ARTFORUM

SEPTMBER 2007

TOP TEN

Alison Knowles

Alison Knowles makes performances, books, poems, and visual artworks. This past July, she performed at Miguel Abreu Gallery in New York as part of “Agapé,” an exhibition on musical notation curated by Alex Waterman. She is a founding member of the Fluxus group.

ARTIST ORGANIZED ART (WWW.ARTISTORGANIZEDART.ORG)

In 2003, Joshua Selman started this website, which grew into a nonprofit organization. The group supports and coordinates artist-organized events and interventions, continuing the legacy of the International Artists’ Museum that Emmett Williams and Ryszard Wasko founded in Poland in 1990. The members of AOA have traveled all over, including Israel and Cardiff, to help create spaces in which art can occur. I like it because it functions outside the commercial art market and benefits artists rather than curators and institutions.

ORCHARD STREET, NEW YORK

The cluster of small art spaces around Orchard Street (Orchard, Dexter Sinister, Miguel Abreu Gallery) feels like an independent scene, not like the one in the 1960s, but its own thing: one that combines new media with old. In nearby Cake Shop, one can still find edgy music on seven-inch vinyl, such as the new album by Messages (Taketo Shimada and Tres Warren), who make irregular and intensely energetic music unlike anything you’d hear in a club. In July, at Miguel Abreu, I saw San Diego cellist Charles Curtis and Alex Waterman perform pieces by Eliane Radigue and Christian Wolff. The performance was spellbinding and minimal; the dimension of the music let us feel the presence of audience and space, without dominating either.

A MAGNIFICENT CATHEDRAL

I met some friends in Cologne and heard this joke: A tourist looking at the Cologne Cathedral said, “What a shame that they built the cathedral so close to the railroad station!” Later in the day, on my way to the public radio station Westdeutscher Rundfunk Köln (whose wonderful program Studio Akustische Kunst was then directed by Klaus Schöning), I crossed a street against the light and was stopped by a policeman on the other side. I replied in French. After several moments spent staring at each other blankly, he let me go.

FOOD ART

John Cage was a great macrobiotic cook, and we enjoyed cooking together. To include space and silence in art is not easy; perhaps he developed his expertise in the kitchen. Food became serious art in the ‘60s, a new genre coming from everyday life; and it persists today. (I think of Rirkrit Tiravanija’s live food events, such as the ones he produced at David Zwirner this past spring.) That first decade, Daniel Spoerri hung used lunch trays on the walls in his famous Düsseldorf restaurant and Ay-O performed “Identical Lunch,” my event score involving New York’s ubiquitous tuna-fish sandwich, at one of George Maciunas’s New Year’s celebrations. Gordon Matta-Clark’s Food
restaurant opened on Prince Street in the early ’70s. In the ’80s, Emily Harvey would host banquets for her artists’ birthdays in the private section of her Broadway gallery space—a worthy substitute for bad wine and city water. The French Conceptualist Jean Dupuy once made mayonnaise there, sitting on a turning platform and releasing the oil, drip by drip. Delicious!


**MUSÉE DES MOULAGES D’ART ANTIQUE**
Curated by Bertrand Clavel, a French Maciunas scholar, the most recent exhibition of my “Time Samples”—found objects embedded in paper with titles on attached tickets—took place this past summer at the University of Lyon’s Musée des Moulages d’Art Antique, a stadium-size space that houses full-size plaster casts of famous European statues. Twenty students helped me arrange the “Time Samples” on long tables, and we produced a concert of new and vintage Fluxus “events” amid Etruscan and Roman statuary. If you make it there, try cycling down the hill to the Carrés Pégase, a small residential hotel in which I was the sole visitor, though local residents, retirees, and the occasional lawyer or doctor would appear for breakfast.

**MARCEL BROODTHAERS**
Having used what he had at hand to make his art—for instance, eggshells and mussels—Broodthaers is one of my heroes. Mussels and eggs are cheap and common fare in Brussels. Broodthaers drank wine at a bar in town called Mort Subite, which translates “sudden death.” The work of this man, who was desperately poor in his lifetime, is now well represented in the local museum of modern art.


**CONCRETE POETRY**
The best source for this genre, which marries words and typography, thus providing an important bridge to visual art, is *Anthology of Concrete Poetry* (Something Else Press, 1967) by Emmett Williams, who began making prints, paintings, and performances with concrete poetry in the ’50s. Jackson Mac Low formed concrete poems as a grid on which
one could move in any direction. Mary Ellen Solt broke down the names of flowers into visual word-bouquets. These poets have all died in the past few years, but their important contributions have led us to poetry that need not even sit on the page. During a recent evening at the Drawing Center in New York, curated by Lytle Shaw, participants performed poems using objects, instruments, and audience participation.

NAM JUNE PAIK, TATE MODERN
I recently stayed in Peckham, a working-class and culturally diverse neighborhood in London, with Benedict O’Looney, an artist, architect, and co-organizer of the 2006 London Architecture Biennale. In the mornings, we would eat breakfast under the wisteria vine in his garden, and then he would take me on a guided tour of the city. Walking into Tate Modern’s side entrance one afternoon, we stumbled upon a Nam June Paik video tribute. The showing inspired me to recall the Fluxus performance pieces I did with Paik in 1962, feeling delighted that he was my friend and that he was being so honored there.

SKULPTUR PROJEKTE MÜNSTER
This exhibition was initiated by Kasper König and Klaus Bussmann thirty years ago and has occurred every ten years since. We need actions outside galleries and concert halls, so I appreciate this show, which features sculptures in outdoor locations around the city, like Michael Asher’s Caravan, 1977–, which has found new sites within Münster for all four installments. I look forward to visiting for the first time this October.

NIGHTTIME READING
On my bedside table is a range of literature that I read while drifting toward sleep: Thoreau’s diaries and essays; Morton Feldman’s descriptions of painters and composers of the ‘50s and ‘60s (Give My Regards to Eighth Street); Benjamin H. D. Buchloh’s big book of essays (Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry); stories by Jorge Luis Borges; and the early works of Gabriel García Márquez. In terms of new research on Fluxus, I enjoy Hannah Higgins’s Fluxus Experience and Julia Robinson’s catalogue essay in George Brecht: Events: A Heterospective. And to all a good night.