Separation and Conjunction:
Music and Art, circa 1800–2010
Simon Shaw-Miller

Music and art have not always been, nor are they always, divided. They have not always been considered separate in terms of their mode of address (hearing and sight) or their sensory mode (ear and eye). Nor have they always been seen as existing within two different dimensions: space (art) and time (music). The most trenchant divorce in these terms was first introduced in the eighteenth century, by the German writer Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. In *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766),[1] Lessing uses the Late Hellenistic sculpture of Laocoön and his two sons being attacked by serpents to argue that in the visual arts, formal considerations must always control expression. Poetry, by contrast, could display strong emotion without disrupting form. According to Lessing, Virgil's evocation of the scream in his account of the death of Laocoön "has a powerful appeal to the ear, no matter what its effect on the eye."[2] Although *Laocoön* is concerned with poetry and painting, Lessing's characterization of poetry as a temporal art and painting as a spatial art can be applied equally to music (aural) and painting (visual). His initial discussion lays out his central proposition, the division of the arts on the basis of the categories of space and time:

> I reason thus: if it is true that in its imitations painting uses completely different means or signs than does poetry, namely figures and colors in space rather than articulated sounds in time, and if these signs must indisputably bear a suitable relation to the thing signified, then signs existing in space can express only objects whose wholes or parts coexist, while signs that follow one another can express only objects whose wholes or parts are consecutive. Objects or parts of objects which exist in space are called bodies. Accordingly, bodies with their visible properties are the true subjects of painting. Objects or parts of objects which follow one another are called actions. Accordingly, actions are the true subjects of poetry.[3]

Nonetheless, Lessing next acknowledges that such distinctions are not as cut-and-dried as his initial argument would lead us to believe. "However, bodies do not exist in space only, but also in time . . . On the other hand, actions cannot exist independently, but must be joined to certain beings or things." What are presented as essential differences—differences of kind—turn out, instead, to be differences of degree or focus. Lessing's project was an ideological one; it was as much a matter of evaluation as of definition. Only certain types of activity are appropriate; different media require different terms of address. This approach is in direct opposition to the *ut pictura poesis* tradition ("as in poetry so in pictures"), where there was, according to Lessing and his followers, a failure to acknowledge the fundamental difference between art forms, which produced a "mania for description" in poetry and "a mania for allegory" in painting, which attempts "to make the former a speaking picture, without actually knowing what it could and ought to paint, and the latter a silent poem, without having considered to what degree it is able to express general

1   Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. and annotated by Edward Allen McCormick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984); originally published in German as *Laokoön: Oder über die Grenzen der Malerie und Poesie*.

2   "Clamores horrendos ad sidera tollit"; quoted in Lessing, *Laocoön*, chap. 4, 23.

3   Ibid., chap. 16, 78.

ideas without denying its true function and degenerating into a purely arbitrary means of expression."[4]

This patrolling of the borders of what constituted legitimate artistic expression went back and forth during the period of Romanticism, with some claiming that the arts functioned best alone and in isolation. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel effectively continues Lessing's spatial-temporal division, arguing that "just as sight relates to light or physicalized space, so hearing relates to sound or physicalized time."[5] Others suggested union and synthesis were ideal; Johann Gottfried von Herder wrote in his 1778 essay "On the Cognition and Sensation of the Human Soul":

> [H]owever different this contribution of different senses to thought and sensation may be, in our inner selves everything flows together and becomes one . . . Sight borrows from feeling and believes that it sees what is only felt. Sight and hearing decode each other reciprocally. Smell seems to be the spirit of taste, or at least a close brother of taste. From all this, now, the soul weaves and makes for itself its robe, its sensuous universe.[6]

This dialectic culminates in debates about the nature of modernism and modern artistic expression. Here the English writer Walter Pater is significant. In his essay "The School of Giorgione," he wrote: "Each art, therefore, having its own peculiar and untranslatable sensuous charm, has its own special mode of reaching the imagination, its own special responsibilities to its material. One of the functions of aesthetic criticism is to define these limitations: to estimate the degree in which a given work of art fulfils its responsibilities to its special material."[7] Art, Pater suggests, is always inclined towards "ends in themselves." Form is linked to sensation and subject to intelligence. The mission of art lies in finding a balance between these binary poles: "Art, then, is thus always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material; . . . that the material or subject no longer strikes the intellect only; nor the form, the eye or ear only; but form and matter, in their union or identity, present one single effect to the 'imaginative reason.'"[8] And for Pater, it is the example of music that most completely realizes this ambition:

> Therefore, although each art has its incommunicable element . . . its unique mode of reaching the "imaginative reason," yet the arts may be represented as continually struggling after the law or principle of music, to a condition which music alone completely realizes; and one of the chief functions of aesthetic criticism, dealing with the products of art, new or old, is to estimate the degree in which each of those products approaches, in this sense, to musical law.[9]

Nearly seventy years later, the American critic and theorist Clement Greenberg took up this debate and developed many of these ideas. Greenberg was primarily

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4 Preface to Lessing, *Laocoön*, 5.

5 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*; see *The Hegel Reader*, ed. Stephen Houlgate (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 289.

6 Johann Gottfried von Herder, "On the Cognition and Sensation of the Human Soul," in *Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 204–205.

7 Walter Pater, "The School of Giorgione," in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1873; London: Macmillan, 1928), 128–149, here 128.

8 Ibid., 135.

9 Ibid., 135–136.

concerned with the status of realism in relation to abstract painting and figura-
tive art. He wanted to demonstrate that abstract painting was the fulfillment of
teleology, one based on the specificity of medium. Appropriately, he drew on
these romantic debates, but he explicitly went back to Lessing in his essay
"Towards a Newer Laocoon."[10] In his opening remarks on the purity of artistic
integrity, and confusion over the differences between the arts, Greenberg writes:
"Purism is the terminus of a salutary reaction against the mistakes of painting
and sculpture in the past several centuries which were due to such confusion."[11]
His starting point is that such a thing as purity exists and therefore that any
"confusion" between art forms is a mistake. Every age, he contends, has a domi-
nant art form, and it is the fate of this single art to become the "prototype of all
art: the others try to shed their proper characteristics and imitate its effects."[12]
Greenberg makes a similar point to Lessing's regarding allegory and visual art,
saying literature's role as a paradigm for art corrupts the purity of painting, forc-
ing it to attend to narrative (a temporal concept) at the expense of dwelling on
special issues and the unique possibilities of its own medium. But by the nine-
teenth century the dominant art form had become music, and Greenberg sees
the influence of this art form on painting as positive. Music's character as the
most abstract of the arts allows for Greenberg a sharper focus on formalism:
music becomes a model as a *method*, rather than as a kind of *effect*, at which
point "the avant-garde [found] what it was looking for."[13] Cause and effect are
thus separated, emphasis being placed on conception rather than on reception.

Throughout Greenberg's discussion of modern art, music plays a central role.
Ironically, despite the plea for exclusivity, it is to the condition of music, follow-
ing Pater, to which all art should now aspire. This is acceptable, then, as long as
the dependence is a formal, procedural one, rather than one born of results and
effects: "Only by accepting the example of music and defining each of the other
arts solely in the terms of the sense or faculty which perceived its effects, and
by excluding from each art whatever is intelligible in the terms of any other sense
or faculty, would the non-musical arts attain the 'purity' and self-sufficiency
which they desired."[14]

The essential development of art, specifically painting (the leading media of the
twentieth century for Greenberg), is in his eyes towards increasing acknowl-
edgement of flatness: "The history of avant-garde painting is that of a pro-
gressive surrender to the resistance of its medium; which resistance consists
chiefly in the flat picture plane's denial of efforts to 'hole through' it for realistic
perspectival space."[15]

The crisis in expression that characterizes modernity flows from the shattered
modern world, shattered by Darwin and Einstein among others, leading to the
condition of modern man, so powerfully described by Matthew Arnold as
"Wandering between two worlds, one dead / The other powerless to be born."[16]
This crisis was answered by followers of Lessing, including Greenberg, through
the promotion of art to a state of formal exclusivity and isolation. What became
known as "absolute music," instrumental music in a pure and autonomous form,
offered a rich model of abstraction and formal integrity.

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10 Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon," *Partisan Review* 7, no. 4 (July/August
        1940), 296–310.

11 Ibid., 296.

12 Ibid., 297.

13 Ibid., 304.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 "Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse," *Fraser's Magazine* (April 1855).

I shall pause at this point to return to the foundations of modernism in the late nineteenth century and take an alternative route. This path, like Lessing's, has its roots in German soil, but it follows a very different furrow.

Conjunction and Disciplinarity

If in Pater's and Greenberg's writings music was (perhaps ironically) to act as an exemplum for the aspiring purity of the arts traced back to their medium, the example of music also supports the opposite aspiration: the ambition to synthesis, hybridity, or conjunction between the arts. It should also be noted that a version of this aspiration to synthesis distinguishes significant aspects of premodern culture: the so-called sister arts tradition that looked to commonalities rather than essential differences in its characterization of the arts before Lessing's building of fences.

Modernism is marked, among other things, by a crisis in expression or artistic languages; artistic media had "developed" to a stage where their formal procedures began to implode as convention was stretched to breaking point, through both abstraction and dissonance. Music offered both a model of formal purification and a way of bringing the various arts into harmony with each other through unification.

The German composer Richard Wagner posited a history in which art, in its antique (classical Greek) state, was a unified activity, where dance, music, and poetry all operated under the banner of drama; an Arcadian state, in sharp contrast to the dissolution of the arts he saw all around in the second half of the nineteenth century. The trajectory of the separated strands of art practices, which we commonly term "the arts," had come to a point where their independence had provoked a crisis of comprehensibility; they had individually reached their limits, their zenith. In isolation, the severed arts wither. Torn from their roots, they cannot reach their potential. The only course of action open to them from this extremity, according to Wagner, is reunification. In this way they can attain maturity.[17]

The collapse of Greek civilization caused a rift in drama and led to the dissipation and separation of the forces of art into individual disciplines: "Hand-in-hand with the dissolution of the Athenian state, marched the downfall of Tragedy. As the spirit of *Community* split itself along a thousand lines of egoistic cleavage, so was the great united work of Tragedy disintegrated into its individual factors."[18] For Wagner, the "art-work of the future" lay in artistic synthesis (under the leadership of music). His music dramas would lead the way to artistic renewal by bringing all the arts together in operatic union. This idea led to the concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a conception of synthesis and conjunction that had a profound and wide-ranging impact on later generations of artists in all disciplines. Used more widely by Wagner's followers than the man himself, the term was stretched to include, among other things, exhibition installations, the architecture of the house and the domestic interior, and film projects. Sometimes this aspiration to a synthetic unity was to be found in techniques of montage, assemblage, and collage; sometimes in new media such as performance art, film, and, more recently, digital art. However, it is important that the exact nature of the interaction between elements is carefully considered, as juxtaposition and coexistence is not the same as the aspiration to organic unity and formal synthesis.

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17 See *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, 8 vols., trans. William Ashton Ellis (1892; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993–1995).

18 Richard Wagner, "Art and Revolution," in *The Art-Work of the Future*, vol. 1 of *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, 1:35.

Formal and Contextual Modernism

My contention is that modernism is characterized by the existence of both of these tendencies—purity and hybridity, or separation and conjunction—only one of which is dominant at any one time, although both coexist. In the first half of the twentieth century it was the former that sought supremacy, in the second half the latter. This shift to the precedence of hybridity over purism is sometimes viewed as a move from modernism to postmodernism. I would rather see it as a modulation from what I have called elsewhere *formal* to *contextual* modernism.[19] Perhaps in the early twenty-first century we can perceive a more contented coexistence, rather than the struggle for authority and control, and this phase of their concomitance may be called postmodernism. However, modernism is a more variegated concept than is sometimes imagined, as neither phase, formal nor contextual, exists without some contamination by the other.

Writing about this period in which purism gives way to hybridity also raises issues about disciplinary borders. In contemporary critical writing about the arts, it is most often signified by iteration of the concept "interdisciplinary." In brief, within the general application of the concept "interdisciplinary," the following subdivisions may be made:
— Interdisciplinarity is concerned with synthesis and unification, where two things merge to become a third. Here relationships are in concord, although identity is usually transformed. One example is Robert Morris's sound sculpture *Box with the Sounds of Its Own Making*.
— Cross-disciplinarity (or transdisciplinarity) is concerned with unstable transformations, where the character of one thing dominates and modification develops. Such relationships are often conflictual. An example is Cathy Berberian's work *Stripsody*.
— Multidisciplinarity is concerned with coexistence, with parallelism. Mutual, nondominant coexistence characterizes these relationships, in which concord predominates. An example of this type is John Cage's work *HPSCHD*.

More recently, aspects of research in the humanities have been concerned with challenging disciplinary fractionalization. This is partly a consequence of changes within academic disciplines and partly a result of changes in artistic practices themselves. Interdisciplinarity in this context can be risky. It might undermine and destabilize; one disciplinary position acts as an irritant to the assumptions of the other. In this way a form of cross-disciplinarity may occur. For example, in my own research, thinking of music from the perspective of an art historian changes the terms of address from the sonoric to the visual. This approach can destabilize, or at least challenge, beliefs. In turning to futurism, Dada, and their legacy, we consider the less familiar concept of contextual modernism, and for this reason I shall briefly dwell on a few specific cases.

Futurism

While Greenberg's position can be seen as dogmatic, it should also be seen as a rigorous attempt to provide intellectual tools for making value judgments about serious and trivial cultural production. But whereas Greenberg sought borders and frameworks in order to make judgments about value and ontology, many practitioners sought to break out of such confines. Here, formal modernism gives way to contextual modernism. Within the work and ideology of the futurists and dadaists, the issue of media becomes less clear-cut. The aesthetic

19 See Simon Shaw-Miller, "Music and Modernism," in *The Oxford Handbook to Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming [2010]).

paradigm for both futurism and Dada is performance—art as an act rather than an object. Performance is multimedia, and therefore we cannot simply speak of art and music as we do in the context of formal modernism; instead, we need to think in the gaps and across the frame.

The Italian futurists were perhaps the first artistic group in the twentieth century radically to question the specificity of media and to aspire to a synesthetic form of expression. While they produced significant works of painting and sculpture, their ideas were always generating a dynamic beyond the frame, which is why performance became such an important element of their practice. The artist Umberto Boccioni wrote the following, which is relevant to both futurist art and sculpture: "I want to render the fusion of a head with its environment—I want to render the prolongation of objects in space—I want to model light and atmosphere—I want to transfix the human form in movement – I want to synthesize the unique forms of continuity in space."[20] In 1915, together with Emilio Settimelli and Bruno Corra, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti wrote the Futurist Synthetic Theater Manifesto, in which he defines "synthetic." "That is, very brief. To compress into a few minutes, into a few words and gestures, innumerable situations, sensibilities, ideas, sensations, facts, and symbols."[21] The impatience, but also the bold act of compression evident in this statement, is typical of futurism. In the so-called *serata futurista* (futurist evenings or performances), poetry or manifestos would be declaimed, paintings would be displayed, music (noise music) would be performed, all simultaneously; synthesis and compression. Marinetti summed up this impulse: "Analogy is nothing more than the deep love that unites distant, diverse and seemingly hostile things."[22]

Few areas of life were left untouched and unmixed by the futurists; food, film, architecture, painting, fashion, theater, literature, and music. This latter was most effectively developed by Luigi Russolo, a painter who proclaimed: "I am not a musician, I have therefore no acoustical predilections, nor any works to defend" (although he came from a musical family).[23] He set out his agenda in the manifesto "The Art of Noises", published in 1913. The promotion of noise as a central element of modern life and modern music required the invention of new instrumental resources, the *intonarumori*, noise-intoning machines he built to play his "noise" music.

The inclusion of noise as an aesthetic element of music opened it to the everyday, as did the use of collage and assemblage in visual art. This development was to become increasingly important as the century progressed and formal modernism gave way to contextual modernism.

Dada

Dada, like futurism, was from its very inception a truly multimedia phenomenon, and its influence can be detected in such diverse movements as Nouveau Réalisme, pop art, Fluxus, Arte Povera, the situationists, theater of the absurd, and punk rock.

20 Caroline Tisdall and Angelo Bozzella, *Futurism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 77–78.

21 See http://www.391.org/manifestos/19150218marinetti.htm.

22 Quoted in Tisdall and Bozzolla, *Futurism*, 94.

23 See Luigi Russolo, *The Art of Noises* (1913), in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio, trans. Robert Brain et al. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 88.

When music is discussed in relation to Dada, it is usually with reference to Erik Satie and Parisian Dada (especially the collaborative work *Parade*[24]). But I wish to focus on a less well-known, equally radical work produced in Germany: a work by Jefim Golyscheff. The preferred visual medium of Dada was collage, and the use of bricolage with found objects (and sounds) moved this aesthetic across disciplines (Golyscheff worked as a sculptor and artist as well as musician). Such an approach is antithetical to the purism of formal modernism, with its emphasis on media specificity.

Founded in Zurich, Dada was an aesthetic and ideological revolution rather than a stylistic one. It was born in the Cabaret Voltaire on February 5, 1916, and cabaret and the soiree, like the futurist *serata*, characterized Dada's spirit: performance was the central medium of Dada. With the discovery of the name Dada, and its first public use in Hugo Ball's periodical *Cabaret Voltaire* (June 1916), a more cohesive aesthetic emerged in what until then had been a diverse band of "people of independent minds—beyond war and nationalism—who live for different ideals" (to quote Ball's definition in the above periodical). At the first Dada soiree (July 14), Ball performed his first sound poem composed from invented words, in which he aimed to access an emotive power behind the speech of everyday language. This piece carried on the futurists' interest in sound poetry. The recitation often took place in more than one language simultaneously, usually German, French, and English. In neutral Zurich, this band of disillusioned artists felt a profound need to get beyond national rhetoric, to move towards pure phonic content, to develop a transcultural language, a "language" of sounds, similar to the one already felt to exist within ideas of music as a universal communication system; in other words, to separate sound in language from meaning, as music had emancipated itself. Prior to a recitation, Ball made the following statement:

> In these phonic poems we totally renounce the language that journalism has abused and corrupted. We must return to the alchemy of the word, we must even give up the word too, to keep for poetry its last and holiest refuge.[25]

Poetry's last refuge is sound, not meaning. And music is the paradigmatic "meaningless" sound—poetry becomes a form of music. The following is the opening of Ball's sound poem of 1916, "Karawane":

> jolifanto bambla o falli bambla
> großiga m'pfa habla horem
> egiga goramen
> higo bloiko russula huju
> hollaka hollala
> anlogo bung

This inclusion of non-sense and humor (to a serious end), and an embrace of the vernacular, the "primitive," the political, and the everyday—which was often developed through aleatoric practices and performance techniques—are points of confluence in both Dada art and music.

But the dadaists' dislike of the machine and mechanistic processes (a machine as a "sham life to dead matter") was in stark contrast to the futurists' celebra-

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24 A ballet with music by Satie on a scenario by Jean Cocteau, sets and costumes by Pablo Picasso, and choreography by Léonide Massine (1917).

25 Hugo Ball, *Flight out of Time: A Dada Diary*, ed. John Elderfield, trans. Ann Raimes (New York: Viking, 1974), 57.

tion of mechanism. This attitude also was manifested in the view that repetition was antithetical to human rhythm: "In a typically compressed way [the simultaneous poem] shows the conflict of the *vox humana* with a world that threatens, ensnares, and destroys it, a world whose rhythm and noise are ineluctable."[26] Harmony was to be replaced by noise and rhythmic complexity; rationality was to be replaced by chaos and chance.

The futurists, through the work of Russolo, had devised a noise music that was an art of things, *intonarumori*, and an art of the everyday. As the dadaist Richard Huelsenbeck wrote:

> *Le bruit*, noise with imitative effects, was introduced into art (in this connection we can hardly speak of individual arts, music or literature) by Marinetti, who used a chorus of typewriters, kettledrums, rattles and pot-covers to suggest the "awakening of the capital"; at first it was intended as nothing more than a rather violent reminder of the colourfulness of life.[27]

Although Huelsenbeck made the common mistake of crediting Marinetti, instead of Luigi Russolo, as bruitism's developer, and though he was not aware that Russolo, together with Ugo Piatti, had invented noise-intoning instruments to perform such works, he did see Dada as the most appropriate site for the development and dissemination of bruitism and its use of noise. This new art favored the noise of actual things: not the refined techniques of musical instruments, but the sounds of life, life in the face of death. Whereas postwar neoclassicism sought a return to order after the chaos of the war, the dadaists sought its opposite: anti-art in the face of bourgeois order and certainty. Nowhere was this revolutionary spirit more apparent than in the political turmoil of Berlin in the wake of Germany's defeat. Berlin Dada was an overt attack on the status quo. In Berlin, Dada became much more explicitly political.

One less well-known figure associated with Berlin Dada is worth consideration in this context. The Russian-born Berlin resident Jefim Golyscheff was active as both a composer and an artist. His visual artworks at this time mainly took the form of assemblages, but his musical works were even more bizarre. In a soiree on April 30, 1919, at the Berlin Harmoniumsaal, which involved the usual mix of sound poetry and manifesto readings, Golyscheff performed his "anti-symphony" in three parts, *Musical Circular Guillotine*, an anomalous work which included a band of kitchen utensils. This piece was followed by the work *Cough Manoeuvre: Chaoplasma* in May of the same year.

That Jefim Golyscheff is so little known is emblematic of the change in the currents of modernism. With the rise of formalist modernism and the dominance of a purist paradigm, such radical aesthetics seeking contact with the everyday and enjoying contamination and hybridity became subterranean. These aesthetics then emerged again as formalist modernism gave way to contextual modernism in the second half of the twentieth century in the ideas and work of that most idiosyncratic of American musicians, John Cage. In turning to Cage, I consider a range of theoretical approaches to analyze the syncretism that occurs in his work.

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26 Ibid., 57.

27 Richard Huelsenbeck, "En Avant Dada" (1920), in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Motherwell (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1981), 25.

Frames

John Cage's art is essentially an act of reframing. While at Cage's home in Stony Point, New York, a visitor was speaking of Cage's remarkable achievements and innovations, and praised him for the enormous progress he had brought to music. "Cage walked over to the window, looked out into the woods, and finally said, 'I just can't believe I am better than anything out there.'"[28] Cage said he wanted to imitate nature in her manner of operation,[29] to suppress ego in the service of the work, to radically challenge the relationship between art and the everyday. But it is precisely this reframing that allows us to define his activities *as* music; his activities become part of music's identity and its history. Through the pursuit of his radical aesthetic of "letting sounds be themselves," Cage's work challenged the view that art music is divorced from worldly associations and its physical environment. In pursuing sounds in themselves, he opened up the concept of music to its physical environment: the music of *4'33" is* its physical environment, its sights and site. This approach is what makes it paradigmatic of contextual modernism: *4'33"* exists because of framing.[30]

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida has explored the concept of framing, and in his chapter on the concept of the parergon in *The Truth in Painting*, he turns to Immanuel Kant's work *Critique of Judgment* and within it the "peripheral" discussion of "ornaments" (parerga) and frames as "those things which do not belong to the complete representation of the object internally as elements, but only externally as complements."[31] Kant regards frames as ornamental to the work of art, but necessary to differentiate the intrinsic object of address. As Derrida puts it:

> "What is a frame?" . . . it's a *parergon*, a hybrid of outside and inside, but a hybrid which is not a mixture or a half-measure, an outside which is called to the inside of the inside in order to constitute it as an inside . . . [32]

Kant regards artistic form, or the work of art, as autonomous and autotelic; that is, goal-directed, but with no use in the "outside" world. Essentially, it can offer no conceptual content; it gives the appearance of conceptual play, but, unlike language, it is empty of real meaning.

> An aesthetic judgment is unique in kind and provides absolutely no cognition (not even a confused one) of the object; only a logical judgment does that . . . Indeed, the judgment is called aesthetic precisely because the basis determining it is not a concept but the feeling (of the inner sense) of that accordance in the play of the mental powers insofar as it can only be sensed.[33]

28 Morton Feldman, "Give My Regards to Eighth Street," in *Give My Regards to Eighth Street: Collected Writings of Morton Feldman*, ed. B. H. Friedman (Cambridge, Mass.: Exact Change, 2000), 28.

29 See John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 194.

30 It is interesting to note that Erwin Schulhoff (1894–1942), a composer interested in dadaist aesthetic for a time, wrote a piece called "In Futurum" (from the *Fünf Pittoresken* for piano), which is a completely silent work made up entirely of rests, anticipating Cage's *4'33"* by over thirty years.

31 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1951), 61.

32 Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 63.

33 Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 64.

The frame is what sits between this autonomous object and the outside. But, as Derrida points out, a frame, if necessary, is not just ornamental and contingent. Derrida proposes that the frame functions paradoxically to separate the work both from its context and from the frame itself. In relation to the work of art, the frame appears to be part of the context (the museum wall, for example), but in relation to the general context, it appears to be part of the work (Seurat's painted frames are one example). Thus, Derrida seeks to emphasize that "framing effects occur," rather than frames. Frames are the points of liminal focus. In addition, as already implied, the frame both defines the work (it is necessary) and is mere ornament (it is contingent). The important point here is that the edge of a work, its border or boundary, is theoretically permeable; or, to put it in other terms, text and context are in flux or in dialogue. Such a radical conception of the relationship of inside and outside raises fundamental questions of ontology: questions of what is music or theater, or music or art, become much less straightforward. In addition to ontological frames there are also institutional ones.

Silence

The frame that usually surrounds music is silence, but Cage brought this outside silence into the heart of his work, fashioning his composition out of this framing silence.[34] The edge of his work is set up to be permeable and transparent (but also visible): with "nothing" to listen to, we are made more aware of the site and sights of performance.

There is what we might think of as two kinds of silence: the empirical, ritual, and institutionally organized silence at the beginning and end of a musical work—Wagner was one of the first musicians to insist on adding a visual marker by requiring the lights of the auditorium to be lowered to prepare for this framing silence. Second, there is the silence at the limits of human hearing. But even this silence is challenged through the power of amplification.

Cage's friend La Monte Young serves as an interesting example in this regard. Consider his *Composition No. 5* of 1960, also known as the "butterfly piece." The "sound" in this work is performed by the butterfly or butterflies as they are released. No one present, neither the "performer" who releases the butterflies nor the audience, can hear the sound of the nonhuman "instrument." But they can see it; the effect is visual. An insect of celebrated beauty, often understood as a symbol of metamorphosis in art, performs a flight that acts as a visual metaphor for the absent sound. Young is reported to have said to his colleague Tony Conrad: "Isn't it wonderful if someone listens to something he is ordinarily supposed to look at?"[35]

The score instructs:

> Turn a butterfly (or any number of butterflies) loose in the performance area. When the composition is over, be sure to allow the butterfly to fly away outside. The composition may be any length but if an unlimited amount of time is available, the doors and windows may be opened before the butterfly is turned loose and the composition may be considered finished when the butterfly flies away.

[34] This description is not to suppose an absolute silence, but a relative non-music silence (what we might think of as a ritual silence).

[35] Quotation from Edward Strickland, *Minimalism: Origins* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

Here the concert hall, or performance space, is the frame; it contains the performance—the work is finished once the butterfly leaves the hall. Writing about this piece, Young also raises the issue of audibility as a prerequisite for music: "I felt certain the butterfly made sounds, not only with the motion of its wings but also with the functioning of its body . . . and unless one was going to dictate how loud or soft the sounds had to be before they could be allowed into the realm of music . . . the butterfly piece was music."[36] Young's subsequent *Composition No. 6* critiques the performance space in a different but equally radical way.

Minimalism

The modernist (post-Romantic) aesthetic urgency to place the frame as ancillary comes from acknowledging its necessity. In the eyes of Michael Fried, for example, minimalism in its overt "theatricality" draws attention to its context, and this moves it across the great divide between art and the state of objecthood. Fried points out that the test of a work of art was the suspension of that very objecthood in favor of the everyday. Theater is "what lies *between* the arts"; it is the "common denominator that binds a large and seemingly disparate variety of activities to one another."[37] Minimalism therefore committed the modernist sin of borrowing from another discipline's effects. Such minimalist objects needed the theater of the site to be meaningful. In these terms, Cage's *4'33''* cannot be seen as modernist, for it makes no attempt to transcend the contingencies of the viewer's or listener's time and place. It is "literalist," encountered as part of, or actually made up of, the everyday context. Minimalist works—and they don't come more minimal than *4'33''*—were in Fried's terms not self-possessed and were therefore unable to free spectators of their self-awareness.

Indeed, the sculptor Robert Morris developed the notion of "gestalt" in relation to certain minimalist works. In *Untitled* (1969), a work that consists of nine L-shaped beams that, although they are identical, are perceived as different because of their varied disposition in the gallery space (upended, on their side, tilted, and so on). The aim of such an approach is to present "unitary forms," that is, works that do not require a viewer to move around them to grasp the whole. The effect is heightened, according to Morris, by "the strength of the constant, known shape, the gestalt," against which the manifestation of the pieces, in different arrangements, is always being compared. It is the large size of such works that produces this "presence"; the human figure acts as a constant in terms of scale. Here, sculpture approaches the condition of painting, in that painting is often concerned with a fixed spectator in relation to the depiction, in the sense of one "look."

Context is important. Such works require a specific environment in which to function: the gallery. The space becomes a type of pictorial field; it confers form and artistic meaning upon them; it acts as a frame, as does the concert hall. Thus, the gallery is not a "neutral" space but one that confers meaning and that deserves attention. The gallery functions as a frame in the way proposed by Derrida: to separate the work both from its context—it allows us to see the object as sculpture—and from the frame itself. The work is dependent

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[36] La Monte Young, quoted in Douglas Kahn, "The Latest: Fluxus and Music," in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, ed. Janet Jenkins (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993), 106.

[37] Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (Summer 1967), 12–23; reprinted in *Art in Theory, 1900–1990: An Anthology of Changing Idea*, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 822–834.

on the gallery to give it its status as sculpture (this is especially the case for the minimalist works of Carl Andre, which utilize found materials such as fire bricks). The gallery can also function as a theatrical space in such works as Morris's *Untitled* (1967/1968), in which the installation of the work is performative.

The concert hall likewise focuses attention for minimalist music, but in minimalism's early incarnation the music required a form of perceptual attention different from that normally required for classical music. Philip Glass, a composer who, like Morris, employs materials that have a gestalt (an additive melody or rhythm built on distinctive repetitive patterns), wrote of minimalist music: "When it becomes apparent that nothing 'happens' in the usual sense, but that, instead, the gradual accretion of musical materials can and does serve as the basis of the listener's attention, then he can perhaps discover another mode of listening."[38] Such terms of address compel music to move toward objecthood. Because little happens, the parameters of the music ossify; there is little narrative drama, and time therefore operates differently. By refusing to engage in large-scale, goal-directed harmonic structures through its use of repetition, phasing, and sequencing, its shallow musical space, and its limited directionality (where segments follow one another rather than develop from each other—see, for example, Terry Riley's seminal work *In C*), minimal music allows the listener to move in and out of the musical space and timeframe without radical corruption to the material: to "move around the musical object." Although temporal progress is important, it is relatively static and gradual. As Steve Reich describes it: "While performing and listening to gradual musical processes one can participate in a particular liberating and impersonal kind of ritual. Focusing in on the musical process makes possible that shift of attention away from *he* and *she* and *you* and *me* outwards towards *it*."[39]

So while minimal music may be object-centered, the opposite was true for visual minimalism according to Fried's conception of "theatricality." As this point reminds us, different conceptual paradigms often bring with them the need for different modes of address, different ways of looking and listening.

Postmodernism and the Postmedium Condition

If what I have been calling contextual modernism re-emerged in the mid-twentieth century to replace the dominance of the purist paradigm of formal modernism, then what is often called postmodernism might be used to refer to the more recent coexistence of both in the pluralist present. In this context, I evoke the concept of "the post-medium condition," coined by Rosalind Krauss, to refer to this shift away from the idea of media exclusivity to a more multimedia approach. Though there are artists and musicians who might be seen as sympathetic to formal modernism and who are still very active, many artists and musicians move across and between media and styles. For Krauss, the postmedium condition is explicitly the coming to worldwide artistic dominance of the "mixed-media installation."

Postmodernist (postmedium) artists are an interesting category because, in moving across and between media, they resist definition as simply "artists" or "musicians." Categorization becomes problematic, but it remains important to consider the historical precedents and traditions on which such border-cross-

38 Philip Glass, quoted in Wim Mertens, *American Minimal Music*, trans. J. Hautekiet, preface by Michael Nyman (London: Kahn & Averill, 1983), 79.

39 "Music as a Gradual Process," in *Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials*, ed. Marcia Tucker and James Monte (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1969).

ing activity may be based. Many postmodernist artists work in close relation to popular or vernacular musical culture and digital technology.

By way of a coda, I shall consider one contemporary artist who makes clear how difficult it is to close off the arts into media-defined frames. Christian Marclay seeks out the visual echoes of music in the fabric of society and in the fetishized musical object. These echoes are intimately entwined with notions of technology as objects: from vinyl records, album covers, magnetic tape, photography, and video, to instruments of his own development that are impossible to play, such as *Accordion* (1999), an accordion with a surrealistically extended bellows, and *Lip Lock* (2000), a witty conjoining of a tuba and a pocket trumpet at their mouth pieces, resembling a hydra budding its offspring.

In addition to the production of these "sculptures" and wall-based pieces, Marclay also works as a performing musician, but his instrument is not conventional. Instead, he "plays" musical recordings—most often in the form of vinyl records, which are often scratched, broken, or otherwise altered. He utilizes what he calls a Phonoguitar, which is in effect a turntable held by a shoulder strap and played at the waist. Marclay plays and remakes music by means of the recorded sounds produced by others.

Records and the technology of sound reproduction have been a constant interest of Marclay. His *Endless Column* (1988) is made from hundreds of stacked records, which tower over the viewer, and *Mobius Loop* (1994) is manufactured from stitched-together cassettes. The resonance of Walter Benjamin's famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936) is rather nostalgically evoked in much of this work, which echoes a time when the distinction between copy and original, though complex, was relatively clear. With digital technologies, the relation (in some music) between simulacra and origin is less straightforward.

Marclay's practice is attuned to the ways in which technologies of reproduction, while also petrifying sounds and images, are consumed to reactivate the object reproduced. As live music requires physical bodies, so recorded music, no matter how mediated, is also tied to the material world. Reproduction technology is not merely a means of transmission; it is also a cultural object with its own signifying capacities, physical presence, and design characteristics. The destruction of the commodity of music is a part of this process of reactivation of the object, as is its subversion in Marclay's wonderfully parodic use of record sleeves (an obvious example of art and music in concert—what Nicholas Cook has called "the domestic *Gesamtkunstwerk*"[40]) in his *Body Mix* series, where LP covers are joined to make new "exquisite corpses" (*cadavre exquis*). But these cut-and-mix or collage/assemblage techniques do not attempt to obscure the joining; they do not present a "natural whole." Rather, the stitching together remains evident; meaning is a consequence of joining things together. In other ways, Marclay differs from the cut-and-mix DJ culture that he evokes. In his rejoinings and juxtaposition of fragments, a supra identity is rarely claimed. He is less concerned with demonstrating his own connoisseurship than he is in allowing the audience to reflect on the aesthetics of discontinuity.

Despite my comments about the blurring of boundaries between artists and musicians, it is worth noting that Marclay does not define himself as a musician in the avant-garde sense. He therefore does not align himself with the likes of

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40 See Nicholas Cook, "The Domestic *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or Record Sleeves and Reception," in *Composition—Performance—Reception: Studies in the Creative Process in Music*, ed. Wyndham Thomas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 105–117.

Mauricio Kagel or Earle Brown, artist-musicians in the post-Cage Fluxus tradition. This tradition is, despite its radical nature, very much a musical tradition. Marclay comes, instead, from the art-school environment, one that can in part be identified by its closer relationship to pop culture, a lineage that produced, among others, Brian Eno and Malcolm McLaren.[41]

When Michael Fried wrote, "the illusion that the barriers between the arts are in the process of crumbling . . . and that the arts themselves are at last sliding towards some kind of final, implosive, hugely desirable synthesis,"[42] this may have been for him an undesirable illusion. Certainly, the "crumbling of artistic barriers" is not ubiquitous, as I have suggested through my discussion of the long arm of modernism, in both of its guises as "formal" and "contextual." But this trend towards synthesis has emerged as a powerful current in late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century culture. What Marclay's work teaches is the power of heterogeneity and the joy of the constant play of meanings that emerge on the cusp between art and music, the visual and the aural.

41 See Simon Frith and Howard Horne, *Art into Pop* (London: Methuen, 1987).
42 Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 831.

Jefim Golyscheff
Anti-Symphony: Musical Circular Guillotine (1919)

– Program notes of Dada soiree on April 30, 1919, in the Harmoniumsaal of the Graphisches Kabinett in Berlin. Source: Hanne Bergius, *Dada Triumphs! Dada Berlin, 1917–1923. Artistry of Polarities: Montages—Metamechanics—Manifestations* (New Haven: Thomson/Gale, 2003).

The "anti-symphony" *Musical Circular Guillotine* was a mixed-media music composition by the dadaist Jefim Golyscheff (1897–1970). It was performed as the climax of the Dada soiree on April 30, 1919, in the Berlin Harmoniumsaal. Golyscheff's colleague Raoul Hausmann gave this account of the evening:

> Golyscheff appeared together with a young girl dressed in white. I can still see this scene as if it were today, as if nothing had changed: Golyscheff, with a weak smile, went up to the large grand piano and beckoned with a small gesture of the hand to the innocent angel, who sat down and proclaimed in the voice of an electronic puppet:
> Anti-symphony in three parts = musical circular guillotine
> Provocative shot in the arm
> Chaotic mouth cavity of the submarine aircraft
> Collapsible Hypo—F#-chondriac
> Imagine . . . in all his mixed boyishness, aggressiveness, and shyness—I don't know what could have made for gayer melancholy. Imagine: your ears pierced by the words recited by the pure angel, your eyes popping out of your head because of its a-rhythm, its transparent notes [sic] a jumble of tones forced upon you which no longer wanted to be harmonies, but simply were DADA. His cunning art on the edge of acrobatics and the girl in white snatched away from the craft of music unknown, unexpected sounds, so that you were transported into infra-tonal raptures. To see this innocent angel play the syncopated sequence of dissonances had an unimaginable effect. The public, not yet accustomed to jazz, was disorientated; it was as if they had fallen out of the clouds.[1]

All this was apparently to the accompaniment of a band of kitchen utensils. It is unlikely the work was ever performed again, but it represents one of the most sophisticated examples of Dada's interventions into the realm of music.

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[1]   Raoul Hausmann, "A Jef Golyscheff," *Phases* 11 (May 1967): 75–77 (cited in Joan Ockman, "Reinventing Jefim Golyscheff: Lives of a Minor Modernist," *Assemblage* 11 [April 1990], 89).

La Monte Young
Composition No. 6 (1960)

Composition 1960 #6

The performers (any number) sit on the stage watching and listening to the audience in the same way the audience usually looks at and listens to performers. If in an auditorium, the performers should be seated in rows on chairs or benches; but if in a bar, for instance, the performers might have tables on stage and be drinking as is the audience.

Optional: A poster in the vicinity of the stage reading: COMPOSITION 1960 #6
by
La Monte Young
admission

(price)

and tickets, sold at stairways leading to stage from audience, admitting members of the audience who wish to join the performers on stage and watch the remainder of the audience.

A performance may be of any duration.

July 2, 1960

– Reprint of "Composition No. 6 by La Monte Young" in *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, edited by La Monte Young. Source: *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, eds. La Monte Young and Jackson Mac Low (New York, 1963), n.p.

In 1960 the American composer La Monte Young (b. 1935) composed a series of works entitled *Composition*. Like the others in the series, *No. 6* consists of a score, and like the majority of them the score is composed as a written text. They are radical works that challenge musical conventions, examining the onto-logical nature of art and music. *No. 6* is concerned with the social situation of music-making and the etiquette of musical presentation. This work reverses the conventional performer-audience relationship: focusing on the trope of sight, it requires the performer or performers to observe the audience rather than the other way around.

This work reverses the idea of the audience as passive, as simply spectators, in the most direct way. It positions the audience as the work and the performers as the spectators. In addition, it makes sight (and the gaze) the sole communi-cative act; no one "performs." Like John Cage's *4'33''*, any sounds produced by the "audience" or the environment come to constitute the music. But the visual element of musical performance that is always present, but rarely explicitly addressed, is here made conspicuous, for it is essentially all there is. The work also underlines the socialized nature of witnessing a musical performance through the consequent self-awareness of the audience.

Robert Morris
Box with the Sound of Its Own Making (1961)

– Installation view of *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961) by Robert Morris.
 © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2015, courtesy the artist and Seattle Art Museum. With
 friendly support by Sonnabend Gallery and Sprueth Magers Berlin London.

In 1961 the American artist Robert Morris created *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*, a cube-shaped, nine-inch walnut box containing a tape recorder and a speaker. The piece plays a tape loop of over three hours' duration of sounds recorded during the construction of the box, including the artist leaving the studio. The work explicitly takes to task Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's definition of visual art as spatial and nontemporal: duration and temporality are constituent elements of the artwork. It refers the "viewer" beyond the space and time of their perception to the "present" history of the development (making) of the object. This history is acoustically present but visually absent; the labor of construction is not hidden in the crafting of the box but contained within it in the form of sound. In this way, sculpture and sound are tangibly linked and interrelated.

The minimalist structure of Morris's sculpture relates to the work of some of his contemporaries, such as Carl Andre. The hidden sound recalls Marcel Duchamp's work *With Hidden Noise*, conceived in 1916 and constructed in 1964: a ball of twine pressed between two metal plates with something inside that makes a noise when shaken.

Terry Riley
In C (1964)

– Score for *In C* (1964)
by Terry Riley.
© Terry Riley,
℗ Celestial Harmonies,
1989.

Composed in 1964, Terry Riley's *In C* is an early classic of minimalist music. The title of Riley's piece sets it in opposition to Schoenbergian atonal and serial music in its declaration of the most elemental of key signatures. It is not, however, "tonal," as there is little impression of harmonic progress or motion, and no real sense of long-term tonal goals. The tonal resources of the piece consist of simple musical phrases derived from the tonic chord and scale of C, with only very sparing use of F-sharp and B-flat. A basic beat in regular quavers is set up in octaves—the two highest Cs on the piano keyboard, an idea originally suggested by Steve Reich, one of the first performers of the work—and a pedal point, which continues throughout the work. The first phrase, an ascending major third (C–E), establishes the tonal core. From this point the piece unfolds in a gradually spreading canonic texture, almost exclusively diatonic, producing a succession of major and minor triads. It manifests limited improvisational freedom: the number of players, instrumentation, and exact timing of each of the 53 figures on a single page that make up the piece are left unspecified. However, the sequence of the 53 sections is fixed, the dynamic level is a steady forte, and no performer is allowed to play as a soloist. Further, the performers are directed to remain aware of their fellows, and to listen creatively to the others so that all parts can "chime" together. This approach produces a degree of formal control on a completely determined stock of musical fragments that, nevertheless, allows the performers to become fellow composers. The element of chance is, therefore, reduced, but not eliminated.

Cathy Berberian
Stripsody (1966)

– Pages from score for Cathy Berberian's *Stripsody* (1966) by
  Roberto Zamarian, Edition Peters 66164.
  Courtesy C. F. Peters Musikverlag Leipzig, London, New York.

Stripsody is a cross-media work, operating in the space between music and
graphic art. It is scored for solo voice, and was composed by the American
mezzo-soprano Cathy Berberian (1925–1983). The score is represented as a
drawn cartoon strip, and was illustrated and notated by the artist Roberto
Zamarin (and published by C. F. Peters Corporation). Hans Otte, on behalf of
Radio Bremen in Germany, commissioned the work for the *pro musica nova*
festival of contemporary music in May 1966, which was the occasion of its first
performance. The score is read left to right, top to bottom, and displays a tem-
poral arrangement of characters—Tarzan and Superman, among others—and of
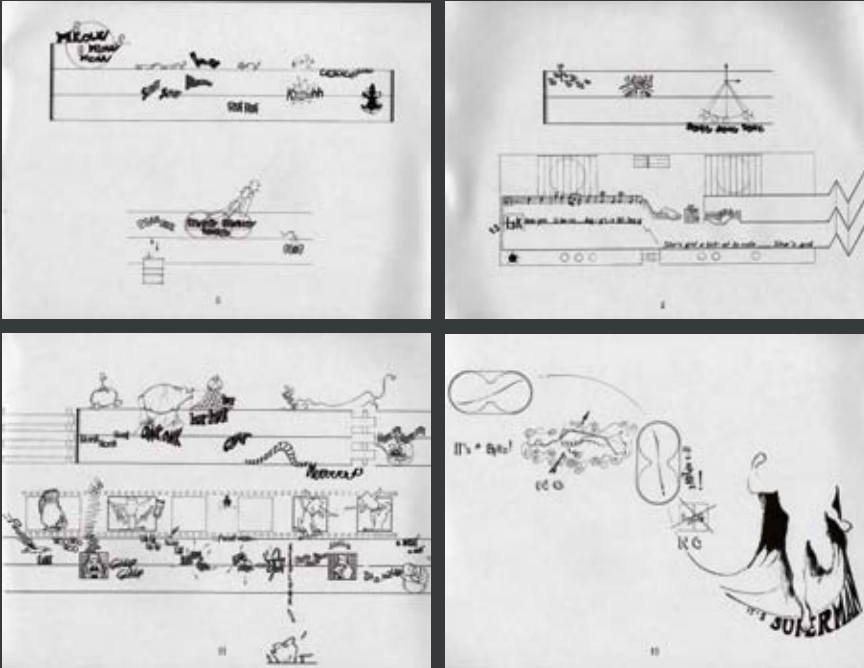
– Pages from score for Cathy Berberian's *Stripsody* (1966) by
  Roberto Zamarian, Edition Peters 66164.
  Courtesy C. F. Peters Musikverlag Leipzig, London, New York.

onomatopoeic sounds in approximate pitch ("oink," "zzzzzz," "pwuitt," "bang,"
"uhu," "kerplunk," etc.). It is notated on three lines of high, middle, and low
pitch, and is principally addressed to timbre. Conventional notation systems
have been less suited to accommodate this quality, often resorting to verbal
instructions as here, although in this case the words are drawn in imitation of
their sound. This graphically sophisticated score requires the singer to effec-
tively sing drawings. Although the score forms a magnificent visual document
for private consumption, the performance of the work is no less visually signifi-
cant in public. One instruction to the performer—directly related to the com-
mission—indicates that the work should be performed "as if [by] a radio sound
man, without any props, who must provide all the sound effects with his voice."[1]
In addition, certain "scenes"—in the score, bars enclosed by brackets, per-
formed by means of hand gestures—are to be acted out: "Whenever possible,
gestures and body movements should be simultaneous with the vocal
gestures."[2] The score stands between graphic and musical art, much like its
performance stands between theater and recital.

[1] Quotation from the score, Cathy Berberian, *Stripsody: solo voice* (Frankfurt am Main:
   C. F. Peters, 1989 [cat. no. P66164]).
[2] Ibid.

Robert Morris
Untitled (1967/1968)

– Installation view of *Untitled* (1967/1968) by Robert Morris.
  © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2015. Photo: David Heald, courtesy Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Untitled (1967/1968) is a mutable floor sculpture made of strips of felt by the American artist Robert Morris. This visual artwork has much in common with minimalist music. Morris had been a student of Anna Halprin when La Monte Young and Terry Riley were composing works for her performances in the late 1950s and early 1960s. As with Riley's composition *In C*, this work by Morris presents a formal context that is to some degree variable, a set of instances or circumscribed possibilities, rather than a set of fixed formal relations among different constituents. The specific relations between the various elements that make up *Untitled* are subject to change. When the work is transported from one viewing situation to another, as with different performances of *In C*, the specific formal relations inevitably undergo transformation. The installation of this work into the gallery space requires the curator to "perform" it by drop-ping the felt on the floor. His or her role is equivalent to that of the musician who interprets a score. The spectators of the work will experience a different range of connections at each manifestation, performance, or installation. *Untitled* is limited to a single material—264 pieces of tan felt, one centimeter thick—and to one process, cutting. The structure of the work is simply the result of applying the process of cutting to the material. That the strips are of different lengths and widths and that the disposition is variable, like Riley's work, produces control within a fixed material circumstance, which allows for creative input on the part of the installer of the work, as it does for the per-formers of *In C*. With this work, Morris is concerned more overtly with process than with object (what he termed "anti-form"). A gesture is made in the direc-tion of Jackson Pollock's technique of dripping paint onto a canvas on the floor. Like paint, the felt has pliancy, a quality not normally associated with sculpture. The performed disposition of it in the gallery space is equivalent to a recorded performance of music; it is an arrested interpretation.
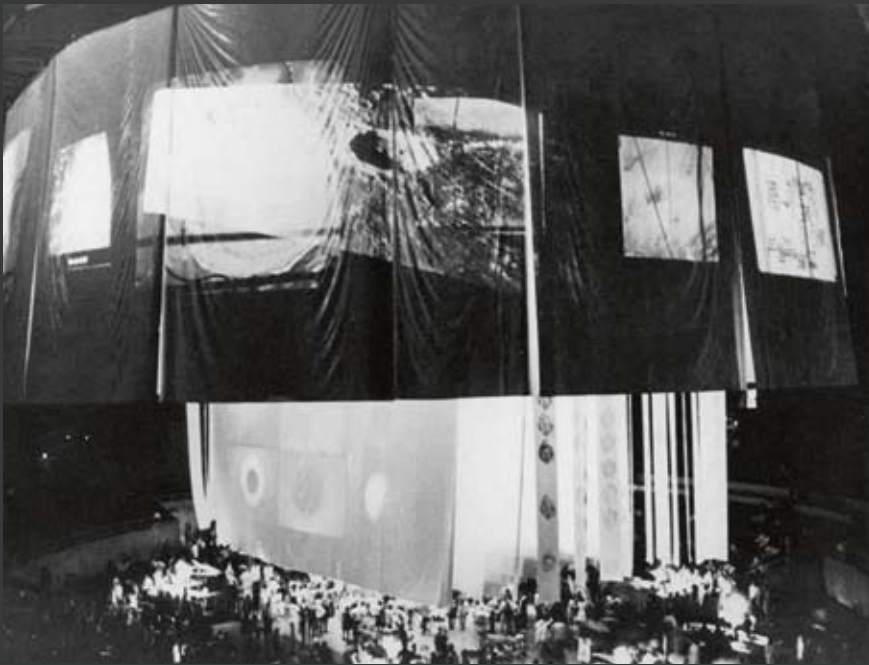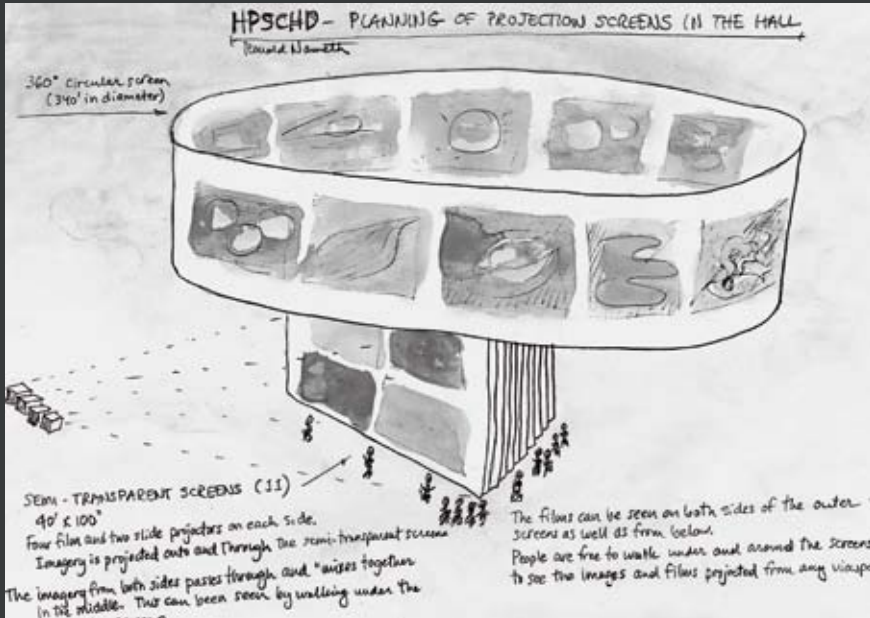
– Sketch for *HPSCHD* (1969) by John Cage and
  Lejaren Hiller with Ronald Nameth.
  Courtesy C. F. Peters Musikverlag Leipzig, London,
  New York.

– Photograph of *HPSCHD* (1969) by John Cage and
  Lejaren Hiller with Ronald Nameth.
  Courtesy C. F. Peters Musikverlag Leipzig, London,
  New York.

John Cage and Lejaren Hiller
HPSCHD (1969)

HPSCHD is an audiovisual work whose elements include projected film, slides, and music. The title of the work is derived from the word "harpsichord" reduced to six capital letters, in the manner of 1950s computer printouts. It was composed as a collaboration between American musicians John Cage (1912–1992) and Lejaren Hiller (1924–1994), with the assistance of Jack Cuomo and Laetitia Snow. The first performance of the work on May 16, 1969, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign lasted over five hours. The piece called for seven harpsichords and up to 51 tapes. These tapes play electronic pitches that utilize different equal-tempered divisions of the octave, ranging from 5 to 56 tones per octave, excluding the normal 12-note octave, which is assigned to the harpsichords themselves. Some of these harpsichords play music that is generated by means of a musical dice game invented by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Other harpsichords play randomly processed music by Mozart and other composers, including (in chronological order) Ludwig van Beethoven, Frédéric Chopin, Robert Schumann, Louis Moreau Gottschalk, Ferruccio Busoni, Arnold Schönberg, and Cage and Hiller themselves. The first performance also included the use of 7 preamplifiers, 208 computer-generated tapes, 52 projectors, 64 slide projectors with 6,400 slides (slides of abstract designs and images of space exploration, the latter borrowed from NASA), 8 film projectors with 40 films (including some borrowed from NASA), a 340-foot circular screen, and several 11-by-40-foot rectangular screens. The audience was free to stay in the performance space for any duration of time, to sit or walk around, to dance, eat or read, and so on. The experience of this multimedia extravaganza was intended to be different for each audience member, as individual reception depended on how and where attention was focused.