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Postgraduate Programme in Curating

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HOW TO DO THINGS WITH ART, WORDS AND *grapefruits*

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Author's Declaration

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Zurich, 17/5/2022
Dr Marinella Sofia Gkinko

A Word

A word is dead
When it is said,
Some say.
I say it just
Begins to live
That day.

Emily Dickinson

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Abstract

"A word is dead/ When it is said,/ Some say./ I say it just/ Begins to live/ That day". Emily Dickinson's poem "A word" stands as a source of inspiration for the research questions of this paper. Its focus lies on the possibilities inherent in the relationship between art and language and the ways that language is being physicalised, transcribed or used as medium, narrative and a central communication vehicle in the artistic expression; mainly the polysemy of language, its potential and dynamic, as well as its performativity. Taking J.L. Austin's seminal book *How to Do Things With Words* (1962) and Dorothea Von Hantelmann's study, *How to Do Things With Art—The Meaning of art's performativity* (2010) as a point of departure, I tackle the question of "How to do things with art and words". Yoko Ono's *Grapefruit* (1964) constitutes the core case study of this research, and it is examined through the theoretical lens of two key structuralist texts by Umberto Eco and Roland Barthes, which concern the new role of the viewer in relation to modern art, music, and literature, aiming to query the relationship between writing and performance, script/score and enactment, as well as their blurring boundaries.

I. A few words about words

The word is defined as a single unit of language that has meaning and can be spoken or written. Philosophy of language investigates the nature of language, the relations between language, language users, and the world. Investigations may include inquiry into the nature of meaning, intentionality, reference, the constitution of sentences, concepts, learning, and thought. Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell were pivotal figures in analytic philosophy's "linguistic turn". These writers were followed by Ludwig Wittgenstein (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus), the Vienna Circle as well as the logical positivists, and Willard Van Orman Quine.

In continental philosophy, language is not studied as a separate discipline, as it is in analytic philosophy. Rather, it is an inextricable part of many other areas of thought, such as phenomenology, structural semiotics,[1] hermeneutics, existentialism, structuralism, deconstruction and critical theory. The idea of language is often related to that of logic in its Greek sense as "logos", meaning discourse or dialectic. Language and concepts are also seen as having been formed by history and politics, or even by historical philosophy itself.

The field of hermeneutics, and the theory of interpretation in general, has played a significant role in 20th century continental philosophy of language and ontology beginning with Martin Heidegger. Heidegger combines phenomenology with the hermeneutics of Wilhelm Dilthey. Heidegger believed language was one of the most important concepts for Dasein. Heidegger believed that language today is worn out because of overuse of important words, and would be inadequate for in-depth study of Being (Sein). For example, Sein (being), the word itself, is saturated with multiple meanings. Thus, he invented new vocabulary and linguistic styles, based on Ancient Greek and Germanic etymological word relations, to disambiguate commonly used words. He avoided words like consciousness, ego, human, nature, etc. and instead talked holistically of Being-in-the-world, Dasein.

With such new concepts as Being-in-the-world, Heidegger constructs his theory of language, centered on speech. He believed speech (talking, listening, silence) was

[1] David Kreps, *Bergson, Complexity and Creative Emergence*, Springer, 2015, 92.

the most essential and pure form of language. Heidegger claims writing is only a supplement to speech, because even readers construct or contribute their own "talk" while reading. The most important feature of language is its projectivity, the idea that language is prior to human speech. This means that when one is "thrown" into the world, his existence is characterized from the beginning by a certain pre-comprehension of the world. However, only after naming, or "articulation of intelligibility", can one have primary access to Dasein and Being-in-the-World.[2]

Hans-Georg Gadamer expanded on these ideas of Heidegger and proposed a complete hermeneutic ontology. In Truth and Method, Gadamer describes language as "the medium in which substantive understanding and agreement take place between two people." In addition, Gadamer claims that the world is linguistically constituted, and cannot exist apart from language. For example, monuments and statues cannot communicate without the aid of language. Gadamer also claims that every language constitutes a world-view, because the linguistic nature of the world frees each individual from an objective environment: "... the fact that we have a world at all depends upon language and presents itself in it. The world as world exists for man as for no other creature in the world."[3]

Paul Ricœur, on the other hand, proposed hermeneutics which, reconnecting with the original Greek sense of the term, emphasized the discovery of hidden meanings in the equivocal terms (or "symbols") of ordinary language. Other philosophers who have worked in this tradition include Luigi Pareyson and Jacques Derrida. Within the field of Semiotics, that studies the transmission, reception and meaning of signs and symbols, human language (both natural and artificial) is just one among many ways that humans (and other conscious beings) can communicate. It allows them to take advantage of and effectively manipulate the external world to create meaning for themselves and transmit this meaning to others. Every object, every person, every event, and every force communicates (or signifies) continuously. The ringing of a telephone, for example, is the telephone. The smoke that is seen on the horizon is the sign that there is a fire. The smoke signifies. The things of the world,

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[2] Martin Heidegger (1996) *Being and Time*. New York: Blackwell.

[3] Hans G. Gadamer (1989) *Truth and Method*, New York: Crossroad.

in this vision, seem to be labeled precisely for intelligent beings who only need to interpret them in the way that humans do. Everything has meaning. True communication, including the use of human language, however, requires someone (a sender) who sends a message, or text, in some code to someone else (a receiver). Language is studied only insofar as it is one of these forms (the most sophisticated form) of communication. Some important figures in the history of semiotics, are Charles Sanders Peirce, Roland Barthes, and Roman Jakobson. In modern times, its best-known figures include Umberto Eco, A. J. Greimas, Louis Hjelmslev, and Tullio De Mauro. Investigations on signs in non-human communications are subject to biosemiotics, a field founded in the late 20th century by Thomas Sebeok and Thure von Uexküll.

Another of the questions that has divided philosophers of language is the extent to which formal logic can be used as an effective tool in the analysis and understanding of natural languages. While most philosophers, including Gottlob Frege, Alfred Tarski and Rudolf Carnap, have been skeptical about formalizing natural languages, many of them developed formal languages for use in the sciences or formalized parts of natural language for investigation. Some of the most prominent members of this tradition of formal semantics include Tarski, Carnap, Richard Montague and Donald Davidson.[4]

On the other side of the divide, and especially prominent in the 1950s and '60s, were the so-called "ordinary language philosophers". Philosophers such as P. F. Strawson, John Langshaw Austin and Gilbert Ryle stressed the importance of studying natural language without regard to the truth-conditions of sentences and the references of terms. They did not believe that the social and practical dimensions of linguistic meaning could be captured by any attempts at formalization using the tools of logic. Logic is one thing and language is something entirely different. What is important is not expressions themselves but what people use them to do in communication.[5]

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[4] B. Partee (2006) "Richard Montague (1930–1971)" In *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 2nd Ed., ed. Keith Brown. Oxford: Elsevier. V. 8, 255–257.

[5] W. G. Lycan (2008). Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction. New York: Routledge.

Hence, Austin developed a theory of speech acts, which described the kinds of things which can be done with a sentence (assertion, command, inquiry, exclamation) in different contexts of use on different occasions.[6] Strawson argued that the truth-table semantics of the logical connectives do not capture the meanings of their natural language counterparts ("and", "or" and "if-then").[7] While the "ordinary language" movement basically died out in the 1970s, its influence was crucial to the development of the fields of speech-act theory and the study of pragmatics. Many of its ideas have been absorbed by theorists such as Kent Bach, Robert Brandom, Paul Horwich and Stephen Neale.[8] In recent work, the division between semantics and pragmatics has become a lively topic of discussion at the interface of philosophy and linguistics, for instance in work by Sperber and Wilson, Carston and Levinson.[9]

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[6] J.L. Austin (1962) *How to Do Things With Words,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[7] P. F. Strawson, "On Referring". *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 59, No. 235 (Jul., 1950) 320–344.

[8] R. Brandom, (1994) *Making it Explicit*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

[9] Dan Sperber, Deirdre Wilson (2001) *Relevance: communication and cognition* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers; Carston Robyn (2002) *Thoughts and utterances: the pragmatics of explicit communication*. Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell Pub and C.; Stephen Levinson (2000) *Presumptive meanings: the theory of generalized conversational implicature*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

II. Traversing Theoretical Perspectives

This chapter moves through the theoretical perspectives adopted for the purposes of this study: from the performative capacity of the language and art's social relevance to considering participation through a structuralist theoretical lens.

a. *How to do things with words*

How to Do Things With Words[10] is a work by John Langshaw Austin, published in England in 1962 (posthumous edition) from a series of lectures given in 1955 at Harvard University. Austin's views on the matters discussed in the lectures were first formed in 1939, and he made some use of them in his address, "Other Minds," to the Aristotelian Society in 1946. Between 1952 and 1959, he lectured on the same topic, sometimes under the title "Words and Deeds." Much of Austin's philosophical reputation rests upon his incisive and acerbic criticism of the views of other philosophers—for example, his withering attacks on the views of A. J. Ayer and G. J. Warnock in Sense and Sensibilia (1962).

From this book was born the theory of speech acts, which will give rise to contemporary pragmatic linguistics and the philosophy of ordinary language. With this book, J.L. Austin continues the studies of Émile Benveniste, Karl Bühler , Roman Jakobson, Charles Bally, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. With an innovative and didactic working method, he develops his theories of speech acts in twelve lectures, differentiating two types of statements: the constative statement and the performative (or performative) statement. A statement is performative when nothing is stated or described but an act is performed. The performative is subjected to conditions of "happiness", depending on a situational (or circumstantial) context.

Throughout his studies, he realizes that constants also depend on conditions, so he extends the performative criterion to all statements. Therefore, it elaborates a taxonomy of the different ways we can have of "doing" something when saying something, divided into three categories: the locutionary act (saying something is

[10] J.L. Austin (1962) *How to Do Things With Words*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

doing something), the illocutionary act (when saying something we are doing something) and the perlocutionary act (because we say something we are doing something). It recognizes in the illocutionary act the essential act of the word, therefore it tries to establish a taxonomy of the different values that the verbs of an illocutionary act can adopt.

Austin invented speech act theory, and his theory has been used, revised, and extended not only by philosophers but also by linguists, linguistic anthropologists and sociologists, cognitive psychologists, and speech communication theorists. Austin begins his lectures in a remarkably modest way: “What I shall have to say here is neither difficult nor contentious; the only merit I should like to claim for it is that of being true, at least in parts.” He then recounts, with approval, attempts to recognize that some so-called statements are strictly nonsense and to determine why they are nonsense. He also lauds the discovery that some statements do not purport to state facts but aim to evince emotion or to prescribe or otherwise influence conduct. These efforts and discoveries have developed piecemeal, he thinks, but also amount to a revolution in philosophy, about which he says, “If anyone wishes to call it the greatest and most salutary in its history, this is not, if you come to think of it, a large claim.”

What he proposes is a theory that describes the utterances that masquerade as statements. He calls such utterances “performatives. ”Performatives have two characteristics: First, they do not describe or “constate” anything at all and are not true or false; second, to utter the performative sentence is not merely to say something. Austin’s first examples of performatives are “I do,” uttered by a bride or groom; “I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth,” uttered by someone smashing a bottle of champagne against the bow of a vessel; “I give and bequeath my watch to my brother,” as occurring in a will; and “I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow.” Based upon these examples, it might be tempting to think that to say the right words is the same as to do the action at issue. However, that is not correct. In general, the words have the proper effect only if uttered in appropriate circumstances, and only if the participants are doing certain other physical or mental things—for example, breaking the bottle of champagne. Further, for some acts, words are not necessary at all. Marrying might be accomplished by cohabiting and betting accomplished by inserting a coin into a slot machine.

Austin's examples of performatives are sufficient to prove that there is some distinction to be drawn between them and constatives: "But now how, as philosophers, are we to proceed? One thing we might go on to do, of course, is to take it all back: Another would be to bog, by logical stages, down. But all this must take time." Constatives are true or false; however, performatives are not—instead, because they are types of actions, they can be done well or badly. Austin, in his doctrine of infelicities, concentrates on how they can be performed badly; for one way to learn how a machine works is to see in what ways it can break. As a kind of action, performatives are subject to all the defects that any action is; as linguistic acts, they have some special problems. Without pretending that the list is...These matters raise doubts about the performative/constative distinction. Is there a way to make the distinction in grammatical terms, by grammatical criteria?

Many, but not all, performatives have their main verb in the first-person-singular, present tense, active, indicative mood, but "You are hereby authorized . . ." "Passengers are warned . . ." "Notice is hereby given . . ." and "Turn right" are exceptions. Thus, neither person, number, tense, voice, nor mood can be used as a simple criterion. The first-person, active, present tense remains, however, an attractive base upon which to build a criterion. An asymmetry exists between a performative verb in this form and the same verb in other persons, tenses, and moods. If one utters "I had bet," "He bets," or "They (might) have bet," one describes a certain action; but no action is described if one utters the words "I bet." Rather, to say "I bet" (in the right circumstances, frame of mind, and so on) is, roughly, to bet. Austin's strategy for devising a criterion is, then, to make a list of verbs having this asymmetry and to "reduce" other performative utterances to this form, which Austin calls "explicit performative" form. Explicit performatives should be considered a development of language that evolves out of "primary performatives," which are vague and less explicit because they serve more than one purpose. "I will," in contrast with "I..

Up to this point Austin has been contrasting saying and doing. A new approach is required, one that focuses on the senses in which saying can be doing. Austin notices that every case of saying something, in the full sense, what he calls the "locutionary act," is a case of doing something. Every locutionary act consists of a phonetic act, a phatic act, and a rhetic act. The phonetic act is the act of merely uttering

noises; a parrot is capable of performing a phonetic act. The phatic act is the act of uttering certain words in a grammatical sequence, that is, noises that belong to a language, and of uttering those words as belonging to a language. The asrequirement is important; a parrot utters words but because it is not aware of them as words or as having a meaning, it does not perform a phatic act.

The rhetic act is the act of uttering the words with a more or less definite sense and a reference. The terms “sense” and “reference” are those of German philosopher Gottlob Frege, but the doctrine is Austin’s. For Frege, all meaningful words have both a sense and reference; for Austin, reference belongs to words that are correlated to objects by “demonstrative conventions”; sense belongs to those words that are correlated to general things by “descriptive conventions.”The difference between the phatic act and the rhetic act is brought out by the different ways of reporting them. A phatic act is reported by direct quotation: He said, “The cat is on the mat.” A rhetic act is reported by indirect quotation: He said that the cat is on the mat. The difference is critical. One who reports aphatic act is claiming, in effect, to be offering a verbatim report of the speaker’s words and is not committed to the proposition that its speaker had achieved any reference; there might have been no cat to which to refer. A person who reports a rhetic act is not claiming that its speaker used the very words in which the report is cast; the speaker might have said, “The feline pet is lying upon the fabric used for protecting the floor.” The person is committed to the proposition that the speaker’s words had a definite sense and reference.

To report a rhetic act is not to report a speech act fully, for such a report leaves out the force of the utterance. Was his saying that I was to go to the store an order or merely advice or a suggestion? The force of a speech act is its “illocutionary force”; the act is an illocutionary act. The illocutionary act is governed by and conforms to conventions, and it should not be confused with something else that is done in a speech act, a perlocutionary act. A perlocutionary act is an act that produces certain effects on the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or even the speaker, as a consequence of the illocutionary act. These effects are natural consequences and not conventional ones, such as follow illocutionary acts. Although it is only a roughlinguistic guide, people commonly report illocutionary acts as things done in saying something and perlocutionary acts as things done by saying something. In

saying it, one warns another person (illocutionary act); by saying it, one persuades another person (perlocutionary act). These linguistic formulas do not, however, yield a criterion. By saying something, a person might have been joking or insinuating, but joking and insinuating are not perlocutionary acts. And in saying something, a person might have made a mistake, but making a mistake is not an illocutionary act.

The original contrast between performatives and constatives was a false dichotomy. Illocutionary acts are performative, in Austin's original sense of thatterm, and some of them have truth values. "I state that . . ." is on a par with "I argue that . . ." and "I promise that . . ." Like performatives, statements have felicity conditions. A statement often presupposes the existence of a referent, so if no referent exists, the attempted statement fails. Also, like performatives, statements require that the speaker be in a certain position; without evidence, the speaker cannot state when the world will end, although he or she may guess or prophesy it. Stating, it appears, is not unique; it is just one of many kinds.

Austin's method of work is innovative in every way. He calls his way of philosophizing "linguistic phenomenology." He does not consider the analysis of language as such, but as a philosophy that deals with language, in order to study phenomena. His method of analyzing language is based on trial and error, thoroughness, and concern for detail. It postulates observing language, distrusting it, disfiguring it, even disrupting it. For this reason, the analyst must imagine new or unprecedented situations even when they are strange or extremely trivial. Taking the complete inventory of the possibilities of enunciations and exhaustive lists of speech acts allows to be in front of the "total situation", apt to raise answers to the philosophical questions. You have unwavering and exclusive confidence in your method, even though it may seem laborious in the face of all the enunciation possibilities. For him, the uses of language are not infinite, therefore it is possible and necessary to establish a repertoire as wide as possible to arrive at an exact method. In that way, he opposes both philosophical abstraction and grammatical abstraction.

b. *How to do things with art*

At the heart of *How to Do Things with Art*[11] lies the question of art's relevance to society. How does art become politically or socially significant? This book attempts to answer this question on a theoretical level, and to indicate, through the analysis of works by James Coleman, Daniel Buren, Jeff Koons, and Tino Seghal, how artists can create and shape social relevance; in other words, to provide what could be called a pragmatic understanding of art's societal impact. The title of the book itself is a play on John Langshaw Austin's seminal lecture series “How to Do Things with Words,” in which he discussed the performative, or reality-producing, capacity of language. The model of performativity that the author argues for, points toward these fundamental levels of meaning production, putting the conventions of art production, presentation, and historical persistence into focus, showing how these conventions are co-produced by any artwork, and proposing that it is precisely this dependency on conventions that opens up the possibility of changing them.

The question of how to do things with art seems particularly pertinent today: never before has what we call art been so important to Western societies—more art museums are being built than ever before, exhibitions attract mass audiences, the art world has not only expanded globally but also socially, and probably no other profession has received such a dramatic boost in status as the artist, who perfectly embodies today's prevailing idea of a creative, self-determined subjectivity.

How can artists themselves shape the social relevance and impact of their work? In *How to Do Things with Art*, German art historian Dorothea von Hantelmann uses four case study artists --Daniel Buren, James Coleman, Jeff Koons and Tino Sehgal--to examine how an artwork acts upon and within social conventions, particularly through the "performing" of exhibitions. Therefore, she develops a well-founded, far-reaching analytical approach to modern and contemporary art, in particular the art of European and American post-war modernism. The book's title is a play on J.L. Austin's seminal text, *How to Do Things with Words*, which describes

[11] Dorothea von Hantelmann (2010) *How to Do Things with Art: The Meaning of Art's Performativity*, JRP | Ringier.

language's reality-producing properties and demonstrates that in "saying" there is always a "doing"--a linguistic counterpart to the dynamics envisioned by Von Hantelmann for art, in which "showing" is a kind of "doing." Few other words coined in recent years have spread as far and as fast as “performativity”. As so often when it comes to defining terms and concepts, however, the exact meaning is often vague. She interprets the performative as being a novel instrument of critical artistic practice that does not so much seek to break with existing structures of art and its institutions like an avant-garde movement, as to analyse their effectiveness and, at the same time, to beat them at their own game.

The concept of the performative derives from linguistics and deals with the phenomenon that language not only has a representative or communicative function, but can also perform actions. Declarations such as “I swear“ or “You are sentenced” are not simply descriptions of reality, but speech acts that create reality. This ability of language to perform speech acts serves von Hantelmann as the starting point of her further analysis of how language can create realities. Sociologist and gender researcher Judith Butler sees this ability of language to perform speech acts rather than merely to make literal statements as an area of social activity that is determined by conventions and rules of which individual speakers are unaware. It is an inescapable fact that we as speakers are continually creating things. Von Hantelmann sums up Butler’s theory by saying that she uses the word ‘performative’ to refer to actions that create reality, but not exactly because that was what an individual intended, but because it derives from conventions”.

In her further studies of contemporary art, to which she devotes four chapters of her book, von Hantelmann applies this model of the power to act to artworks themselves. The aim is less to place the focus of observation (and criticism) on aesthetic categories, such as a work’s form, medium or appeal, and instead to ask how the artwork “acts” within the context of conventions. “The model of performativity ... places the main emphasis on the conventions of its production, presentation and reception, it shows how each individual work of art helps to produce these conventions and how, in so doing, possibilities are created for changing them.“ While the many strands of immanent critique that evaluate artworks’ status (such as conceptual art, Fluxus and minimalism) did change the materiality of the artwork, making it a more

intellectual process that presents ideas rather than creating aesthetic objects, they were still tied to an approach that saw artworks as museum pieces. According to von Hantelmann, that is why these critical approaches were ultimately of no consequence – they only confirmed the institutional power of the museums, market and art history.

As someone who has observed the artistic progress of Tino Sehgal for a long time, von Hantelmann devotes an extensive section of her analysis to his career. It consists of reducing the material composition of an artwork and allowing it to exist only in live interaction. Sehgal's body-based works, which, incidentally, are often incorrectly referred to as "performances", use all the conventions of the art business except one: material appearance and capturability. Because Sehgal's works of the last ten years have always been developed and shown only in very specific museums and only with the physical presence of actors, their only form of existence consists of self-production. It is possible to remember, describe or copy them, but they can never be possessed except during the moment of their self-realisation.

Von Hantelmann believes that this enables the artist to underline the power to act against which people have polemicized again and again with more or less helpless means of criticism. But rather than attempting to undermine such "conventions", Sehgal transforms them and uses them to attempt to redefine what comprises a performative artwork – the ability and potential to produce itself within a framework, a framework which itself has always been part of the action.

c. *The poetics of the open work*

Italian semiotician Umberto Eco is one of the pioneers of reader response theory. *The Open Work* (1962)[12] addresses the open-ended and aleatory nature of modern music, literature and art, pointing to the wider implications of this new mode of aesthetic reception for sociology and pedagogy, and for new forms of communication. To avoid any confusion in terminology, it is important to specify that here the definition of the 'open work', despite its relevance in formulating a fresh dialectics between the work of art and its performer, still requires to be separated from other conventional applications of this term. Aesthetic theorists, for example, often have recourse to the notions of 'completeness' and 'openness' in connection with a given work of art. These two expressions refer to a standard situation of which we are all aware in our reception of a work of art: we see it as the end product of an author's effort to arrange a sequence of communicative effects in such a way that each individual addressee can refashion the original composition devised by the author.

The addressee is bound to enter into an interplay of stimulus and response which depends on his unique capacity for sensitive reception of the piece. In this sense the author presents a finished product with the intention that this particular composition should be appreciated and received in the same form as he devised it. As he reacts to the play of stimuli and his own response to their patterning, the individual addressee is bound to supply his own existential credentials, the sense conditioning which is peculiarly his own, a defined culture, a set of tastes, personal inclinations and prejudices.

Thus, his comprehension of the original artefact is always modified by his particular and individual perspective. In fact, the form of the work of art gains its aesthetic validity precisely in proportion to the number of different perspectives from which it can be viewed and understood. These give it a wealth of different resonances and echoes without impairing its original essence; a road traffic sign, on the other hand, can be viewed in only one sense, and, if it is transfigured into some fantastic

[12] Umberto Eco, *Opera aperta* (Milan: Bompiano, 1962); trans. Anna Cancogni, *The Open Work* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989) 1–23.

meaning by an imaginative driver, it merely ceases to be that particular traffic sign with that particular meaning. A work of art, therefore, is a complete and closed form in its uniqueness as a balanced organic whole, while at the same time constituting an open product on account of its susceptibility to countless different interpretations which do not impinge on its unadulterable specificity. Hence, every reception of a work of art is both an interpretation and a performance of it, because in every reception the work takes on a fresh perspective for itself.

An artistic work that suggests is also one that can be performed with the full emotional and imaginative resources of the interpreter. Whenever we read poetry there is a process by which we try to adapt our personal world to the emotional world proposed by the text. This is all the more true of poetic works that are deliberately based on suggestiveness, since the text sets out to stimulate the private world of the addressee so that he can draw from inside himself some deeper response that mirrors the subtler resonances underlying the text.

If we turn to literary production to try to isolate an example of a 'work in movement', we are immediately obliged to take into consideration Mallarmé's *Livre*, a colossal and far-reaching work, the quintessence of the poet's production. He conceived it as the work which would constitute not only thegoal of his activities but also the end goal of the world: 'Le monde existe pour aboutir à un livre.' ['The world exists to end up in a book'.] Mallarmé never finished the book, although he worked on it at different periods throughout his life. But there are sketches for the ending which have recently been brought to light by the acute philological research of Jacques Schérer.[13]

The metaphysical premises for Mallarmé's Livre are enormous and possibly questionable. I would prefer to leave them aside in order to concentrate on the dynamic structure of this artistic object which deliberately sets out to validate a specific poetic principle: 'Un livre ne commence ni ne finit; tout au plus fait-il semblant.' ['A book neither begins nor ends; it only pretends to do so.'] The Livre was conceived as a mobile apparatus, not just in the mobile and 'open' sense of a composition such as

[13] J. Schérer (1957) *Le 'Livre' de Mallarmé Premières recherches sur des documents inédits*, Paris: Gallimard.

Un coup de dès … [A Throw of the Dice …], where grammar, syntax and typesetting introduced a plurality of elements, polymorphous in their indeterminate relation to each other.

The possibilities which the work's openness makes available always work within a given field of relations. As in the Einsteinian universe, in the 'work in movement' we may well deny that there is a single prescribed point of view. But this does not mean complete chaos in its internal relations. What it does imply is an organizing rule which governs these relations. Therefore, to sum up, we can say that the 'work in movement' is the possibility of numerous different personal interventions, but it is not an amorphous invitation to indiscriminate participation. The invitation offers the performer the opportunity for an oriented insertion into something which always remains the world intended by the author.

In other words, the author offers the interpreter, the performer, the addressee, a work to be completed. He does not know the exact fashion in which his work will be concluded, but he is aware that once completed the work in question will still be his own. It will not be a different work, and, at the end of the interpretative dialogue, a form which is his form will have been organized, even though it may have been assembled by an outside party in a particular way that he could not have foreseen. The author is the one who proposed a number of possibilities which had already been rationally organized, oriented and endowed with specifications for proper development.

The poetics of the 'work in movement' (and partly that of the 'open' work) sets in motion a new cycle of relations between the artist and his audience, a new mechanics of aesthetic perception, a different status for the artistic product in contemporary society. It opens a new page in sociology and in pedagogy, as well as a new chapter in the history of art. It poses new practical problems by organizing new communicative situations. In short, it installs a new relationship between the contemplation and the utilization of a work of art. Seen in these terms and against the background of historical influences and cultural interplay which links art by analogy to widely diversified aspects of the contemporary world view, the situation of art has now become a situation in the process of development. Far from being fully accounted for and catalogued, it deploys and poses problems in several dimensions. In short, it is an 'open' situation, in movement. A work in progress.

d. *The death of the author*

Roland Barthes' short essay 'The Death of the Author' (1968) should ideally be read alongside 'From Work to Text' (1971) as his key statement on the idea that a work's meaning is not dependent on authorial intention but on the individual point of active reception. Barthes was concerned primarily with literature but his insights are analogous to much contemporary art of this period, particularly works that emphasize the viewer's role in their completion.

Though the sway of the Author remains powerful (the new criticism has often done no more than consolidate it), it goes without saying that certain writers have long since attempted to loosen it. In France, Mallarmé was doubtless the first to see and to foresee in its full extent the necessity to substitute language itself for the person who until then had been supposed to be its owner. For him, for us too, it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is, through a prerequisite impersonality (not at all to be confused with the castrating objectivity of the realist novelist), to reach that point where only language acts, 'performs', and not 'me'. Mallarmé's entire poetics consists in suppressing the author in the interests of writing (which is, as will be seen, to restore the place of the reader).

Paul Valéry, encumbered by a psychology of the Ego, considerably diluted Mallarmé's theory but, his taste for classicism leading him to turn to the lessons of rhetoric, he never stopped calling into question and deriding the Author; he stressed the linguistic and, as it were, 'hazardous' nature of his activity, and throughout his prose works he militated in favour of the essentially verbal condition of literature, in the face of which all recourse to the writer's interiority seemed to him pure superstition. Proust himself, despite the apparently psychological character of what are called his analyses, was visibly concerned with the task of inexorably blurring, by an extreme subtilization, the relation between the writer and his characters; by making of the narrator not he who has seen and felt nor even he who is writing, but he who is going to write (the young man in the novel – but, in fact, how old is he and who is he? – wants to write but cannot; the novel ends when writing at last becomes possible), Proust gave modern writing its epic.

Surrealism, though unable to accord language a supreme place (language being system and the aim of the movement being, romantically, a direct subversion of

codes – itself moreover illusory: a code cannot be destroyed, only 'played off'), contributed to the desacrilization of the image of the Author by ceaselessly recommending the abrupt disappointment of expectations of meaning (the famous surrealist 'jolt'), by entrusting the hand with the task of writing as quickly as possible what the head itself is unaware of (automatic writing), by accepting the principle and the experience of several people writing together. Leaving aside literature itself (such distinctions really becoming invalid), linguistics has recently provided the destruction of the Author with a valuable analytical tool by showing that the whole of the enunciation is an empty process, functioning perfectly without there being any need for it to be filled with the person of the interlocutors.

Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, just as I is nothing other than the instance saying I: language knows a 'subject', not a 'person', and this subject, empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language 'hold together', suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it. The removal of the Author (one could talk here with Brecht of a veritable 'distancing', the Author diminishing like a figurine at the far end of the literary stage) is not merely an historical fact or an act of writing; it utterly transforms the modern text (or – which is the same thing – the text is henceforth made and read in such a way that at all its levels the author is absent). The temporality is different. The Author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a before and an after. The Author is thought to nourish the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child.

The modem scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written here and now. The fact is (or, it follows) that writing can no longer designate an operation of recording, notation, representation, 'depiction' (as the Classics would say); rather, it designates exactly what linguists, referring to Oxford philosophy, call a performative, a rare verbal form (exclusively given in the first person and in the present tense) in which the enunciation has no other content (contains no other proposition) than the act by which it is uttered – something like the I declare of kings or the I sing

of very ancient poets. Having buried the Author, the modern scriptor can thus no longer believe, as according to the pathetic view of his predecessors, that this hand is too slow for his thought or passion and that consequently, making a law of necessity, he must emphasize this delay and indefinitely 'polish' his form. For him, on the contrary, the hand, cut off from any voice, borne by a pure gesture of inscription (and not of expression), traces a field without origin – or which, at least, has no other origin than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins. In the multiplicity of writing, everything is to be disentangled, nothing deciphered; the structure can be followed, 'run' (like the thread of a stocking) at every point and at every level, but there is nothing beneath: the space of writing is to be ranged over, not pierced; writing ceaselessly posits meaning ceaselessly to evaporate it, carrying out a systematic exemption of meaning.

Thus, is revealed the total existence of writing: a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted.

Which is why it is derisory to condemn the new writing in the name of a humanism hypocritically turned champion of the reader's rights. Classic criticism has never paid any attention to the reader; for it, the writer is the only person in literature. We are now beginning to let ourselves be fooled no longer by the arrogant antiphrastical recriminations of good society in favour of the very thing it sets aside, ignores, smothers or destroys; we know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the readermust be at the cost of the death of the Author.[14]

[14] Roland Barthes, 'La mort de l'auteur', Mantéia, V (Paris, 1968); trans. 'The Death of the Author', in Roland Barthes, Image – Music – Text, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill & Wang/London: Fontana, 1977) 142–148.

Language was an important tool for Conceptual artists in the 1960s. Many used language in place of more traditional materials like brushes and canvas, and words played a primary role in their emphasis on ideas over visual forms. Though text had been used in art long before this, artists like Joseph Kosuth were among the first to give words such a central role. Conceptual artists also used language in the form of instructions detailing how an artwork should be made. Sol LeWitt was among the principal originators of this strategy, which his peers widely embraced. Arguing that ideas alone can be art, he allowed for a measure of separation between the artist and the physical execution of his or her artwork. His work exemplifies this: he would generate ideas for artworks and write instructions on how to make them, which other people—sometimes whole teams working days or weeks—would then carry out. In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work [. . .] all planning and decisions are made beforehand, and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes the machine that makes the art.[15]

The classical painting is a material object with a virtually infinite number of unspecified and unspecifiable properties which are nonetheless considered to be constitutive for the identity of the work, because they were supposedly witnessed (and thus endorsed) by the artist. That is why art galleries exhibit original paintings, rather than copies or descriptions. (Cf. Nelson Goodman on copies and fakes in Languages of Art.) But when art is in fact created by realizing explicit, discursively articulated concepts, the possibility arises to skip the realization of the work, and to communicate the underlying concept directly to the "spectator". In classical music, this possibility has existed already for several centuries, because it is always based on the execution of scores which specify the intended properties of a piece in great detail. Some people do in fact read music, but playing and listening have always remained more popular.

The musical score is one of the most conspicuous roots of the "concept art" tradition in modern art. Around 1960, several New York composers and their overseas associates in the "International Fluxus Movement" started to write verbal pieces that

[15] Sol LeWitt: "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum*, summer 1967.

were inspired by the teachings of John Cage (specifically: his generalization of music to include theatre, his interest in indeterminacy, and his emphasis on abstract temporal structures). These pieces (by George Brecht, La Monte Young, Henry Flynt, Tony Conrad, Dick Higgins, Yoko Ono, Eric Andersen, Ben Vautier and several others) were often fairly vague, or had nothing to do with sound, or were obviously nicer to read than to execute, or were impossible to perform in the first place. They were verbal artworks without being literature, using conventional, literal language to denote classes of things, events, or concepts. The "score" is treated as an autonomous artwork which can be displayed in books or magazines without any intentions regarding its possible execution. (Nonetheless, many word pieces can be (and have been) "played". The performable ones among the Fluxus pieces were often executed as "events" in the context of "concerts"; and some of them have also been realized as visual art works. (The exhibition Pop Art Redefined (Hayward Gallery, London, 1969), for instance, included realizations of some pieces by George Brecht.)

Later conceptual artists such as Lawrence Weiner, Sol LeWitt and Robert Barry presented their "word pieces" in a visual arts context. Weiner treated his verbal descriptions as autonomous artworks, which could be displayed on gallery walls without any intentions regarding their possible execution; the description thus replaces the work. Sol LeWitt's pieces, on the other hand, were obviously intended to be realized rather than contemplated. They constitute a direct visual equivalent of the scores of traditional classical composers. The Fluxus compositions were disseminated through private correspondence, low circulation magazines, and small-scale "concerts". The work of later, more visually oriented "conceptual artists" (Weiner, LeWitt, Barry, Kosuth, Art & Language) was sold to commercial art galleries and major museums; it thus entered more easily into the canonical narratives of modern art history.

Since the beginning of her career, Yoko Ono has explored issues of socio-political importance that are still highly relevant today. From early on, she has been committed to peace in the world and the feminist cause. Ideas always play a central role in her work: sometimes she formulates them in a playful and humorous way, sometimes quite radically, and then again very poetically. Some are transformed into objects while others are left immaterial. Yoko Ono’s artistic oeuvre is correspondingly

diverse, encompassing sculptures, works on paper, installations, performances, film and music.

The small square book entitled *GRAPEFRUIT* is something like the centerpiece of Yoko Ono's art. It contains a collection of her "instructions" or "event scores". These are directions or sketches of ideas for performances that basically anyone who reads them can perform. What counts, however, is the imagination the fantasy. The work of art can also only be created in the head and does not necessarily have to be acted out. This makes Yoko Ono a conceptual artist avant la lettre. Ono chose the title for the book because she saw the grapefruit as a hybrid, a mixture of orange and lemon. She regarded herself as a hybrid too -between Japan and America, between East and West, between visual art, music and performance. The first edition, was published in 1964 in an edition of 500 pieces. Those who had bought Grapefruit before its release paid only three dollars; after its release, the price rose to six dollars.

V. Looking Outwards

all this makes me prefer to view art
not as means of production
but as form of thinking -art thinking, in fact.
Luis Camnitzer

Claire Bishop defined the emphasis on collaboration and participation in contemporary art as "the social turn."[16] The point of departure for the selection of texts in this reader is the social dimension of participation – rather than activation of the individual viewer in so-called 'interactive' art and installation. The way in which the medium of the exhibition is discussed in curatorial discourse is ambivalent, particularly so in recent times. There are studies of the exhibition as a form and medium (Misiano et al., "The Grammar of the Exhibition"; Hoffmann, "Overture"), providing detailed analyses of the processes of communication and interpretation responsible for any form of knowledge production in the exhibition space (Ferguson; Poinsot), as well as studies of its social and cultural function (Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex" [1996]; O'Doherty; Franke). Some publications forego a discussion of the exhibition space in favour of other spaces, such as the discursive, the performative, or the public (urban) space (O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn"; Lind, Performing the Curatorial), while others directly focus on the notion of the curatorial exploring the conditions of hospitality of exhibitions as communicative spaces with regard to the production of knowledge and meaning that is either generated in them or attributed to them.[17]

The question that still has relevance today and remains largely unanswered is what happens or needs to happen in the exhibition space so that it can function as a medium of enquiry rather than representation and be perceived as an arena of significance grounded in the materiality of what is presented rather than of symbolic knowledge production what conditions the exhibition space while viewing an exhibition, the questions addressed would presumably primarily concern the grammar of the exhibition, its speech and utterance, and the ways in which it produces meaning

[16] Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," *Artforum*, Vol. 44, No. 6 (February 2006), 178-183.
[17] Wiebke Gronemeyer (2018) "The Communicative Space of the Exhibition", 22.

and knowledge.[18] The meaning of an exhibition resides neither "in" the artworks not in the arrangement of the display, nor even in the texts written to accompany the show. Meaning is constructed by the spectator in a space that includes all of these, as well as the discussions and reviews the show generates. Art becomes socially meaningful only within the discursive contexts, explicit or implicit, in which it is experienced.[19]

Rancière's unpublished essay 'The Emancipated Spectator' (2004)[20] is addressing the opposition of 'active' and 'passive' is riddled with presuppositions about looking and knowing, watching and acting, appearance and reality. This is because the binary of active/passive always ends up dividing a population into those with capacity on one side, and those with incapacity on the other. As such, it is an allegory of inequality. Drawing analogies with the history of education, Rancière argues that emancipation should rather be the presupposition of equality: the assumption that everyone has the same capacity for intelligent response to a book, a play or a work of art. Rather than suppressing this mediating object in favour of communitarian immediacy, Rancière argues that it should be a crucial third term which both parts refer to and interpret. The distance that this imposes, he writes, is not an evil that should be abolished, since it is the precondition of any communication: Spectatorship is not the passivity that has to be turned into activity. It is our normal situation. We learn and teach, we act and know as spectators who link what they see with what they have seen and told, done and dreamt. There is no privileged medium as there is no privileged starting point. In calling for spectators who are active as interpreters, Rancière implies that the politics of participation might best lie, not in anti-spectacular stagings of community or in the claim that mere physical activity would correspond to emancipation, but in putting to work the idea that we are all equally capable of inventing our own translations.[21]

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[18] See above.

[19] Alexander Alberro (2014) "Alice Creischer, Andreas Siekmann, and Max Jorge Hinderer: The Potosí Principle (2010)." *Mousse: The Artist as Curator*, vol. 45, no. 4, 33.

[20] Jacques Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator", unpublished conference paper, Frankfurt, August 2004 <http://theater.kein.org/> [accessed 15/5/2022].

[21] A similar argument for consumption as creative is put forward by Michel de Certeau in The Practice of Everyday Life (1980). Literary variants of this idea can be found in Roland Barthes' 'Death of the Author' (1968) and 'From Work to Text' (1971), and in Jacques Derrida's idea of the 'Countersignature', *Paragraph*, vol. 27, no. 2, July 2004, 7–42.

Unattached to a privileged artistic medium, this principle would not divide audiences into active and passive, capable and incapable, but instead would invite us all to appropriate works for ourselves and make use of these in ways that their authors might never have dreamed possible.

My hope is that this thesis helps move future research into the meaning of art in a direction that and exposes the real power that art possesses, in its dynamic content and force and at the same time "allow art the potential to remain indeterminate and its interpretation undirected".[22]

[22] Sophie J Williamson (2017) "On Cultural Translation", *OnCurating* 35, 93-98.

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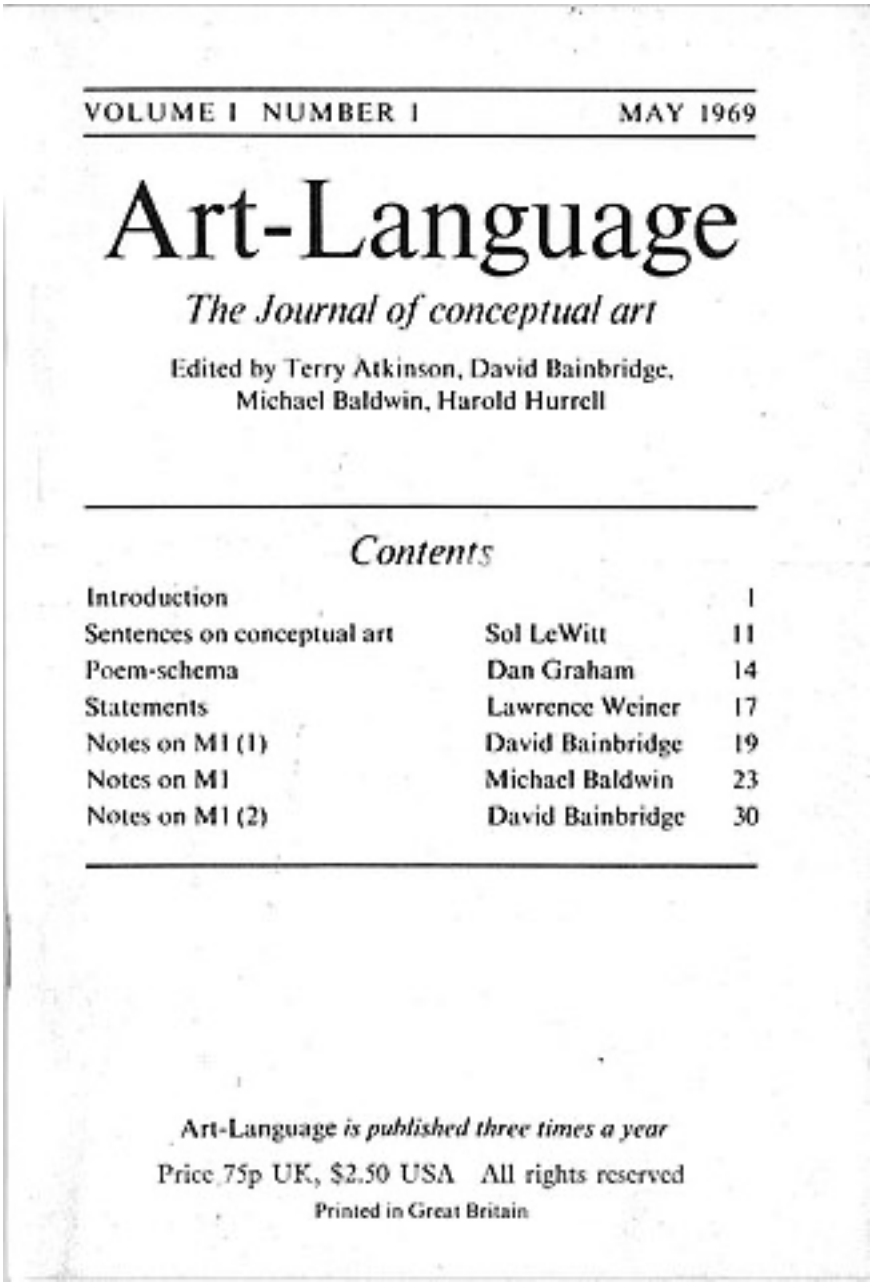
Annex - Images Credits

Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs,* 1965



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The Journal of conceptual art

Edited by Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge,
Michael Baldwin, Harold Hurrell

Contents

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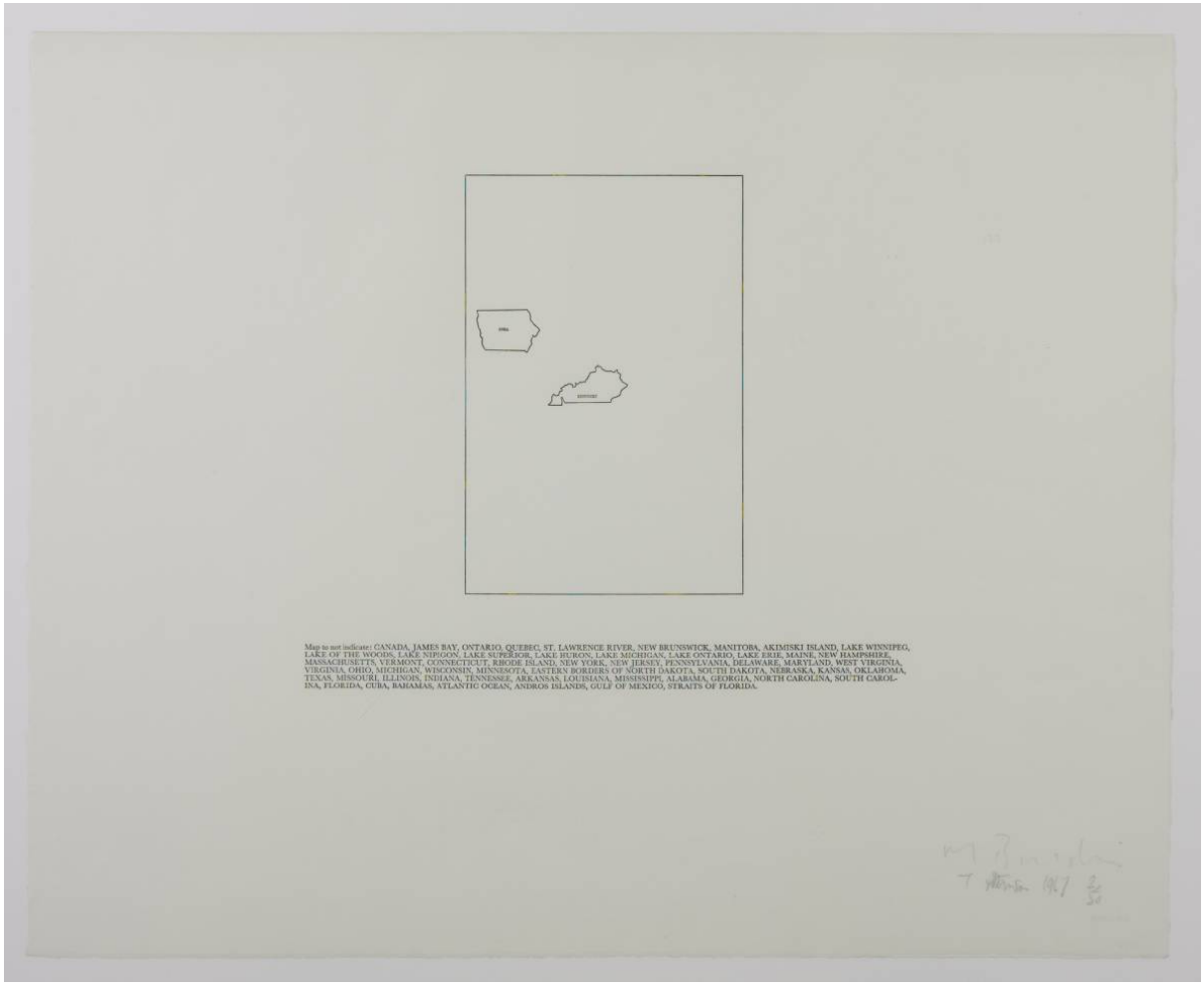
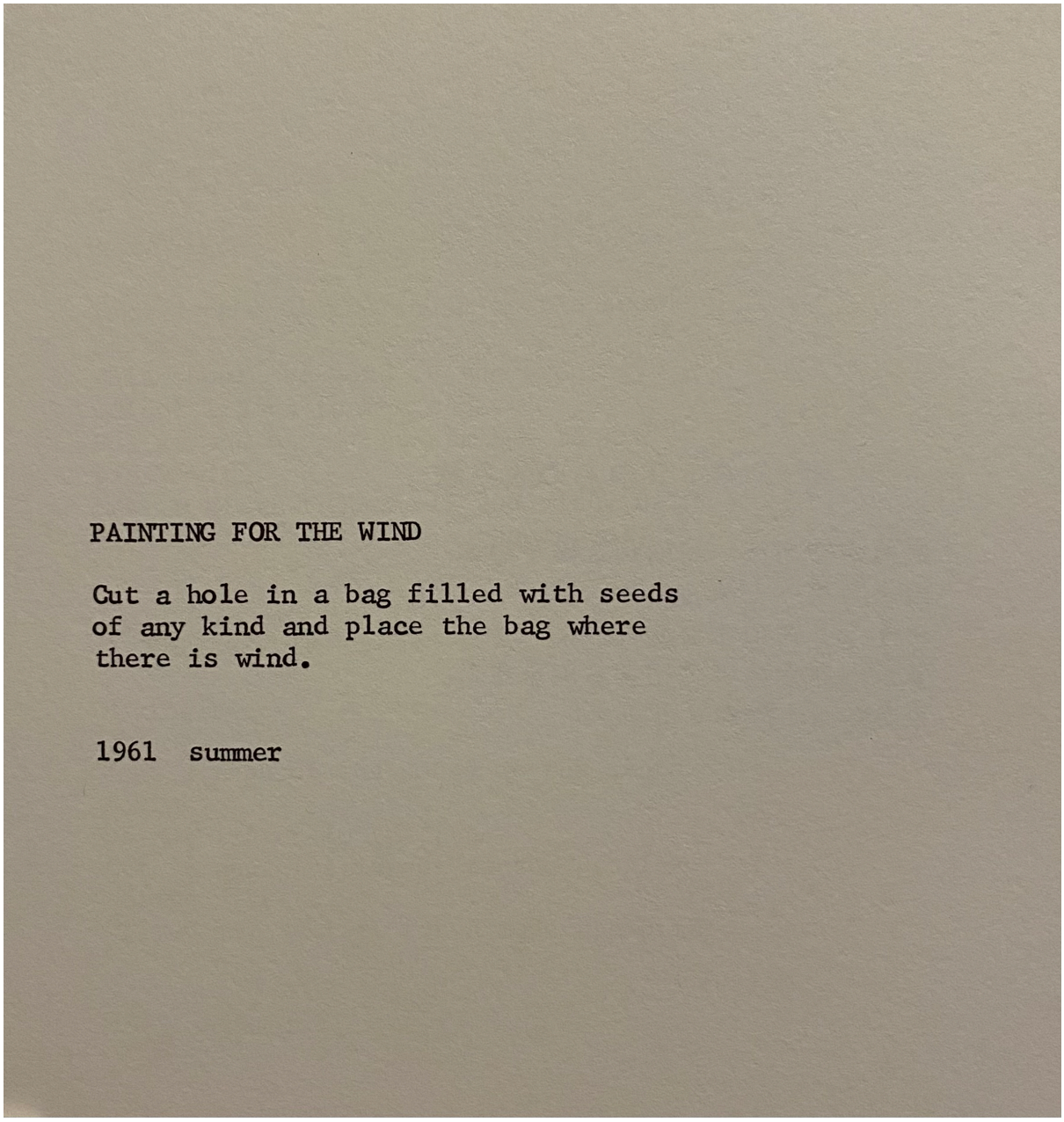
Cover of Art-Language the journal of conceptual art by Art & Language with texts by Michael Baldwin, Sol LeWitt, Dan Graham, Lawrence Weiner, and David Bainbridge

Art & Language, *The Studio at 3 Wesley Place, in the Dark (IV), and Illuminated by an Explosion nearby (VI)* (1982)



Art & Language, *Map to Not Indicate*, 1967



Yoko Ono, "Painting for the wind", *Grapefruit*, 1964. From the exhibition, YOKO ONO: THIS ROOM MOVES AT THE SAME SPEED AS THE CLOUDS at Kunsthaus Zürich (2022)

Selections from *Grapefruit* (1964) | Yoko Ono

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCO8DPEDeXg

Where else can one simultaneously lose and find oneself than in Yoko Ono's 'Grapefruit'?

First published in 1964, this book of 'Instructions and Drawings' is a touchstone of conceptual art. It contains a series of 'event scores' that replace the physical work of art and instructions which the individual may or may not enact. The name Grapefruit was chosen as title because Ono believed the grapefruit to be a hybrid of an orange and a lemon, and thus a reflection of herself as "a spiritual hybrid".
This performance was directed and conducted by Yvette Ofa Agapow. Here's what she had to say on the experience: "I had a lot of fun putting this performance together; working out how we could create something large-scale using Ono's minimal specifications. It was important to me to translate these works that so often reflect otherwise 'average' processes (e.g. listening to a heartbeat or drawing a line) into something liminal - that transcended time - to create a sense of wonder around them in the concert hall. I often think about how women like Ono are disrespected or are called 'weird', and how much of a better place the world would be if we all, like her, just listened a bit more."

Pieces in order of appearance:

1. Secret Piece
2. Pieces for Orchestra 1-6
3. Collecting Piece
4. Beat Piece
5. Line Piece 1-3
6. Wood Piece
7. Purification Chamber Piece
8. Wall Piece for Orchestra to Yoko Ono

As performed in the Women of Noise International Women's Day Concert: 6 March 2020, Ian Hanger Recital Hall, Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University.

Performers:
Percussion
Yvette Ofa Agapow
Cara Daily
Skylar Sansome
Mikki Thomsen

Emily Moolenschot
Eugenie Puskarz Thomas
Crystal Gwendoline Smith
Flute - Rhoslyn Carney
Oboe - Shana Hoshino
Melodica - Jess Postle
Trumpet - Elisabeth Bell
French Horn - Rhiannon Hurn
Saxophone - Courtney Lovell
Violin - Kaz Ninness
Bassoon - Sasha Walker