CHAPTER SIX

Living Art c. 1933 to the 1970s

Performance in the United States began to emerge in the late thirties with the arrival of European war exiles in New York. By 1945 it had become an activity in its own right, recognised as such by artists and going beyond the provocations of earlier performances.

Black Mountain College, North Carolina

In the autumn of 1933, twenty-two students and nine faculty members moved into a huge white-columned building complex overlooking the town of Black Mountain, three miles away, and its surrounding valley and mountains. This small community soon attracted artists, writers, playwrights, dancers and musicians to its rural southern outpost, despite minimal funds and the makeshift programme which the director, John Rice, had managed to draw up.

Looking for an artist who would create a focal point for the diverse curriculum, Rice invited Josef and Anni Albers to join the community school. Albers, who had taught at the Bauhaus prior to its closure by the Nazis, quickly provided just that necessary combination of discipline and inventiveness that had characterized his years at the Bauhaus: 'art is concerned with the HOW and not the WHAT; not with literal content, but with the performance of the factual content. The performance – how it is done – that is the content of art', he explained to the students in a lecture.

Despite the lack of explicit manifesto or public declaration of its ends, the small community slowly acquired a reputation as an interdisciplinary educational hide-out. Days and nights spent in the same company would easily turn into brief improvised performances, considered more as entertainment. But in 1936, Albers invited his former Bauhaus colleague Xanti Schawinsky to help expand the art faculty. Given the freedom to devise his own programme, Schawinsky soon outlined his 'stage studies' programme, largely an extension of earlier Bauhaus experiments. 'This course is not intended as a training for any particular branch of the contemporary theatre', Schawinsky explained. Rather it would be a general study of fundamental phenomena; 'space, form, colour, light, sound, movement, music, time, etc.'

The first staged performance from his Bauhaus repertory, *Spectrodrama*, was 'an educational method aiming at the interchange between the arts and sciences and using the theatre as a laboratory and place of action and experimentation'.

The working group, composed of students from all disciplines, 'tackled prevailing concepts and phenomena from different viewpoints, creating stage representations expressing them'.

Focusing on the visual interplay of light and geometric forms, *Spectrodrama* drew on the earlier light reflection experiments of Hirschfeld-Mack. Such scenes as, for example, a yellow square that 'moves to the left and disappears, uncovering in succession three white shapes; a triangle, a circle and a square', would have been typical of an evening's performance at the Bauhaus. 'The work we did was of a formal and pictorial concept', Schawinsky explained. 'It was visual theatre.' A second performance, *Danse*
104 *macabre* (1938), was less a visual spectacle than a production in the round, with audiences dressed in cloaks and masks. Both works, together with Schawinsky's course, served to introduce performance as a focal point for collaboration among members of the various art faculties. Schawinsky left the college in 1938 to join the New Bauhaus in Chicago, but there were soon brief visits from artists and writers including Aldous Huxley, Fernand Léger, Lyonel Feininger and Thornton Wilder. Two years later the college moved to Lake Eden, not far from Asheville, North Carolina, and by 1944 had inaugurated a summer school which was to attract large numbers of innovative artists of varying disciplines.

104 Xanti Schawinsky's *Danse macabre*, presented at Black Mountain College in 1938

105 John Cage's New York début at the Museum of Modern Art, 1943

John Cage and Merce Cunningham

At the same time that the Black Mountain College was increasing its reputation as an experimental institution, a young musician, John Cage, and a young dancer, Merce Cunningham, were beginning to make their own ideas felt in small circles in New York and on the West Coast. In 1937, Cage, who had briefly studied Fine Arts at Pomona College in California, and composition with Schoenberg, expressed his views on music in a manifesto called *The Future of Music*. It was based on the idea that 'wherever we are, what we hear is mostly noise . . . Whether the sound of a truck at 50 mph, rain, or static between radio stations, we find noise fascinating.' Cage intended to 'capture and control these sounds, to use them, not as sound effects, but as musical instruments'. Included in this 'library of sounds' were the sound effects from film studios which would make it possible, for instance, 'to compose and perform a quartet for explosive motor, wind, heart beat and landslide'. A critic on the *Chicago Daily News* reviewed a concert which illustrated those ideas, given in Chicago in 1942. Under the headline 'People Call it Noise – But he Calls it Music', the critic noted that the 'musicians' played beer bottles, flowerpots, cowbells, automobile brake-drums, dinner bells, thundersheets and 'in the words of Mr Cage, "anything we can lay our hands on" '.

Despite the somewhat puzzled response of the press to this work, Cage was invited to give a concert at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the following year. Jawbones were banged, Chinese soup bowls tinkled and oxbells struck, while an audience 'which was very high-brow', according to

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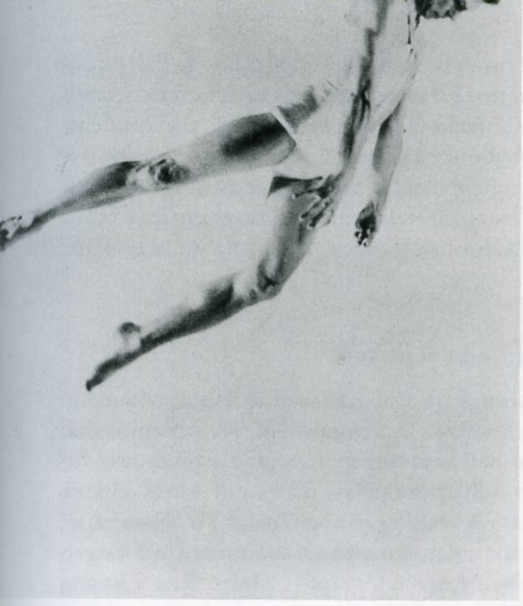
Life magazine, 'listened intently without seeming to be disturbed by the noisy results'. By all accounts, the New York audiences were far more tolerant of these experimental concerts than the audiences of almost thirty years earlier that had angrily attacked the Futurist 'noise musicians'. Indeed, Cage's concerts soon produced a serious body of analysis of his and earlier experimental music, and Cage himself wrote prolifically on the subject. According to Cage, in order to understand the 'sense of musical renaissance and the possibility of invention' that had taken place around 1935, one should turn to Luigi Russolo's *The Art of Noises* and Henry Cowell's *New Musical Resources*. He also referred his readers to McLuhan, Norman O. Brown, Fuller, and Duchamp – 'one way to write music: study Duchamp'.

On a theoretical level, Cage pointed out that composers who chose to be faced with the 'entire field of sound' necessarily had to devise entirely new methods of notation for such music. He found models in oriental music for the 'improvised rhythmic structures' proposed in his manifesto, and although largely 'unwritten' the philosophy on which they were based led Cage to insist on the notions of chance and indeterminacy. 'An indeterminate piece', he wrote, 'even though it might sound like a totally determined one, is made essentially without intention so that, in opposition to music of results, two performances of it will be different.' Essentially, indeterminacy allowed for 'flexibility, changeability, fluency and so forth', and it also led to Cage's notion of 'non-intentional music'. Such music, he explained, would make it clear to the listener that 'the hearing of the piece is his own action – that the music, so to speak, is his, rather than the composer's'.

Such theories and attitudes reflected Cage's deeply felt sympathy for Zen Buddhism and oriental philosphy in general and found a parallel in the work of Merce Cunningham who, like Cage, had by 1950 introduced chance procedures and indeterminacy as a means of arriving at a new dance practice. Having danced for several years as a leading figure in Martha Graham's company, Cunningham soon abandoned the dramatic and narrative thread of Graham's style, as well as its dependence on music for rhythmic direction. Just as Cage found music in the everyday sounds of our environment, so too Cunningham proposed that walking, standing, leaping and the full range of natural movement possibilities could be considered as dance. 'It occurred to me that the dancers could do the gestures they did ordinarily. These were accepted as movement in daily life, why not on stage?'

While Cage had noted that 'every smaller unit of a larger composition reflected as a microcosm the features of the whole', Cunningham emphasized 'each element in the spectacle'. It was necessary, he said, to take each circumstance for what it was, so that each movement was something in itself. This respect for given circumstances was reinforced by the use of chance in
106 preparing works, such as *Sixteen Dances for Soloist and Company of Three*



106 Merce Cunningham in *Sixteen Dances for Soloist and Company of Three*, 1951

107 Erik Satie's *The Ruse of the Medusa*, reconstructed at Black Mountain College in 1948. Buckminster Fuller (*left*) as Baron Méduse and Merce Cunningham as the 'mechanical monkey'

(1951), where the order of the 'nine permanent emotions of the Indian classical theatre' was decided by the toss of a coin.

By 1948 the dancer and the musician had been collaborating on several projects for almost a decade and both were invited to join the summer school at Black Mountain College held that year. Willem de Kooning and Buckminster Fuller were also there. Together they reconstructed Erik Satie's *The Ruse of the Medusa* 'set in Paris, the day before yesterday'. The 107
performance featured Elaine de Kooning as the leading lady, Fuller as Baron Méduse, choreography for the 'mechanical monkey' by Cunningham and sets by Willem de Kooning. Directed by Helen Livingston and Arthur Penn, the performance introduced the little-known absurdities of Satie's 'drama' and his eccentric musical ideas to the Black Mountain community. Cage, however, had to fight for the acceptance of Satie's ideas as he was soon to do for his own. His lecture 'In Defence of Satie', accompanied by a series of twenty-five half-hour concerts three nights a week, following the evening meal, stated that 'we cannot, ought not agree on matters of material' and reflected preoccupations in his own work: the strings of his 'prepared piano' were already jammed with odd materials – rubber bands, wooden spoons, bits of paper and metal – creating the sounds of a compact 'percussion orchestra'.

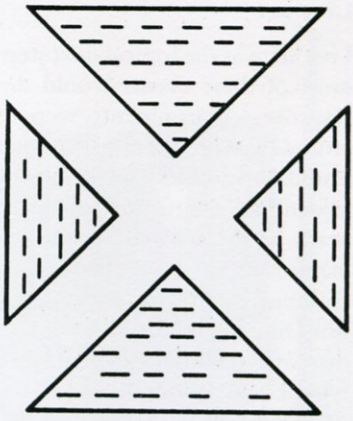
In 1952, Cage took these experiments even further, arriving at his famous silent work. *4′ 33″* was a 'piece in three movements during which no sounds are intentionally produced'; it abandoned intervention by the musician altogether. The work's first interpreter, David Tudor, sat at the piano for four minutes and thirty-three seconds, silently moving his arms three times; within that time the spectators were to understand that everything they heard was 'music'. 'My favorite piece', Cage had written, 'is the one we hear all the time if we are quiet.'

Black Mountain College untitled event 1952

That same year, Cage and Cunningham had returned to Black Mountain College for yet another summer school. An evening of performance that took place in the college dining hall that summer created a precedent for innumerable events that were to follow in the late fifties and sixties. Before the actual performance, Cage gave a reading of the Huang Po Doctrine of Universal Mind which, in its curious way, anticipated the event itself. Cage's comments on Zen were noted by Francine Duplessix-Gray, then a young student: 'In Zen Buddhism nothing is either good or bad. Or ugly or beautiful. . . . Art should not be different [from] life but an action within life. Like all of life, with its accidents and chances and variety and disorder and only momentary beauties.' Preparation for the performance was minimal: performers were given a 'score' which indicated 'time brackets' only and each was expected to fill out privately moments of action, inaction and silence as indicated on the score, none of which was to be revealed until the performance itself. In this way there would be no 'causal relationship' between one incident and the next, and according to Cage, 'anything that happened after that happened in the observer himself'.

108 Spectators took their seats in the square arena forming four triangles created by diagonal aisles, each holding the white cup which had been placed on their chair. White paintings by a visiting student, Robert Rauschenberg, hung overhead. From a step-ladder, Cage, in black suit and tie, read a text on 'the relation of music to Zen Buddism' and excerpts from Meister Eckhart. Then he performed a 'composition with a radio', following the prearranged 'time brackets'. At the same time, Rauschenberg played old records on a hand-wound gramophone and David Tudor played a 'prepared piano'. Later Tudor turned to two buckets, pouring water from one to the other while, planted in the audience, Charles Olsen and Mary Caroline Richards read poetry. Cunningham and others danced through the aisles chased by an excited dog, Rauschenberg flashed 'abstract' slides (created by coloured gelatine sandwiched between the glass) and film clips projected onto the ceiling showed first the school cook, and then, as they gradually moved from

108 **Diagram of *Untitled Event*, held at Black Mountain College in the summer of 1952, showing seating arrangement**



the ceiling down the wall, the setting sun. In a corner, the composer Jay Watt played exotic musical instruments and 'whistles blew, babies screamed and coffee was served by four boys dressed in white'.

The country audience was delighted. Only the composer Stefan Wolpe walked out in protest, and Cage proclaimed the evening a success. An 'anarchic' event; 'purposeless in that we didn't know what was going to happen', it suggested endless possibilities for future collaborations. And it provided Cunningham with a new décor and costume designer for his dance company: Robert Rauschenberg.

The New School

Despite its remote location and limited audience, news of the untitled event spread to New York, where it became the talking-point of Cage and the students who were pursuing his course on the composition of experimental music, begun in 1956 at the New School for Social Research. The small classes included painters and film makers, musicians and poets, Allan Kaprow, Jackson MacLow, George Brecht, Al Hansen and Dick Higgins among them. Friends of the regular students, George Segal, Larry Poons and Jim Dine, often attended. Each in their different ways had already absorbed Dada and Surrealist-like notions of chance and 'non-intentional' actions in their work. Some were painters making works which went beyond the conventional canvas format, taking up where the Surrealist environmental exhibitions, Rauschenberg's 'combines' and Jackson Pollock's action paintings had left off. Most were to be deeply influenced by Cage's classes and by reports of the Black Mountain event.

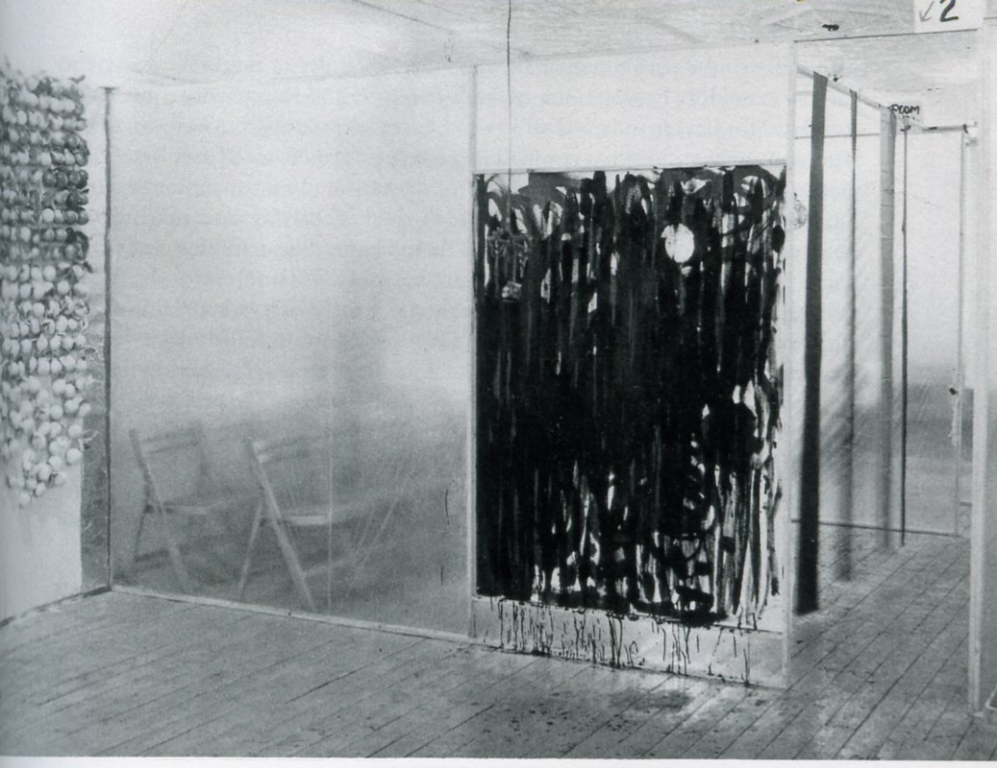
Live art

Live art was the logical next step from environments and assemblages. And most of these events would directly reflect contemporary painting. For Kaprow, environments were 'spatial representations of a multileveled attitude to painting', and a means to 'act out dramas of tin-soldiers, stories and musical structures that I once had tried to embody in paint alone'. Claes Oldenburg's performances mirrored the sculptural objects and paintings he made at the same time, providing a means for him to transform those inanimate but real objects – typewriters, ping-pong tables, articles of clothing, ice-cream cones, hamburgers, cakes, etc. – into objects of motion. Jim Dine's performances were for him an extension of everyday life rather than of his paintings, even if he acknowledged that they were actually 'about what I was painting'. Red Grooms found inspiration for his paintings and performances in the circus and amusement arcades, and Robert Whitman, despite his painterly origins, considered his performances essentially as theatrical events. 'It takes time', he wrote; and for him time was a material like paint or plaster. Al Hansen, on the other hand, turned to performance in revolt against 'the complete absence of anything interesting in the more conventional forms of theater'. The artwork that interested him most, he said, was one that 'enclosed the observer [and] that overlapped and interpenetrated different art forms'. Acknowledging that these ideas stemmed from the Futurists, Dadaists and Surrealists, he proposed a form of theatre in which 'one puts parts together in the manner of making a collage'.

'18 Happenings in 6 Parts'

109 Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* at the Reuben Gallery, New York, in the autumn of 1959, was one of the earliest opportunities for a wider public to attend the live events that several artists had performed more privately for various friends. Having decided that it was time to 'increase the "responsibility" of the observer', Kaprow issued invitations that included the statement 'you will become a part of the happenings; you will simultaneously experience them'. Shortly after this first announcement, some of the same people who had been invited received mysterious plastic envelopes containing bits of paper, photographs, wood, painted fragments and cut-out figures. They were also given a vague idea of what to expect: 'there are three rooms for this work, each different in size and feeling. . . . Some guests will also act.'

Those who came to the Reuben Gallery found a second-floor loft with divided plastic walls. In the three rooms thus created, chairs were arranged in circles and rectangles forcing the visitors to face in different directions. Coloured lights were strung through the subdivided space; a slatted



109 Allan Kaprow, from *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, 1959: one room of a three-room environment at the Reuben Gallery, New York

construction in the third room concealed the 'control room' from which performers would enter and exit. Full-length mirrors in the first and second rooms reflected the complex environment. Each visitor was presented with a programme and three small cards stapled together. 'The performance is divided into six parts', the notes explained. 'Each part contains three happenings which occur at once. The beginning and end of each will be signalled by a bell. At the end of the performance two strokes of the bell will be heard.' Spectators were warned to follow instructions carefully: during parts one and two they may be seated in the second room, during parts three and four they might move to the first room, and so on, each time at the ring of a bell. Intervals would be exactly two minutes long, and two fifteen-minute intervals would separate the larger sets. 'There will be *no applause after each set*, but you may applaud after the sixth set if you wish.'

The visitors (whom the programme notes designated as part of the cast) took their seats at the ring of a bell. Loud amplified sounds announced the

beginning of the performance: figures marched stiffly in single file down the narrow corridors between the makeshift rooms and in one room a woman stood still for ten seconds, left arm raised, forearm pointing to the floor. Slides were shown in an adjacent room. Then two performers read from hand-held placards: 'it is said that time is essence . . . we have known time . . . spiritually . . .'; or in another room: 'I was about to speak yesterday on a subject most dear to you all – art . . . but I was unable to begin.' Flute, ukulele and violin were played, painters painted on unprimed canvas set into the walls, gramophones were rolled in on trolleys, and finally, after ninety minutes of eighteen simultaneous happenings, four nine-foot scrolls toppled off a horizontal bar between the male and female performers reciting monosyllabic words – 'but . . .', 'well . . .'. As promised, a bell rang twice signalling the end.

The audience was left to make what it could of the fragmented events, for Kaprow had warned that 'the actions will mean nothing clearly formulable so far as the artist is concerned'. Equally, the term 'happening' was meaningless: it was intended to indicate 'something spontaneous, something that just happens to happen'. Nevertheless the entire piece was carefully rehearsed for two weeks before the opening, and daily during the week's programme. Moreover, performers had memorized stick drawings and time scores precisely indicated by Kaprow so that each movement sequence was carefully controlled.

More New York happenings

The apparent lack of meaning in *18 Happenings* was reflected in many other performances of the time. Most artists developed their own private 'iconography' for the objects and actions of their work. Kaprow's *Courtyard* (1962), which took place in the courtyard of a derelict hotel in Greenwich Village, included a twenty-five-foot paper 'mountain', an 'inverted mountain', a woman in night dress, and a cyclist, all of which had specific symbolic connotations. For instance, the 'dream girl' was the 'embodiment of a number of old, archetypal symbols, she is nature goddess (Mother Nature) and Aphrodite (Miss America).' Robert Whitman's concentric tunnels in *The American Moon* (1960) represented 'time capsules' through which performers were led to a central space which was 'nowhere' and were disoriented further by layers of burlap and plastic curtains. For Oldenburg, an individual event could be 'realistic' with 'fragments of action immobilized by instantaneous illuminations', as in *Snapshots from the City* (1960), a collaged city landscape with built-in street and immobile figures on a stage against a textured wall, flickering lights and found objects on the floor; or it could be a transformation of real and 'dreamed' events as in *Autobodys* (Los Angeles,

1963), which was triggered off by television images of slowly moving black automobiles in President Kennedy's funeral procession.

Performances followed in quick succession: six weeks after Kaprow's *Courtyard*, Red Grooms's *The Burning Building* took place at the Delancey Street Museum (actually Grooms's loft), Hansen's *Hi-Ho Bibbe* at the Pratt Institute, Kaprow's *The Big Laugh* and Whitman's *Small Cannon* at the Reuben Gallery. An evening of varied events was planned for February 1960 at the Judson Memorial Church in Washington Square, which had recently opened its doors to artists' performances. *Ray Gun Spex*, organized by Claes Oldenburg, with Whitman, Kaprow, Hansen, Higgins, Dine and Grooms, drew a crowd of about two hundred. The church's gallery, ante-room, gymnasium and hall were taken over for Oldenburg's *Snapshots from the City* and Hansen's *Requiem for W.C. Fields Who Died of Acute Alcoholism* – a poem and 'film environment' with clips from W.C. Fields films projected onto Hansen's white-shirted chest. In the main gymnasium, covered in canvas flats, an enormous boot walked around the space as part of Kaprow's *Coca Cola, Shirley Cannonball?*. Jim Dine revealed his obsession for paint in *The Smiling Workman*: dressed in a red smock, with hands and head painted red, and a large black mouth, he drank from jars of paint while painting 'I love what I'm . . .' on a large canvas, before pouring the remaining paint over his head and leaping through the canvas. The evening ended with Dick Higgins counting in German until everybody left.

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110 Jim Dine, from *The Smiling Workman*, 1960, at the Judson Church, New York. Dine is shown drinking from a can of paint before he crashed through the canvas on which he had written 'I love what I'm . . .'

Despite the very different sensibilities and structures of these works, they were all thrown together by the press under the general heading of 'happenings', following Kaprow's *18 Happenings*. None of the artists ever agreed to the term, and despite the desire of many of them for clarification, no 'happening' group was formed, no collective manifestos, magazines or propaganda issued. But whether they liked it or not, the term 'happening' remained. It covered this wide range of activity, however much it failed to distinguish between the different intentions of the work or between those who endorsed and those who refuted Kaprow's definition of a happening as an event that could be performed only once.

Indeed, Dick Higgins, Bob Watts, Al Hansen, George Macunias, Jackson MacLow, Richard Maxfield, Yoko Ono, La Monte Young and Alison Knowles presented very different performances at the Café A Gogo, Larry Poons's Epitome Café, Yoko Ono's Chambers Street loft, and the uptown Gallery A/G, all of which came under the general name of Fluxus, a term coined in 1961 by Macunias as the title for an anthology of work by many of these artists. The Fluxus group soon acquired their own exhibition spaces, Fluxhall and Fluxshop. However, Walter de Maria, Terry Jennings, Terry Riley, Dennis Johnson, Henry Flynt, Ray Johnson and Joseph Byrd presented works that could be classified under neither of these headings, despite the tendency of the press and critics to fit them neatly into an intelligible fashion.

Dancers such as Simone Forti and Yvonne Rainer, who had worked with Ann Halprin in California and who took to New York some of the radical innovations that Halprin had developed there, were to add to the variety of performances taking place in New York at this time. And these dancers would in turn strongly affect many of the performing artists who were to emerge later, such as Robert Morris and Robert Whitman, with whom they were to collaborate eventually.

The only common denominator of these diverse activities was New York City, with its downtown lofts, alternative galleries, cafés and bars that housed the performers of the early sixties. Outside America, however, European and Japanese artists were developing an equally large and varied body of performances at the same time. By 1963, many of those, such as Robert Filiou, Ben Vautier, Daniel Spoerri, Ben Patterson, Joseph Beuys, Emmett Williams, Nam June Paik, Tomas Schmit, Wolf Vostell and Jean-Jacques Lebel, would have either visited New York or sent work that indicated the radically different ideas being developed in Europe. Japanese artists such as Takesisa Kosugi, Shigeko Kubota and Toshi Ichiyanagi arrived in New York from Japan where the Gutai Group of Osaka – Akira Kanayama, Sadamasa Motonaga, Shuso Mukai, Saburo Mirakami, Shozo Shinamoto, Kazuo Shiraga and others – had presented their own spectacles.

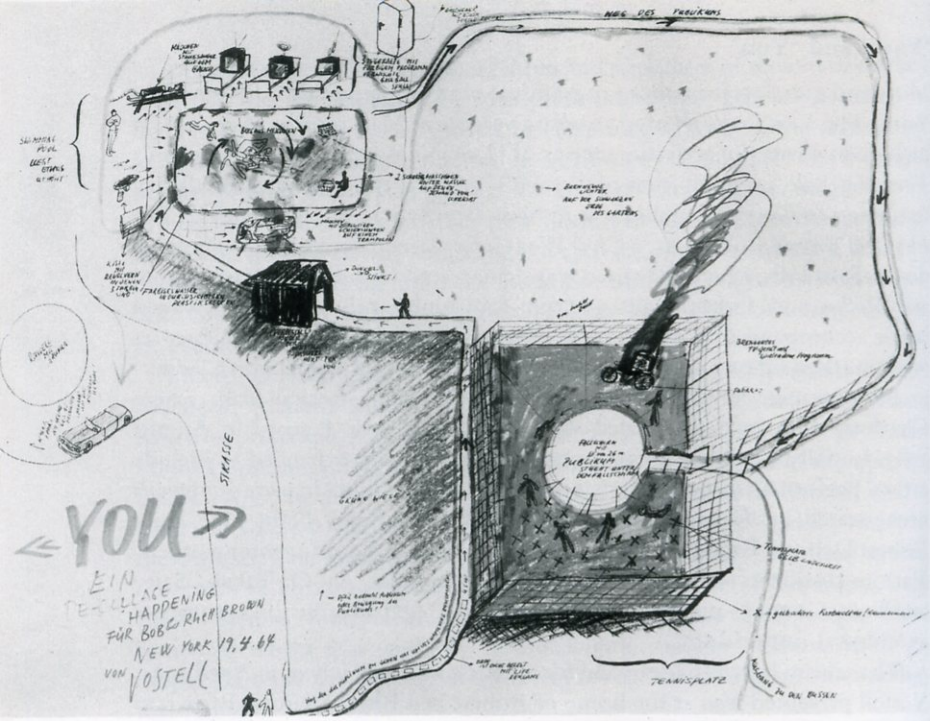
'Yam' and 'You'

More and more performance programmes were organized throughout New York. The *Yam Festival* lasted an entire year from May 1962 to May 1963. It included a variety of activities such as Al Hansen's *Auction*, Alison Knowles's *Yam Hat Sale*, an exhibition of Vostell's 'décollages', as well as an all-day excursion to George Segal's farm in New Brunswick. Michael Kirby's *The First and Second Wilderness, a Civil War Game* opened on 27 May 1963 at his downtown loft, where the space was demarcated to indicate 'Washington' and 'Richmond' and an infantry of two-foot-high cardboard soldiers waged battle accompanied by cheers from cheerleaders and audience, while scores were marked up on a large scoreboard by a bikini-clad woman on a ladder.

Performance concerts were held at the Carnegie Recital Hall, where Charlotte Moorman organized the first Avant-Garde Festival in August 1963. Initially a musical programme, the festival soon expanded to include artists' performance, particularly a reconstruction of Stockhausen's *Originale* orchestrated by Kaprow and including Max Neufield, Nam June Paik, Robert Delford-Brown, Lette Eisenhauer, and Olga Adorno, among others. Various dissidents – Henry Flynt, George Macunias, Ay-O, Takaka Saito and Tony Conrad – picketed this performance, regarding the foreign import as 'cultural imperialism'.

The schism between locals and foreigners continued when, in April 1964, Vostell presented *You* at the home of Robert and Rhett Delford-Brown in suburban Great Neck. A 'décollage' happening, *You* took place in and around a swimming pool, tennis court and orchard, scattered with four hundred pounds of beef bones. A narrow path, 'so narrow that only one person can pass at a time', littered with coloured advertisements from *Life* magazine and punctuated by loudspeakers greeting each passer-by with 'You, You, You!', wound between the three main locations of activity. In the deep end of the swimming pool were water and several typewriters as well as plastic sacks and waterpistols filled with brilliant yellow, red, green and blue dye. 'Lie down on the bottom of the pool and build a mass grave. While lying there, decide whether or not you will shoot other people with the colour', the participants were instructed. On the pool edges were three colour television sets on a hospital bed, each showing distorted images of a different baseball game; Lette Eisenhauer covered in flesh-toned fabric, lying on a trampoline between a pair of inflatable cow's lungs; and a naked girl on a table embracing a vacuum cleaner tank. 'Allow yourself to be tied to the beds where the T.V.s are playing . . . . Free yourself . . . . Put on a gas mask when the T.V. burns and try to be as friendly as possible to everyone', the instructions continued.

You, Vostell later explained, was intended to bring the public 'face to face, in satire, with the unreasonable demands of life in the form of chaos', confronting them with the most 'absurd and repugnant scenes of horror to



111 Wolf Vostell, plan of *You*, 1964, an all-day event held in the country, on the farm of the Delford-Browns in New York State

awaken consciousness . . . What is important is what the public itself takes away as a result of my images and the Happening.'

The element of place

Similar group events flourished throughout New York, from Central Park to the 69th Street Armory, where performances by Cage, Rauschenberg and Whitman, among others, celebrated 'Art and Technology' in 1966. The actual venue of this event was an important consideration: Oldenburg noted that 'the place in which the piece occurs, this large object, is part of the effect, and usually the first and most important factor determining the events (materials at hand being the second and players the third)'. The place 'could have any extent, a room or a nation': hence the scenes of such works as Oldenburg's *Autobodys* (1963 – a car park), *Injun* (1962 – a Dallas farmhouse), *Washes* (1965 – a swimming pool) and *Moviehouse* (1965 – a cinema). He had already presented in 1961 his *Store Days* or Ray Gun Mgs. Co in a shop on East

2nd Street, that served as a showcase for his objects, a studio, a performance space, and a place where those objects could be bought and sold, thus providing a means for artists 'to overcome the sense of guilt connected with money and sales'.

Ken Dewey's *City Scale* (1963), with Anthony Martin and Ramon Sender, began in the evening with spectators filling out government forms at one end of the city, only to be led through the streets to a series of occurrences and places: a model undressing at an apartment window, a car ballet in a car park, a singer in a shop window, weather balloons in a desolate park, a cafeteria, a bookshop, and as the sun came up on the next day, a brief finale by a 'celery man' in a cinema.

A Washington skating rink was the venue for Rauschenberg's *Pelican* (1963), his first performance, after years of improvising a wide range of extraordinary décors and costumes for Cunningham's dance company. *Pelican* opened with two performers, Rauschenberg and Alex Hay, wearing roller skates and back-packs, kneeling on a mobile trolley of wooden planks which they propelled with their hands into the central arena. The two skaters glided at speed around a dancer in ballet shoes, Carolyn Brown, who slowly executed a series of movements on points. Then the back-packs on the skaters opened into parachutes, thus considerably slowing down their movements. 112

112 Robert Rauschenberg, *Pelican*, 1963, with Rauschenberg and Alex Hay on roller skates, and Carolyn Brown on points, performed on a skating rink in Washington

At the same time the dancer speeded up her own stylized routine. There the element of place, as well as objects such as parachutes, ballet shoes and roller skates, determined the nature of the performance.

Rauschenberg's later *Map Room II*, performed in a cinema, the Filmmaker's Cinémathèque, equally reflected his concern that 'the first information I need is where it is to be done and when . . . which has a lot to do with the shape it takes, with the kinds of activity'. So, in the cinema where his idea was to use 'a confined stage within a traditional stage', which also extended into the audience, he created a moving collage of elements such as tyres and an old couch. The dancers taking part – Trisha Brown, Deborah Hay, Steve Paxton, Lucinda Childs and Alex Hay – ex-students of Cunningham and all strongly to influence the shaping of many of Rauschenberg's pieces, transformed the props into mobile, abstract forms. Rauschenberg's aim was that the dancers' costumes, for instance, 'would match the object so closely that integration would happen', leaving no distinction between inanimate object and live dancer.

The Filmmaker's Cinémathèque also provided the venue for rather different works of the same time by Oldenburg (*Moviehouse*) and Whitman (*Prune Flat*). While Oldenburg used the setting to activate the audience both

113 John Cage, *Variations V*, 1965. An audio-visual performance without score. In the background are Merce Cunningham (the choreographer) and Barbara Lloyd. In the foreground (*left to right*) Cage, Tudor and Mumma

in their seats and in the aisles, with performers supplying the various typical gestures such as eating popcorn and sneezing, Whitman was more interested in 'the separation between the audience and the stage, which I tried to keep and make even stronger'. Compared with Whitman's earlier pieces such as *The American Moon* (1960), *Water* and *Flower* (both 1963), *Prune Flat* was more theatrical, on account of its auditorium setting. Originally conceiving the setting as a 'flat' space, Whitman decided to project images of people onto themselves, adding ultra-violet lighting which 'kept the people flat, but also made them come away from the screen a little bit', causing the figures to look 'strange and fantastic'. While certain images were projected directly onto the figures, others created a filmic background, often with the film sequence transposed. For example, two girls are shown on the film walking across the screen, while the same girls walk simultaneously across the stage; an electrical company's flickering warning light, which by chance formed part of the film footage, was duplicated on stage. Other transformations of film images into live ones were created through the use of mirrors as performers matched themselves against the screen images. Subsequently time and space became the central features of the work, with the preliminary film made in the 'past', and the distortions and repetition of past action in present time on the stage. 114

114 Robert Whitman, *Prune Flat*, 1965, performed at the Filmmaker's Cinémathèque, New York. The photograph shows a more recent reconstruction of the same event

118 Carolee Schneemann's *Meat Joy*, of the preceding year, performed at the Judson Memorial Church, New York, transformed the body itself into a moving 'painterly' collage. A 'flesh celebration', relating to 'Artaud, McClure, and French butcher shops', it used the blood of carcasses instead of paint to cover the writhing naked and near-naked bodies. 'Taking substance from the materials . . . means that any particular space, any debris unique to Paris [where the event was also performed] and any "found" performers . . . would be potential structural elements for the piece', Schneeman wrote. 'What I find will be what I need', both in terms of performers and of 'metaphorically imposed space relations'.

Also in 1964, John Cage presented *Variations IV*, described by one critic as 'the kitchen-sink sonata, the everything piece, the minestrone masterpiece of
113 modern music'. His *Variations V*, given in July 1965 at the Philharmonic Hall in New York, was a collaborative work with Cunningham, Barbara Lloyd, David Tudor and Gordon Mumma; its script was written *after* the performance by chance methods, for possible repeats. The performance space was crossed with a grid of photo-electric cells, which when activated by the movement of the dancers, produced corresponding lighting and sound effects. In the same year came *Rozart Mix*, which Cage wrote 'for twelve tape machines, several performers, one conductor and eighty-eight loops of tape'.

The new dance

Essential to the evolving styles and exchange of ideas and sensibilities between artists from all disciplines which characterized most performance work of this period, was the influence of dancers in New York from early 1960. Many of these – Simone Forti, Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, Steve Paxton, David Gordon, Barbara Lloyd and Deborah Hay, to name a few – had started in a traditional dance context and then having worked with Cage and Cunningham, quickly found in the art world a more responsive and understanding audience.

Whether inspired by Cage's initial exploration of material and chance or the permissive Happenings and Fluxus events, these dancers began to incorporate similar experiments in their work. Their introduction of quite different movement and dance possibilities added, in turn, a radical dimension to performances by artists, leading them far beyond their initial 'environments' and quasi-theatrical tableaux. On matters of principle the dancers often shared the same concerns as the artists, such as the refusal to separate art activities from everyday life and the subsequent incorporation of everyday actions and objects as performance material. In practice, however, they suggested entirely original attitudes to space and the body that the more visually oriented artists had not previously considered.

115 Ann Halprin, *Parades and Changes*, 1964

Dancers' Workshop Company, San Francisco

Although the Futurist and Dada precedents of performance of the fifties are the most familiar, they are not the only ones. The view of 'dance as a way of life, that uses everyday activities such as walking, eating, bathing and touching' had its historical origin in the work of dance pioneers like Loie Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Rudolf von Laban and Mary Wigman. In the Dancers' Workshop Company formed, in 1955, just outside San Francisco, Ann Halprin picked up the threads of those earlier ideas. She collaborated with the dancers Simone Forti, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer and Steve Paxton, the musicians Terry Riley, La Monte Young and Warner Jepson, as well as with architects, painters, sculptors and untrained people in any of these fields, encouraging them to explore unusual choreographic ideas, often on an outdoor platform. And it was these dancers who, in 1962, were to form the core of the inventive and energetic Judson Dance Group in New York.

Using improvisation 'to find out what *our* bodies could do, not learning somebody else's pattern or technique', Halprin's system involved 'putting everything on charts, where every possible anatomical combination of movement was put to paper and given numbers'. Free association became an important part of the work, and *Birds of America or Gardens Without Walls* showed 'non-representational aspects of dance, whereby movement unrestricted by music or interpretative ideas' developed according to its own inherent principles. Props such as long bamboo poles provided extra scope for the invention of new movements. *Five-Legged Stool* (1962), *Esposizione* (1963) and *Parades and Changes* (1964) all revolved around task-oriented movements, such as carrying forty wine bottles onto the stage, pouring water from one can into another, changing clothes; and the varied settings, such as 'cell blocks' in *Parades and Changes*, allowed each performer to develop a series of separate movements that expressed their own sensory responses to light, material and space.

The Judson Dance Group

When the members of the Dancers' Workshop Company arrived in New York in 1960 they translated Halprin's obsession for an individual's sense of the straightforward physical movement of their own bodies in space into public performances, in programmes of happenings and events held at the Reuben Gallery and the Judson Church. The following year Robert Dunn began a composition class at the Cunningham studios which was made up of these same dancers, some of whom were then studying with Cunningham. Dunn separated 'composition' from choreography or technique and encouraged the dancers to arrange their material through chance procedures, experimenting at the same time with Cage's chance scores and Satie's erratic musical structures. Written texts, instructions (e.g. to draw a long line across the floor, which lasted the whole evening), and game assignments, all became part of the exploratory process.

Gradually the class built up its own repertory: Forti would do very simple bodily actions, extremely slowly or repeated many times; Rainer performed *Satie Spoons*; Steve Paxton spun a ball; and Trisha Brown discovered new movements at the throw of dice. By the late spring of 1962 there was more than enough material for a first public concert. In July when three hundred people arrived at the Judson Church in the intense summer heat, a three-hour marathon awaited them. The programme began with a fifteen-minute film by Elaine Summers and John McDowell followed by Ruth Emerson's *Shoulder*, Rainer's *Dance for 3 People and 6 Arms*, David Gordon's macabre *Mannequin Dance*, Steve Paxton's *Transit*, Fred Herko's *Once or Twice a Week I Put on Sneakers to Go Uptown* (on roller skates), Deborah Hay's *Rain Fur* and

5 *Things* (often hobbling on her knees) and many others. The evening was a great success.

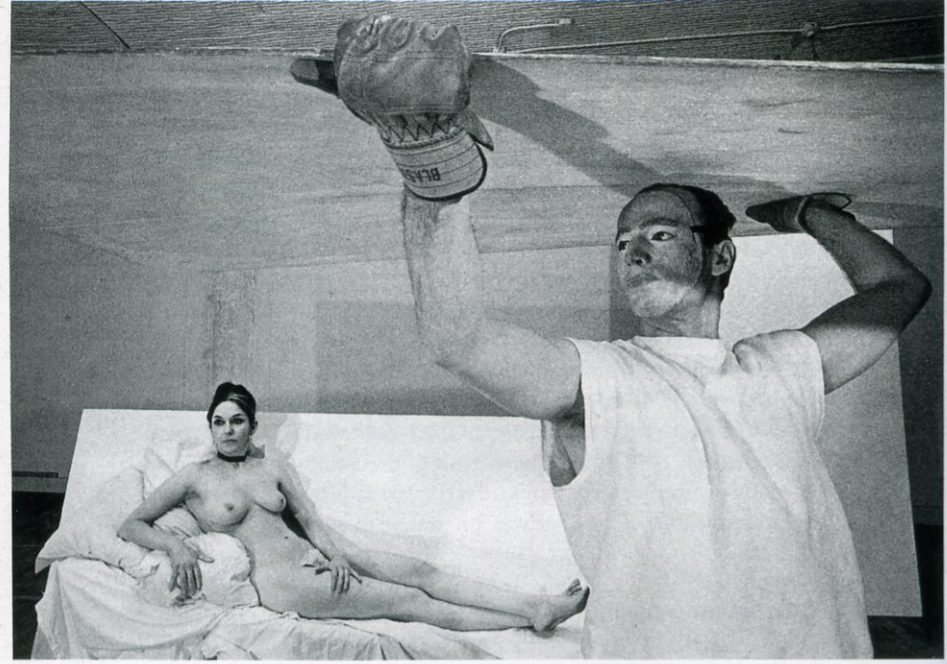
With a regular venue for their workshop, as well as a readily available concert space, the Judson Dance Group was formed, and dance programmes followed in quick succession throughout the following year, including works by Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, Sally Gross, Carolee Schneemann, John McDowell and Philip Corner, among others.

On 28 April 1963, Yvonne Rainer presented *Terrain*, a ninety-minute work in five sections ('Diagonal', 'Duet', 'Solo Section', 'Play' and 'Bach') for six performers, dressed in black leotards and white shirts. After sections based on the calling of letters or numbers, with the dancers creating random figurations, there came the 'Solo' phase accompanied by essays written by Spencer Holst and spoken by the dancers as they executed a memorized sequence of movements. When not performing their solos the dancers congregated casually around a street barricade; the last section, 'Bach', was a seven-minute compendium of sixty-seven phases of movement from the preceding sections.

Terrain illustrated some of Rainer's basic principles: 'NO to spectacle no to virtuosity no to transformations and magic and make-believe no to the glamour and transcendency of the star image no to the heroic no to the anti-heroic no to trash imagery no to involvement of performer or spectator no to style no to camp no to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer no to eccentricity no to moving or being moved.' The challenge, she added, 'might be defined as how to move in the space between theatrical bloat with its burden of dramatic psychological "Meaning" – and – the imagery and atmospheric effects of the non-dramatic, non-verbal theatre (i.e. dancing and some "happenings") – and – theatre of spectator participation and/or assault'. It was this radical dismissal of so much of the past and the present that drew many artists into direct collaboration with the new dancers and their innovative performances.

Dance and minimalism

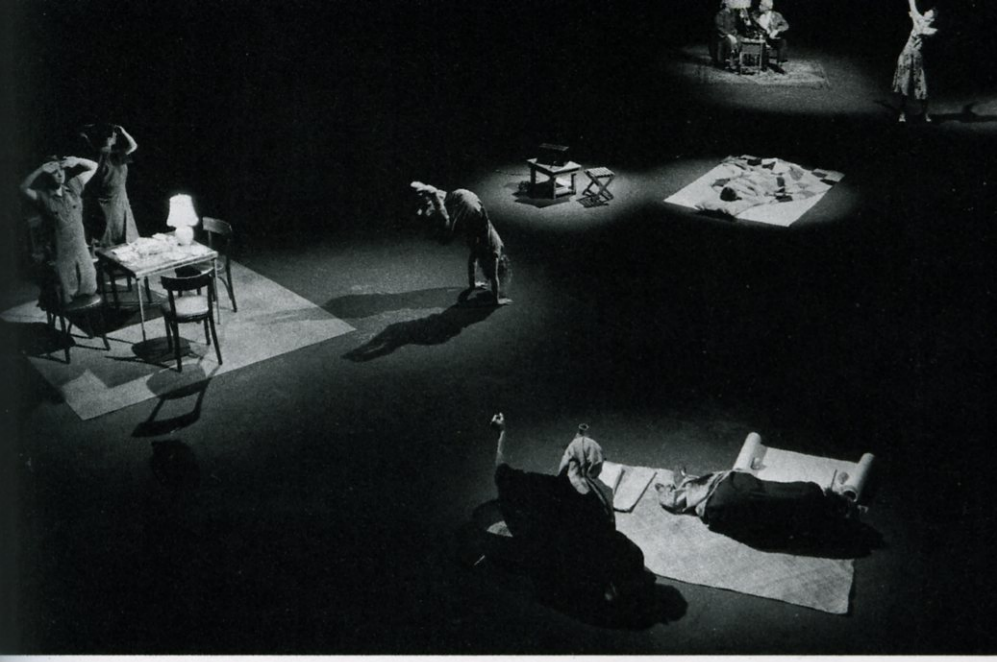
By 1963 many artists involved in live events were actively participating in the Judson Dance Group concerts. Rauschenberg, for instance, who was responsible for the lighting of *Terrain*, created many of his own performances with the same dancers, making it difficult for some to distinguish whether these works were 'dances' or 'happenings'. Simone Forti worked for many years with Robert Whitman and both she and Yvonne Rainer collaborated with Robert Morris, as in Forti's *See-Saw* (1961). That the dancers were leading performance beyond the earlier happenings and their Abstract Expressionist painterly origins is exemplified by the fact that a sculptor like



116 Robert Morris, *Site*, first performed in 1965

Morris created performances as an expression of his interest in the 'body in motion'. Unlike the earlier task-oriented activities he was able to manipulate objects so that they 'did not dominate my actions nor subvert my performances'.

These objects became a means for him to 'focus on a set of specific problems involving time, space, alternate forms of a unit, etc.' And so in *Waterman Switch* (March 1965, with Childs and Rainer) he emphasized the 'coexistence of the static and the mobile elements of objects': in one sequence he projected Muybridge slides showing a nude man lifting a stone, followed by the same action performed live by another nude male, illuminated by the
116 beam of a slide projector. Again, in *Site* (May 1965, with Carolee Schneemann), the space was 'reduced to context . . . riveting it to maximum frontality' through a series of white panels which formed a triangular spatial arrangement. Dressed in white and wearing a rubber mask designed by Jasper Johns to reproduce exactly the features of his own face, Morris manipulated the volume of the space by shifting the boards into different positions. As he did so he revealed a naked woman reclining on a couch in the pose of Manet's *Olympia*; ignoring the statuesque figure and accompanied by the sound of a saw and a hammer working on some planks, Morris continued arranging the



117 Meredith Monk, *Quarry*, first performed in 1976

panels, implying a relationship between the volumes of the static figure and that created by the movable boards.

At the same time, the increasing preoccupations towards 'minimalism' in sculpture could, for those who wished, explain the entirely different performance sensibilities. Rainer prefaced the script of her 1966 *The Mind is a Muscle* with a 'Quasi Survey of Some "Minimalist" tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity . . .', mentioning the 'one-to-one relationship between aspects of so-called minimal sculpture and recent dancing'. Although she acknowledged that such a chart was in itself questionable, the objects of the minimal sculptors – for example 'role of artist's hand', 'simplicity', 'literalness', 'factory fabrication' – provided an interesting contrast to the 'phrasing', 'singular action', 'event or tone', 'task-like activity' or 'found' movement of the dancers. Indeed, Rainer emphasized the object quality of the dancer's body when she said that she wished to use the body 'so that it could be handled like an object, picked up and carried, and so that objects and bodies could be interchangeable'.

So when Meredith Monk presented her own performance, *Juice*, at the Guggenheim Museum in 1969, she had already absorbed the happenings procedure (as a participant in many early works) as well as the new

explorations of the Judson Dance Group. The first part of *Juice* – a 'three-part theatre cantata' – took place in the enormous spiralling space of the Guggenheim, with eighty-five performers. With the audience seated on the circular floor of the museum, dancers created moving tableaux at intervals of forty, fifty and sixty feet above their heads. The second part took place in a conventional theatre and the third in an unfurnished loft. The separation of time, place and content, of different spaces and changing sensibilities, would later be combined by Monk into large operetta-like performances such as
117 *Education of a Girl Child* (1972) and *Quarry* (1976).

★ ★ ★

The development of European performance in the late fifties paralleled that in the United States in so far as performance came to be accepted by artists as a viable medium. Only ten years after a debilitating major war, many artists felt that they could not accept the essentially apolitical content of the then overwhelmingly popular Abstract Expressionism. It came to be considered socially irresponsible for artists to paint in secluded studios, when so many real political issues were at stake. This politically aware mood encouraged Dada-like manifestations and gestures as a means to attack establishment art values. By the early sixties, some artists had taken to the streets and staged aggressive Fluxus-style events in Amsterdam, Cologne, Düsseldorf and Paris. Others, more introspectively, created works intended to capture the 'spirit' of the artist as an energetic and catalytic force in society. The three artists in Europe at this time whose work best illustrates these attitudes were the Frenchman Yves Klein, the Italian Piero Manzoni and the German Joseph Beuys.

Yves Klein and Piero Manzoni

Yves Klein, born in Nice in 1928, was throughout his life determined to find a vessel for a 'spiritual' pictorial space, and it was this that led him eventually to live actions. To Klein, painting was 'like the window of a prison, where the lines, contours, forms and composition are determined by the bars'. Monochrome paintings, begun around 1955, freed him from such constraints. Later, he said, he remembered the colour blue, 'the blue of the sky in Nice that was at the origin of my career as a monochromist' and at an exhibition in Milan in January 1957, he showed work entirely from what he called his 'blue period', having searched, as he said, 'for the most perfect expression of blue for more than a year'. In May of the same year, he had a double exhibition in Paris, one at the Galerie Iris Clert (10 May) and the other at the Galerie Colette Allendy (14 May). The invitation card announcing both exhibitions displayed Klein's own International Klein Blue monogram. For the Clert opening he presented his first Aerostatic Sculpture, composed of 1001 blue balloons released 'into the sky of Saint Germain-des-Prés, never

to return', marking the beginning of his 'pneumatic period'. Blue paintings were exhibited in the gallery, accompanied by Pierre Henry's first taped version of the *Symphonie Monotone*. In the garden of the Galerie Colette Allendy he showed his *One Minute Fire Painting*, composed of a blue panel into which were set sixteen firecrackers which produced brilliant blue flames.

It was at this time that Klein wrote 'my paintings are now invisible' and his work *The Surfaces and Volumes of Invisible Pictorial Sensibility*, exhibited in one of the rooms at the Allendy, was precisely that – invisible. It consisted of a completely empty space. In April 1958, he presented another invisible work at the Clert, known as *Le Vide* ('The Void'). This time the empty white space was contrasted with his inimitable blue, painted on the exterior of the gallery and on the canopy at the entrance. According to Klein the empty space 'was crammed with a blue sensibility within the frame of the white walls of the gallery'. While the physical blue, he explained, had been left at the door, outside, in the street, 'the real blue was inside . . .'. Among the three thousand people who attended was Albert Camus, who signed the gallery visitors' book with 'avec le vide, les pleins pouvoirs' ('with the void, a free hand').

Klein's *Blue Revolution* and *Théâtre du vide* were given full coverage in his four-page newspaper *Le Journal d'un seul jour, Dimanche* (27 November 1960), which closely resembled the Paris newspaper *Dimanche*. It showed a photograph of Klein leaping into the void. For Klein art was a view of life, not simply a painter with a brush in a studio. All his actions protested against that limiting image of the artist. If colours 'are the real dwellers of space' and 'the void' the colour of blue, his argument went, then the artist may just as well abandon the inevitable palette, brush and artist's model in a studio. In this context, the model became 'the effective atmosphere of the flesh itself'.

Working with somewhat bemused models Klein realised that he did not have to paint *from* models at all, but could paint *with* them. So he emptied his studio of paintings and rolled the nude models in his perfect blue paint, requesting that they press their paint-drenched bodies against the prepared canvases. 'They became living brushes . . . at my direction the flesh itself applied the colour to the surface and with perfect exactness.' He was delighted that these monochromes were created from 'immediate experience' and also by the fact that he 'stayed clean, no longer dirtied with colour', unlike the paint-smeared women. 'The work finished itself there in front of me with the complete collaboration of the model. And I could salute its birth into the tangible world in a fitting manner, in evening dress.' It was in evening dress that he presented this work, entitled *The Anthropometries of the Blue Period*, at Robert Godet's in Paris in the spring of 1958, and publicly at the Galerie Internationale d'Art Contemporain in Paris on 9 March 1960, accompanied by an orchestra also in full evening dress, playing the *Symphonie Monotone*. 119,120

118 Carolee Schneemann's *Meat Joy*, 1964, also performed in Paris, used the blood of meat carcasses instead of paint to cover the performers' bodies

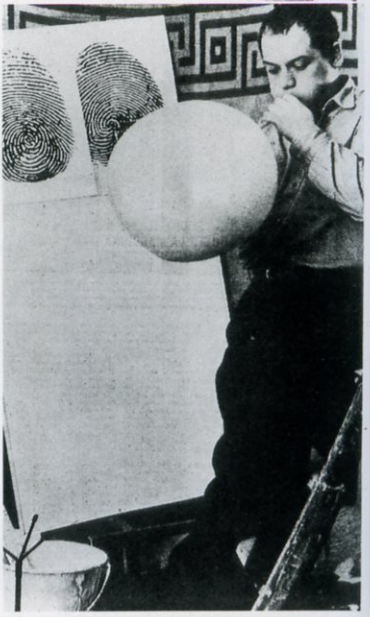
119 A Paris audience viewing Yves Klein's 'live' painting *Anthropometries of the Blue Period*, 1960

121 Klein throwing 20g of gold leaf into the Seine for *Immaterial Pictorial Sensitivity Zone* 5, 26 January 1962. The buyer is burning his cheque

Klein considered these demonstrations as a means to 'tear down the temple veil of the studio . . . to keep nothing of my process hidden'; they were 'spiritual marks of captured moments'. The International Klein Blue of his 'paintings' was, he said, an expression of this spirit. Moreover, Klein sought a way to evaluate his 'immaterial pictorial sensitivity' and decided that pure gold would be a fair exchange. He offered to sell it to any person willing to purchase such an extraordinary, if intangible, commodity, in exchange for gold leaf. Several 'sales ceremonies' were conducted: one took place on the banks of the River Seine on 10 February 1962. Gold leaf and a receipt changed hands between the artist and the purchaser. But since 'immaterial sensitivity' could be nothing but a spiritual quality, Klein insisted that all remains of the transaction be destroyed: he threw the gold leaf into the river and requested 121
that the purchaser burn the receipt. There were seven purchasers in all.

In Milan, Piero Manzoni went about his work in a not unsimilar manner. But Manzoni's actions were less a declaration of 'universal spirit' than the affirmation of the body itself as a valid art material. Both artists believed that it was essential to reveal the process of art, to demystify pictorial sensitivity, and to prevent their art from becoming relics in galleries or museums. While Klein's demonstrations were based on an almost mystical fervour, Manzoni's centred on the everyday reality of his own body – its functions and its forms – as an expression of personality.

◁120 **On 9 March 1960, the first public exhibition was given of Klein's *Anthropometries*. Klein directed three nude models to cover themselves in blue paint and press themselves against the prepared canvases, while twenty musicians played Henry's *Symphonie Monotone***



122 Piero Manzoni, *Living Sculpture*, 1961. Manzoni signed various individuals, thus turning them into 'living sculpture' 123 Manzoni making *Artist's Breath*, 1961

Klein and Manzoni met briefly at Klein's monochrome exhibition in Milan in 1957. Five months later, Manzoni wrote his yellow pamphlet *For the Discovery of a Zone of Images* in which he stated that it was essential for artists 'to establish the universal validity of individual mythology'. Just as Klein had considered painting a prison from which monochromes would liberate him, so Manzoni saw painting as 'an area of freedom in which we seek the discovery of our first images'. His all-white paintings called *Achromes*, generally dated from 1957 until his death, were intended to give 'an integrally white [or rather integrally colourless] surface beyond all forms of pictorial phenomena, beyond any extraneous intervention upon the value of the surface. . . . A white surface that is a white surface and that is all . . .'.

Where Klein had made paintings by pressing live models against canvas, Manzoni made works which eliminated the canvas altogether. On 22 April
122 1961 his exhibition of *Living Sculpture* (1961) opened in Milan. Following Manzoni's own signature on some part of the live sculpture's anatomy, the individual concerned would receive a 'certificate of authenticity' with the inscription: 'This is to certify that X has been signed by my hand and is therefore, from this date on, to be considered an authentic and true work of art.' Amongst those signed were Henk Peters, Marcel Broodthaers, Mario Schifano and Anina Nosei Webber. The certificate was in each case marked by a coloured stamp, indicating the designated area of artwork: red indicated

that the person was a complete work of art and would remain so until death; yellow that only the part of the body signed would qualify as art; green imposed a condition and limitation on the attitude or pose involved (sleeping, singing, drinking, talking and so on); and mauve had the same function as red, except that it had been obtained by payment.

A logical development from this was that the world too could be declared an artwork. So Manzoni's *Base of the World* (1961), erected in a park on the outskirts of Herning, Denmark, metaphorically set the world on a sculptural pedestal. The artist's physical output was equally important in this art/life equation. First he made forty-five *Bodies of Air* – balloons filled with air and sold for thirty thousand lire. Uninflated balloons were packaged in wooden pencil-boxes, along with a small tripod which would serve as an exhibition stand for the balloon when inflated. Like the *Living Sculpture*, they were variously valued: those balloons inflated by the artist himself would be exhibited as *Artist's Breath* and such works were sold for two hundred lire a litre (maximum capacity for any one balloon being about three hundred litres). Then in May 1961, Manzoni produced and packaged ninety cans of *Artist's Shit* (weighing thirty grams each), naturally preserved and 'made in Italy'. They were sold at the current price of gold, and soon became 'rare' art specimens. 123

Manzoni died of cirrhosis of the liver at the age of thirty in his studio in Milan, in 1963. Klein died of a heart attack at thirty-four, only eight months later, soon after seeing one of his *Anthropometries* spliced into the film *Mondo Cane* at the Cannes Film Festival.

Joseph Beuys

The German artist Joseph Beuys believed that art should effectively transform people's everyday lives. He too resorted to dramatic actions and lectures in an attempt to change consciousness. 'We have to revolutionize human thought', he said, 'First of all revolution takes place within man. When man is really a free, creative being who can produce something new and original, he can revolutionize time.'

Beuys's actions often resembled Passion plays with their stark symbolism and complex and systematic iconography. Objects and materials – felt, butter, dead hares, sleighs, shovels – all became metaphorical protagonists in his performances. At the Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf, on 26 November 1965, Beuys, his head covered in honey and gold leaf, took a dead hare in his arms and quietly carried it round the exhibition of his drawings and paintings, 'letting it touch the pictures with its paws'. Then he sat on a stool in a dimly lit corner and proceeded to explain the meaning of the works to the dead animal, 'because I do not really like explaining them to people', and

since 'even in death a hare has more sensitivity and instinctive understanding than some men with their stubborn rationality'.

Such meditative conversation with himself was central to Beuys's work. In terms of artists' performances it marked a turning point from earlier Fluxus actions. Yet his meetings with Fluxus had confirmed Beuys's own teaching methods at the Düsseldorf Academy where he had become professor of sculpture in 1961, at the age of 40. There he had encouraged the students to use any material for their work and, more concerned with their humanity than their eventual success in the art world, conducted most of his classes in the form of dialogues with students. In 1963, he organized, at the Academy, a Fluxus Festival with many American Fluxus artists participating. Beuys's polemical art and anti-art attitudes soon began to disturb the authorities; considered a disruptive element within the institution, he was always up against considerable opposition there and was finally, in 1972, dismissed amidst violent student protest.

Beuys's *Twenty-four Hours* (1965) was also given as part of a Fluxus event which included Bazon Brock, Charlotte Moorman, Nam June Paik, Tomas Schmit and Wolf Vostell. Having fasted for several days before the opening of the performance at midnight on 5 June, Beuys confined himself to a box for twenty-four hours, stretching out from time to time to collect objects around him, his feet never leaving the box. 'Action' and 'time' – 'elements to be controlled and directed by human will' – were reinforced in this lengthy and meditative concentration on objects.

Eurasia (1966) was Beuys's attempt to examine the political, spiritual and social polarities that characterize existence. Its central motif was 'the division of the cross', which for Beuys symbolized the division of people since Roman times. On a blackboard he drew only the upper section of the emblem, and proceeded, through a series of actions, to 'redirect the historical process'. Two small wooden crosses embedded with stopwatches lay on the floor; nearby was a dead hare transfixed by a series of thin wooden sticks. As the alarmbells of the stopwatches rang, he strewed white powder between the legs of the hare, stuck a thermometer in its mouth and blew in a tube. Then he walked over to a metal plate on the ground, kicking it with force. To Beuys, the crosses represented the division between east and west, Rome and Byzantium; the half cross on the blackboard the separation between Europe and Asia; the hare the messenger between the two; and the plate a metaphor for the arduous and frozen trans-Siberian journey.

Beuys's fervour took him to Northern Ireland, Edinburgh, New York, London, Berlin and Kassel. *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* was a dramatic one-week event which began on the journey from Düsseldorf to New York in May 1974. Beuys arrived at Kennedy Airport wrapped from head to toe in felt, the material which was for him an insulator, both

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physically and metaphorically. Loaded into an ambulance, he was driven to the space which he would share with a wild coyote for seven days. During that time, he conversed privately with the animal, only a chainlink fence separating them from the visitors to the gallery. His daily rituals included a series of interactions with the coyote, introducing it to objects – felt, walking stick, gloves, electric torch, and the *Wall Street Journal* (delivered daily) – which it pawed and urinated on, as if acknowledging in its own way the man's presence.

Coyote was an 'American' action in Beuys's terms, the 'coyote complex' reflecting the American Indians' history of persecution as much as 'the whole relationship between the United States and Europe'. 'I wanted to concentrate only on the coyote. I wanted to isolate myself, insulate myself, see nothing of America other than the coyote . . . and exchange roles with it.' According to Beuys, this action also represented a transformation of ideology into the idea of freedom.

To Beuys, this transformation remained a key to his actions. His idea of 'social sculpture', consisting of lengthy discussions with large gatherings of people in various contexts, was a means primarily to extend the definition of art beyond specialist activity. Carried out by artists, 'social sculpture' would mobilize every individual's latent creativity, ultimately moulding the society of the future. The Free University, an international, multi-disciplinary network set up by Beuys in conjunction with artists, economists, psychologists etc., is based on the same premises.

124 Joseph Beuys, *Coyote*, 1974, at the René Block gallery in New York