited in Katharine Kuh, "Marcel Duchamp" The Artist's Voice (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 92. Quoted in Tomkins, Duchamp, pp. 159-60.

[18] Moira and William Roth, "John Cage on Marcel Duchamp: An Interview," Art in America (Nov.-Dec. 1973) 75. Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 171.

[19] Cited by Robert Morris in Art in America (November 1989). Quoted in Tomkins, Duchamp, p. 427.

[20] Duchamp, in Cabanne, p. *77.*

[21] Quoted by William Seitz, The Art of Assemblage. Exh. Cat. NYMOMA, 1961, p. 20. Quoted in Tomkins, Duchamp, p. 162.

[22] Quoted in Tomkins, Duchamp, p. 438.

[23] Jennifer Gough-Cooper and Jacques Caumont, in Ephemerides. 12 June 1963. Quoted in Tomkins, Duchamp, p. 416.

[24] Cage, M, p. 17.

[25] Quoted in Cabanne, pp. 46-7.

[26] Cage. A Year from Monday, p. 102.

[27] Quoted in Tomkins, Duchamp, pp. 411-2

[28] Jasper Johns, "The Green Box," Scrap 2 (23 December 1960) 4. Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 168.

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[29] Duchamp, in Pierre Cabanne, Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp, p. 75.

[30] Calvin Tomkins, The World of Marcel Duchamp (New York: Time-Life Books, 1966), p. 164.

[31] Duchamp, in Pierre Cabanne, Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp, p. 75.

[32] Cage, Musicage, pp. 103-4.

[33] Cage, X, p. 53.

[34] Cage, Musicage, p. 101.

[35] Cage, Musicage, p. 109.

[36] Cage, X p. 53.

[37] Cage, in Kostelanetz, ed., John Cage: An Anthology, p. 10.

[38] Cage, Musicage, p. 67.

[39] Cage, *A Year from Monday*, p. 7.

[40] Duchamp, in Pierre Cabanne, Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp, p. 76.

[41] Revill, p. 213.

[42] Alain Jouffroy and Robert Cordier, "Entendre John Cage, Entendre Marcel Duchamp." Opus International 49 (March 1974). Quoted in Revill, p. 213.

[43] Cage, Musicage, p. 157.

[44] Tomkins, Duchamp, p. 411.

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[45] Cage, Musicage, p. 111.

[46] Cage, Musicage, p. 111.

[47] Cage, Musicage, p- 111-

[48] Cage, Musicage, p. 110.

[49] Quoted in Tomkins, Duchamp, p. 455

[50] Quoted in Tomkins, Duchamp, p. 455

[51] Cage. Musicage, p. 110.

[52] Cage, M, p. xv

[53] Cage, X, p. 53.

[54] Cage, Musicage, p. 111.

[55] Cage, Musicage, p. 229.

[56] Cage, Musicage, p. 129.

[57] Cage, Musicage, p. 228.

[58] Johns, "Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968)." Artforum (November. 1968) 6. Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 169.

III. John Cage and Zen

The early [compositions] could have been considered expressive. It sometimes seemed to me that I managed to "say" something in them. When I discovered India, what I was saying started to change. And when I discovered China and Japan, I changed the very fact of saying anything; I said nothing anymore. Silence: since everything already communicates, why wish to communicate?[1]

John Cage (1968)

The history of postwar America reveals the beginning of a restless quest for alternatives to established industrial-age world views, culminating in the activist movements for personal and social transformation which characterized the 1960s. Among these alternative philosophies was Zen Buddhism, which blossomed in 1950s and '60s America into a cultural phenomenon best known today through works of such literary artists as Gary Snyder, Alan Watts, and Allen Ginsburg. Of all the ways American intellectuals responded to Zen ideas at this time, some of the most notable, both for authenticity and idiosyncrasy, are found in the works of John Cage. For Cage, the discovery of Zen around 1950 confirmed suspicions already forming in his mind concerning questions of life's purpose and the place of music in it, while simultaneously suggesting the means by which he might communicate these ideas. Cage's interaction with Zen produced compositions which revolutionized the modern conception of music, while his writings proclaimed the breakdown of distinctions between art and life, influencing a generation of painters, sculptors, and performance artists.

By 1944, Merce Cunningham had formed his own dance company, and Cage soon became his musical director. Together through five decades of professional and personal collaboration, the two would redefine the relationship between music and dance, giving to each total independence within the context of their simultaneous performance. The association with Cunningham was personal as well as professional, and had the effect of leading Cage to confront the issue of his own sexual identity.[2] In 1945 Cage separated

from Xenia and took an apartment with Cunningham in a warehouse district on the lower East Side.

The cumulative stress of these major life changes led Cage to seek help from a psychiatrist, but he was so disillusioned at their first meeting that he never returned for a second. Then "in the nick of time,"[3] came Gita Sarabhai, a brilliant young woman from India who had come to America to learn more about the Western music which she saw steadily diluting and overshadowing her own country's Classical traditions. Cage agreed to give her lessons for free if she would, in turn, teach him about the music of India. As the two continued to work together, and discussions moved beyond music into larger questions of life, Gita Sarabhai became Cage's guide to the world of Indian philosophy and spirituality.

Following his continuing fascination with silence and its role in defining musical structure. Cage made an important discovery in 1948. Visiting the soundless anechoic chamber at Harvard University and hearing, to his surprise, not silence but the sound of his own circulation and nervous system in operation. Cage realized that true silence was an abstract fiction, that sound was everywhere continuous, and that he could never create a silence in music no matter how hard he might try.

Cage was looking for an alternative to the seemingly impossible task of communicating feelings through music in a world where musicians all seemed to be "speaking only for themselves." In searching for meaning in his music, he had reached a point of crisis, and vowed "to give up composition unless I could find a better reason for doing it than communication."[4] Cage attended a series of lectures on Indian spiritual practices given by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, who said that the responsibility of the artist was to imitate nature, not in her appearances, but "in her manner of operation."[5] This struck a chord with Cage, who began to conceive the possibility of a kind of music based not on forms, but on processes.

One day he asked Sarabhai what her teacher in India had said the purpose of

music was. Her response: "to quiet the mind and make it susceptible to divine influences."[6] Again Cage felt himself in agreement. If music could truly open us up to the divine, that would surely be a higher purpose than the continued formalist production of "geniuses and masterpieces."[7] "Where people had felt the necessity to stick sounds together to make a continuity," he said, "we ... felt the opposite necessity to get rid of the glue so that sounds would be themselves."[8] Continuing his studies of Eastern philosophy. Cage soon found new validation for his emerging aesthetic convictions in the series of lectures on Zen Buddhism he began to attend at Columbia University in 1949.

The teacher, Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (Fig. 8), had studied Zen in Japan with Kosen, the "father of modem Zen," and later with Kosen's dharma heir Soyen Shaku, spending four years as a lay disciple in the monastery at Engakuji in Kamakura. He moved to Chicago in 1897, working as a translator of, among other things, the writings of Lao-Tzu. By the time of the second World War, Suzuki had written thirty books in Japanese and another twenty or so in English, and had dedicated himself to the task of spreading the message of Zen around the globe in a way that would make it easily accessible to ordinary people.[9]

After sojourns in Europe and Japan, the eighty-year-old Suzuki returned to America in 1949, when Crane Bathroom Fixtures of Illinois agreed to underwrite a series of graduate seminars in Zen at Columbia University.[10] Although Suzuki was not a Zen monk and had never received official "dharma transmission" from Soyen Shaku, his position as a lay practitioner with a wide-ranging spiritual and scholarly appetite and a good grasp of Western history and culture made him an ideal interpreter of Zen thought for American intellectuals. In addition to Cage, those directly influenced by Suzuki's teachings included an impressive array of the progressive thinkers of the period, including Erich Fromm, Karen Homey, Aldous Huxley, C. G. Jung, Thomas Merton, and Huston Smith.[11]

One stipulation of the grant which supported Suzuki's lectures was that observers

be allowed to attend. Although in a typical semester, only two or three students might be taking the class for credit, the classroom was always full, the overflow crowd standing against the walls and spilling out into the hall.[12] Cage recalled that Suzuki always spoke in a very low voice, and when during nice weather the windows were left open, planes flying overhead on the approach to La Guardia airport would frequently drown out the lecture. Suzuki never seemed to mind, never bothering to raise his voice or repeat what he had just said. Even when his words were perfectly audible, they seemed to defy rational understanding, but somehow succeeded in transmitting Suzuki's ideas in more subtle ways. There were times. Cage said, when "I couldn't for the life of me figure out what he was saying. It was a week or so later, while I was walking in the woods looking for mushrooms, that it all dawned on me."[13]

Cage had first been exposed to Zen some ten years earlier, attending a lecture by Nancy Wilson Ross while teaching at the Cornish School in Seattle. But the lessons of Suzuki, arriving as they did during Cage's crisis of personal meaning, came at a time when the composer was truly ready to receive them and put them to use in his life and work. Thus, Zen didn't create Cage's aesthetic, but it provided a validating world view and a suitable frame for the concerns he already had, and suggested a possible course of action. As Cage later wrote, "What I do, I do not wish blamed on Zen, though without my engagement with Zen ... 1 doubt whether I would have done what I have done.... I mention this in order to free Zen of any responsibility for my actions. I shall continue making them, however."[14]

A major portion of Suzuki's teaching was based on the Buddhist doctrines of interpenetration and unimpededness, the notion, in his words, that "Every individual reality, besides being itself, reflects in it something of the universal.... A system of perfect relationship exists among individual existences and also between individuals and universals..."[15] This is the viewpoint of the Kegon school based on the Avatamsaka Sutra, containing writings described by Suzuki as "the most inspiring monument erected by the

Indian mind to the spiritual life of all mankind."[16]

The interpenetration of realities as interpreted by the senses is described in the Avatamsaka Sutra as resembling the vast jeweled net of the god Indra, the existence of each interconnected jewel only perceivable by the reflections it contains of every other jewel and of each of their uncountable connections. The beams of light that reflect and refract the innumerable jeweled images pass unimpeded through each jewel and through each other. Suzuki, for whom light provided the ideal metaphor of interpenetration, noted that "... the essential nature of light is to intermingle without interfering or obstructing.... One single light reflects within itself all other lights generally and individually."[17]

Cage saw immediately the implications of Suzuki's teaching for his music. Sound, like light, is a field phenomenon of overlapping, nonobstructing wave energies. Cage sought to write music which would call attention to the everpresent vibrational field rather than to the composer's own manipulation of harmonic or compositional structures. Cage objected to the traditional structuring of music as a hierarchy of sonic events, for "... although all things are different it is not their differences which are to be our concern but rather their uniquenesses and their infinite play of interpenetration with themselves and with us."[18]

One aspect of focusing on the holistic nature of the sound field. Cage found, was that it could undermine traditional assumptions about what constitutes "relatedness" in art, thereby weakening our comfortable reliance on traditional Western notions of causality. As Cage understood the concept.

> In all of space each thing and each human being is at the center.... moving out in all directions, penetrating and being penetrated by every other one no matter what the time or what the space. So that when one says that there is no cause and effect, what is meant is that there are an incalculable infinity of causes and effects, that in fact each and every thing in all of time and space is related to each and every other thing in all of time and space.[19]

Cage saw that an awareness of these multiple interconnections can arise in any situation where we have no expectation of what the correct relations "should" be. He

described how the act of paying attention without preconceived relational ideas can free us to experience completely unexpected relations based on a synchronistic rather than causal orientation:

> Once when several of us were driving up to Boston, we stopped at a roadside restaurant for lunch. There was a table near a comer window where we could all look out and see a pond. People were swimming and diving.... Inside the restaurant was a jukebox. Somebody put a dime in. I noticed that the music that came out accompanied the swimmers, though they didn't hear it.[20]

The idea of musical performance as a set of interpenetrating field phenomena was revisited frequently by Cage during the years he spent as musical director of the Merce Cunningham dance troupe. His standard procedure was to compose his work completely independently of Cunningham's choreography, so that neither musicians, dancers, nor audience would have any idea what relations would emerge until the performance was actually given.

Cage thus found in Zen precepts a way to transcend what he felt had always been the fatal flaw of Western composition: its ego-centered dependence on the composer's attempt to communicate a fictitious emotional state through artificial divisions of experience. He recalled Suzuki's advice that "... the ego has the capacity to cut itself off from experience ... and it can also flow with the experience.... In other words, we can change our minds, so that rather than concentrating on ourselves in self-consciousness, we can become attentive to environment..."[21] Cage felt that by suspending self-imposed limitations of taste, memory and judgment, we could open ourselves to previously unconsidered realms of experience, and "This being so there is no need to cautiously proceed in dualistic terms of success and failure or the beautiful and the ugly..."[22]

Suzuki had taught Cage that such either/or distinctions only reflect the orientation of our own minds, and block us from an authentic unmediated experience of the world as it truly is. In an interview with Huston Smith in 1959, Suzuki said:

> So long as we are relative, in a relative world, we get attached to the dualistic view of reality. But underneath, or in, or with, a relative world, we have another world which is not relative, which transcends it, but at the same time is in it, that

> is, *with* the relative world, and that world I may call a transcendental realm. In that world there is no good, no evil, no guilt, or no ugliness.[23]

One of Suzuki's favorite Buddhist texts was the doctrine of Universal Mind, written by the T'ang dynasty Zen philosopher Huang Po, which became a major influence on Cage's thought. Huang Po believed that "... we must cultivate dispassion, realizing that none of the attractive or unattractive attributes of things have any absolute existence," but are artifacts of our own attachments.[24] Cage put forth the same point in the form of a hypothetical musical question: "... if sounds being beautiful stop sometime and the only sounds to hear are not beautiful to hear but are ugly, what will happen to us? Would we ever be able to get so that we thought the ugly sounds were beautiful?"[25]

For Cage, this kind of perceptual breakthrough would be provided by compositions incorporating Ananda Coomaraswamy's advice about imitating nature's manner of operation. Such an approach had been followed for centuries by painters in China for whom, as art historian Mai-mai Sze relates, "Painting ... was never separate from the *tao* of living. Its main focus was, and still is, the *Tao,* the Way, the Order of Nature or the way nature works."[26] In 1951 Cage was introduced by his student Christian Wolff to the Chinese oracle, the I Ching, or Book of Changes, and began to produce his first compositions based on chance operations. His edition contained a foreword by C. G. Jung on the subject of synchronicity, suggesting how nature's methods might best be imitated. "If we leave things to nature," wrote Jung, "we see ... [that] every process is partially or totally interfered with by chance so much so that under normal circumstances a course of events absolutely conforming to specific laws is almost an exception"[27]

Cage's response, in 1951, was to write his first compositions based on chance operations, a method which would serve him for the next forty years. He wrote works whose notes were determined by random imperfections in the cheap brand of music paper he bought. In other compositions he tossed coins and consulted the I Ching to determine what notes and sounds would be played. Though he rarely used the book for its wisdom or prophecy, its method of generating random numbers became an essential part of his

compositional process for the rest of his life. His first major such work was the Music of Changes for piano. Since three I Ching coins had to be flipped six times to refer to a chart to determine the pitch of one note in the composition, and the process repeated for the note's duration, loudness, timbre, and other characteristics, it took nine months of flipping coins to generate all of the I Ching hexagrams for the piece's forty-three minutes of music.[28]

One evening. Cage went to hear a New York Philharmonic performance of Anton Webern's Symphonie, and was so overwhelmed that he decided not to stay for the Rachmaninoff piece which was to comprise the concert's second half. As he was leaving the hall, he encountered Morton Feldman, another composer who had had a similar reaction.[29] The two became close friends, and Feldman introduced Cage to David Tudor, a brilliant young pianist who was one of the few musicians fearless enough to tackle Cage's more esoteric compositions. Tudor became an invaluable collaborator and leading interpreter of Cage's works, which were becoming ever more theatrical. His Water Music (Fig. 9), which features pouring liquids, duck whistles being blown underwater, and cards being shuffled amidst pianistic outbursts, was premiered by Tudor in 1952. "Where do we go from here?" wrote Cage, "Towards theater. That art more than music resembles nature. We have eyes as well as ears and it is our business while we are alive to use them."[30]

Cage's use of chance operations led straightaway to his invention of "indeterminacy." With indeterminacy, the composer merely produces a set of rules within which the performer acts to produce chance-generated sounds, thus guaranteeing that the score will produce different music at every performance. He scored his Imaginary Landscape No. 4 for twelve radios and twenty-four performers, each performer adjusting the volume or tuning of one of the radios. Though each performer followed a very carefully scripted set of cues based on the I Ching, the actual sounds produced during each performance of the piece would be entirely contingent on what was being broadcast

at the time. The piece's first public performance took place at Columbia University in May of 1951 at the end of a long program, and it was not played until after midnight, when most stations had already signed off. The premiere thus consisted almost entirely of dead air, or broadcast silence. The composer was delighted.

"So for you," interviewer Daniel Charles proposed to Cage in 1968, "the performer becomes the composer." "Yes," replied Cage, "and the audience can become the performer."

> Charles: What does the composer become?
> Cage: He becomes a member of the audience. He starts to listen.
> Charles: ... Henceforth it becomes impossible to distinguish among various roles.
> Cage: They interpenetrate.[31]

Cage did not believe that chance operations act as "mysterious sources of 'the right answers.'" Instead, he believed, "They are a means for locating a single one among a multiplicity of answers ... of silencing the ego so that the rest of the world has a chance to enter into the ego's own experience."[32] But, as Cage found out, silencing the ego's attachment to forms requires its own kind of discipline. He wrote, "When I first tossed coins I sometimes thought: I hope such and such will turn up."[33] Nevertheless, setting aside preconceived likes and dislikes can allow greater understanding to arise:

> If I am unhappy after a chance operation, if the result does not satisfy me, by accepting it at least I have the chance to modify myself, to change myself. But if I insist on changing the I Ching, then it changes rather than I, and I have gained nothing, accomplished nothing![34]

By not predefining success as a goal, the risk of failure is eliminated, and the limiting nature of dualistic thought is exposed. "... What's meant by risk?" Cage asked. "Lose something? Property? Life? Principles? The way to lose our principles is to examine them, to give them an airing."[35] Principles, for Cage, acted to limit experience even before it occurred; only by losing them, he believed, can we awaken to experience on its own terms.

According to Cage, "When a composer feels a responsibility to make, rather than

accept, he eliminates from the area of possibility all those events which do not suggest the at that time vogue of profundity, for he takes himself seriously, wishes to be considered great, and he thereby diminishes his love and increases his fear and concern about what people will think."[36] By composing in a way which repudiated traditional harmonic and structural relations, adopting nature's processes and allowing sounds to be themselves. Cage aimed to create not just a new kind of music, but a whole new conception of music, whose purpose was "not to bring order out of chaos nor to suggest improvements in creation, but simply to wake up to the very life we're living..."[37]

Cage's philosophy is consistent with one of the key lessons of Zen, as Robert Linssen says, a suspension of egoistic judgments, so that we can make "an eminently positive and constructive action... in which the fullness of life is expressed at the very instant of its emergence."[38] In a similar vein, Suzuki defined Zen enlightenment (or satori) as the revelation of "a meaning hitherto hidden in our daily concrete particular experiences... not something added from the outside ... [but] being itself.... Reality is in its isness."[39] According to Nancy Wilson Ross, "This state of mind is technically called *mushin,* literally the state of no-mind. This is when we are simply aware of what is without distorting it by the complexities of self-consciousness…"[40]

The cultivation of the state of no-mind is one of the central themes in the writings of Huang Po. Suzuki liked to point out that one translation of his own dharma name, Daisetsu, is "great stupidity," implying a mind void of preexisting knowledge, and thus open to an authentic experience of reality.[41] The quality of this no-mind, for which Suzuki in his translation used the word "empty," is written in Chinese with characters whose literal meaning is "skylike," a term that implies not only emptiness, but also an all-encompassing boundlessness.[42] From such a mind, enlightenment can be free to arise "out of the blue." The implications of this state of emptiness, according to Ross, have long been recognized by visual artists of the Zen tradition. In traditional Zen painting, she says, "Space, though empty, was never vacant, for out of Emptiness or the Void came all

of life."[43] As in the familiar graphic representation of the Tao, with its complementary principles of Yin and Yang coexisting, interpenetrating, and defining one another, Zen recognizes that it is in the union of what initially appear to be opposites that the whole of reality can be perceived. "To Zen/' says Suzuki, "silence roars like thunder."[44]

In the history of Western art, there is perhaps no better example of this idea than the composition by John Cage entitled 4'33". First performed in Woodstock, New York in 1952 by pianist David Tudor, the work consists entirely of silence, the performer marking the start and finish of each of the piece's three movements and taking a bow at the end. What Western music describes as silences are, as became evident during the performance of full of unanticipated and unintended sounds. Cage, in inviting us to give these "silent sounds" the same quality of attention we normally bring to musical compositions, directs us to a state of mind in which intended and unintended sounds, music, random noise, and silence all have equality within our conscious unmediated experience of life's vibrational field.

Cage's quest is reminiscent of the Zen tale of Toyo, disciple of master Mokurai (known as Silent Thunder) of Kennin Temple. Toyo sought for many years to identify the sound of one hand clapping, considering and rejecting every sound he could conceive, until he finally "entered true meditation and transcended all sounds. 'I could collect no more,' he explained later, "so I reached the soundless sound.'"[45] Cage, who likewise spent many years trying to free sounds from their enslavement to conception, always retained a special regard for his silent composition, the 4'33". "Not a day goes by," he said many years later, "without my making use of that piece in my life and work. I always think about it before I write my next piece."[46]

In the Shurangama Sutra, the Boddhisattva Kuan-Yin writes of reaching enlightenment through a kind of mindful listening detached from the judgmental influences of the "sixth consciousness."[47] Cage's work likewise points to the awakening which arises from attentive listening without distinctions or divisions. "There are always

sounds," says Cage. "Whether I make them or not there are always sounds to be heard and all of them are excellent."[48] By learning to truly hear sounds and silences, without imposing relations on them, we can release ourselves from the fear of loss which accompanies our habitual attachment to forms. "Not one sound fears the silence that extinguishes it," Cage writes. "But if you avoid it, that s a pity, because it resembles life very closely and life and it are essentially a cause for joy."[49]

In pursuing non-attachment, chance rather than intention, and an equality of sound and silence. Cage united his work with his attitude toward life, in which, echoing Huang Po, he said "All activities fuse in one purpose which is ... no purpose."[50] Thus life and art both take on the qualities of Zen meditation--they are "purposeless," yet enlightening. In Zen, says Buddhist scholar Peter Harvey, "Meditative training is ... not a means to an end, as in most other Buddhist traditions. It is to be done for its own sake, for training and enlightenment are one.... "[51]

Suzuki identified this purposeless aspect of Zen meditation practice as symptomatic of broader differences between Eastern and Western attitudes toward life. When asked why the Chinese, inventors of "the magnet, gunpowder, the wheel, paper, and other things," had never developed a highly technological society, Suzuki replied, "The principal reason is that the Chinese and other Asiatic peoples love life as it is lived and do not wish to turn it into a means of accomplishing something else.... "[52] Cage saw purposelessness as having great relevance to his own work. "Nothing is accomplished by writing, hearing, playing a piece of music," he declared, "our ears are now in excellent condition."[53] To illustrate the Eastern aversion to seeing life as a means to an end. Cage related the story of his Japanese friend to whom he described Eugen Herrigel's book Zen in the Art of Archery, in which the archer, through supreme discipline, manages to hit the bull's eye in total darkness. His friend informed him of "one thing that the author failed to point out, that is, there lives in Japan at the present time a highly esteemed archer who has never yet been able to hit the bull's eye even in broad daylight."[54]

Unlike other Western composers, who had erected musical structures in order to define and divide our experience of sound. Cage, working from his own understanding of the Zen view of reality, created music with no intrinsic structure at all, which nevertheless encompassed the entire audible realm. "The Indians knew long ago that Music was going on permanently and that hearing it was like looking out a window at a landscape which didn't stop when one turned away," he wrote.[55] Some years later, having developed an interest in the American Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau, Cage was delighted to find the identical sentiment in Thoreau's writings as well. "Music is continuous," Thoreau had written, "only listening is intermittent."[56]

According to Cage, the I Ching describes art as an illuminating beacon within a world of darkness. "Naturally," he says, " I disagree."

> If there were a part of life dark enough to keep out a light from art, I would want to be in that darkness, fumbling around if necessary, but alive ... adding to the disorder that characterizes life (if it is opposed to art) rather than adding to the order and stabilized truth beauty and power that characterize a masterpiece (if it is opposed to life).[57]

For Cage, music and art could only be valuable if they served to awaken us to the essential vitality of the very moment in which we are living. "There is all the time in the world for studying music," he wrote, "but for living there is scarcely any time at all. For living takes place each instant. Unimpeded."[58]

The Shurangama Sutra promises the enlightenment of Kuan-Yin to anyone who practices her method of non-attached listening for a period of thirty years. Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom, is also said to have recommended this method over "all the other dharma doors in existence."[59] Yet Cage, who applied the principles of Zen to his writing and listening for more than forty years, never claimed to have "achieved" anything. "I have never practiced sitting cross legged," he said, "nor do I meditate. My work is what I do..."[60] His activity was always characterized by an intimate involvement with the asking of questions rather than the seeking of definite answers. "That's why I love philosophy," as Suzuki once said, "no one wins."[61]

Suzuki had taught that before studying Zen, men are men and mountains are mountains. When studying Zen, things get confused. After studying Zen, men are men and mountains are mountains. Asked what the difference was between before and after, Suzuki replied, "No difference, only the feet are a little off the ground."[62] Similarly, Cage wanted to break through the confusion that had been caused by Western music, in which "Sounds are no longer just sounds but are letters: A B C D E F G."[63] He sought to achieve a more complete understanding of music in which once again "men are men and sounds are sounds."[64] His paradoxical response to why it was so necessary for sounds to be sounds: "In order that each sound may become the Buddha."[65]

Today Cage is often regarded as an American Zen master although, as his editor Joan Retailack points out, he was more global than American in orientation, "was not a formally trained Zen Buddhist, [and] thought of himself as master of nothing."[66] Like Suzuki, who once completed a lecture on the Zen principle of no-mind by saying "Isn't it funny? I come all the way from Japan to explain something to you which is of its nature not to be explained?,"[67] Cage knew that the true meaning of his work would not lie in its conceptual basis, nor in any explanation that he could provide for it, but would only be found in our own experience of it in our lives. To quote Huang Po, "Away with all thinking and explaining. Let there be a silent understanding and no more."[68] Ultimately, Cage's music and writings succeeded in communicating his outlook, while completely avoiding traditional notions of expression. For the generation of artists who came of age in the 1950s, the implications would be enormous.

Notes for Chapter III

[1] For the Birds, p. 103.

[2] Rich, p. 154.

[3] Cage, Silence, p. 127.

[4] Quoted in Revill, pp. 88-9.

[5] Cage, Musicage, p. xlvi.

[6] Quoted in Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors, p. 99.

[7] Cage, Silence, p. 162.

[8] Rich, p. 169.

[9] Rick Fields, How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America (Boston: Shambhala Pub., 1992), p. 137; Revill, p. 107.

[10] Fields, p. 196; Revill, p. 108.

[11] Helen Tworkov, Zen in America: Profiles of Five Teachers (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1989), pp. 4-5; Revill, p. 109.

[12] Revill, p. 108.

[13] Silence, p. 262.

[14] Silence, p. xi.

[15] Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, Essays in Zen Buddhism. Third Series (London: Luzac, 1934), pp. 66-7.

[16] Quoted in Peter Harvey, An Introduction to Buddhism (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 118.

[17] Suzuki, Essays, p. 78.

[18] Silence, 171.

[19] Silence, pp. 46-7.

[20] A Year from Monday, p. 133.

[21] Quoted in Kazuaki Tanahashi and Tensho David Schneider, Essential Zen (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994), p. 108.

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[22] Silence, p. 47.

[23] Quoted in Nancy Wilson Ross, The World of Zen. (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), p. 255.

[24] Quoted in Ross, p. 69.

[25] Silence, p. 42.

[26] Quoted in Ross, pp. 96-7.

[27] Quoted in Cage, Musicage, p. xviii.

[28] Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors, p. 111.

[29] Revill, p. 101.

[30] Silence, p. 12.

[31] For the Birds, p. 95.

[32] Musicage, p. xxviii.

[33] Silence, p. 163.

[34] For the Birds, p. 95.

[35] A Year from Monday, p. 15.

[36] A Year from Monday, p. 105.

[37] Silence, p. 95.

[38] Quoted in Ross, p. 220.

[39] Quoted in Ross, p. 30.

[40] p. 125.

[41] Tworkov, p. 6.

[42] Tworkov, p. 7.

[43] pp. 90-91.

[44] Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, "Lectures on Zen Buddhism." Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis (New York: Grove Press, 1960), p. 10.

[45] Ross, p. 77.

[46] Quoted in Rich, p. 142.

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[47] William Bodri and Lee Shu-Mei, "Hearing: A Door to Liberation." Tricycle: The Buddhist Review. DC 1 (1999) 37

[48] Silence, p. 152.

[49] Silence, p. 173.

[50] A Year from Monday, p. 10.

[51] p. 271.

[52] Suzuki, "Lectures," p. 7.

[53] Silence, p. xii.

[54] A Year from Monday, p. l37.

[55] A Year from Monday, p. l22.

[56] Quoted in Rich, p. 173.

[57] Silence, p. 46.

[58] Silence, p. 179.

[59] Bodri and Lee, p. 37.

[60] Quoted in Rich, *p.* 155.

[61] Quoted in Silence, p. 40.

[62] Quoted in Silence, p. 88.

[63] Silence, p. 165.

[64] Silence, p. 169.

[65] Silence, p. 70.

[66] Quoted in Musicage, p. xl.

[67] Quoted in A Year from Monday, p. 68.

[68] Quoted in Nelson Foster and Jack Shoemaker, The Roaring Stream: A New Zen Reader (Hopewell, NJ: Ecco Press, 1996), p. 92.

IV. The Cage Aesthetic and the Post-Postwar Generation

> *What followed Dada, Surrealism, was social in thought or intention (André Breton), individualist in fact. What followed Johns and Rauschenberg, Neo-Dadaism, in short, what today has taken the place of Surrealism, is social from the outset and through and through, because it is an art which deals for example with industrially produced tomato juice cans. Now if I were obliged to choose between Surrealism and Dada, I would naturally choose Dada. And if I had to prefer one Dadaist above all others, I would keep Duchamp. After which, of course, I would liberate myself from Dada.*[1]
>
> John Cage (1972)

Using a Zen approach. Cage was able to bring his characteristic optimism to Dada's reaction of values. As Irving Sandler says, "In Cage's eyes, Dada and Zen were akin, despite divergent aims, because they related to everyday life in an unsentimental, shocking, and humorous fashion. Moreover, both repudiated willful and rational creation, and encouraged the use of accident and discontinuity to an extreme unprecedented in Western art."[2] Rudolf Kuenzli notes that just as Duchamp and the Dadaists had challenged artistic conventions during the First World War, "Duchamp's works and ideas played a similarly liberating role for a more recent generation of artists after the Second World War. The intermediary between Duchamp and these young Americans was undoubtedly John Cage..."[3]

Duchamp himself was older and more reclusive, a legendary specter who had not been known to produce any new work in many years. Indeed, Duchamp was on the verge of slipping into obscurity when Robert Lebel produced his major study of the artist in 1959.[4] The New York art world was then dominated by the Abstract Expressionist style of Jackson Pollock and Willem De Kooning, with its emphasis on painterly gesture as a link to the subconscious struggles inherent in self-realization through artistic creativity. While Cage was never a believer in this existentialist view of arts meaning, he was in general more sympathetic to painting as an art form than was Duchamp, and admired the "all-over" compositional style of some Abstract Expressionists, who like Mark Tobey, projected painting as

> ... a surface which in no sense has a center of interest, so that it is truly distinguished from most art. Occidental and Oriental, that we know of. The individual is able to look at first one part and then another, and in so far as he can, to experience the whole. But the whole is such a whole that it doesn't look as if the frame frames it. It looks as if [it]... could continue beyond the frame.[5]

Despite the Abstract Expressionists' dominance, and their support from powerful figures like critic Clement Greenberg and Museum of Modem Art director Alfred Barr, many young artists were eager to move in a new direction away from the prevailing aesthetic of the existentialist hero-creator. As Sandler notes, a few of them "began to respond ironically or negatively to professions of *angst.* It was John Cage who launched a major assault on the existentialist influence on the visual arts,"[6] an assault which was already gaining ground by the mid-1950s. According to Calvin Tomkins,

> Work by second generation Abstract Expressionists often seemed derivative and mannered. Conservative critics such as the New York Times' John Canaday kept prophesying a return to "humanist" (i.e., figurative) painting, but the critics, as usual, were in for a shock. They had scarcely noticed the amazing shift in attitude and outlook that was already well advanced in the work of some younger New York artists, poets, dancers, filmmakers, musicians, and performance artists. John Cage ... was one of the main catalysts of this shift.[7]

In 1949, Cage delivered his "Lecture on Nothing" at the Eighth Street Artists' Club founded by Robert Motherwell.[8] "The Club," as it was known, was a center for artists who were already disenchanted by the prevailing Pollock-De Kooning-Greenberg aesthetic stance. Into their midst walked Cage: "I have nothing to say," he said, "and I am saying it."[9] His words became a rallying point for young artists more inclined to minimalism—and not only for such formal minimalists as Ellsworth Kelly, Frank Stella, and Robert Morris, but, as Hunter and Jacobus have noted, for the Neo-Dada Pop artists as well, who would use "objects from low, everyday life with minimal or no modification imposed upon them by the artist."[10]

In spring of 1948, while on a dance tour, John Cage and Merce Cunningham spent several days at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where Cage premiered his just-completed Sonatas and Interludes for prepared piano while Cunningham danced. The faculty and students showered them with gifts of food and art as they left, and Josef Albers, the Bauhaus veteran who now ran the small, progressive, arts-centered institution, invited them back to teach

in the summer session.[11] While driving back to North Carolina that summer. Cage gave a lecture at Carnegie Tech in Pennsylvania. In the audience was a second-year student named Andy Warhol, whose name, minus the final vowel, would one day become synonymous with the New York Pop movement.[12] The primary challenges to Abstract Expressionism's hegemony, says critic Barbara Rose, were nurtured in an atmosphere "generated mainly" by Cage.[13]

Among those teaching the summer session with Cage and Cunningham, in addition to Josef Albers and his wife Anni, who taught weaving, were Willem de Kooning, suggested by Cage as a last-minute replacement for an ill Mark Tobey, and the visionary architect Buckminster Fuller. Other regular members of the faculty at Black Mountain included Walter Gropius, Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Jacob Lawrence, and Ben Shahn, as well as the poets Charles Olson and M. C. Richards. Guest lecturers ranged from Clement Greenberg to Albert Einstein.[14] All in all, it was the perfect environment to inspire a confrontation with art’s status quo.

Cage's main contribution to the curriculum that summer was a festival of the music of Erik Satie, a series of twenty-five thirty-minute concerts accompanied by lectures. One of the more memorable events was an August 14 performance of Satie's "lyric comedy" La Piège de Méduse (fig. 10), recently translated by M.C. Richards and directed by Arthur Penn. With piano by John Cage and sets designed by Willem and Elaine de Kooning, the production starred Buckminster Fuller in the role of Baron Medusa, with Elaine de Kooning as his daughter Frisetta and Merce Cunningham as Jonas, a "costly mechanical monkey."[15]

Much more disruptive to the summer program was Cage's lecture "In Defense of Satie," presented as a debate between Beethoven, master of large- scale harmonic form, and Satie, with his open-ended structures described by Cage as based on time relations. Cage declared "immediately and unequivocally, [that] Beethoven was in error, and his influence, which has been as extensive as it is lamentable, has been deadening to the art of music."[16] The audience was electrified and "practically burned all Beethoven recordings," as one former student recalled,[17] while the faculty and administration were more than a little threatened by the uproar that greeted Cage's "declaration of war on the assumed supremacy of the Germanic tradition that dominated American musical life, including the music program at Black Mountain."[18]

His deepening involvement with Satie's work led Cage, with a cash award of $1000 from

the Institute of Arts and Letters, to travel to France in 1949 to conduct research on the French composer. While in Paris he met Pierre Boulez, heir to the serialist tradition of Schoenberg. Boulez introduced Cage to Pierre Schaeffer, who had invented *musique concrète,* music created from natural sounds by splicing together the newly-available magnetic recording tape. It was also here that he met Ellsworth Kelly, one of the leading figures of early minimalism, who immediately began producing Cage-inspired collages and paintings based on chance operations. His interest further encouraged by an association with Sophie Tauber-Arp, whose husband Jean Arp had been a leading figure in the Zurich Dada movement, Kelly's entire aesthetic outlook began to reflect the philosophy of Cage: "leaves, grass, cracks in the wall," he said, "all randomness of a million pieces and variations. This composing was endless and didn't need 'me'—they made themselves-as it seemed nature worked for me using the laws of chance."[19]

Cage pored over Satie's notebooks, discovering marginal notations which he claimed validated his theory of Satie's structural use of time, though composer Darius Milhaud, who had known Satie, said that the columns of numbers merely referred to shopping lists.[20] Cage discovered several unpublished scores by Satie while in Paris, including a short composition for piano named Vexations, which fascinated him. Though the piece is only one page in length, Satie directed that it be played 840 times in succession, after the performer enters a state of "total interior immobility." Cage had the work published in the journal Contrepoints, and brought a copy of the manuscript back to New York with him, along with three unpublished suites of Satie's Furniture Music.[21] The Cage-produced world premiere of Vexations in 1963 is regarded as a defining moment for the emerging musical minimalism of composers Steve Reich and especially Philip Glass, who later said that Cage had "changed my life and the way I think."[22]

Approached by Lee Krasner in 1950 to write the score for a Hans Namuth Paul Falkenberg film about Jackson Pollock, Cage declined the opportunity, but recommended his friend Morton Feldman. Then Burgess Meredith commissioned a score for a film he was producing on American sculptor Alexander Calder, in which Cage included the gentle percussion sounds of Calder's mobiles bumping into each other. The score won an award at the 1951 Woodstock Film Festival.[23] It was also at this time that Cage met one of the most important artists of the next generation who would use his ideas to challenge the dominant aesthetic of the New York art world.

Robert Rauschenberg was an energetic young painter from Port Arthur, Texas, whose artistic journey had led him to the Kansas City Art institute, and from there to the Academic Julian in Paris. Rauschenberg was pursuing a close involvement with oil paint itself, even to the point of abandoning paintbrushes, which had come to seem an obstruction between the artist and his work. "I was painting with my hands," he says, "trying to get as involved as I could with the act of painting. What came out were mostly messes."[24] Though he clearly had a feel for the medium, he knew that the next step in his artistic evolution would only come through the exercise of discipline.

Spurred on by an article in Time magazine that called Josef Albers "the greatest disciplinarian in the United States," Rauschenberg enrolled at Black Mountain College midway through the fall semester of 1948.[25] He both flourished and chafed under Albers' strong hand, recalling later that "Albers was a beautiful teacher and an impossible person.... I'm still learning what he taught me, because what he taught had to do with the entire visual world. ... I consider Albers the most important teacher I've ever had, and I'm sure he considered me one of his poorest students."[26] As Schoenberg had for Cage, Albers acted for Rauschenberg as a model of the standards that would need to be overcome for his own art to emerge.

"Albers' rule is to make order," Rauschenberg has said. "As for me, I consider myself successful only when I do something that reflects the lack of order I sense."[27] While Albers' doctrinaire approach to abstract composition and the formal relations of pure color may only have antagonized Rauschenberg into doing exactly "the reverse of what I was supposed to have learned,"[28] there was another aspect of the master's teaching to which the young student could easily relate. Albers taught the Bauhaus precept of *Werklehre,* an appreciation of the "possibilities and limits of materials" through the use of all manner of fotmd objects as potential sources for art.[29] Rauschenberg opted for the job of trash collector in the college's communal division of labor, finding in the castoff materials of others the inspiration for his own creative projects. His natural inclinations were bringing him close to the attitude of inclusion favored by Cage. "Painting relates to both art and life," he said. "I try to act in the gap between the two."[30]

In New York, Rauschenberg began to attract some attention among the Abstract Expressionists, whose work had hung alongside his in an exhibition organized by dealer Leo Castelli, and he had been given his first one-man show at Betty Parsons' gallery. It was at the

Parsons show that Rauschenberg officially made the acquaintance of John Cage, presenting him with a small pink and tan collage. Sometime later, stopping in at Cage's New York apartment and finding the composer not at home, Rauschenberg repainted the work as an all-black composition, which he was sure Cage would like much better.[31] Despite Cage's initial shock at the young artist's behavior, the two soon became close friends and collaborators.

Next to Josef Albers it was Cage, in many ways the German's polar opposite, who would have the most decisive impact on Rauschenberg's emerging aesthetic. Rauschenberg would later credit Cage with having been "the only one who gave me permission to continue my own thoughts."[32] Trying to work in the gap between art and life, he felt a natural kinship to the older composer, who like his mentor Marcel Duchamp, maintained that the gap didn't exist. The success of Rauschenberg in his Cagean quest is evident in this 1965 review by an unfriendly critic:

> Contemporary artists such as Rauschenberg have become fascinated by the patterns and textures of decaying walls with their tom posters and patches of damp. Though I happen to dislike Rauschenberg, I notice to my chagrin that I cannot help being aware of such sights in a different way after seeing his paintings.[33]

Cage recognized that his aims and Rauschenberg's were similar, and saw no conflict in their opposing tactics. "Sometimes we blur the distinction between art and life," he said, "sometimes we try to clarify it. We don't stand on one leg. We stand on both."[34]

Rauschenberg and Cage first saw their common concern bear fruit in 1951, when Rauschenberg created his Automobile Tire Print (Fig. 11). Carefully inking the tires of Cage's Model A Ford, Rauschenberg directed the composer as he drove across fifty sheets of paper laid edge-to-edge along New York's Fulton Street. Cage was simply "the only person with a car who would be willing," according to Rauschenberg.[35] The resulting monoprint, sixteen inches tall and twenty-two feet long, is now regarded as an important "forerunner of the artist's use of everyday imagery as an integral part of his compositions, and of incorporating chance occurrences into an ordered artistic arrangement."[36] Though Cage, as the driver, was the one actually "drawing" the work, he describes his contribution to Rauschenberg's project as that of an "unpaid day laborer."[37]

Cage and Cunningham were living on one floor of a converted tenement house at Grand and Monroe, overlooking the East River, where their neighbors included painter Sonya Sekula,

sculptor Richard Lippold, and composer Morton Feldman. The apartment's spartan furnishings, large spaces, and spectacular views helped make it a favorite hangout for avant-garde artists, and led to its use in a number of photo sessions for Vogue and Harper's Bazaar.[38] Looking over the living room, which contained only a grand piano, straw matting on the floor, and a few pillows for seating, the sculptor Isamu Noguchi said "An old shoe would look beautiful in this room."[39]

In the summer of 1952 Cage was invited back to Black Mountain by Lou Harrison, who now ran the music department. Albers had by this time left the college, and the furor over the Beethoven incident had subsided. Cage drove down to North Carolina with Cunningham and David Tudor, and the three were joined for the summer session by Rauschenberg.[40] Infused with Cage's aesthetic spirit, Rauschenberg was working on the art-life dilemma from another angle, producing the monumentally scaled and immaculately finished White Paintings, of which an example is shown in Fig. 12. Their gleaming, featureless surfaces, rendered without any trace of visible brushwork, are so resolutely blank that they achieve maximal resonance with the ambient lighting conditions and atmosphere of the space in which they are shown. While their only concession to traditional composition is the joining of identical, empty panels into a larger whole, reminiscent of the severe geometries of Albers' work, they nevertheless project a powerful energy into the gallery space, reflecting back the shifting fields of light incident upon them. John Cage once referred to the White Paintings as "airports for the lights, shadows, and particles,"[41] and Rauschenberg explained that he made them "so that one could look at them and almost see how many people were in the room...,"[42] as each onlooker adds his or her own reflected color to the surface of the canvas.

Since Rauschenberg knew that the enamel paint he used would fade and yellow with time, he stipulated that the panels should be periodically repainted to ensure the perfection of their continued whiteness. In a letter to Betty Parsons, Rauschenberg revealed a Duchamp/Cage-style repudiation of the artist's traditional creative role when he wrote, "It is completely irrelevant that I am making them—today is their creator."[43] The panels in the collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modem Art were last repainted in the 1970s by the artist Brice Marden.[44]

Though Cage had first raised the idea of a piece of silent music in a lecture at Vassar College around 1948, when he proposed selling a four-minute piece of silence to the Muzak corporation as a break from their endless stream of shopping mall and elevator music,[45] it was

only after the "encouragement of Rauschenberg's White Paintings that he wrote his most famous work, the 4'33".[46] first performed on August 29,1952 by David Tudor. "Any experimental musician in the twentieth century has had to rely on painters," said Cage, "because they were the lively changers of art to begin with."[47] Tudor dutifully raised and lowered his arms to signal the start of each of the piece's three movements, while the rustling and coughing of the festival audience became, in effect, the music. The point, according to Cage: "There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear."[48] In a talk at the Eighth Street Artists' Club, Rauschenberg explained, "It is hard to paint nothing. A picture is an object, a whole, that isn't just waiting for someone to express anything. It is finished before it is painted."[49] According to Irving Sandler, Rauschenberg "concluded that the white paintings were probably more beautiful than anything else he had done."[50]

For both Cage and Rauschenberg, the goal was to open up the work of art so that all of life could flow through it. At the New York City premiere of 4'33" in April 1954, reviewer Nancy Seely deadpanned, "you could have heard a piano drop."[51] What Cage appreciated most about his silent piece, he said, "is that it can be played any time, but it only comes alive when you play it. And each time you do it is an experience of being very, very much alive."[52] The composer who once admitted that "the music I prefer, even to my own and everything, is what we hear if we are just quiet,"[53] decided, like Rauschenberg, that in making an empty form he had created his most beautiful work. Ironically, most of those who agreed with him, as Kostelanetz points out, were his detractors, who wished that all of his works had been as silent.[54]

Rauschenberg's next series, the Black Paintings, were the complete antithesis of the White Paintings in more ways than their title would suggest, while defining another stance of opposition to the studied Bauhaus formalism of Albers. As Fig. 13 shows, the Black Paintings, far from presenting a clean, uniform surface, were built up into a glossy, clotted mass of oil and enamel, combined with thickly collaged scraps of torn newsprint. Here and there, words and images from the printed pages struggle to make themselves visible through the sticky blackness, activating the painted surface to a depth of two inches or more, like fragments of recorded life trying to push beyond the expressive machinations of art. Referring to these works, Rauschenberg said "I was interested in getting complexity without their revealing much."[55]

In both the White and Black Paintings, Rauschenberg is limiting his own responsibility

for the artwork's ultimate effect, as Calvin Tomkins says, "principally by trying to make the viewer work harder and become more involved in the process."[56] Rauschenberg's aim is something broader than a projection of the self: "I don't want a painting to be just an expression of my personality," he says, "I feel it ought to be much better than that."[57] The statement recalls a story about Cage who, having moved to upstate New York, was once praised by a visitor to his home for his many contributions to music. Cage merely gestured to the forest beyond the grounds and said, "I just can't believe that I'm that much better than anything out there."[58] When Rauschenberg was asked by a critic if he intended to allow the interpretation of his work's meaning to be provided by each individual viewer, he replied, "I insist on it."[59]

Cage's major project for the summer was the completion of his Williams Mix, a tape collage piece of enormous complexity commissioned by architect Paul Williams, in which the attack, decay, and duration characteristics of each of hundreds of found sounds chosen through chance operations were controlled by cutting the tape at precise angles over a template that resembled a dressmaker's pattern (Fig. 14). As Cage worked on the project for months with his assistants, he noted how the development brought music closer to visual art: "Film sound, then tape, was the first indication that 'time equals space,'" he said. "You could do graphic things in space that would have musical effects in time. Notation could change from being symbols to being what actually caused the music."[60]

Also that summer, Cage staged an event at Black Mountain based on his reading of a book on Dada theater by Kurt Schwitters and on his study of Antonin Artaud's The Theater and Its Double, recently translated by M. C. Richards.[61] The Theater Piece No. 1. which consisted of Cage, Cunningham, Rauschenberg, Tudor, Richards, and Charles Olson all performing simultaneous unrelated and chance-determined acts, was designed to allow "an opportunity or situation within which the aesthetic experience of ongoing, ordinary existence could be foregrounded."[62] The spontaneous scripting of both performers and audience in the Theater Piece have led art historians to recognize the event as the first "Happening," six years before that term was used to describe the performance-oriented works of Alan Kaprow and others. Asked if this signified Cage's leaving music for theater, the composer replied, "But my music was already theater. And theater is only another word for designating life."[63] Kostelanetz agrees that expanding music's definition beyond its traditional aural boundaries was a logical move for

Cage, whose "principal theme, applicable to all the arts, was the denial of false authority by expanding the range of acceptable and thus employable materials, beginning with nonpitched 'noises.'[64]

1953 would see the merging of all of these influences in Rauschenberg's work, as he rejected more strongly than ever the heroic expressive struggle that is the basis of the Abstract Expressionist model of art. At the same time, he began to merge the painted surfaces of his work with an ever-expanding assortment of found objects in his first "combines," which would ultimately become his greatest vehicle for perfecting the union of the painted canvas with the empirical world.

Returning to New York, Rauschenberg went to see Willem de Kooning and asked him for a drawing to erase. He later recalled, "I'd been working for several weeks, trying ... to use the eraser as a drawing tool."[65] It just didn't make much sense for me to erase my own marks, so I thought it made for a special situation.... De Kooning was the most important artist of the day.... He said he wasn't going to make it easy for me--and he didn't! I spent four weeks erasing that drawing."[66] The resulting work, which Rauschenberg framed and titled Erased de Kooning Drawing (Fig. 15), still bears the faint traces of de Kooning's original crayon, ink, and grease pencil.

Rauschenberg's act has been widely interpreted as a kind of patricidal negation of the form and content of Abstract Expressionism, a decisive gesture in denial of gesture, with unavoidable overtones of Dada nihilism and iconoclasm.[67] John Cage compared the erasure drawing to the famous L.H.O.O.Q., a "Rectified Readymade" in which Marcel Duchamp had drawn a moustache onto a reproduction of the Mona Lisa: "Duchamp showed the usefulness of addition (moustache); Rauschenberg showed the function of subtraction (de Kooning). Well, we look forward to multiplication and division."[68] But if the Erased de Kooning is the culmination of the anti- gestural approach first suggested by the White Paintings, then the smudged residue of de Kooning's work that remains on the paper's surface can be seen as Abstract Expressionism's lingering ghost—a sign, in the words of Irving Sandler, "of Rauschenberg's inability to escape de Kooning, even if he wanted to..."[69]

In fact, it was Rauschenberg's absorption of de Kooning's gestural style that would ultimately be his greatest ally in the attempt to merge art and life. The way had been shown by

the Black Paintings, and from their tattered and textured surfaces Rauschenberg fashioned the ideas that would lead to his landmark "combine" works, beginning with the Red Paintings of 1953-54. His Collection (Fig. 16) provides an encyclopedic review of the techniques and influences that had shaped Rauschenberg's outlook up to that time. Found objects of wood and tin attached to the surface of the painting's three panels and extending beyond the frame echo Albers' lessons in the inherent aesthetic properties of materials. Newspaper and comic strip clippings and fine art postcards peek out from beneath thick gestural smears of red paint, recalling the active surfaces of the Black Paintings, and anticipating the use of media imagery in the later works of Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein.

The bold brushstrokes, runs, and splatters recycle the Abstract Expressionist styles of Pollock and de Kooning, uniting the separate panels of Collection, originally painted red, yellow and blue, in a single tonality based on variations on a theme of red.[70] The composition is further sectioned by collaged pieces of fabric, also in pinks and reds, bringing to mind the scraps once used in the quilts and hand-made clothing fashioned by the artist's mother back in Port Arthur, Texas. Even the ideas behind the anti-expressive white paintings are reprised here, their goal of bringing the whole room into the painting being taken up by a small hand mirror embedded in the paint, its reflection of the painting's environment obscured by an overlay of sheer, translucent gauze, suggesting that the product of an artist’s work is always a less-than-perfect mirror of nature.

While the complex assemblage of materials found in Collection has its precedents in Cubist collage and the *Merz* paintings of Kurt Schwitters, Rauschenberg's work is distinct in that the collage elements are less defined by their contribution to the overall design, and are left more free to assert their own identity as independent objects. "A pair of socks is no less suitable to make a painting with than wood, nails, turpentine, oil, and fabric," the artist has stated.[71] The open-ended formal and thematic relations of the combine paintings recall Cage's musical compositions made of ambient noise.
just as the earlier White Paintings had been the optical correlative of Cage's music of silence.

In his subsequent combines, Rauschenberg continued his assault on traditional assumptions of what a painting could be, incorporating such objects as a stuffed eagle, an Angora goat, and the artist’s own bed quilt and pillow (Rauschenberg rather disarmingly

explaining that he had simply "run out of things to paint on").[72] "There is no more subject in a combine than there is in a page from the newspaper," said Cage. "Each thing that is there is a subject. It is a situation involving multiplicity."[73]

For Rauschenberg, even the act of creation was merely one equal element included among many in his work, rather than the fundamental source of meaning it had been for the Abstract Expressionists. He underscored this message with his combine painting Factum 1 (Fig. 18), a collage of letters, calendar pages, and photo imagery, including the likeness of President Eisenhower, all enlivened with gestural smears of paint. He then reproduced the work precisely, down to the last splatter and dribble, in Factum 2 (Fig. 19), challenging the New York critics to determine whether the spontaneous and "expressive" version was really better or more artistic than its carefully calculated twin. Cage trumpeted his approval:

> Hallelujah! The blind can see again. Blind to what he has seen so that seeing this time is as though first seeing. How is it that one experiences this, for example, with the two Eisenhower pictures which for all intents and purposes are the same? (A duplication containing duplications). Everything is so much the same, one becomes acutely aware of the differences, and quickly.[74]

Although the self-conscious nature of Rauschenberg's artistic statements made them at times, in Cage's view, "seem more 'special,' and more toward Schwitters than toward Duchamp,"[75] Rauschenberg was not above the occasional purely Duchampian gesture. Once, when asked to do a portrait of gallery owner Iris Clert for an exhibition, he sent her a telegram reading: "This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so."[76] In the '60s, he developed the methods of silkscreen and photo transfer to exploit juxtapositions of unrelated imagery, reversing himself by creating a flat picture space totally at odds with the sculptural dimensionality of his earlier combines. At the same time, his forays into performance art and his work as designer for the Merce Cunningham and Judson Church dance groups focused on further aspects of the "art-life" dichotomy.

Rauschenberg met the painter Jasper Johns around 1954, and soon introduced him to Cage.[77] The two artists worked together for a time designing window displays for New York shops, including Tiffany's, and became major supporters of Cage's music, even pooling their money to produce a twenty-five-year retrospective concert in 1958. Like Rauschenberg's work, the paintings of Johns pose questions about the nature of artistic expression, but with even more

determination to exclude his own feelings, tastes, and identity. While Rauschenberg's art looks outward, opening itself up to the whole world, that of Johns turns inward to consider its own place within that world.

Johns's paintings of flags, targets, and numbers are fundamentally about the nature of representation itself. Can one make an image of the flag (Fig. 17) without having made a flag? If the stars and stripes is an abstract symbol, is a painting of it an abstraction or a representation? Is Johns *presenting* a flag *as* a work of art, or is he *representing* one *in* a work of art?[78] The refusal of Johns to provide us with the answers further shifts the locus of the creative act, contradicting the expected artist-subject relationship. "That he has nothing to say about them proves that they are not subjects rather than that he as a human being is absent from them," remarks Cage. "He is present as a person who has noticed that *at every point in nature there is something to see."*[79]

By making his canvas precisely coextensive with the flag image, says Cage, Johns tells us "that it is not a painting o/a flag. The roles are reversed: beginning with the flag, a painting was made. Beginning, that is, with structure, the division of the whole into parts corresponding to the parts of a flag, a painting was made which both obscures and clarifies the underlying structure."[80] Even abstract art's arch-defender Clement Greenberg had to admit he was intrigued by the issues raised by Johns:

> Everything that usually serves representation and illusion is left to serve nothing but itself, that is, abstraction; while everything that usually serves the abstract or decorative-flatness, bare outlines, all- over or symmetrical design—is put to the service of representation.[81]

"What's so interesting in his work," says Cage, "is that the things that his work has represented—flags, numbers, beer cans—are very close to the thingness of the everyday world. Those are not, as it were, ideas of his, but ideas of all of us."[82] Simultaneously less celebratory and less cynical than the Pop artists who followed him, Johns claimed that choosing for his subjects "things the mind already knows ... gives me room to work on other levels."[83] While unavoidably referencing our stock of cultural symbols, his works, through their beautiful painterly qualities, insist on being seen as independent visual objects. "A large part of my work has been involved with the painting as object, as real thing in itself," he says. "And ... so far, my general development... has moved in the direction of using real things as painting. That is to say I find it more interesting to use a real fork as painting than it is to use painting as a real fork."[84]

While opposed to the "purist" stance of traditional modernist abstraction, the work of Rauschenberg and Johns shares abstract art's commitment to the real. Cage recognized that the whole issue of abstract painting was actually a matter of viewpoint, since any translation of experience onto a painted surface is necessarily an act of abstraction.

Mondrian, he noted,

> ... said that representational work was too abstract. That he required realistic painting like his own.... And when you agree with him it's very mind-opening. Because you do see that representational painting, is, as Jasper says, a tragedy ... and that he much prefers the real thing— the real fork. And what Mondrian wanted to paint was *really* what he was painting ... that couldn't be mistaken for something else.[85]

Johns later said of Cage, "Knowing John had a great effect on my work. ... John is intellectually generous and ... is capable of grasping ideas in different disciplines and the relationships among them. He is probably the first person I met to take such pleasure in ideas."[86] Johns' commitment to the primacy of ideas, to an art "at the service of the mind," actually put him closer in outlook to Duchamp than either Cage or Rauschenberg.[87] Seeking to free art from the "stink of artists' egos," he would deliberately subvert his own intentions, at times doing "something that seems quite uncalled for in the painting, so that the work won't proceed so logically from where it is, but will go somewhere else."[88] Above ll, he said, "I don't want my work to be an exposure of my feelings."[89]

More than in the case of Cage or Rauschenberg, Johns's reticence was in tune with the natural inclinations of his personality. While Rauschenberg couldn't help expressing himself, even on a blank canvas, Johns' works seem inexpressive by nature, despite their luxurious painterly surfaces. Although Cage was perhaps his closest confidant, Johns has always kept most aspects of his life intensely private, and even his biographers are unclear on many of the details of his life story. This, to Cage, was in fact one of the most interesting things about his friend:

> I know him quite well... and yet he's a complete stranger ... you know ... and that's why I love to see him, or be with him--is that each time I'm with him I have no idea who he is! You know? Just no idea at all. If s a complete, marvelous mystery.[90]

When Cage was asked to present Johns with a gold medal for printmaking from the Academy of Arts and Sciences, he wrote a poem celebrating his friend's part in reshaping the issues of meaning in art: "I wrote a mesostic on his name saying this is not really a gold medal, something

like that, this medal is not pure gold. It was to the effect that he's created the greatest difficulties for me. And the difficulties that I cherish the most."[91]

In the words of Calvin Tomkins, "The trails blazed by Johns and Rauschenberg would lead to Pop art. Happenings, Minimal art. Conceptual art, and several other developments, but they also led back to Cage and, beyond Cage, to Duchamp."[92] Where Cage contributed the most to the young New York artists, in Sandler's view,

> was in directing their attention to the American scene and in convincing them to accept it as it was, in a Zen-like spirit of 'joy and revolution.' Their artistic discovery of everyday images, artifacts, and events constituted a kind of Americanization of Zen or a spiritualization of the American environment, for its familiar components became objects of contemplation or faith, like secular icons.[93]

Just as in the work of Duchamp, which as Cage said "leads you, even in the special place, to things which are not special... and which your life is made up by," the Pop artists who followed Johns and Rauschenberg celebrated the banalities of life as the true sources of artistic inspiration. "There was this quality, actually, in the work of Andy Warhol," Cage explains. "I mean the soup can has been transformed!... So that through Andy we are able to go to whatever supermarket there is, and find ourselves in church!"[94] In a 1969 essay. Cage wrote, "Soup cans are not only beautiful (Warhol for example) but true (Campbell's soup is actually in them). They're also constant reminders of spiritual presence. 'I am with you always.' Function fulfilled by images of the Virgin Mary along a path is now also fulfilled by the public telephone. Instead of lighting a candle, we insert a dime and dial."[95]

Asked by Daniel Charles, "But doesn't an Andy Warhol get us used to repetitions?," Cage responded, "No, in fact he makes us lose that habit. Each repetition must authorize an entirely new experience."[96] As with Rauschenberg's Factum paintings, the field of similarities makes us seek out uniquenesses. Or, as Cage elaborated in a later interview, "Each can is separate from each other can. They're only connected as ideas in our heads. But in reality light falls on each one uniquely, so that each can is at the center of the universe... or is the Buddha, you see. So, if s worthy of honor, as such. I mean, you wouldn't do anything bad to the Buddha, you know."[97]

It is that power of art to point to something beyond itself in a surprising and challenging way that is the aim of Cage's blend of Duchamp and Zen. As he explained in a 1974 interview,

"Left to itself art would have to be something very simple--it would be sufficient for it to be beautiful. But when it's useful it should spill out of just being beautiful and move over to other aspects of life so that when we're not with the art it nevertheless influences our actions or our responses."[98] Robert Rauschenberg once summarized his high regard for Cage, saying, "I've never been into music, but I have the greatest respect for someone who knows that music is just listening, like art is just looking."[99] The statement's simplicity belies its profundity, for while art may indeed be "just looking," to allow oneself the freedom to just look without prejudice is no trivial matter. John Cage has done as much as anyone to open our eyes and ears to the possibility.

Notes for Chapter IV

[1] For the Birds, p. 222. (In a 1972 footnote to the 1968 interviews. A supplementary footnote of 1980 adds, "As did Duchamp.")

[2] Sandler, The New York School, p. 167.

[3] Rudolf E. Kuenzli, Marcel Duchamp: Artist of the Century (1990). Quoted in Richard Kostelanetz, "Not Wanting to Say Anything About John Cage." Chicago Review 38 (1992), 169.

[4] Irving Sandler, American Art of the 1960s (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 50.

[5] Quoted in Sandler, The New York School pp.163-4.

[6] Sandler, The New York School p. l63.

[7] Tomkins, Duchamp, pp. 408-9.

[8] John Cage, Etchings 1978-1982 (San Francisco: Crown Point Press, 1982), p. 59.

[9] Silence, p. 109.

[10] Sam Hunter and John Jacobus, Modem Art (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), p. 320.

[11] Mary Emma Harris, The Arts at Black Mountain College (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), p. 146.

[12] Revill, p. 94. Revill, Cage's English biographer, mistakenly locates Carnegie Tech in Oakland, California, rather than in the Pittsburgh suburb of Oakland, Pennsylvania.

[13] Barbara Rose, American Art Since 1900: A Critical History (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 216.

[14] Mary Lynn Kotz, Rauschenberg/ Art and Life (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990), p. 67; Harris, p. 146.

[15] Harris, p. 154. Revill (p. 95) erroneously reads "costly mechanical donkey."

[16] Cage, in Richard Kostelanetz, ed., John Cage: An Anthology (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 81.

[17] Winslow Ames, quoted in Harris, p. 154.

[18] Harris, p. 154.

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[19] Quoted in Diane Waldman, Collage. Assemblage, and the Found Object (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), pp. 234-5.

[20] Revill, p. 99.

[21] Revill, pp. 99-100.

[22] Quoted in Revill, p. 4.

[23] Revill, p. 141; Cage, For the Birds, p. 193.

[24] Calvin Tomkins, Off the Wall: Robert Rauschenberg and the Art World of Our Time (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), p. 24.

[25] Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors, p. 199

[26] Harris, p. 126.

[27] Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors, p. 199.

[28] Robert Rauschenberg, Rauschenberg. Interview with Barbara Rose. ed. Elizabeth Avedon (New York: Vintage Books, 1987), p. 23.

[29] Kotz, p. 67.

[30] Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 176.

[31] Tomkins, Off the Wall, p. 65.

[32] Rauschenberg, p. 34.

[33] E. H. Gombrich, "Visual Discovery Through Art," Arts Magazine (November 1965), 25. Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 165.

[34] M, p. 106.

[35] Quoted in Revill, p. 140.

[36] Kotz, p. 72.

[37] Musicage, p. 121.

[38] Revill, p. 102.

[39] Quoted in Cage, A Year from Monday, p. 133.

[40] Revill, p. 161.

[41] A Year from Monday, p. 71.

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[42] Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors, p. 203.

[43] National Collection of Fine Arts, Rauschenberg (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1976), p. 3.

[44] National Collection, p. 66.

[45] Rich, p. 160.

[46] Revill, p. 164; Harris, p. 231.

[47] Quoted in Kostelanetz, John Cage (Ex)plain(ed), p. 32.

[48] Silence, pp. 7-8.

[49] Club Panel, "Patriotism in the American Home." Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, pp. 174-6.

[50] The New York School, p. 176.

[51] Seely, in The New York Post. 15 April 1954, p. 3. Quoted in Revill, p. 179.

[52] For the Birds, p. 153.

[53] Cage, in Kostelanetz, ed. John Cage: An Anthology, p. 12.

[54] Kostelanetz, John Cage (Ex)plain(ed), p. 49.

[55] Quoted in Tomkins, Off the Wall, p. 72.

[56] Tomkins, Off the Wall, p. 72.
[57] Quoted in Tomkins, Off the Wall, p. 72.
[58] Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 154.

[59] In Robert Hughes, American Visions 7: The Empire of Signs. Videocassette (PBS Home Video, 1996).

[60] Musicage, p. 91.

[61] Cage, For the Birds, p. 164.

[62] Johanna Drucker, "Collaboration Without Objects in the Early Happenings." Art Journal 52.4 (1993), 51-8.

[63] For the Birds, p. 165.

[64] Kostelanetz, John Cage (Ex)plain(ed), p. 3.

[65] Tomkins, Off the Wall, p. 96.

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[66] Rauschenberg, p. 51.

[67] Tomkins, Off the Wall, p. 96; Sandler, The New York School, p. 177.

[68] A Year from Monday, p. 71.

[69] Sandler, The New York School, p. 177.

[70] San Francisco Museum of Modem Art, The Painting and Sculpture Collection (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1985), p. 194.

[71] Quoted in National Collection, p. 7.

[72] Rauschenberg, p. 58.

[73] Silence, p. 101.

[74] Silence, p. 102.

[75] Musicage, p. 106.

[76] Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 171.

[77] Georges Boudaille, Jasper Johns (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), p. 9. Rauschenberg (p. 47) says "around 1952."

[78] Cf. Sandler, The New York School, p. 185.

[79] A Year from Monday, p. 75.

[80] A Year from Monday, p. 74.

[81] After Abstract Expressionism," Art International. 25 October 1962, pp. 26-7. Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 186.

[82] Musicage, p. 107.

[83] Quoted in Leo Steinberg, Jasper Johns (New York: George Wittenbom, 1963), p. 15.

[84] Quoted in Mark Rosenthal, Jasper Johns Work Since 1974 (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1988). Cited in Cage, Musicage, p. 5.

[85] Musicage, p.73.

[86] Michael Crichton, Jasper Johns (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1977), p. 32.

[87] Sandler, The New York School, p. 171.

[88] Quoted in Rosenthal, Jasper Johns Work Since 1974. Cited In Musicage, p. 5.

[89] Quoted in Rosenthal, Jasper Johns Work Since 1974. Cited in Cage, Musicage, p. 4.

[90] Musicage, p. 59.

[91] Musicage, pp. 59-60.

[92] Tomkins, Duchamp p- 410.

[93] Sandler, The New York School, p. 170. Quote from Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors, p. 137.

[94] Musicage, p. 103.

[95] M, pp. 65-7

[96] For the Birds, p- 80.

[97] Musicage, p. 103.

[98] Quoted in Robin White, "Interview with John Cage." View 1.1 (1978), 12.

[99] Rauschenberg, p. 100.

V. Visual Art, Performance, and John Cage

Theatre takes place all the time wherever one is and art simply facilitates persuading one this is the case.[1]

John Cage (1954)

The Twenty-Five-Year Retrospective concert of the music of John Cage, produced by Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, was held in New York's Town Hall on May 15,1958. Next door, in the art gallery on the former site of the Police Department stables, new works by Rauschenberg were being shown on one floor, while upstairs, original musical scores by John Cage were exhibited, including his Water Music of 1952. The gallery sold several pages of Cage's Concert for Piano and Orchestra as works of art, obliging the composer to rewrite the missing sections of the composition "in order to maintain its existence as a piece of music."[2]

For more than a year. Cage had been teaching a class in experimental music composition at New York's New School for Social Research, in which he promoted the idea of interactive multimedia performance environments similar to his 1952 Black Mountain Theater Piece. Among his students were Alan Kaprow, George Brecht, Al Hansen, and Dick Higgins, all of whom would soon become known as pioneers of Performance Art in New York and Europe. Other artists who sat in on Cage's classes at the New School, and whose subsequent works reflected his teachings, included George Segal, Larry Poons, and Jim Dine.[3]

Cage's style of teaching involved a sharing of ideas, rather than a transmission from teacher to student. Cage would report on his projects, the students would report on

theirs, and "opinions but not evaluations would be swapped."[4] The first class was devoted to the subject of notation. "So much space equals so much time," said Cage, writing the two words on the blackboard. He turned toward the class and smiled. "Sort of makes you feel you're thinking in the right century, doesn't it?"[5] After demonstrating how he had solved certain compositional problems, Higgins recalled. Cage "told the class that he would be quite angry if they copied any of these. Then, to reassure people, he said not to worry, he wasn't very frightening when he was angry."[6] Al Hansen adds: "To a great extent, and probably to John Cage's disgust, the class became a little version of Black Mountain College."[7]

Cage's student Alan Kaprow, who had begun as a gestural painter in the manner of de Kooning, soon began creating Rauschenberg-like assemblage works, which he then enlarged into room-sized Environments, and by adding theatrical actions, developed the open-ended works which he christened "Happenings."[8] To Kaprow, the spectators who came to see his Environments took on a new role as mobile elements of color and form whose actions were beyond the control of the artist, thereby creating, he noted, "a never-ending play of changing conditions between the relatively fixed or 'scored' parts of my work and the 'unexpected' or undetermined parts."[9]

Al Hansen had come to the composition class out of an interest in filmmaking, hoping to find within the cinematic frame a union of all the arts. Cage's teaching moved him in a different direction:

> Actually, by the time I had finished the course, I realized that all art forms do not meet in the film frame, but in the eyeball. In the head of the observer, for better or worse. Therefore, in the happening—which I developed as a way of overlapping and interpenetrating art forms in the hope of finding a new one, without at first realizing that the happening was the form itself—I realized my solution. This would be my party platform and the thing I would stand on. This would be the wall I would beat my head against faithfully.[10]

For Cage, the greatest impetus in trying to develop a new form of theater not tied to traditional notions of plot and character was his reading of Antonin Artaud's The Theater and Its Double in 1952. "It gave me the idea for a theater without literature/' he recalled. "Words and poetry may of course always enter into it. But the rest, everything that is in general *nonverbal,* may enter into it as well."[11] A key strategy, adopted by Cage's students, was to present multiple unrelated interpenetrating events whose unexpected interrelationships would be foregrounded, undermining the viewer's tendency to read into the event a linear structure. For this to be achieved in a Happening, Cage estimated, "I would say offhand that the minimum number of necessary actions going on at once is five. Bright people can clear up rather quickly perplexity arising from lower numbers."[12]

According to Higgins,

> ... the best thing that happened to us in Cage's class was the sense he gave that 'anything goes,' at least potentially. Only George Brecht seemed to share Cage's fascination with the various theories of impersonality, anonymity, and the life of pieces outside of their perceivers, makers, or anyone else. For the rest of us, the main thing was the realization of the possibilities, which made it easier to use smaller scales and a greater gamut of possibilities than our previous experience would have led us to expect.[13]

Outside of Cage's class, the artistic discussion and experimentation continued, with a number of artists, including Hansen, Higgins, and Poons and the composers Jackson MacLow and La Monte Young meeting regularly at the Epitome coffee house on Bleecker Street as the New York City Audio-Visual Group.[14] Several of Cage's students turned to urban art-life issues in exhibitions at the Reuben Gallery from October 1959 until its closing in April of 1961, as well as at the AG Gallery operated by Lithuanian-American George Maciunas. Their works ranged from assemblages of urban junk to environmental and theatrical pieces. The artists involved included Kaprow, Brecht, Red Grooms, Robert Whitman, Jim Dine, Simone Morris (Forti) and Claes Oldenburg.[15]

Contributing to the acceptance of such events was the new attitude prevalent

among the artists and supporters of Abstract Expressionism, that paintings and sculptures were only the physical residue of an artist's actions, which in themselves constituted the actual work of art. This interpretive shift, signaled by critic Harold Rosenberg's redefinition of New York gestural abstraction as "Action Painting," was, as Irving Sandler notes, one of the key factors "that made Cage-like events viable in 1958 in a way that they had not been a half-dozen years earlier."[16]

Kaprow, initially the most vocal of the Cage-inspired artists, enthusiastically supported the idea of Action Painting, providing, he said, that it lead "not to more painting, but to more action."[17] Ironically, Rosenberg's concept was more suited to the Happenings of the young artists who rejected Abstract Expressionism than it was to the gestural painting for which it was originally coined.[18] Beyond simply reinterpreting the artist's traditional role, Kaprow wanted to begin with "the totality of nature itself as a point of departure" for the creation of an "all-encompassing artistic experience."[19] The goal was to "get rid of all the conditions of the conventional arts, or at the very best to arrive at another kind of condition ... which was always uncertain of its condition as art."[20]

What is ultimately experienced, according to Kaprow, "is a form which is as open and fluid as the shapes of our everyday experience, without simply imitating some part of it."[21] Cage referred to the Happenings as "the only theater worth its salt. We aren't having art just to enjoy it," he said. "We are having art in order to use it."[22] Marcel Duchamp, too, was intrigued by the new approach: "Happenings introduced into art an element no one had put there: boredom.... Fundamentally, it's the same idea as John Cage's silence in music; no one had thought of that."[23] Duchamp saw ennui as a possible strategy for overcoming taste. "The more bored you are, the more Happening it is," he remarked. "In a Happening things just happen, as they would happen anywhere else. It is a nice form of indifference."[24]

Kaprow once described the Happenings that he and his colleagues were

producing as:

> conceived on, generally, four levels. One is the direct 'suchness' of every action,... with no more meaning than the sheer immediacy of what is going on.... The second is that they are performed fantasies not exactly like life, though derived from it. The third is that they are an organized structure of events. And the fourth level, no less important, is their 'meaning' in a symbolic or suggestive sense.[25]

Kaprow's comments reveal that although his Happenings, like those of Higgins, Dine, Grooms, Oldenburg, and Whitman, lacked the formal structures of traditional theater, they were still intended by their creators to be expressive of a message and a point of view, a constraint that was anathema to Cage himself.[26] While Cage was empathetic toward the younger artists' aims of an art which increases our awareness of daily life, he rejected their attempt to assume the artist's traditional role of control over the process. "I know perfectly well that things interpenetrate," he said. "But I think they interpenetrate more richly and with more complexity when I myself do not establish any connection."[27]

Cage felt that this was a crucial difference between his own performance events and those of his former students. Since their works were based on intentionality, he said, "if something unexpected happens, in their eyes it can only signify an interruption."[28] Cage's own works were based on a promise to "not disturb by my concern the structure of anything that is going to be acting; to act is a miracle and needs everything and every me out of the way."[29] Like Rauschenberg's White Paintings, which he had once praised as the only paintings which are not disturbed by the action of shadows. Cage's commitment to the truth of the present moment demanded the creation of a form that nothing could "interrupt." "An error is simply a failure to adjust immediately from a preconception to an actuality," he declared.[30]

To govern Happenings by means of habitual taste. Cage felt, was to deny the art-as-process motives that had led to the Happenings in the first place. "They make true *objects* out of their happenings," he said. "I, on the contrary, am committed to letting anything happen, to making everything that happens acceptable."[31] Even without

structural devices such as plot and deliberate staging. Cage felt little had been gained if intentionality was still present:

> The only way you're going to get a good performance of an intentional piece, that furthermore involves symbols and other relationships that the artist has drawn in his mind, is to have lots of rehearsals, and you're going to have to do it as well as you can.... You're involved in a whole thing that we have been familiar with since the Renaissance and before.[32]

Such performances. Cage felt, would forever be bound to a single center, that of the creator, "while in my own happenings," he explained, "everyone must be in the center."[33] The assertion of the creator's will could have social consequences as well, especially if a piece required the audience's cooperation. Cage recalled a performance of Claes Oldenburg's Moviehouse: "It was a police situation. It was politically bad—telling people not to sit down. I refused, so I sat down, and so did Duchamp."[34]

Rather than structuring the event according to the tastes of the creator. Cage felt.

> The structure we should think about is that of each person in the audience... [whose] consciousness is structuring the experience differently from anybody else's.... So the less we structure the theatrical occasion and the more it is like unstructured daily life, the greater will be the stimulus to the structuring faculty of each person in the audience. If we have done nothing he then will have everything to do.[35]

Many audience members, as Cage discovered throughout his long career, may not be up to the challenge. Rauschenberg once said admiringly of his friend, "Cage can still empty a hall quicker than any of their contemporaries. I mean that as a compliment. That's good music."[36] When asked by an interviewer, "Does it bother you when people walk out?," Cage replied with typical equanimity, "No, it doesn't bother me because they are the ones who are walking out. I myself am staying."[37]

Cage's aesthetic has been criticized and misconstrued for its "anything goes" quality, and Cage himself was occasionally critical of those who may have used his aesthetic principles "as an excuse for not doing their work carefully."[38] Cage's own performance works were meant to be, as poet John Ashbery described it, "ultimate proof not so much of 'anything goes' but 'anything can come out.'"[39] Or, in Cage's own words,

"Actually, anything does go but only when nothing is taken as the basis. In an utter emptiness anything can take place."[40]

In late summer of 1958, Cage, touring Europe with David Tudor, gave the lecture "Composition As Process" in Darmstadt, Germany, and reunited with Higgins, who was organizing a performance artists' cooperative there.[41] The group, committed to anarchistic collaborative works, became known as Fluxus with the 1961 arrival of Maciunas, who later cited Cage's teachings as "a major source of inspiration" for the Fluxus performance aesthetic.[42] While the movements goals were at best loosely defined, an anti-elitist, neo-Dada mentality prevailed, based on an aesthetic that reflected Cage's preference for found materials and unexpected events.[43] Through Fluxus, Cage's ideas made their way into the performance and conceptual works of Yoko Ono, Joseph Beuys and Yves Klein.[44]

Germany in the 1950s was a major center for musical experimentation, much of it in the area of electronic composition. The Studio for Electronic Music attached to Radio Cologne was already supporting works by Karlheinz Stockhausen, Gyorgi Ligeti, and other avant-garde composers. Cage visited the studio and met Nam June Paik, an eager Korean twenty years his junior who had graduated from the University of Tokyo in 1956 with a degree in aesthetics and a thesis on Arnold Schoenberg. Paik was in Germany pursuing graduate study in music at the University of Munich and the Freiburg Conservatory. The two quickly became good friends and under Cage's influence, Paik became an enthusiastic participant in Fluxus events.

Cage's artistic conceptions based on random events and attentiveness to the moment, and his prediction of a music moving "towards theater,"[45] perfectly suited Paik, who adapted Cage's aesthetic to his own dramatic personality. In his <u>One For Violin</u> Paik picks up a violin from a table with both hands away from his body, then slowly, silently, and imperceptibly raises it until it is just above his head, only to bring it suddenly down with full force, shattering it to splinters against the tabletop, a deconstruction strangely reminiscent of early cubist still lifes by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. The piece

illustrates an important difference between the works of Cage and Paik. While both were engaged in the search for new musical sounds, Paik's search would often contain an element of dramatic violence totally foreign to Cage.[46] The connection as well as the contrast between the two are exemplified by Paik's 1959 piece Homage to John Cage, which ends when the upright piano used in the performance is suddenly shoved forcefully onto its back.

The impact of the works of Paik, whose interest in Zen Buddhism was stimulated by Cage, and who actually spent some time in a Zen monastery, has been compared to that of the stick sometimes used by Zen masters to slap their disciples into sudden enlightenment. The aggressive and shocking qualities of Paik events led Kaprow to brand him a "cultural terrorist."[47] Despite the fact that Paik's work bears the unmistakable stamp of his personality, it courts the unexpected in a way that Cage found "fascinating, and rather often frightening. Now I would think twice before attending one of his performances," he said, adding, "He generates a real sense of danger, and sometimes goes further than what we are ready to accept. But it is very interesting."[48]

Paik brought aspects of life experience into his musical compositions in a way beyond that which even Cage was willing to explore. The score for his Playable Music No. 4 reads, "cut your left arm very slowly with a razor (more than 10 centimeters)." Danger Music, which Paik dedicated to Higgins, contains the instruction "Climb into the vagina of a dead whale."[49] To Paik, the art-life strategy he inherited from Cage was merely the latest manifestation of an artistic quest that had been going on for more than a century: the search for an all-encompassing form of art, the *Gesamtkunstwerk* of the Romantic era. He noted the connection in his orchestration notes for one piece from 1959: "Film 2-3 screens. Strip tease, boxer, hen (alive). 6 years girl, light piano, motorcycle and of course sounds, one TV. // 'whole art' in the meaning of Mr. R. Wagner."[50] Cage once commented that "If s hard to describe why his performances are so terrifying.... You get the feeling very clearly that anything can happen, even physically

dangerous things."[51]

Cage had particular reason to worry. At one infamous performance given at Mary Baumeister's studio in Cologne in 1960, with Cage and Stockhausen in attendance, Paik leapt from the stage where he had been performing at the piano, snipped off Cage's necktie with a huge pair of scissors, then dumped a bottle of shampoo on the older composer's head before running out through the crowd.[52] Paik's unpredictability in performance gained him some notoriety for the many recitals he did in galleries and private studios around Cologne, ultimately leading one German reporter to give him the designation he has worn proudly ever since: "The world's most famous bad pianist."[53] As to his own role in shaping Paik's work. Cage demurs: "Maybe Nam June's meeting me made it possible for him to go out and do the things he was going to do sooner or later anyway, but only because it was already in him to do them. The fact is he took my ideas into areas where I would never have gone."[54]

Paik describes how his own performance art originated in his frustration at being unable to find sufficiently original musical sounds: "I did little happenings, which put me in the art world. I'd let a piano fall down and people thought I was making a social statement, which made me rather notorious."[55] One thing that distinguished Paik's works from those of the other Fluxus artists, is that, as Calvin Tomkins notes, "they were hardly ever boring, intentionally or otherwise."[56] Perhaps because of his art's origins in music, with its natural consciousness of time as an important compositional element, Paik sustains interest with a disciplined sense of time in a way that is rare among his colleagues trained in painting and sculpture. Conversely, association with visual artists led him to be more conscious of his music's spatial dimension, as in 1961's Music for 20 Rooms, which consists of a series of sound environments through which audience members move, each listener experiencing a unique spatial and temporal composition. At times, Paik has been criticized for pushing his art too far in the direction of pure entertainment. "Americans need not be entertained every second, because they are so

rich," he explains. "I come from very poor country and I am poor. I have to entertain people every second."[57]

At this point, when as Paik says, "I was reaching the limit of what 1 could do with happenings,"[58] another chance encounter suggested to him what his next step might be. "A German who studied radar during the war told me radar waves make interesting painting," he says. "Then I had idea. Why don't I move from electronic music into electronic painting with the TV."[59] Without telling anyone, he rented a small studio in the suburbs of Cologne and filled it with used television sets, wiring and rewiring, changing voltages and polarities, and in general "reintroducing a lot of the technical flaws television engineers had spent years trying to eliminate."[60] The results were immediately gratifying. "When I saw so many new shapes on the screen, I knew I was on to something.... I kept at it. It was going from poverty to surplus—after struggling to make good sound and not be able to, suddenly I was making too many good pictures."[61]

In Wuppertal in 1963, Paik performed his latest musical compositions, accompanied one evening by Joseph Beuys, a visitor to the show, who joined in and helped Paik hack a piano to pieces with an axe.[62] Alongside the performance Paik exhibited his altered television sets, making the exhibition the first show of video art ever held. The actual content of the video program scarcely mattered, since the distortions introduced by Paik's electronic surgery made such beautiful abstract patterns. His concern has always reflected the post-Pollock orientation toward art as process rather than product, and by calling attention to the technological channeling of information in video, he makes of television a metaphor for the process of information transfer, as well as a vehicle for linear content. Cage's introduction to the catalogue stated, "someday artists will work with capacitors, resistors, and semiconductors as they work today with brushes, violins, and junk."[63]

Paik seemed satisfied by the effect of the videos, which he described as "not always interesting but not always uninteresting," comparing them to "nature, which is

beautiful not because it changes beautifully, but simply because it changes."[64] The seemingly infinite variations of visual patterns produced by the manipulation of electromagnetic fields suggested Cage's vision of an art not shaped by an artist's ego. In the glowing traces of the electron beam, Paik saw an opportunity to make art that was less dependent on his own personality than his previous work had been. At the same time, a new identity for video was created, no longer tied to its narrative and cinematic origins.

At about the same time in New York, Cage and a group of followers that included Whitman, Robert Rauschenberg, and Frank Stella, were also exploring applications of technology to art. With the help of electronic engineer Billy Klüver, they organized the groundbreaking 9 Evenings: Theater and Engineering at the Twenty-fifth Street Armory, a site sacred to art history for having hosted the first major exhibition of modem art in America in 1913. Out of the 9 Evenings was born the organization EAT, for Experiments in Art and Technology, which sought to bring together artists and engineers in creative collaboration, and which by the end of the '60s boasted over 3000 members in some thirty chapters worldwide.[65]

In 1962, Cage went with David Tudor on a six-week tour of Japan funded by the Sogetsu Art Center (Fig. 20). On the way, he reconnected with Morris Graves in Seattle, and gave a lecture at the University of Hawaii. While in Japan, he composed 0'00". a "solo to be performed in any way by anyone." He dedicated the piece, whose performance instructions simply state "IN A SITUATION PROVIDED WITH MAXIMUM AMPLIFICATION (NO FEEDBACK), PERFORM A DISCIPLINED ACTION,"[66] to Yoko Ono and her then-husband Toshi Ichiyanagi.[67]

Subtitled 4'33" No. 2. and written as a sequel to his silent piece, the work completes Cage's demolition of the wall presumed to exist between music and other forms of activity. It manifests the paradox of completing any action in a nonexistent period of time, just as the earlier piece had shown the impossibility of complete inaction in a finite time. It also symbolizes the realization of a belief once articulated by Daisetz

Suzuki, that"... we are so constituted by nature that we can all be artists—not, indeed, artists of special kinds, such as painters, sculptors, musicians, poets, etc., but artists of life."[68] Or, as Cage once explained to a journalist, "Now we have such a marvelous loss of boundaries that your criticism of a happening could be a piece of music or a scientific experiment or a trip to Japan or a trip to your local shopping market."[69]

On September 9,1963, New York's Pocket Theater witnessed another chapter in Cage's legendary contributions to performance art, when he produced the world premiere of Erik Satie's Vexations, the lost piano piece that he had discovered in Paris in 1949. The marathon concert, which began at 6:00 PM, required eleven pianists, including Cage and Tudor, working in shifts, and took over eighteen and a half hours until the end of the 840th repetition at 12:40 the next afternoon. The event, now noted in the Guinness Book of Records, has become part of the enduring folklore of the avant-garde. Cage went on to produce further recitals of Vexations in Berlin in 1966 and at the University of California at Davis in 1967.[70]

Most performers and listeners who have experienced the entire work, which developed a veritable cult in the years following Cage's premiere, have reported "some form of expanded consciousness akin to the spirit of Zen," according to Satie's biographer Gavin Bryars.[71] Though only one page in length, the piece's intense chromaticism and counterintuitive phrase structure make it "impossible to memorize" even after hundreds of repetitions, and many listeners have reported that, faced with a repetitive structure that cannot be followed, the ear's tendency is to create phrase groupings where none exist. It is undoubtedly this feature, so reminiscent of Cage's response to the Rauschenberg Factum paintings, which made Vexations such a touchstone for minimalist composers like Philip Glass in the 1960s.[72] When pianist Peter Evans attempted a complete solo performance in 1970, he abandoned it abruptly after the 595th repetition, claiming that after fifteen hours he was beginning to experience terrifying hallucinations and was afraid the piece would cause him to lose his mind.[73]

Actually, Cage had once proposed a similar piece, a performance consisting of a cracked record of Mischa Elman performing Antonin Dvorak's Humoresque played nonstop for thirteen hours. Cage's idea was that the audience would be admitted free, but charged as they left. The earlier they departed, the higher the ticket price would be.[74] The unrealized work, like the live performances of Vexations, beautifully illustrates one of Cage's favorite Zen sayings: "If something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, try it for eight, sixteen, thirty-two, and so on. Eventually one discovers that it's not boring at all but very interesting."[75]

By 1964 Nam June Paik had left the Fluxus group and was in New York City. Maciunas cited an "anticollective attitude" and "excessive individualism" as possible reasons for the split,[76] but Paik simply said "I came to the U. S. only because of John Cage."[77] His first U. S. appearance was in a performance of Stockhausen's Originale at an avant-garde music festival being held at Judson Hall. The festival's organizer, Charlotte Moorman, had never heard of Paik, but Stockhausen insisted that he was the only one who could properly interpret the work, as he had done to good effect in Europe. Paik's performance "consisted of covering his head with shaving cream and rice, slowly unrolling a long Chinese scroll, plunging his head into a pail of water, screaming, and playing the piano.[78] An additional unplanned variation occurred on the fourth night of the festival, when three young men came up from the audience, grabbed Paik, and handcuffed him to the set before slipping out the back door, as the stunned Moorman called the police. Naturally, the audience thought it was all part of the performance.

Moorman (see Fig. 21) was a classically trained cellist with a particular interest in the works of the avant-garde masters. A graduate of Julliard, she had worked with the American Symphony under Leopold Stokowski, shared a flat with Yoko Ono, and been dubbed by composer Edgar Varèse "the Jeanne d'Arc of New Music."[79] Much as David Tudor had done for Cage, she brought her legendary serious demeanor to the realization of many of Paik's best- known compositions, and established herself as the leading

interpreter of his music.

In Variations on a Theme by Saint-Saëns, which was premiered at the 1965 avant-garde festival marking the first anniversary of Moorman's meeting with Paik, the cellist performed half of Camille Saint-Saëns' The Swan, before climbing into a large barrel of water and returning to finish the

piece soaking wet (when the piece was reprised at a festival in Venice, Moorman dipped herself into the Grand Canal and was immediately rushed to the hospital for a typhoid injection by concerned public health officials).[80] The same year, Paik's Sonata for Adults Only, in which an elegantly-dressed Moorman performs a Cello Suite by Bach, pausing after each phrase to remove an article of clothing until she is completely naked, was performed at the New School for Social Research, in an exhibition that also included several of Paik's altered television sets.

Cage, meanwhile, was spending a good deal of his time touring with the Merce Cunningham company, for whom Rauschenberg had become artistic director in 1954. In 1965 Cage and Cunningham presented Variations V. at Lincoln Center, with music by Cage, Tudor, and Gordon Mumma, dance by Cunningham and Barbara Lloyd, sets by Rauschenberg, film loops by Stan Vanderbeek, and video projections by Nam June Paik (Fig. 22).[81] Other Cage/Cunningham productions from the decade included Scramble (1967), with sets designed by Frank Stella, and Rain Forest (1970), featuring sets decorated with Andy Warhol's silver Mylar balloons.[82]

As Paik began to incorporate more video elements into his performance pieces and sculptural installations, he was always aware of trying to use video in a balanced way, as one element among many, so that "video is not the medium of the art, but a medium in a mixed-media work in the old-fashioned sense. It is like the real bedspread in a Robert Rauschenberg painting of a bed."[83] The spirit of Rauschenberg is evident in Paik's own TV Bed of 1972, which features eight televisions facing upwards beneath a king-size plexiglass sheet. When Moorman was recovering from surgery and was unable

to play her cello normally for a period of several weeks, she found she could comfortably play while lying down on the TV Bed. The fact that the flow of video information can be used in this way, as a Rauschenbergian piece of collaged reality, has made it the central element of Paik's ongoing investigations of society, technology, and perception.

Cage recognized that video's privileged position as the prime interpreter of reality for the modem world was in itself a metaphor for his own heterogeneous and nonlinear view of art, asking quizzically, "What is this thing called Art? TV? (Everything at once, no matter when/where we are?)"[84] Still, his favorite among Paik's works were, predictably, those in which the creator's input was secondary to that of the viewer:

> My mind just went to the experience of looking at a film by Nam June Paik... called Zen for Film.... In which he made no image on the film. It's an hour long and you see the dust on the film and on the camera and on the lens of the projector. The dust actually moves and creates different shapes. The specks of dust become, as you look at the film, extremely comic. They take on character and they take on kind of a plot—whether this speck of dust will meet that speck. And if they do, what happens? I remember being greatly entertained and preferring it really to any film I've seen before or after. It's one of the great films, and it's not often available to see.... We read-even into two specks of dust—we read a relationship of some kind. I think when you look at a movie your mind runs to plot, hmm? That something's happening.[85]

> We've seen, say, Warhol. But the extreme of that is the Nam June Paik. Where we don't see anything. We just see projections of dust. It's not dust in the film, really. There might be some, but if s mostly in how it's being shown, which will change. It's quite amazing. That's seeing something that won't exist again, hmm? But that also will exist again-in another form.... Isn't that marvelous? In fact it will never not exist. It's like the silent piece, which you can always hear.[86]

Paik, whose contributions "reverberate in the work of nearly every artist involved with video today,"[87] was recently named by Art News magazine as one of the 25 most influential artists of the twentieth century.[88] In addition to his video environments and multi-monitor installations, his later works include an hour long Tribute to John Cage produced for WGBH Boston, and Global Groove. a high-velocity 1974 blending of tap dancers, Buddhist chanting, and Japanese Pepsi-Cola commercials with images of Cage and Moorman and an eclectic sound track ranging from Stockhausen to Mitch Ryder and

the Detroit Wheels (Fig. 23). On some level, Paik has always remained true to the restless sensibilities of his Fluxus origins, while claiming that his intention is to be a "humanizing spirit" for technology.[89] "If I make a mistake, so I make a mistake," he says. "But better to make a new mistake than an old success; that is my credo."[90] Although the 68-year old artist has been slowed by a stroke he suffered in 1997, he continues to design new projects, leaving most of the actual fabrication to assistants, and is making plans for a major exhibition in honor of the John Cage centennial in 2012, the year of his own eightieth birthday.[91]

In Toronto in 1968, Cage collaborated with Marcel Duchamp on a chess performance piece entitled Reunion. Separate musical scores had been prepared by Cage, Tudor, Gordon Mumma, and David Behrman, each producing a continuous flow of electronic sound. However, the sounds could only be heard when switched on by moves on a chessboard specially designed by engineer Lowell Cross. The performance consisted of a chess match between Cage and Duchamp, in which each move would trigger an unpredictable series of electronic noises derived from the four simultaneously occurring musical compositions. "Our game affected all the sound sources, but it was not one itself," Cage explained.[92] In the first match Duchamp, who had sacrificed a knight, won an easy victory over Cage, who played against Duchamp's wife Teeny in the second-movement rematch.[93]

That same year Jasper Johns, who had succeeded Rauschenberg as the Cunningham Dance Company's artistic director in 1966, conceived a set design for the new Cage/Cunningham production Walkaround Time based on the visual elements of Duchamp's Large Glass. Duchamp gave his assent, provided that he not have to do any of the actual fabrication (Johns readily agreed to do the work), and provided that the pieces of the Glass, screened onto large transparent modules carried about the stage by the dancers, would in the course of the performance be reassembled into the work's original form (see Figs. 24 and 25).

"There are two kinds of music that interest me now," Cage said. "One is music I can perform alone. Other's music that everyone (audience too) performs together."[94] As the composer's orientation moved from intimate minimalist works to large-scale, "maximalist" happenings, it became increasingly time-consuming to generate all of the random numbers for his chance operations. For his Atlas Eclipticalis (1961) Cage had to hire the Merce Cunningham dancers as assistants for the job of coin-flipping.[95] In 1969 he faced an even greater challenge when he was commissioned by Antoinette Vischer to create new music for harpsichord. Cage was reluctant at first, saying he finally accepted primarily because "I've always hated the harpsichord ... it reminds me of a sewing machine."[96] The result was his most ambitious performance piece to date.

Working with computer engineer Lauren Hiller, Cage composed HPSCHD. which featured seven amplified harpsichords, fifty-eight channels of computer-generated sounds, forty films and eighty slide projectors playing for an audience approaching 10,000 at the University of Illinois, Champaign. The sheer number of chance decisions required by the score led the composer for the first time to employ computer software for generating all of the necessary I Ching hexagrams. In subsequent years. Cage could generally be seen toting a valise stuffed with computer printouts of I Ching results, which he referred to as "a great supply of answers to questions which I have not yet asked."[97]

In the 1970s Cage composed a series of works based on the writings of James Joyce, culminating in the sprawling Roaratorio: An Irish Circus on Finnegan's Wake in 1979, which included a tape collage of natural sounds collected from every location mentioned in Joyce's text.[98] By the 1980s, Cage was ready to take on opera in his hilarious Europeras 1-5. in which chance operations could produce such absurdities as a baritone voice singing an aria intended for a soprano, while the orchestra played a musical accompaniment from a different opera altogether. The "plots" for these operas consisted of single sentences from various operatic plot synopses stitched together in random order (see Fig. 26).[99] As Duchamp had once turned works of art into his own

Readymades, Cage showed that even the sounds of Grand Opera could be used as music.

Throughout the 1950s and '60s, Cage had been at the forefront of the shift in interest from art as an object to art as a process involving the relationship between artist and object or between artist and perceiver.[100] "The relationship between the object and the event," he mused. "Can they (2) be separated? Is one a detail of the other?"[101] Cage saw the reorientation of the art world towards collective process as modeling a new social order as well, one based not on authority but on collective experience. "Art's socialized," he proclaimed. "It isn't someone saying something, but people doing things, giving everyone (including those involved) the opportunity to have experiences they would not otherwise have had."[102]

Having inspired artists to incorporate "real" objects into their art, and then having moved beyond objects into actions. Cage had finally achieved his goal of eradicating the art-life barrier, and of pointing the way to an art potentially without limits:

> Were a limit to be set... a process outside that limit would surely be discovered. Since processes can include objects (be analogous, that is, to environment), we see that there is no limit. For some time now, I have preferred processes to objects for just this reason: processes do not exclude objects. It doesn't work the other way around?[103]

The pitfalls of ego and taste are everpresent, and the lessons learned may not be the ones we imagined we would learn, but the validation, for Cage, consisted in the continuing potential for self-alteration that his philosophy made available:

> I imagine myself to be composing processes, and I end up with objects.. .. But what is even more interesting is that the music I composed in the past, and which I never pretended was anything more than an object or a collection of objects, can henceforth quite easily be integrated into processes.... Yes, henceforth, we listen to object-works differently. We listen to Beethoven in a new way. It is strange that this can happen. Long ago, that would have horrified me.[104]

Marcel Duchamp once declared that he much preferred breathing to producing art.[105] Similarly, Cage once defined art itself as simply "breathing and walking and managing to empty the head sufficiently to notice what there is to see and hear in the theater we happen to be living in." With all of life made available to be heard, he

maintained, the artist no longer needs to be saying anything: "There's not much more to say, or rather no space nor time to say it in."[106] Cage's impact on art was profound, but his goal was much broader—to change the very nature of our perceptions and actions in the world. "Art's obscured the difference between art and life," he announced. "Now let life obscure the difference between life and art."[107] Art's value, for Cage, is simply to show us that such a transformation is possible, and to bring our-awareness to the performance that is our life.

Notes for Chapter V

[1] "45' For a Speaker," rpt. in Cage, Silence, p. 174.

[2] Vincent Katz, "John Cage: an Interview." The Print Collector's Newsletter XX (1990), 206. See also ReviU, p. 191.

[3] Sandler, The New York School, p. 34.

[4] Revill, p. 185.

[5] Hansen, in Kostelanetz, ed., John Cage: An Anthology, p. 122.

[6] Quoted in Kostelanetz, ed. John Cage: An Anthology, p. 122.

[7] Quoted in Kostelanetz, ed., John Cage: An Anthology, p. 122.

[8] Sandler, The New York School, pp. 197-8.

[9] Allan Kaprow, "Notes on the Creation of a Total Art," Allan Kaprow. New York: Hansa Gallery, 1958. Quoted in Sandler. The New York School, p. 205.

[10] Hansen, in Kostelanetz, ed., John Cage: An Anthology, p. 121.

[11] Cage, For the Birds, p. 52.

[12] Silence, p. 173.

[13] Higgins, in Kostelanetz, ed., John Cage: An Anthology, p. 124.

[14] Sandler, The New York School, pp. 34-5.

[15] Sandler, The New York School, p. 41.

[16] Sandler, The New York School, p. 196.

[17] Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 197.

[18] Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 197.

[19] Allan Kaprow, "Notes on the Creation of a Total Art." Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 205

[20] Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 197.

[21] Allan Kaprow, "Notes on the Creation of a Total Art." Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 205.

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[22] Cage, in Kostelanetz, ed., John Cage: An Anthology, p. 24.

[23] In Cabanne, Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp, p. 99.

[24] Cited by Otto Hahn, "Passport No. G255300," Art and Artists 1 4 (July 1966). Quoted in Tomkins, Duchamp, p. 429.

[25] Allan Kaprow, "A Statement," in Michael Kirby, Happenings (New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., 1965). Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 208.

[26] Sandler, The New York School, p. 208.

[27] For the Birds, p. 78.

[28] For the Birds, p. 167.

[29] Silence, pp. 170-1.

[30] Silence, pp. 170-1.

[31] For the Birds, p. 167.

[32] Michael Kirby and Richard Schechner, "An Interview with John Cage," Tulane Drama Review 10 (Winter 1965), 69. Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 213.

[33] For the Birds, p. 52.

[34] Quoted in Kostelanetz, ed. John Cage: An Anthology, p. 26.

[35] Kirby and Schechner, p. 55. Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 213.

[36] p. 99.

[37] Quoted in Kostelanetz, John Cage (Ex)plain(ed). p. 130.

[38] Cage, interview with Ellsworth Snyder, Visible Language 26 (1992), 1-2. Rpt. in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, Mr, Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), p. 321.

[39] Quoted in Kostelanetz, John Cage (Ex)plain(ed). p. 32.

[40] Silence, p. 175.

[41] Jan Pepper, "From the 'Aesthetics of Indifference' to 'Negative Aesthetics': John Cage and Germany 1958-1972." October 82 (1997), 30; Revill, p. 192.

[42] Lucie-Smith, p. 288.

[43] Markus Brüderlin, "Nam June Paik," Artforum International XXX (January 1992), 117.

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[44] Hunter and Jacobus, p. 314.

[45] Cage, Silence, p. 12.

[46] Tomkins, "Video Visionary," p. 48.

[47] Quoted in Tomkins, "Video Visionary," p. 51.

[48] Cage, For the Birds, p. 167.

[49] Quoted in Revill, p. 219.

[50] Quoted in Cage, A Year from Monday, p. 90.

[51] Quoted in Tomkins, "Video Visionary," p. 48.

[52] Irving Sandler, Art of the Postmodern Era: From the Late 1960s to the Early 1990s (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), p. 50.

[53] Tomkins, "Video Visionary," p. 71.

[54] Quoted in Tomkins, "Video Visionary," p. 48.

[55] Quoted in Carol Diehl, "Breaking the Rules," Art and Antiques 11 (April 1988), 120.

[56] p. 48.

[57] Quoted in Tomkins, "Video Visionary," p. 69.

[58] Diehl, p. 77.

[59] Quoted in Paul Gardner, "Paik Unplugged," Art News 93 (January 1995), 136.

[60] Tomkins, "Video Visionary," p. 46.

[61] Diehl, p. 120.

[62] RosaLee Goldberg, Performance: Live Art Since 1960 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), p. 38.

[63] Quoted in Tomkins, "Video Visionary," p. 44.

[64] Quoted in Tomkins, "Video Visionary," p. 46.

[65] Sandler, American Art of the 1960s, p. 236.

[66] Revill, p. 203.

[67] Revill, p. 203.

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[68] Suzuki, "Lectures," p. 15.

[69] Cage, in Kostelanetz, ed. John Cage: An Anthology, p. 30.

[70] Matthew Shlomowitz, "Cage's Place in the Reception of Satie," (unpublished paper), UC San Diego, 1999, p. 7.

[71] Vexations and its Performers." Contact: a Tournai of Contemporary Music 26 (Spring 1983), 15-6. Cited in Alan M. Gillmor, Erik Satie (Boston: Twain Pub., 1988), p. 103.

[72] Gillmor, p. 103.

[73] Quoted in Gillmor, p. 103.

[74] Revill, p. 205.

[75] Silence, p. 93.

[76] Williams and Noël, p. 89.

[77] Patricia Mellencamp, "The Old and the New: Nam June Paik." Art Journal 54 (1995), 41.

[78] Tomkins, "Video Visionary," p. 52.

[79] Quoted in Tomkins, "Video Visionary," p. 53.

[80] Tomkins, "Video Visionary," p. 60.

[81] Cf. Caplan. Kostelanetz, John Cage: An Anthology, fig. 53.

[82] Caplan.

[83] Ronald J. Green, "At the Crossroad: Paik's Electronic Superhighway," Afterimage 23 (Summer 1996), 18.

[84] Cage, A Year from Monday, p. 89.

[85] Musicage, p. 135.

[86] Cage, Musicage, pp. 135-6.

[87] John G. Hanhardt, "TV Guide," Art News 98 (May 1999), 144.

[88] May 1999, p. 17.

[89] Tomkins, "Video Visionary," p. 69.

[90] Quoted in Diehl, p. 120.

[91] Ann Landi, "Screen Idyll," Art News 98 (January 2000), 146-7.

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[92] Cage, For the Birds, p. 168.

[93] Revill, p. 223.

[94] Cage, M, p. 102.

[95] Cage, For the Birds, p. 143.

[96] Revill, p. 225.

[97] John Cage, "Reflections of a Progressive Composer on a Damaged Society" October 82 (1997),87.

[98] Cf. Greenaway.

[99] Rich, p. 177.

[100] Kenneth Baker, "Tuning in to Video Art," San Francisco Examiner Datebook. 30 Jan 2000, p. 29.

[101] A Year from Monday, p. 79.

[102] A Year from Monday, p. 151.

[103] John Cage, Empty Words: Writings 73-'78 (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1979), pp. 178-9.

[104] For the Birds, pp. 135-6.

[105] Quoted in Cabanne, p. 72.

[106] A Year from Monday, p. 93.

[107] A Year from Monday, p. 19.

VI. Epilogue: John Cage, Visual Artist

> *I once said to Alexander Smith, who is one of the world's authorities on mushrooms, that if I had my life to live over again, I would be a botanist. He said, "Why?" I said, that way I would avoid the jealousies and competitions and so forth that plague the art world. He said, "Well, that shows how little you know about botany. " Presently I mentioned the name of another mycologist; and he got quite angry and said, "Don't mention his name again in my house."*[1]
>
> John Cage (1967)

John Cage's later years were characterized by an increasingly direct involvement in the creation of visual art. This was perhaps not so much a violation of the promise he had once made to Arnold Schoenberg to devote his life solely to music, as it was a tribute to his own success in stretching the boundaries of musical experience to incorporate the visual world as well. "We have eyes as well as ears," he said, "and it is our business while we are alive to use them."[2]

Actually, many of Cage's musical scores had already been noted for their striking graphic presence. The sense of design evident in some of his scores for percussion orchestra led in 1957 to his briefly holding the position of art director for the Jack Lenor Larsen Textile Company in New York, where he produced advertising graphics (see Fig. 27). "I lost the job," Cage recalled, "because he wanted me to find one way of doing things and then to repeat it, whereas I wanted to, if possible, continually have a new and interesting form of advertising."[3] Early examples of Cage's musical work being exhibited as art included the Chess Piece of 1944 (Fig. 28), as well as the scores exhibited at the 1958 Stable Gallery show, which prompted the following review from New York Times critic Dore Ashton:

> They are set down in a complex system of numbers, notes, letters, and geometrical formations,... and each page has a calligraphic beauty quite apart from its function as a musical composition.... In all of the manuscripts, there is a delicate sense of design at work that transcends the purely technical matter of setting down music.[4]

Cage's investigations were causing him to doubt his earlier assumption that, in musical notation, time should equal space. Along the way, he developed, by his own estimation, "84 kinds of notation," frequently creating something that no longer looked like a traditional musical score, but that his artist friends told him "resembled, could be looked at as, a work of art."[5] One example is the Fontana Mix, composed in Milan in late 1958, an indeterminacy work whose score consisted of five overlay sheets of clear acetate stacked in a random orientations, each random stacking generating a different musical performance (see fig. 29). Cage's work sparked the interest of other composers and performance artists in nontraditional types of musical scores, many of which he collected and published as the book Notations in 1969. The ordering and presentation of the individual scores within the book, and their juxtapositions with comments made by the composers, were determined by chance operations, creating a work whose visual appeal, said Cage, was "like those aquariums where all of the fish are in one big tank."[6]

When Marcel Duchamp died in 1968, an art magazine asked several people, including Cage and Jasper Johns, if they would care to comment. Johns told Cage, "I don't want to say anything about Marcel." The remark inspired Cage to respond with his first major graphic arts project.[7] Entitled Not Wanting to Say Anything About Marcel the work consisted of words and letters selected by chance operations, and lithographed in randomly chosen colors onto sheets of plexiglass (Fig. 30). Eight sheets of transparent plexiglass were mounted one behind the other in a wooden base; the complete work consisted of four such constructions, and was produced in an edition of 125 by typographer Calvin Sumsion for Hollander Galleries. With the transparent layers providing a shifting view of the texts' interpositions, and simultaneously mirroring back the viewer's gaze, the piece is clearly in the spirit of Duchamp's Large Glass. The viewer's attempt to form meaning out of the text fragments reflects the view that Cage had held since the 1940s, that it is not necessary for an artist to make any statement in his work. For Johns, not wanting to say anything was a characteristic response; for Cage, it

was the very goal of his art.

Cage's disciplined yet accepting attitude towards the creative act, as his editor Joan Retallack notes, was "Apollonian in needing to have a reasoned structure," while at the same time "Dionysian not only in the hearty sensual delight he took in material presence ... but in his enduring enthusiasm for the degree to which chance took things out of his control."[8] Cage felt that his stance of aesthetic acceptance was not an abdication of his responsibility as creator, but rather, as he frequently stated, a shifting of the nature of that responsibility from one of making choices to one of asking questions.

Once, when he was studying with Arnold Schoenberg, Cage had been called up to the front of the class to solve a problem in counterpoint that the maestro had written on the board. After he had found a workable solution, Schoenberg said "That's good. Now find another solution." Again Cage solved the exercise, and again Schoenberg asked for a different solution, and again, until finally Cage announced, "There are no more solutions." Schoenberg then asked, "What is the principle underlying all of the solutions?"[9] Years later. Cage would describe how this event helped convince him of the true nature of creative responsibility: "The principle underlying all the solutions lies in the question that is asked.... It was in fact his question that produced all of the solutions and he would have accepted that."[10]

Cage's greatest ally in maintaining his art's questioning stance was undoubtedly his use of chance, but he saw chance operations only as a means to an end, never as a goal in themselves. "Chance is a method of composition," he said, "not a characteristic structure."[11] An episode from the 1970s sharpened the distinction for Cage, when chance and nonintentionality seemed for a moment to be at odds. While writing his fourth book of essays. Empty Words, a text prepared with the aid of chance operations. Cage discovered that a malfunction in his I Ching computer software was giving him, not random numbers, but a repeating series.

1 discovered ... that I was getting a repetition.... So what should I do?

> I was momentarily nonplussed ... until I realized that... 1 had continually worked, not intentionally, but non-intentionally. I felt now that I had to accept the error in the chance operations as part of the "stance of acceptingness" that was at the basis of what 1 was doing. That *it* was at the basis, more than the specific chance operations.... That allowed me to continue with ease, rather than guilt.[12]

> [The repetition] can be seen as being very-beautiful.... 1 hadn't intended it. And I didn't use it to produce intentions on my part. What I did actually was to change the computer program, so that it wouldn't do that again![13]

Having defined the work in terms of the questions asked. Cage felt an obligation to accept the answers, rather than succumb to the temptation to try and improve on them. "When I find myself at that point," he said, "in the position of someone who *would* change something—at that point, 1 don't change it, I change myself. If s for that reason that I have said that instead of self-expression. I'm involved in self-alteration."[14]

In 1977, at the age of sixty-five. Cage was invited by Kathan Brown, director of Crown Point Press, to come to California to produce etchings. The primary reason he accepted the offer, he says, despite his insecurity at being unable to draw, was that he had once declined an invitation from his old friend Gita Sarabhai to join a trek through the Himalayas, because he was too busy. It was a choice he had always regretted.[15] Not wanting to waste another such opportunity. Cage arrived at Crown Point for the first time on New Year's Day 1978, and soon commenced work on Seven Day Diary (Not Knowing), a series of prints that embodied a systematic program for sampling all of the available etching techniques, alone and in combinations determined by chance operations. Cage would return to Crown Point at least once a year for the rest of his life to make prints, always relishing his involvement in an activity he described as "characterized by my not knowing what I was doing."[16]

The different etching techniques used in the Seven Day Diary (hard- ground, sugar-lift, spitbite, etc.) were applied to the marks Cage made on the etching plate, the number of such marks determined by chance. To further subvert the possibility of intention, he made the marks while not looking at the plate, with assistant Lilah Toland

keeping count of the total number of marks, and informing him on the occasions that he missed the plate completely.[17] "What I'm proposing," he said, "is what I often call the tourist attitude—that you act as though you've never been there before.... So that you're not *supposed* to know anything about it, hmm? But if you do ... even then there can be so many newnesses ... we have never really been *anywhere* before! I mean, even the most familiar places."[18]

Of all his graphic art works, the Changes and Disappearances series produced at Crown Point from 1979-82, Cage said, were "perhaps the most impractical extreme that I've gone to" (see Fig. 31).[19] They are partly the result of the composer's fascination with the Transcendentalist works of Henry David Thoreau, who had once written "all sound is nearly akin to silence; it is a bubble on the surface which straightaway bursts." Several of the print series Cage produced at Crown Point in the 1970s and '80s, as well as several of the chance-composed essays that he wrote during the same period, were based in part on Thoreau's journals.

The eight copper plates used for the prints were first cut into sixty-six smaller plates whose edges were determined by dropping strings onto the plates from various heights, a technique borrowed from Marcel Duchamp's Three Standard Stoppages. The prints were made from a chance-determined number of these plate fragments, each of which could contain three kinds of marks; curved lines made with an engraver's tool, straight lines scratched onto the plate with a drypoint needle, and photographic enlargements of sketches from the diaries of Thoreau. Each mark on the plate had its location, length, depth, orientation, and color determined by chance operations, with all marks containing a minimum of 10% blue pigment. In the case of the Thoreau drawings, enlarger settings, lenses, and lens openings, as well as exposure times and development times, were all determined by chance operations. When the printers informed him that some combinations of settings would result in no image appearing on the print. Cage joyfully insisted that they go through the entire process anyway, to print the

"disappeared" image.[20]

Less painstaking and more dramatic was the approach used in the Eninka series of 1986 (see Fig. 32), in which a chance-determined number of sheets of newspaper were placed on the printer bed and set afire, then run through the press, leaving the impression of the smoke and flame on a piece of dampened Japanese paper. This was then mounted on another piece of paper, and the whole branded one or more times with a heavy iron ring. The number, location, temperature, and duration of the brands were determined by chance operations (see Fig. 33).[21]

As with his musical compositions, the use of chance in Cage's graphic works helps to set them apart from the world of finished objects, emphasizing instead their identity as the remains of active contingent processes, directing our attention back out into the chaotic contingencies of our own lives. Through the fluid marks that seem to have found their way, however improbably, to the surfaces which confront us, our awareness is opened to the fluidity that manifests itself in any fortuitous conjunction of events, including that of our own presence and participation in the experience that those marks engender.[22]

At the time of his death in 1992, Cage was working with the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art on an exhibition entitled Rolywholyover: A Circus. Having established so many new directions for art. Cage was now exploring the structure and function of the museum itself as an artistic medium. In what would be his final work, the role of the "special place" which defines and distinguishes certain objects as art came under Cagean attack:

> If you go to a museum, what do you have? You have a number of objects at the same eye level. You see a straight line around the room and the space between the objects is the same everywhere, hmm? So anything you do to that situation will help. The first thing you could do would be to take some of them away.... Or, put things that don't belong there. It's that kind of thing that I've done.[23]

In addition to his own prints and musical scores, the show, which finally opened in September 1993, featured many works by those he had admired; Morris Graves, Marcel

Duchamp, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and others. Additional items had been selected at random from every museum within a fifty-mile radius. In the center of the exhibit, video screens projected images of randomly selected words and texts, while chess boards sat waiting for players. Furthermore, the works on display were constantly changing, being moved in and out of the galleries on a meticulously timed schedule based on chance operations. Even in Cage's absence, the museum officials continued to follow his score, each morning consulting the I Ching to determine the schedule of the day's exhibits.

"Art's just a way we have of throwing out ideas," he once declared, "ones we've picked up in or out of our heads. What's marvelous is that as we throw them out--these ideas--they generate others, ones that weren't even in our heads to begin with."[24] The process of artistic creation, in other words, continues long after the artist has gone. While we may cite the enormous influence his ideas had on art. Cage himself would have downplayed traditional notions of influence, instead proposing that what we call "history" actually begins in the future, in what Joan Retallack calls "the metamorphic retrospect where suddenly everything seems prescient. Particularly things having to do with those who were to such an unusual degree 'on time' that they seemed to be way ahead of the rest of us."[25]

The methods and systems of John Cage did not lend themselves to imitation, but rather constituted a kind of permission by which others have been stimulated to pursue their own paths through life and art. If his goal was truly to eliminate the personality of the creator from his work, then we must judge his career a failure, since all of his works are so distinctly his own, certain proof, says Barbara Rose, "that the artist asserts himself even in negation."[26]. In the words of his friend Morton Feldman, "Cage stepped aside to such a degree that we really see the end of the world, the end of art. That is the paradox. That this very self-abolishment mirrors its opposite... art's final revelation."[27] Expression, communication, vision, mastery—John Cage took away from us everything we expected

from art. What he gave us in return was nothing less than the entire world, and a challenge to meet the responsibility of making of it what we will.

Notes for Chapter VI

[1] Cage, in Kostelanetz, ed. John Cage: An Anthology, p. 13.

[2] Silence, p. 12.

[3] Musicage, pp. 88-9.

[4] *Dore* Ashton, New York Times. Quoted in Kostelanetz, ed. John Cage: An Anthology, p. 126.

[5] Musicage, p.

[6] Quoted in Kostelanetz, John Cage (Ex)plain(ed). p. 39.

[7] Cage, Musicage, p. 92.

[8] Joan Retallack, in Cage, Musicage, p. xxxix.

[9] Cage, Silence, p. 93.

[10] Cage, quoted in Revill, p. 153.

[11] Kostelanetz, John Cage (Ex)plain(ed). pp. 37-8.

[12] Cage, Musicage, p. 140

[13] Cage, Musicage, p. 140.

[14] Cage, Musicage, p. 139.

[15] Musicage, p. 94.

[16] John Cage, Etchings. 1978-1982 (San Francisco: Crown Point Press), 1982, p. 36.

[17] Revill, p. 263.

[18] Cage, Musicage, pp. 129-30.

[19] Katz, p. 208.

[20] Kathan Brown, Ink. Paper. Metal. Wood: Painters and Sculptors at Crown Point Press (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996), p. 259.

[21] Karin Breuer, Ruth E. Fine, and Steven A. Nash, Thirty-Five Years at Crown Point Press: Making Prints. Doing Art (Berkeley: UC Press, 1997), p. 183.

[22] Cf. Joan Retailack, in Cage, Musicage, pp. 130-1.

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[23] Cage, Musicage, p. 142.

[24] Cage, A Year from Monday, p. 51.

[25] Joan Retallack, in Cage, Musicage, p. xv.

[26] Rose, in Kostelanetz, ed. John Cage: An Anthology, p. 189.

[27] Morton Feldman, "The Anxiety of Art," Art in America (Sept.-Oct. 1973), 92. Quoted in Sandler, The New York School, p. 169.

Figures

Figure 1 John Cage composing his Sonatas and Interludes, 1947 (Rich p. 162)

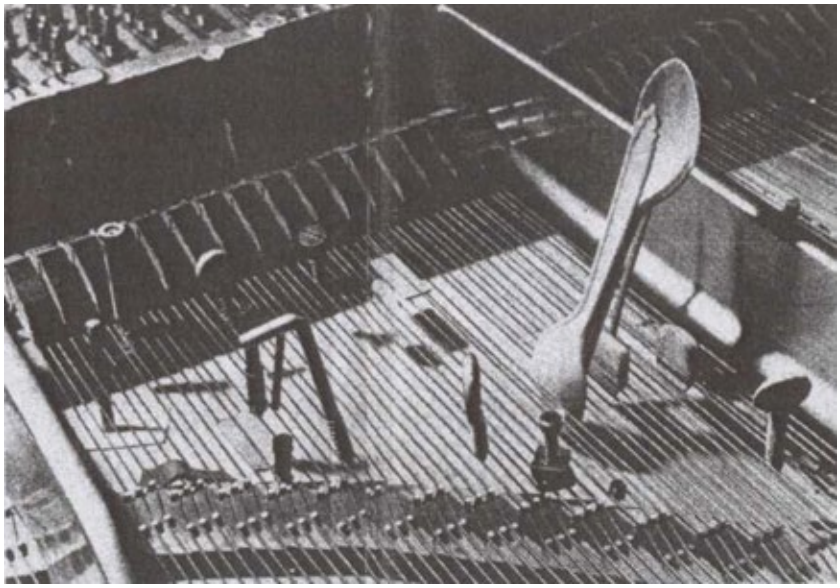

Figure 2 The prepared piano (Rich, p. 147)

Figure 3 Review of Cage's percussion orchestra in Life Magazine, March 15. 1943. Cage is at bottom, center (Kostelanetz. ed. John Cage: An Anthology, figs. 7-10).

Figure 4 Kurt Schwitters. Merz 19, 1920. Paper collage, 7 1/4" x 5 7/8". Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut (Tansey and Kleiner, p. 1073

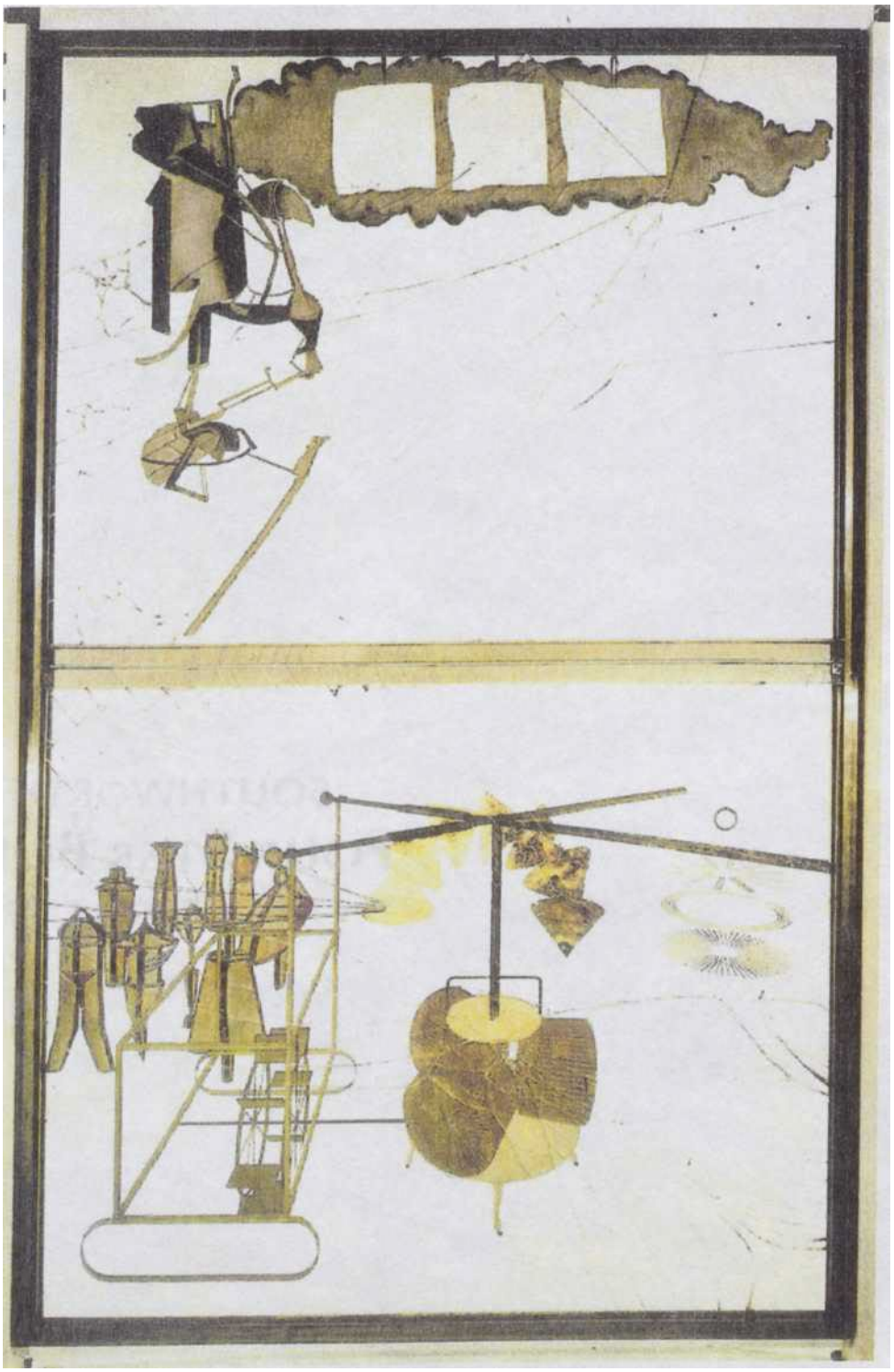

Figure 5 Marcel Duchamp. The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass), 1915-23. Oil. lead wire. foil. dust, and varnish on glass. 107" x 67". Philadelphia Museum of Art (Tansey and Kleiner, p. 1071).

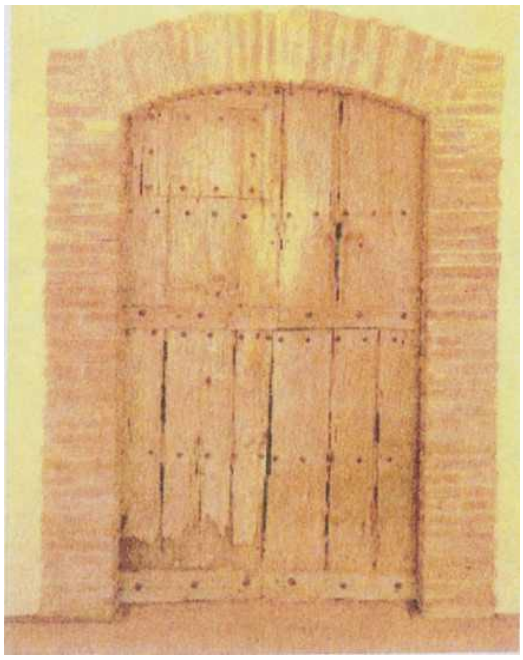

Figure 6 Marcel Duchamp, Etant Donnés: 1) la chute d'eau 2) le gaz d'éclairage, 1946-1966. Mixed-media assemblage with wooden door in brick frame, 95 1/2" X 70", exterior view.

Figure 7 Marcel Duchamp, Etant Donnés. 1946-1966, interior view (N-Euro-Net).

Figure 8 Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki and John Cage in Japan, 1962 (Kostelanetz, ed. John Cage: An Anthology, fig. 48).

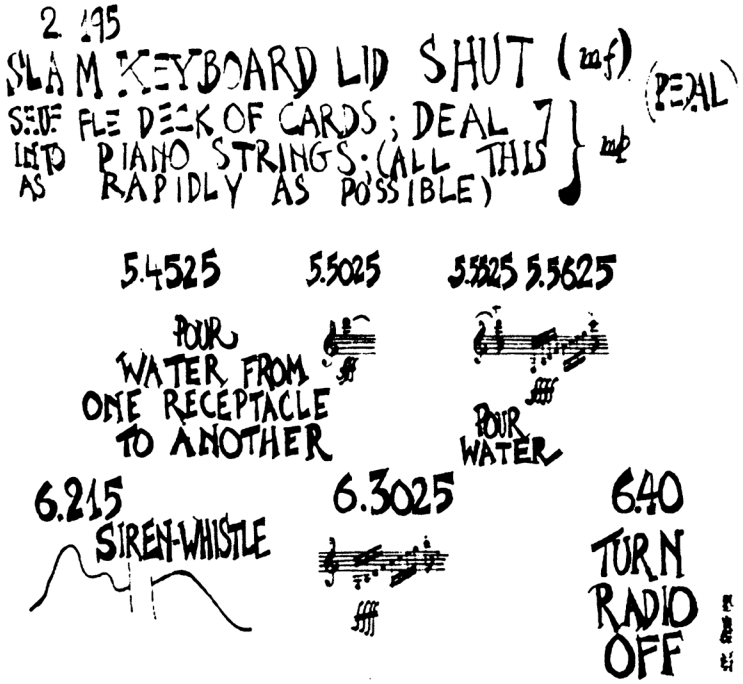

Figure 9 John Cage, score for Water Music, 1952, excerpt. Henmar Press. New York (Rich, p. 163).

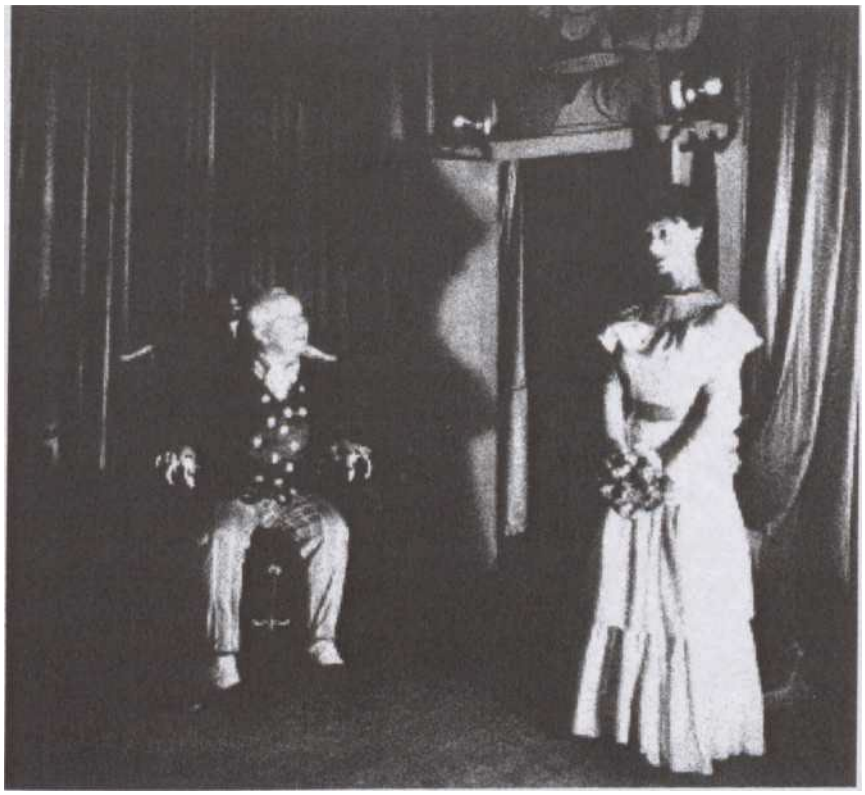

Figure 10 Buckminster Fuller as Baron Medusa and Elaine de Kooning as Frisetta in Erik Satie's La Piège de Méduse. Black Mountain College, 1948 (Harris, p. 155).

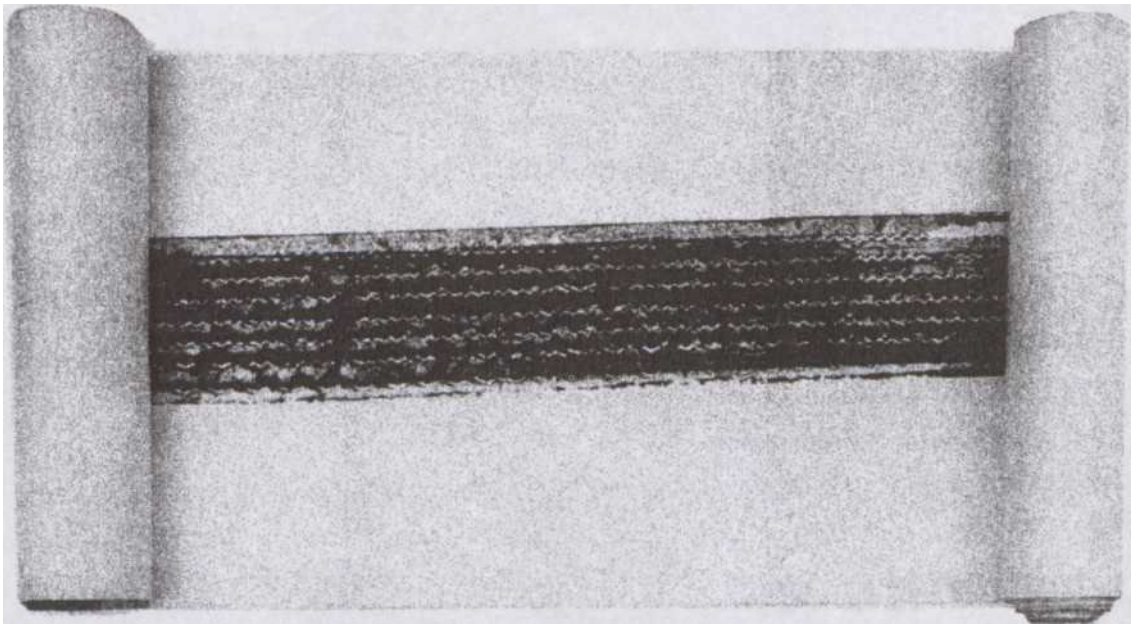

Figure 11 Robert Rauschenberg, Automobile Tire Print, 1951. Ink monoprint on paper, mounted on canvas, 16 1/2" x 264 1/2". San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (Cage, Musicage, p. 123).

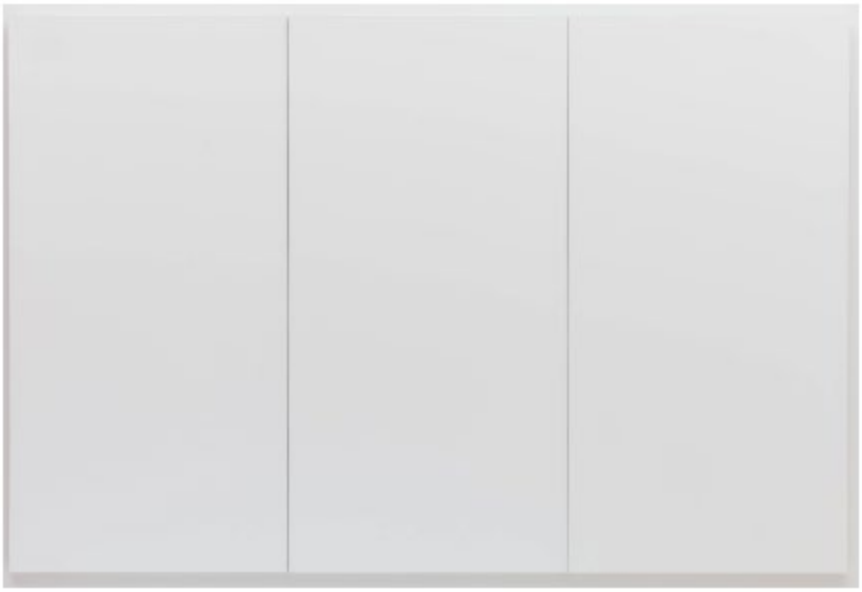

Figure 12 Robert Rauschenberg, White Painting, 1951. Oil on canvas, 72” x 108”. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (National Collection, p. 2).

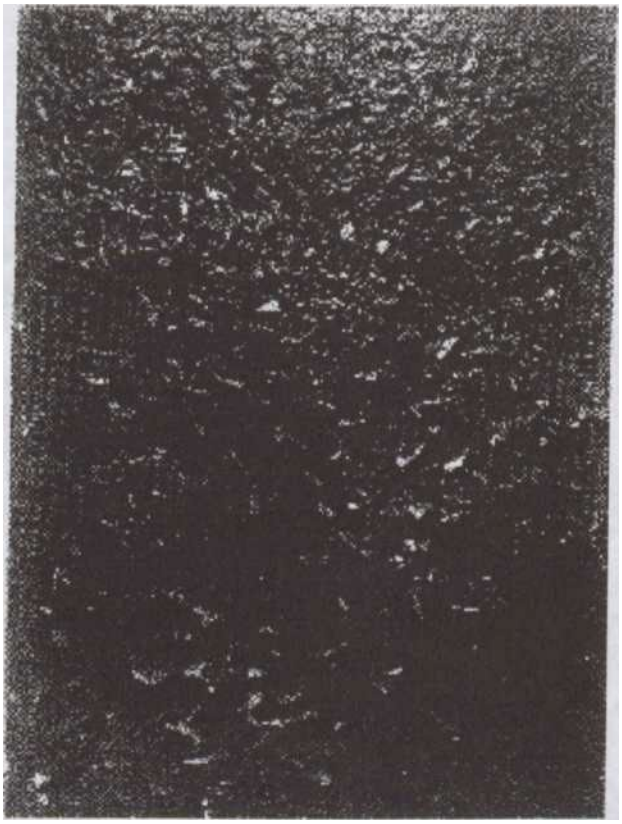

Figure 13 Robert Rauschenberg, Black Painting, 1952. Oil, enamel, and newsprint on canvas, 71 1Z2” x 52 3/4”. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (National Collection, p. 65).

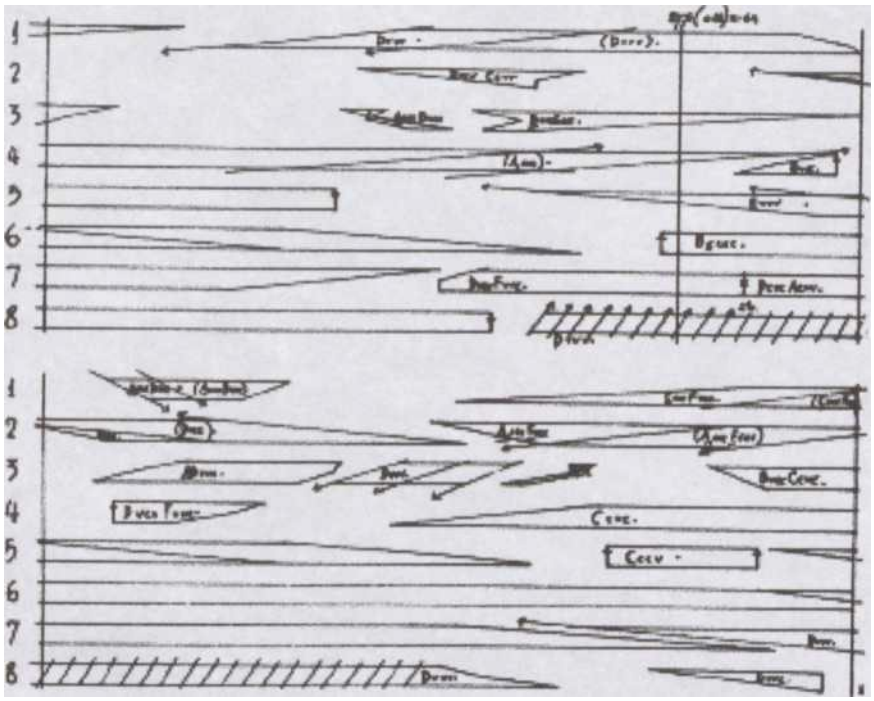

Figure 14 John Cage, score for Williams Mix. 1952, excerpt. Henmar Press, New York (Kostelanetz. ed. John Cage: An Anthology, p. 110).

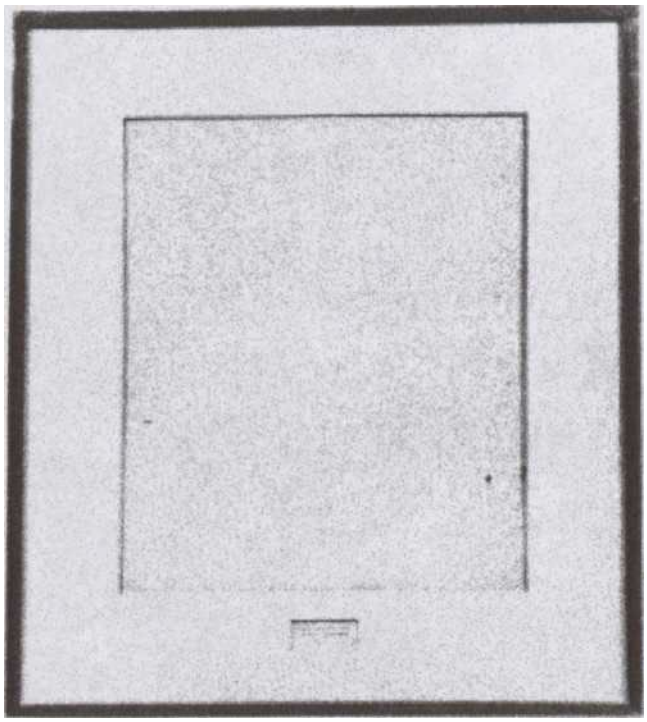

Figure 15 Robert Rauschenberg. Erased de Kooning Drawing, 1953. Traces of ink and crayon on paper in gold leaf frame, 25 1/4" x 21 3/4".

Figure 16 Robert Rauschenberg, Collection, 1953-54. Oil and mixed media on canvas with attached objects, 75" x 95 3/8” x 3 3/4". San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (National Collection, p. 10).

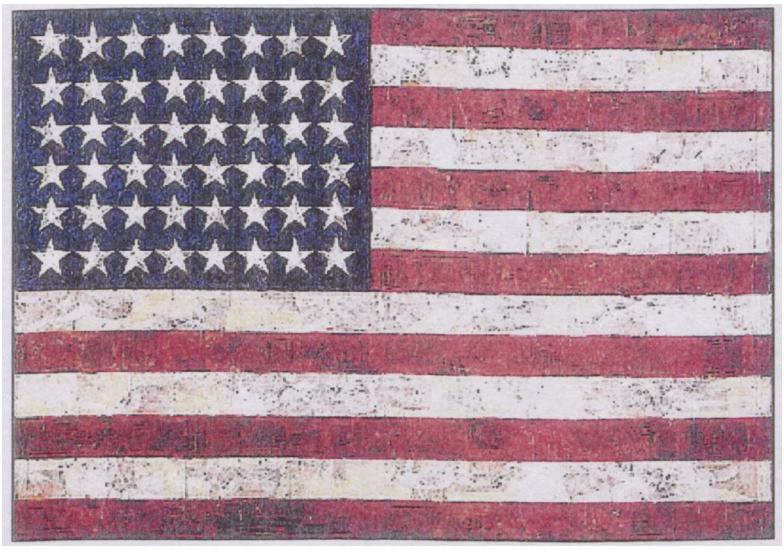

Figure 17 Jasper Johns, Flag, 1955. Oil, encaustic, and newsprint on canvas, 42 1/2" X 60 5/8”. Whitney Museum of American Art (Harden).

Figure 18 (Left Panel) Robert Rauschenberg, *Factum I*, 1957. Oil and collage on canvas, 62" x 35 1/2". Collection of Count Ponza di Biomo, Milan (Forge, plate 17).

Figure 19 (Right Panel) Robert Rauschenberg, Factum II, 1957. Oil and collage on canvas, 62" x 35 1/2". Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Morton G. Neumann, Chicago (Forge, plate 16).

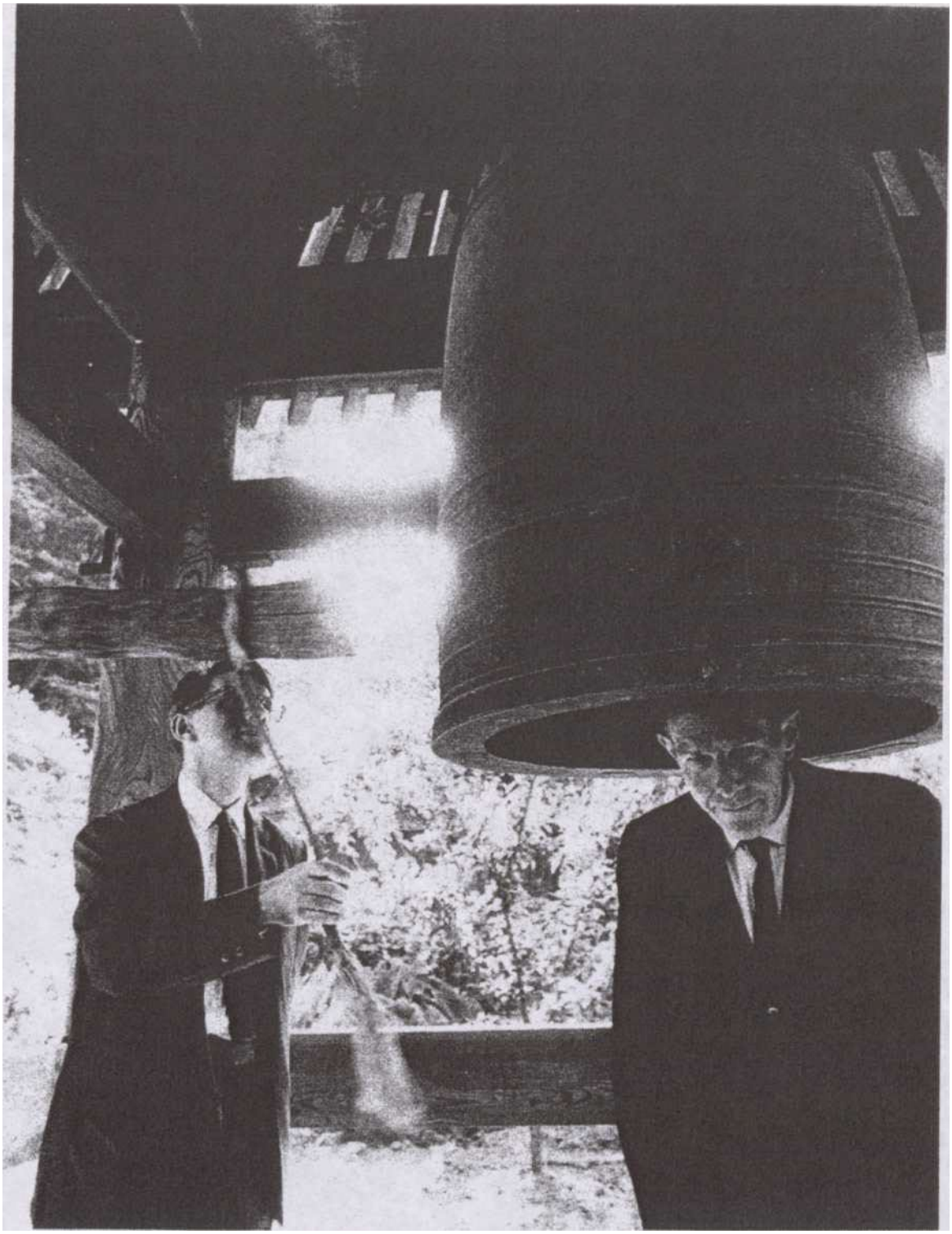

Figure 20 David Tudor and John Cage in Japan, 1962 (Rich, p. 158).

Figure 21 Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman. New York. 1968 (Hanhardt. p. 42)

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Figure 22 Performance of John Cage's Variations V, 1965. In background. Merce Cunningham and Barbara Lloyd. Foreground, left to right: John Cage. David Tudor, Gordon Mumma (Kostelanetz, ed. John Cage: An Anthology, fig. 53).

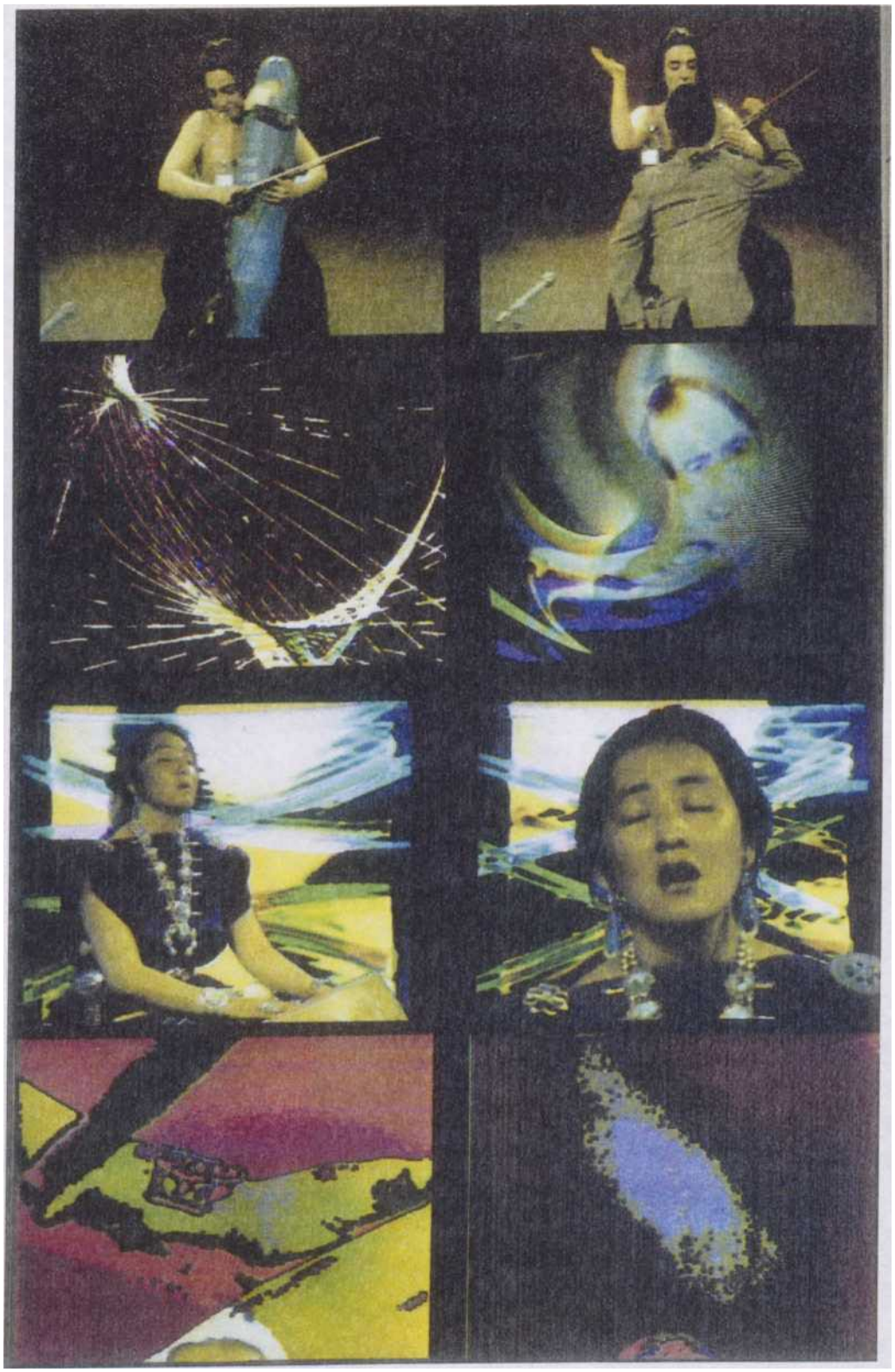

Figure 23 Nam June Paik, stills from Global Groove, 1973 (Hanhardt. pp. 116-7).

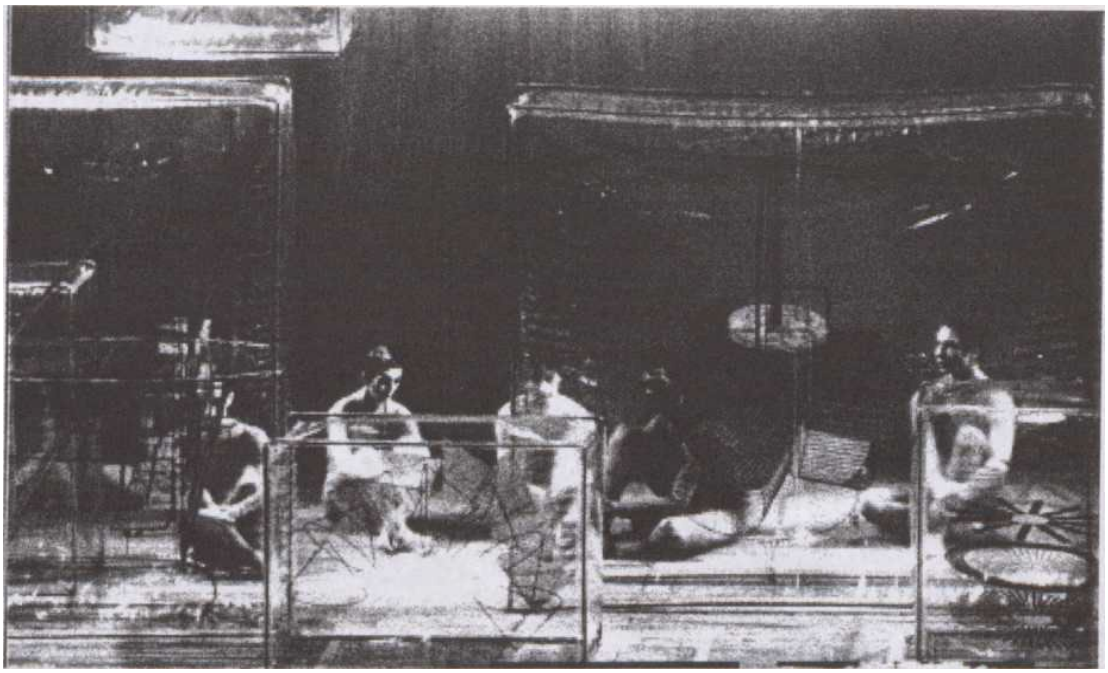

Figure 24 Merce Cunningham. Walkaround Time. First performance, Buffalo, New York, March 1968. Left to right, Carolyn Brown, Valda Satterfield, Meg Harper, Gus Solomon. Jr.. Merce Cunningham (Vaughan, p. 164).

Figure 25 Curtain call after premiere of Walkaround Time, 1968. Left to right. Carolyn Brown, Marcel Duchamp, Merce Cunningham (Tomkins, Duchamp, p. 445).

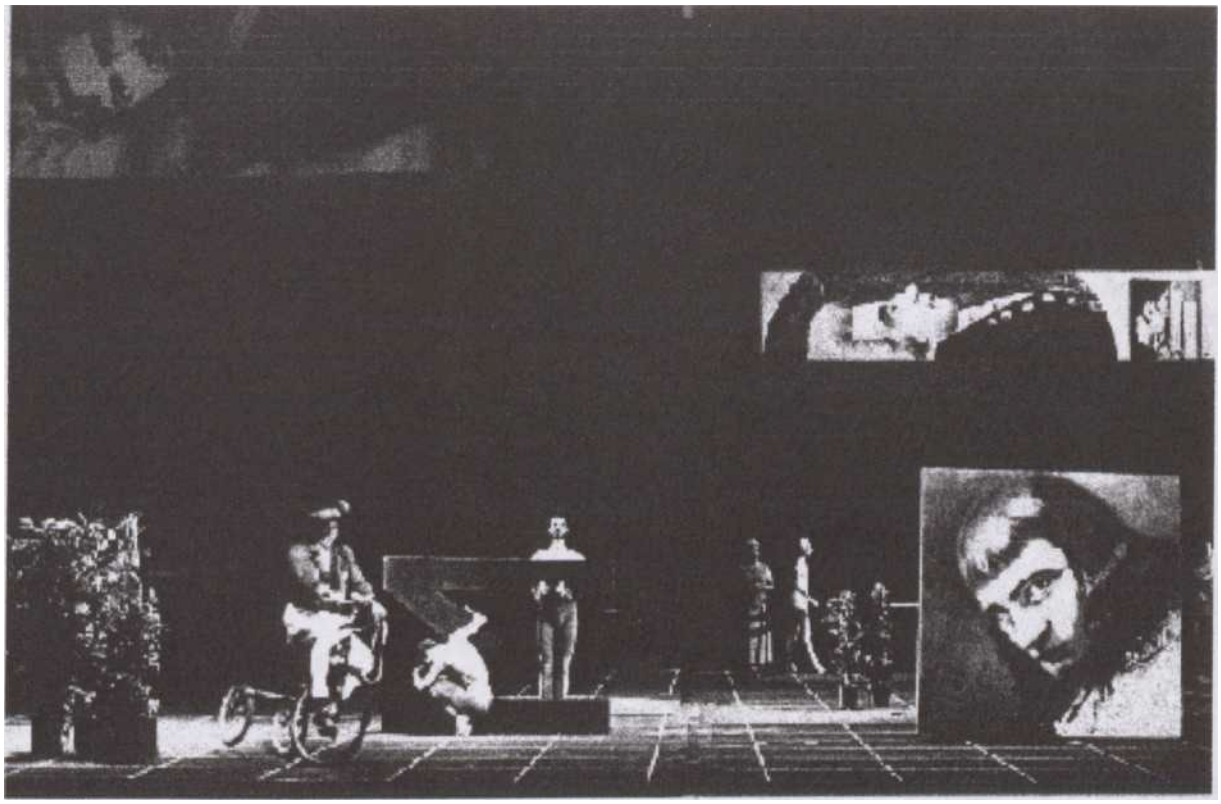

Figure 26 Performance of John Cage's Europeras I and II 1987 (Rich, pp. 178-9)

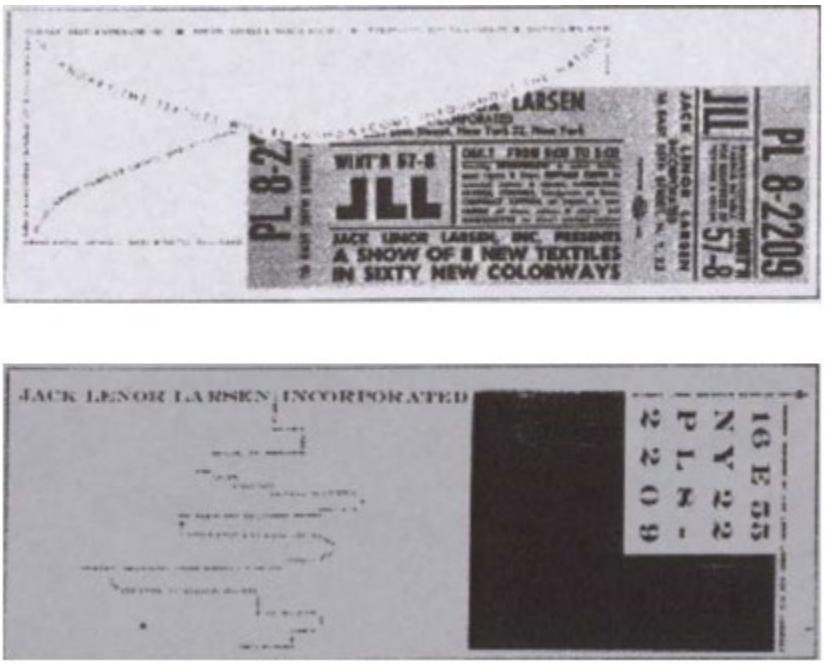

Figure 27 John Cage, advertising graphics for Jack Lenor Larsen Textile Co., 1957-58 (Kostelanetz, ed. John Cage: An Anthology, figs. 27-8).

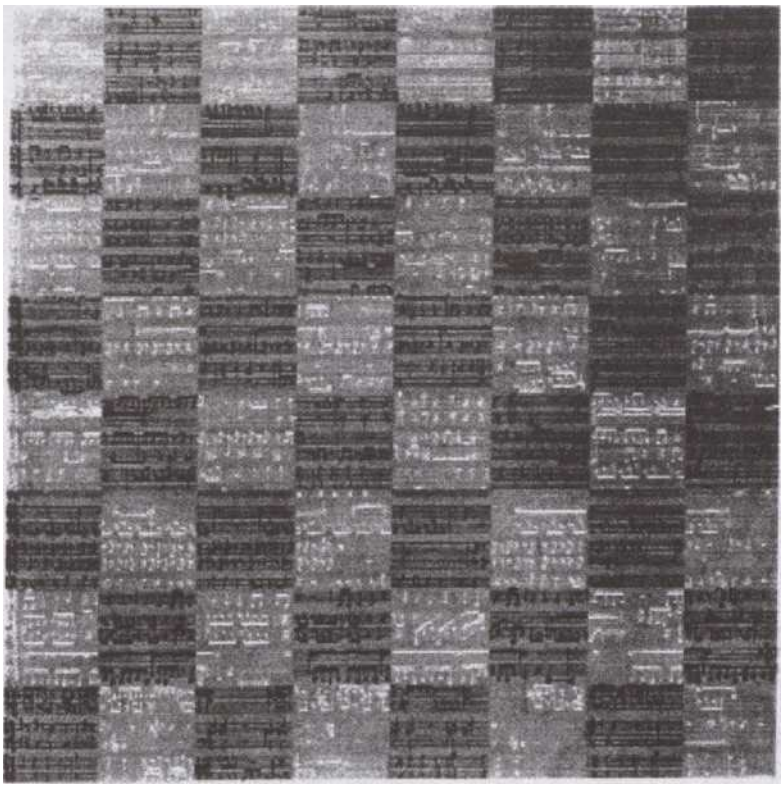

Figure 28 John Cage. Chess Piece (For Marcel Duchamp), ca. 1944. Collection of Alfred and Rue Shaw, Chicago (Kostelanetz, ed. John Cage: An Anthology, fig. 17).

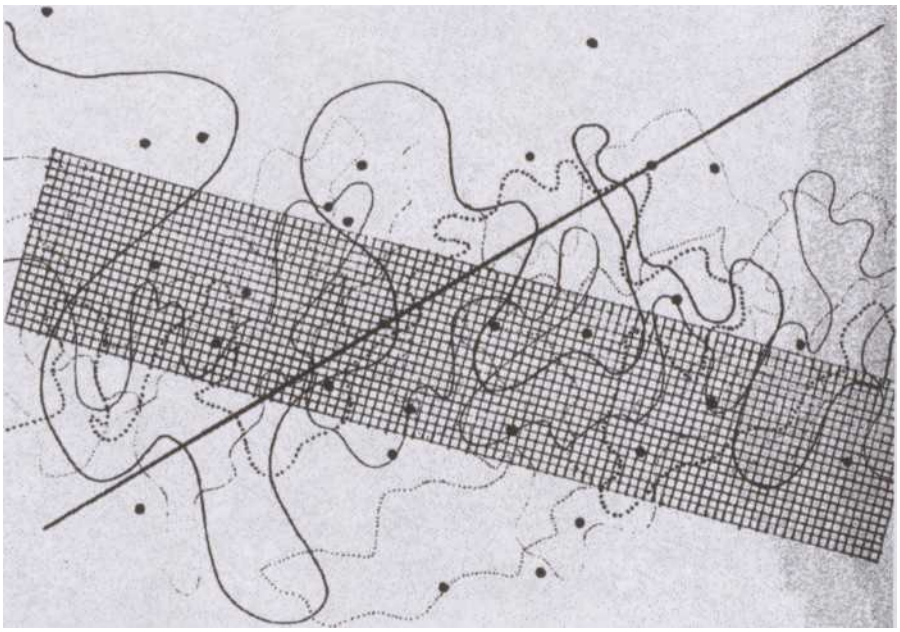

Figure 29 John Cage, Fontana Mix, 1958. Henmar Press, New York (Kostelanetz, ed. John Cage: An Anthology, fig. 35).

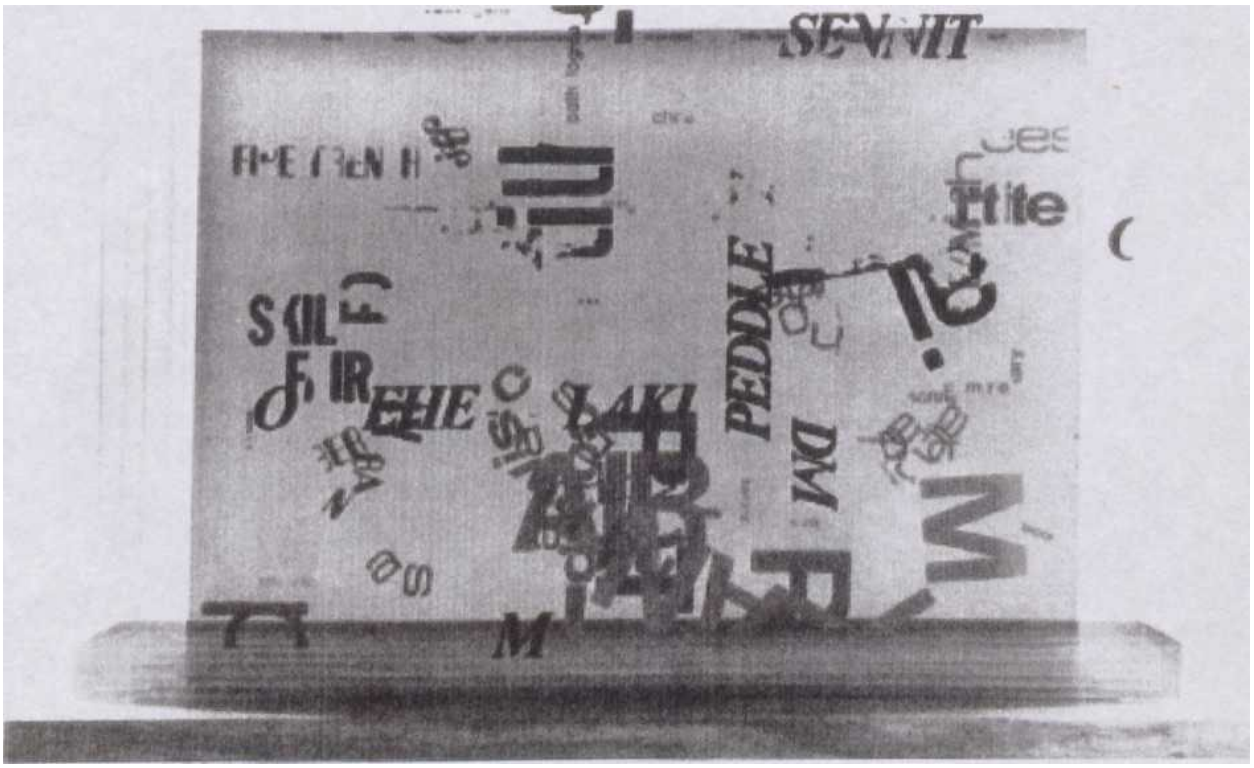

Figure 30 John Cage. Not Wanting to Say Anything About Marcel, 1969. Plexigram multiple mounted on a walnut base. 13 1/2" x 20" EYE Editions. Cincinnati. Ohio (Kostelanetz. ed. John Cage: An Anthology, figs. 59-60).

Figure 31 John Cage. Changes and Disappearances No. 35. 1979-82. Engraving, drypoint, and photo-etching, 11" x 22". Crown Point Press, San Francisco (Cage. Etchings, p. 27).

Figure 32 . John Cage, Eninka I, 1986. Burned, smoked, and branded paper mounted on handmade paper, 28 1/4" x 21 3/8". Crown Point Press, San Francisco (Breuer et. al., p. 183).

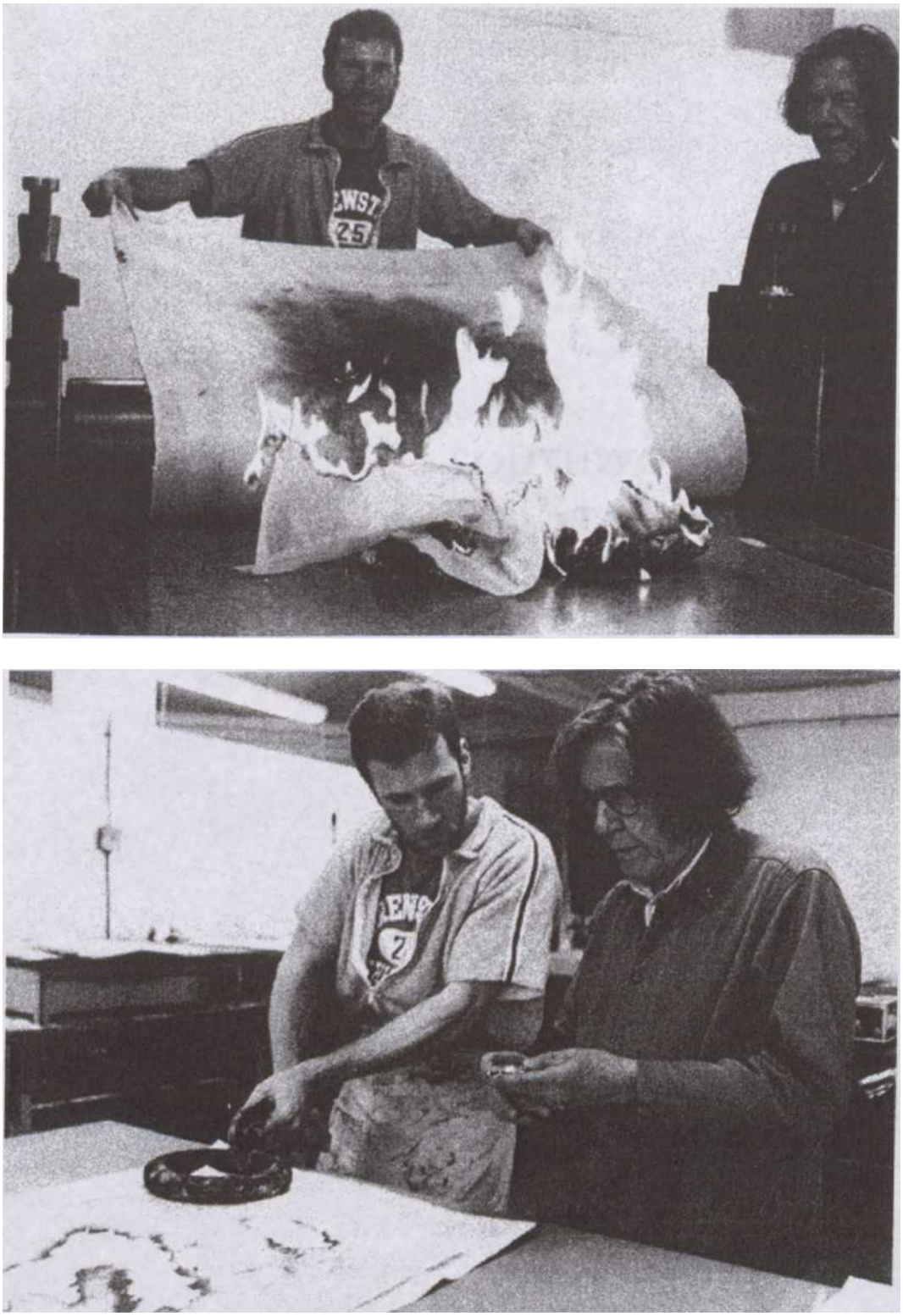

Figure 33 John Cage at Crown Point Press, 1986, working on the Eninka series with printer Lawrence Hamlin (Brown, p. 256).

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