

CAGE'S SATIE: COMPOSITION FOR MUSEUM

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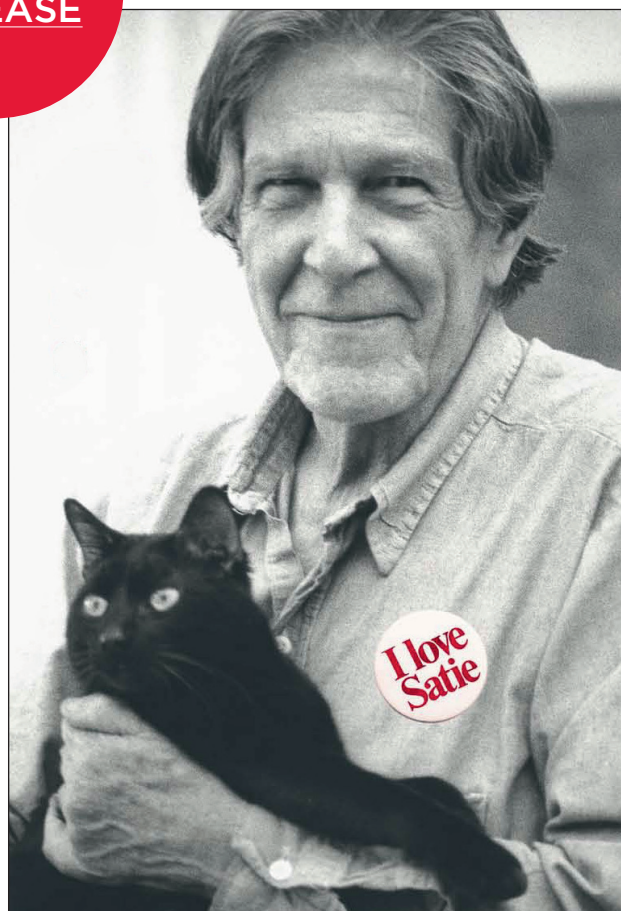
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Photomontage

John Cage, 1989

© Sabine Mathes

&

I Love Satie

John Cage «*Erik Satie Memorabilia*» Collection

© John Cage Trust

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musée
d'art contemporain
de Lyon

Cage's Satie: Composition for Museum

Curator: Laura Kuhn

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INTRODUCTION

SOMETHING IS ALWAYS HAPPENING THAT MAKES A SOUND.¹

THE IDEA OF AN EXHIBITION IN A *CONCERTANTE FORM* THAT EXCEEDS THE TEMPORALITY THAT WOULD BE UNIQUE TO A *CONCERT* AS WELL AS TO AN EXHIBITION ITSELF, AND THAT WOULD BE AS FREE OF THE INELUCTABLE PRESENCE OF THE *OBJECT* AS OF THE DETERMINISM OF A *SCORE* (EVEN OF THE *CAGEIAN GENRE*), SEEMED TO ME TO BE THE LEAST HOMAGE THAT ONE MIGHT PAY TO THE WORK OF JOHN CAGE.

It was with this newly-formulated intention (to do something *with* John Cage which would most certainly not be an exhibition, but would not be a music circus either) that I met with **Laura Kuhn**, the director of the John Cage Trust in New York. Why was I so quick and eager to evoke Satie? Probably because we had presented *Vexations* in September 1993 during the second Biennale de Lyon. The concert was just over 21 hours long and was played by just one performer, Vincent Barras, who had also translated *Silence*². This was Satie as Cage had almost “invented” him, as is the case with all real treasures! It was from that observation, but much later, that Cage’s *Satie: Composition for a Museum*, conceived and executed by Laura Kuhn and the author, John Cage, was born. I also had a second, closely-related, question for Laura, a question which was as direct as it was evasive: What would it mean to live the experience of this work not according to, or after, but *with* Cage, *now*?

In September 1958, Cage wrote the following words (stressing their “pontificating character”) in the *Indeterminacy* section of the three lectures he gave in Darmstadt entitled *Composition as Process*: “There are certain practical matters to discuss that concern the performance of music the composition of which is indeterminate with respect to its performance.” These questions also concern the physical time of execution (our emphasis.) These remarks were addressed to the music and musicians above all, but they also question, fundamentally and more generally, the principle of the exhibition itself.

Indeed, all exhibitions infer a form, whatever it may consist of, which they cannot depart from and which mostly appears as a predetermined route with its minor successive or superimposed events and its high and low points, alternating surprises and calmer moments, as is the case for a controlled recital or well-tempered scales. Discoveries and memorizing in this itinerary are thus the fruit of the perfect harmony between display and narrative, one coinciding with the other, and inversely. Equilibrium is obtained when a perfect circularity appears; that is to say, when the *predisposed* object is *disposed* in order that it becomes *exposed*.

Yet experiencing the work *with* Cage, once the minimum principle has been accepted, which means the instant of its performance and the configuration of its execution, consists of contesting all instituted principles, for example that of *one* itinerary – imposed or not – *one* unique length, *one* arrangement and *one* pre-constructed narration, as well as imposing its zones of discovery, its events and its concerted hitches and glitches. That is to say, that it contests in as far as is possible any principle of *equilibrium*, of *definitive arrangement* and *harmony* (in the sense of intuitive or rational adjustment).

The concertante form – here in the sense of concert, and concertation, “composition” *for* and *with* the site (a museum in this case) – has nothing to do with the absurd notion of “in-situ” and everything to do with charm, pleasure, luck, coincidence, and the merit of simply being there. This form is that of Cage. It isn’t an *exhibition of objects*, an *observation* or *documentation*; it is an “organizational principle” which Cage, noting the importance of form in 1937, defined as “the common ability of man to think”:

“What I call poetry is often called ‘content.’ I myself call it form.”

In 1952, John Cage decided that it would be henceforth impossible to maintain the traditional disassociation of sound and silence. With *4’33”*, and in the time it took for the work to “happen”, the action of concert performer David Tudor, as limited as it was, showed that it is just as impossible to disassociate vision from sound³. Just as the philosopher said “what is real is what is happening”⁴, John Cage confirmed it: “You say: the real, the world as it is. But it is not, it becomes! It moves, it changes! [...] You are getting closer to this reality when you say as it ‘presents itself’; that means that it is not there existing as an object. [...] It is a process.” (*For the Birds*, p.88/89.) And Cage also said “Let’s just have fun with the sounds.” The continuum between hearing and seeing (and not listening and watching) is thus manifest and ensured from that moment on. And of the four composite parts of a sound (pitch, intensity, tone and length), *only the length is common to both sound and silence*.

In this way, **duration** – meaning time....

“But for living there is scarcely any time at all.

For living takes places each instant.” (45’)

and what is **random**,

“Each moment presents what is happening”

(*Music of Changes*, 1951, was the first piece created via the use of chance procedures), and the **indeterminate** – meaning the future,

“There always are sounds. That is to say if one is alive to hear them” (again, 45’)

....are **strengthening** elements for the real hero of the tale in John Cage’s view – life! “Sounds have no goal! They are, and that’s all. They live. Music is this life of sounds, this participation of sounds in life, which may become – but not voluntarily – a participation of life in sounds. In itself, music does not obligate us to anything.” (*For the Birds*, p.96.)

And that is precisely the ambition of this ‘Composition for a Museum’ – to attach itself and remain faithful to this “*life form*.”

THIS COMPOSITION FOR MUSEUM IS POSITIONED BETWEEN CONCERT (WHILST AT THE SAME TIME EXCEEDING ITS TEMPORALITY, AS WAS MENTIONED EARLIER) AND EXHIBITION, WITH NO EXPECTED OR FIXED EXPOSE SEEING AS THE NUMBER OF OBJECTS HAS BEEN REDUCED AS FAR AS IS POSSIBLE AND THE MANUSCRIPTS HAVE BEEN – AND AS WAS OUR INTENTION – SCANNED (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF CAGE’S SATIE COLLECTION OF COURSE.)

WORKING WITH CAGE, OR HOW WHAT IS RANDOM ALLOWS US, “US” AS IN A MUSEUM OF “HERITAGE”, TO BE BOTH FULLY INVOLVED IN THE HISTORICAL STORY AND SIMULTANEOUSLY IMPLICATED IN THE CREATION OF THIS NEW AND HIGHLY ORIGINAL WORK.

THIERRY RASPAIL, DIRECTOR OF MAC^{LYON}

¹ - John Cage, *45’ for a Speaker*, in *Silence*, p.202, all citations are of John Cage unless stated otherwise.

² - John Cage, *Silence, conférences et écrits*, published by Héros-Limité, Genève 2003.

³ - *4’33”* was first performed on 29 August 1952 at the Maverick Concert Hall in Woodstock, New York. The score doesn’t specify instrumentation, but rather states “For any Instrument or Combination of Instruments.” It also makes no mention of the movements of the performer, but David Tudor chose to open and close the keyboard lid to indicate the start of each of the three movements. The work comprises three different scores, although only two are known to exist: the so-called “tacet” version, wherein the three movements are notated with simple Roman numerals (I, II, III) followed by the word *Tacet*, and the so-called, “proportional notation” version, wherein time is indicated by the relative space allotted on the score’s six pages to each of the three movements.

⁴ - Marcel Conche, *L’aléatoire*, published by Editions Mégaré, 1989, page 96

⁵ - John Cage, *For the Birds*: Interviews with Daniel Charles, published by Editions L’Horne, Paris 2002, p.88/89

THE EXHIBITION BY LAURA KUHN

CAGE'S SATIE: COMPOSITION FOR MUSEUM IS A MULTI-SENSORY EXHIBITION OF WORKS BY JOHN CAGE THAT CELEBRATES HIS ENDURING LOVE OF THE FRENCH COMPOSER ERIK SATIE. CAGE WAS INDEBTED TO MANY ARTISTS THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE, JAMES JOYCE, MARCEL DUCHAMP, AND HENRY DAVID THOREAU AMONG THEM. OF ALL THE INDIVIDUALS OF INFLUENCE, HOWEVER, ERIK SATIE HOLDS A PLACE OF PARTICULAR REVERENCE AND HONOR.

Curator: Laura Kuhn, New York

/"TO BE INTERESTED IN SATIE ONE MUST BE DISINTERESTED TO BEGIN WITH, ACCEPT THAT A SOUND IS A SOUND AND A MAN IS A MAN, GIVE UP ILLUSIONS ABOUT IDEAS OF ORDER, EXPRESSIONS OF SENTIMENT, AND ALL THE REST OF OUR INHERITED AESTHETIC CLAPTRAP."/

JOHN CAGE, 1958

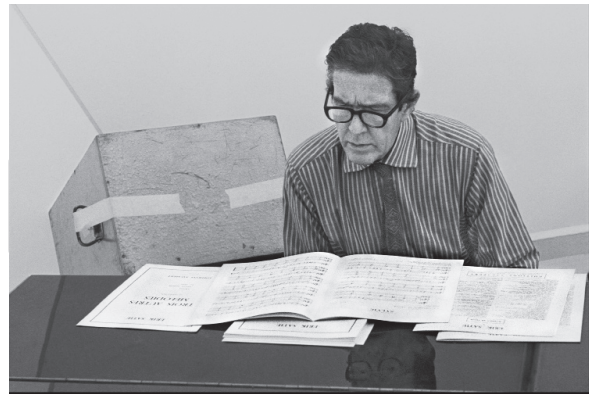
The present exhibition takes a fresh approach to the presentation of John Cage's *oeuvre* by foregoing the usual emphasis on precious artifacts in favor of sounded works.

The first floor brings 12 compositions into a spatialized and randomized remix: ***Cheap Imitation, Chorals, Etcetera, Extended Lullaby, Four³, Furniture Music Etcetera, Socrate, Sports (Perpetual Tango and Swinging), Song Books (Solos for Voice 3-92), Sonnekus², Two⁶, and Letter(s) to Erik Satie***. This audio collage for the ears is complemented by associated materials for the eyes: rare video footage of works from collaborative projects with the legendary American choreographer Merce Cunningham and manipulated scanned images drawn from associated scores and manuscripts from C.F. Peters/Peters Edition and the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

The second floor showcases two additional Satie inspirations: ***James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Erik Satie: An Alphabet* (1982)**, Cage's whimsical radio play cast here into a new interactive sound installation, and ***The First Meeting of the Satie Society* (1985-1992)**, Cage's stunning late-life collaborative merger of poetry, performance, visual art, sculpture, and music. Also on view is **Cage's "Satie Memorabilia,"** an eclectic collection that includes his rarely seen facsimile of *Vexations*.

***The First Meeting of the Satie Society* (1985-1992)** was conceived as a collection of "presents" for Erik Satie, an invitation by John Cage to his esteemed artist friends to fill a Marcel Duchamp-inspired cracked glass valise with words and images bound into eight hand made books. Contributors in the visual aspects include Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Sol LeWitt, Robert Ryman, and Cage himself, while Cage's words, taking the form of lengthy mesostic poems, use as source texts the writings of James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Chris Mann, Henry David Thoreau, Marshall McLuhan, and others. Cage's mesostic poetry reflects his continual search for "a way of writing which though coming from ideas is not about them, or is not about ideas but produces them." This work demonstrates beautifully Cage's passion for not only collaboration and for softening the boundaries between and among the arts, but the intensely expressive potential of his original poetic form.

The work is presented in two ways: as a sculpture, inclusive of its books, and as its books, parsed out across eight individual vitrines. Each has its own interactive touch screen, enabling visitors to turn the pages at will. Headphones at each station also make possible the intimate audition of Cage's one and only performance of



John Cage
Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, 1970
© James Klosty

the work, undertaken at the Rheinisches Landesmuseum in Bonn on March 31, 1985, with the Bonner Ensemble für Neue Musik, Grete Wehmeyer, Klaus Schöning, and Amy Leverenz.

James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Erik Satie: An Alphabet is shown here in a new sound installation by the New York composer, Mikel Rouse. Rouse has developed a two-part soundscape for the work – one heard in surround and comprised of "irrelevant" sounds, and one more momentary and ephemeral, comprised of "relevant" sounds that are activated randomly by visitors to the museum on a specially designed keyboard. The sounds selected follow closely Cage's instructions contained in his manuscripts for an unfinished score, also on view. Additionally, Rouse's surround sound score incorporates rarely-heard readings by Merce Cunningham (as Erik Satie) and Jasper Johns (as Marcel Duchamp's alter-ego, Rose Selavy). This technological integration of sounded materials results in a sounding of the second floor of the museum that can change from moment to moment, ensuring an overall sound experience that can't help but be subtly different from one visit to the next.

The **exhibition catalog** will take the form of oversized CD packaging, with a CD of randomized and spatialized sounds brought together to simulate the museum experience. Tucked into its sleeves will also be a variety of documents, facsimiles, and exhibition views.

Exhibition events

From 13th to 16th december, the music and dance students from the CNSMD of Lyon are at the mac^{LYON} to offer a "discovery week" around the works of John Cage and Erik Satie.

On the agenda:

John Cage (4'33 for piano, percussion, *Imaginary Landscape I, Music of Changes...*), Erik Satie (*Vexations, La Belle Excentrique, Gnossiennes & Gymnopédies*), H. Cowell, M. Feldmann.

CAGE & SATIE

CAGE'S SATIE ! WHY SATIE BY CAGE?

Firstly, because it's never been done ("played", if we confer upon the word the sense which Wittgenstein confers upon playing and language). Next, because the Master "of things seen here and there without glasses, of fugitive figures and other muscular fantasia" is a veritable reference and a source for Cage – "Satie is inexhaustible, like mushrooms." He demonstrates admiration and even "love" because "Satie is indispensable". And also because there are numerous correlations between their two bodies of work. John Cage early on declared that only Satie (and, initially, Webern) constructed his music upon the foundation of what is found in both sound and silence – duration. This is seen in the manuscript for *Parade* (1917), which contains two blank pages before each part dedicated to silence. Unfortunately, they were not conserved by the publisher.

At the same time, Satie's chords and melodies occur in succession but do not "progress", which means that what has preceded a given moment does not suggest what may happen next. Satie pressed ahead with no objectives and in a random manner, employing wanton repetition and an absence of logic. And when, in 1914 and on the occasion of the (private) creation of *Le Piège de Méduse*¹, Erik Satie placed a few sheets of paper between the strings of the piano, he was anticipating the prepared and adapted piano. *Le Piège de Méduse* was performed in North Carolina on 14 August 1948 at the "Festival amateur Erik Satie", which was organized by John Cage at Black Mountain College. Buckminster Fuller played Baron Méduse, Elaine de Kooning played his daughter, the monkey was played by Merce Cunningham, Willem de Kooning created the set, Arthur Penn was the director and John Cage interpreted the score on piano. Much later on, *Furniture Music*, said by John Cage to represent "invention of the strongest kind", was described thus by Satie: "It is music made for useful needs. Art is not a part of these needs [...] it fulfills the same role as light, heat and *comfort* in all its forms."² Thus *Furniture Music* leaves its field of traditional competence, which is the moment and the place in which the concert is played and where it is imperative to "*to do music which has nothing to do*" (Satie, *ibid*). And this is how *Furniture Music* leaves its own domain to enter that of *life*.

Then there is the means of appropriation in the form of devotion³ which is that of the chic imitation of the Grand Œuvre of the master of Arcueil – *Socrate*. This magisterial work by Cage, both "within and without Satie", was born at the end of the 40s when Merce Cunningham decided to choreograph the first movement of *Socrate*. John Cage then came up with an arrangement for two pianos. Much later, in 1968, Cunningham revisited his choreography in order to complete it by creating choreographies for the other two movements. Cage, with help from Arthur Maddox, finished the last two movements, but was not able to



I Love Satie
John Cage «Erik Satie Memorabilia» Collection
© John Cage Trust

obtain copyright from Satie's publisher, Editions Max Eschig. So he decided to imitate *Socrate* on a solo piano – it was a modal and chromatic piece – by using the *I Ching*, of which he asked three questions:

1. Which of the seven modes, if we take as modes the seven scales beginning on white notes and remaining on white notes, which of those am I using?
2. Which of the twelve possible chromatic transpositions am I using?
3. Now for this phrase for which this transposition of this mode will apply, which note am I using of the seven to imitate the note that Satie wrote?

[...] And I was able in that way to write a piece which was not the *Socrate* but which would fit a choreography based on the *Socrate*. So I called it *Cheap Imitation*. [...] I decided to orchestrate it. [...] And it turns out to be a very difficult piece to play, and needs devoted attention, which I would say is true of Satie's music." (Cage, in R. Kostelanetz, p.123)

Among the many points in common which are to be seen in the two works of Cage and Satie we would like to point out the stripping down process which aims for the essence, the absence of "centre" (which may be found anywhere), the use of literature as well as a refusal to use it, and the absence of logic.

A formidable alchemy, the work of Cage is a complete one, *within, with* and *outside* Satie, as is this "Composition", *within* and *with* Cage, even without him.

Thierry RASPAIL, Director of mac^{LYON}

¹ – First and only performance: 14 May 1921 at the Theater Michel in Paris.

² – Erik Satie, *Erik Satie, Écrits*, texts collated by O. Volta, Paris, Champ libre, 1977, p.190.

³ – "As far as my imitations of Satie are concerned, what I had to do was to transcribe Satie. The circumstances were not dependent on me. I only accepted a task of this kind because of my devotion to Satie and Merce Cunningham's dances." (*For the Birds*, p.223).

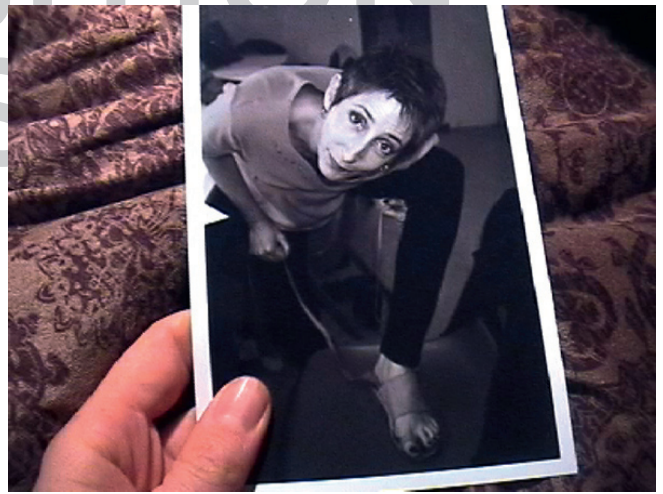
CAGE'S SATIE: COMPOSITION

Laura Kuhn is the Executive Director of the John Cage Trust.

She worked closely with John Cage from 1986 to 1992 on a variety of large-scale projects, including his *Europas 1 & 2* for the Frankfurt Opera and his six mesostic lectures delivered as holder of the Charles E. Norton Chair in Poetry at Harvard University. Projects under her direction at the John Cage Trust include a CD-ROM of sampled piano preparations from Cage's *Sonatas & Interludes* (1946-48), which extend the life of the instrument to MIDI keyboard players, and *The John Cage Book of Days*, a yearly pocket calendar filled with historically important dates, pithy quotations, and unique images drawn from the archives of the John Cage Trust. She created and directed *James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Erik Satie: An Alphabet*, a theatrical realization of Cage's radio play (2001). She is currently collaborating with Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer Kenneth Silverman on a collected edition of *John Cage Correspondence* (Wesleyan University Press, 2013). She is also the John Cage Professor of Performance Arts at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, where the John Cage Trust resides.

Laura Kuhn worked with **Foster Reed**, founder of the venerable New Albion Records, for the selection and placement of audio recordings heard in this Composition.

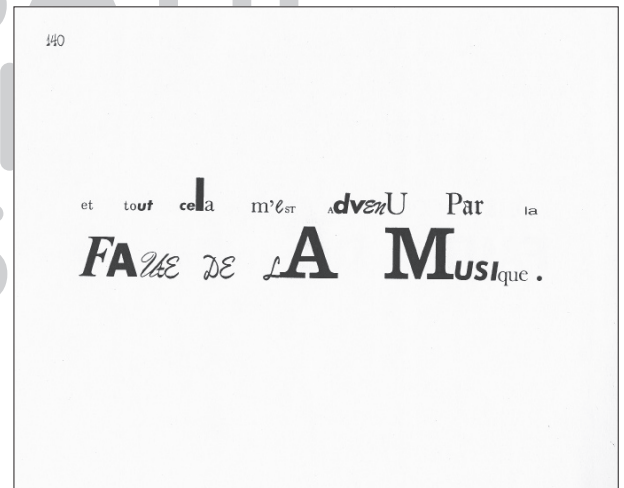
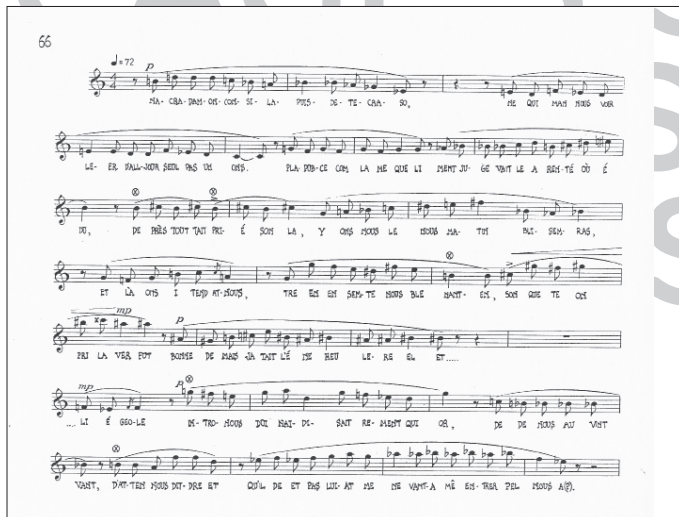
Mikel Rouse is a New York-based composer, director, performer, and recording artist hailed by the *New York Times* as "the best of his generation." His works include 30 records, 7 films, and a trilogy of media operas: *Failing Kansas* (1995), *Dennis Cleveland* (1996), and *The End of Cinematics* (2005), with *Dennis Cleveland* critically acclaimed as "...the most exciting and innovative new opera since *Einstein on the Beach*." In addition to such grand-scale endeavors, Rouse also tours on a more intimate scale as a solo live performer, traversing the globe like a 21st-century Mark Twain with a surreally beautiful song-and-video storytelling piece entitled *Music For Minorities*. His piece for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company (Cunningham's *eyeSpace*, 2006), entitled *International Cloud Atlas*, is scored for multiple iPods set to "shuffle" so that each audience member hears a different realization of the score (with 3,628,800 possible permutations). Additionally, Rouse created the sound score for Laura Kuhn's 2001 theatrical realization of John Cage's *James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Erik Satie: An Alphabet*, for which he also performed the role of James Joyce.



Laura Kuhn
Perth, Australia, 2002
© Melissa Madden Gray

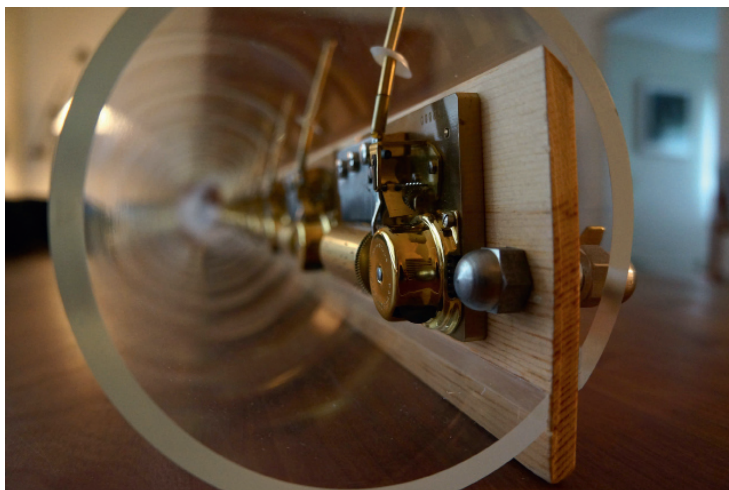
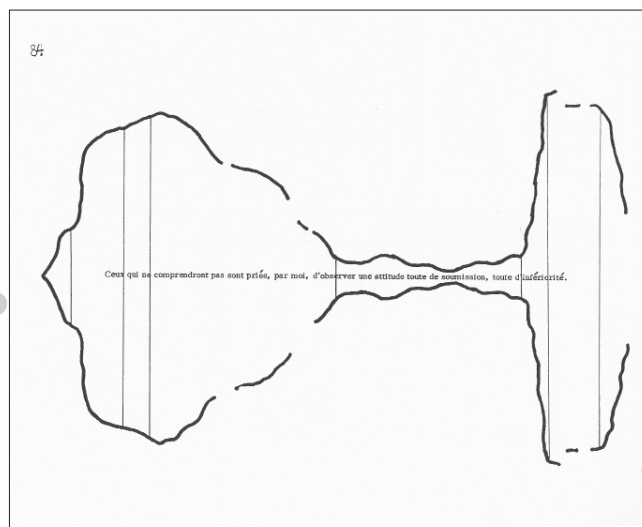
The John Cage Trust was established in 1993 as a not-for-profit institution whose mission is to gather together, organize, preserve, disseminate and generally further the work of the late American composer, philosopher, poet, and visual artist, John Cage. Its founding trustees were Merce Cunningham, Artistic Director of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Anne d'Harnoncourt, Director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and David Vaughan, Archivist of the Cunningham Dance Foundation, all long-time Cage friends and associates. Laura Kuhn serves as both a founding trustee and ongoing Executive Director. In 2008, Anne d'Harnoncourt (1943-2008) was replaced by Margarete Roeder, long-time gallerist to both Cage and Cunningham; in 2009, Merce Cunningham (1919-2009) was replaced by Melissa Harris, Editor-in-Chief of *Aperture*. In 2007, the John Cage Trust went into permanent residence at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.

SELECTION OF WORKS ON SHOW



John Cage, *Song Books*, 1970
© Henmar Press, Inc.

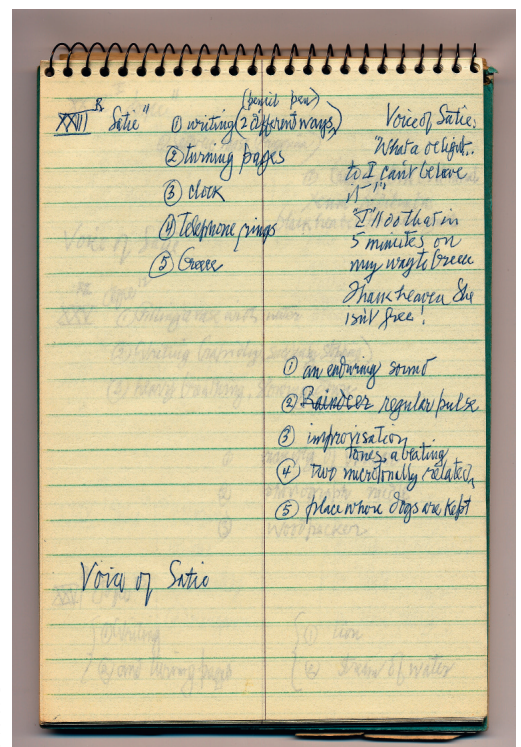
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30.



John Cage, *Extended Lullaby*
Conceived in 1992, executed in 1994
acrylic, spruce brass, and 12 36-note Reuge music box mechanism
edition of 10, plus two artist proofs
Image: Emily Martin
© John Cage Trust

John Cage, James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Erik Satie: *An Alphabet*, 1982

Detail, text manuscript
© John Cage Trust



originally iT was a lecture
to bring about tHoughts
that wEre not in our heads
not about the French composer
erIk satie
but to celebRate
hiS life his work
as Though it were always his birthday
using the titles of his Music
thE initials and words
of his namE
To
write mesostics
poems read down the middle or as usual from side to side
to Give them
tO him
For no reason
jusT
for His
sEeing
and for hiS
heAring
his enjoyment
of beIng
alivE
now that he'S dead
tO use the writings of others
as sourCe
materlal
for thEse
mesosTics
joYce mcluhan

for insTance
duchHamp
thorEau chris mann
myself
and the bIble
a mixtuRe
of loverS
compleTely
iMaginary
that was my idEa
now it has bEcome
a coming Together
of artIsts
jasper johNs robert ryman
robert rauschenberG merce cuningham
sOl lewitt michael silver

sketches by the man oF concord
drawn again by basTian
paper made with
satiE memorabilia printed on it
printed again with fire with Smoke
All
of These presents collected
In a
valisE
of Shattered glass its metal frame
embOssed
with sentenCes he wrote
or remarks he's sald
to havE made
a firsT meeting
like everY

meeTing
with
satiE is
the beginning oF the change
a changed attItude
towaRd life toward art toward work
toward muSic
The
reMoval
of boundariEs
whEreVer
They
exlSt
Never
endinG
the cOMing together
oF
opposiTes
sHow
mE
Something new
And
i'll sTart
all over again
living with intErior immobility
enjoyment in the midSt
Of
Countlessness
accomplshing nothing
as though nothing had happEned
as Though tourist
living as though tourist alwaYs

*John Cage,
«Words for the Satie Society» from
The First Meeting of the Satie Society*

JOHN CAGE: BIOGRAPHY:

John Cage was born in 1912 in Los Angeles. He died in 1992 in New York.

John Cage was a singularly inventive, highly influential, and much beloved American composer, writer, philosopher, and visual artist.

Beginning around 1950, and throughout the passing years, he departed from the pragmatism of precise musical notation and circumscribed ways of performance. His principal contribution to the history of music is his systematic establishment of the principle of indeterminacy: by adapting Zen Buddhist practices to composition and performance, Cage succeeded in bringing both authentic spiritual ideas and a liberating attitude of play to the enterprise of Western art.

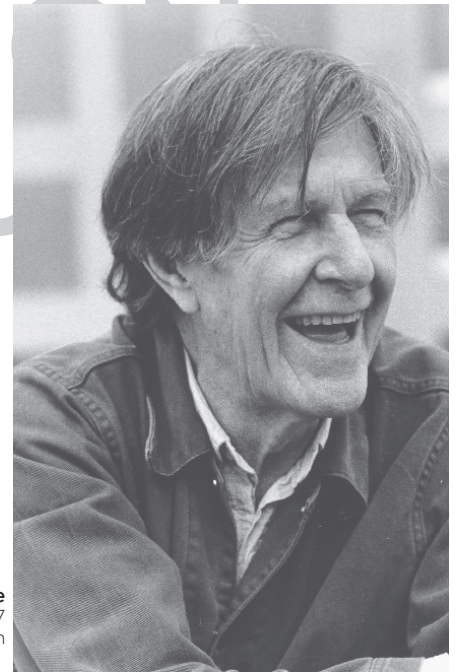
His aesthetic of chance produced a unique body of what might be called «once-only» works, any two performances of which can never be quite the same. In an effort to reduce the subjective element in composition, he developed methods of selecting the components of his pieces by chance, early on through the tossing of coins or dice and later through the use of random number generators on the computer, and especially */C* (1984), designed and written in the C language by Cage's programmer-assistant, Andrew Culver, to simulate the coin oracle of the *I Ching*.

Cage's use of the computer was creative and procedural, and resulted in a system of what can easily be seen as total serialism, in which all elements pertaining to pitch, noise, duration, relative loudness, tempi, harmony, etc., could be determined by referring to previously drawn correlated charts.

Thus, Cage's mature works did not originate in psychology, motive, drama, or literature, but, rather, were just sounds, free of judgments about whether they are musical or not, free of fixed relations, free of memory and taste.

His most enduring, indeed notorious, composition, influenced by Robert Rauschenberg's all-black and all-white paintings, is the radically tacet *4'33"* (1952). Encouraging the ultimate freedom in musical expression, the three movements of *4'33"* are indicated by the pianist's opening and closing of the piano key cover, during which no sounds are intentionally produced. It was first performed by the extraordinarily gifted pianist and long-time Cage associate, David Tudor, at Maverick Hall in Woodstock, N.Y., on Aug. 29, 1952.

A great admirer of Satie, John Cage contributed significantly to making his works known in the United-States. In 1949, he published *Vexations* – one of Satie's most fascinating and astonishing pieces. On 9 September 1963 in New York, John Cage held the first public performance of *Vexations*, undertaken by a dozen pianists for nearly 19 hours.



John Cage
Los Angeles, 1987
© Betty Freeman

/"IN THE FIELD OF STRUCTURE, THE FIELD OF THE DEFINITION OF PARTS AND THEIR RELATION TO A WHOLE, THERE HAS BEEN ONLY ONE NEW IDEA SINCE BEETHOVEN. AND THAT NEW IDEA CAN BE PERCEIVED IN THE WORK OF ANTON WEBERN AND ERIK SATIE. WITH BEETHOVEN THE PARTS OF A COMPOSITION WERE DEFINED BY MEANS OF HARMONY. WITH SATIE AND WEBERN THEY ARE DEFINED BY MEANS OF TIME LENGTHS. THE QUESTION OF STRUCTURE IS SO BASIC, AND IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO BE IN AGREEMENT ABOUT IT, THAT ONE MUST NOW ASK: WAS BEETHOVEN RIGHT OR ARE WEBERN AND SATIE RIGHT?... IF YOU CONSIDER THAT SOUND IS CHARACTERIZED BY ITS PITCH, ITS LOUDNESS, ITS TIMBRE, AND ITS DURATION, AND THAT SILENCE, WHICH IS THE OPPOSITE AND, THEREFORE, THE NECESSARY PARTNER OF SOUND, IS CHARACTERIZED ONLY BY ITS DURATION, YOU WILL BE DRAWN TO THE CONCLUSION THAT OF THE FOUR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MATERIAL OF MUSIC, DURATION, THAT IS, TIME LENGTH, IS THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL. SILENCE CANNOT BE HEARD IN TERMS OF PITCH OR HARMONY: IT IS HEARD IN TERMS OF TIME LENGTH. IT TOOK A SATIE AND A WEBERN TO REDISCOVER THIS MUSIC TRUTH, WHICH, BY MEANS OF MUSICOLOGY, WE LEARN WAS EVIDENT TO SOME MUSICIANS IN OUR MIDDLE AGES, AND TO ALL MUSICIANS AT ALL TIMES (EXCEPT THOSE WHOM WE ARE CURRENTLY IN THE PROCESS OF SPOILING) IN THE ORIENT."/

JOHN CAGE, 1970

Extract from John Cage, *An Autobiographical Statement*, written for the Inamori Foundation and delivered in Kyoto as a commemorative lecture in response to having received the Kyoto Prize in November 1989

ERIK SATIE: BIOGRAPHY

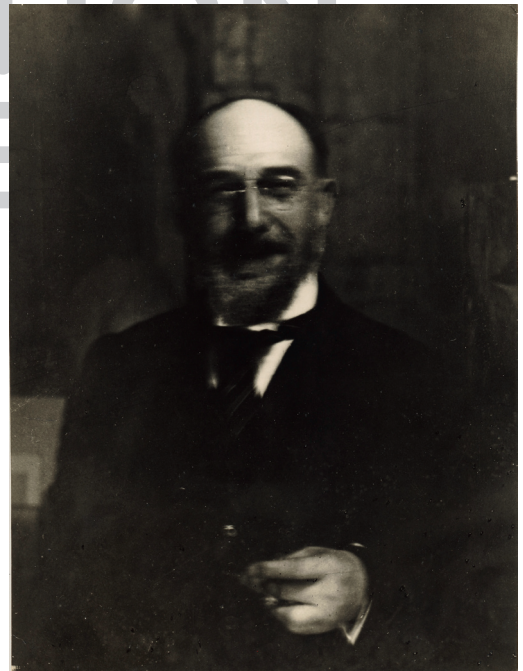
Erik Satie was born in 1866 in Honfleur (France).
He died in 1925 in Paris.

Erik Satie has been in turn defined as a “greek”, “medieval”, “oriental”, “fantastic”, “humouristic”, “mystic” or “dadaist” musician. His work bears witness to an original perception of music in general but also in its relationships with other artistic disciplines, in particular poetry and painting.

Encouraged by his harmony professor he began studying pianoforte and composition, but in 1886, after eight fruitless years and intolerant of academic rules, he decided to leave the conservatory and enlisted in the 66th Infantry regiment at Arras. A year later he deliberately caught bronchitis and was declared unfit for military service.

Returning to civilian life he became a regular at *Le Chat Noir* cabaret, an essential night-spot for humorists, painters, and symbolists of the era. In 1888 he composed three *Gymnopédies*. The next year, seduced by the Romanian popular music and Indonesian Gamelan he had heard at the 1889 Universal Exhibition in Paris, he started working on *Gnossiennes*. Home was a small room on the top floor of a building at Butte Montmartre: “high above my creditors”. In these first works Satie was already using a freehand style with no bar lines, arranged chromatically around complex chord structures. In the score he would replace conventional directions such as “allegro”, “piano con brio”... with his own invented terminology - “don’t make your fingers blush”, “from the top of your back teeth”, “do your best”... In 1895 he composed *Vexations*, an eight-measure motif to be played 480 times consecutively for a total duration of about 20 hours.

Satie wrote in the most varied genres – from “kneeling” music to light music, from the “symphonic drama” to the “instantaneist ballet” – and even invented some new ones, such as “Furniture Music” written “not to be listened to” or film music conceived when the cinema was still silent. *Furniture Music* became a sensation because “it serves the same purpose as light, heat, and all forms of comfort.” It is pure objective formalism in opposition to every sentimental attribute of musical language.



Portrait d'Erik Satie
John Cage «Erik Satie Memorabilia» Collection
© John Cage Trust

Satie collaborated with Picasso, Picabia, Derain, Braque, Léon-Paul Fargue, Cocteau, Tzara and René Clair. His singular approach made an impression on Ravel, Stravinsky and John Cage. The Nouveaux Jeunes group, the Six and the Ecole d'Arcueil all followed his banner. Today young adepts of “repetitive” music, of “experimental” music, of “minimalist” music, of “ambient” music and of “conceptual” music find a natural forefather in him. For Virgil Thomson, Satie’s aesthetic is the only 20th century aesthetic in music.

“ THE MUSICIAN IS PERHAPS THE MOST MODEST OF ANIMALS, BUT HE IS ALSO THE PROUDEST. IT IS HE WHO INVENTED THE SUBLIME ART OF RUINING POETRY ”/

ERIK SATIE

Écrits, texts collected by Ornella Volta, Éditions Champ Libre, 1981, p. 153

VISITOR INFORMATION

JOHN CAGE'S SATIE: COMPOSITION FOR MUSEUM

Exhibition

Curators:

Thierry Raspail, Director of mac^{LYON}
Laura Kuhn

Head of project: Thierry Prat

Exhibition assistant: Marilou Laneuville

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Access

By car:

- along "Quai Charles de Gaulle", follow "Cité Internationale", car parks

By bus, stop Musée d'art contemporain:

- Line C1, Gare Part-Dieu/Cuire

- Line C4 Jean Macé/Cité internationale

change with metro Foch line A or metro

Saxe-Gambetta lines B et D

- Line C5, Bellecour - Terreaux/Rillieux-Vancia

By bike:

- Several Velo'V stations are located around the Museum.

Admission

Full rate: 6 euros*

Concessions: 4 euros*

Free for visitors under 18

* subject to modification

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/ « IT'S NOT A QUESTION
OF SATIE'S RELEVANCE.
HE'S INDISPENSABLE. »/
JOHN CAGE, 1958

Simultaneously:

LA MONTE YOUNG and
MARIAN ZAZEELA
GEORGE BRECHT
RICHARD BUCKMINSTER
FULLER

mac

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