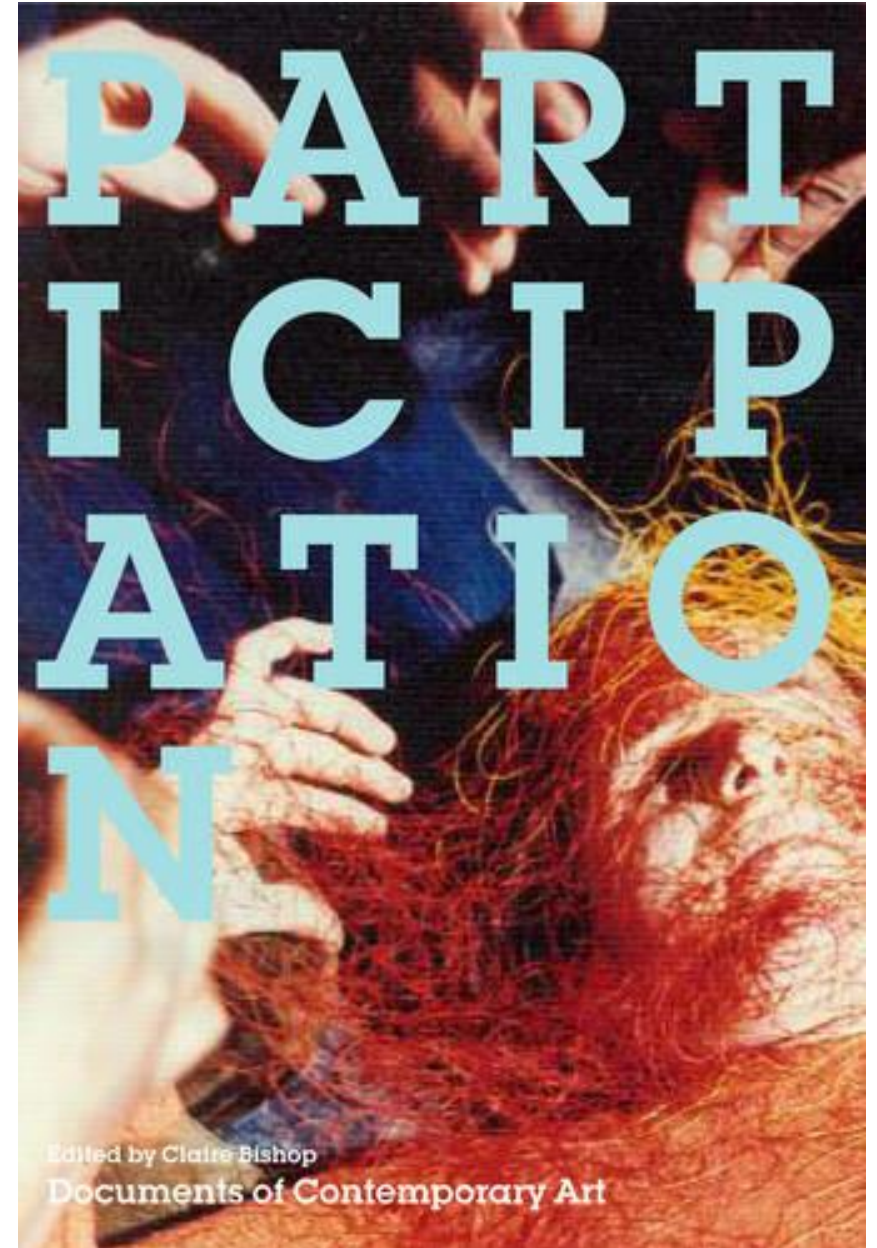


Participation - Happenings, Fluxus and Performance Art



Calls for an art of participation tend to be allied to one or all of the following agendas:

1. the desire to create an active subject, one who will be empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation.
 2. that newly - emancipated subjects of participation find themselves able to determine their own social and political reality.
 3. an aesthetic of participation deriving legitimacy from a (desired) causal relationship between the experience of a work of art and individual/collective agency.
- (paraphrased from, Bishop, C: Participation, pp10 -17)



Participatory art has its origins in the futurist and dada performances of the early twentieth century, which were designed to provoke, scandalise and agitate the public. In the late 1950s the artist Allan Kaprow devised performances called happenings, in which he would coerce the audience into participating in the experience.

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/participatory-art>



Allan Kaprow, Spring Happenings, 1961
As an artist, Kaprow documented his performative work (which he later termed Happenings), for non-participants sparingly;

“the photos should, in no way, be seen to encapsulate the main features of the event” (Potts, 2008, p.121).

<https://openpublishing.psu.edu/arteducation50/book/export/html/11>

On 4-10 October 1959, *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* took place on six days, 4–10 October 1959 at the Reuben Gallery, New York

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/h/happening>



What is a Happening?

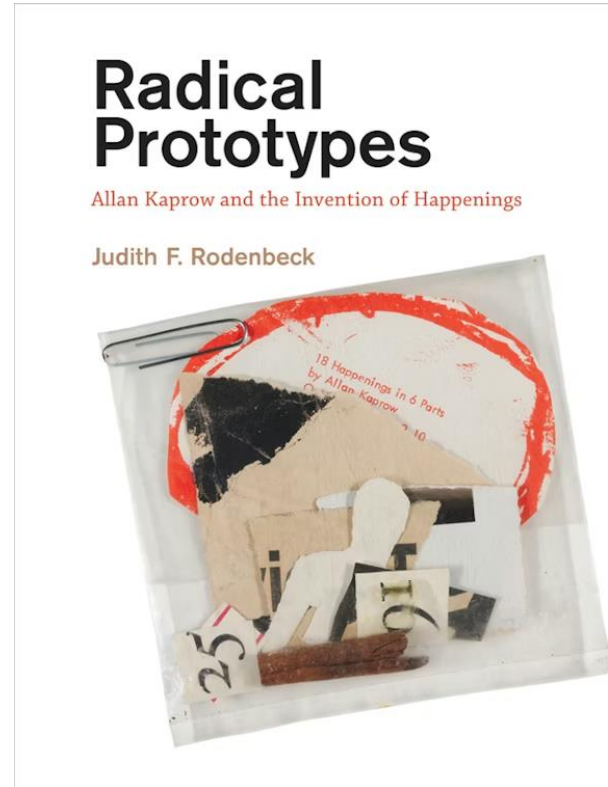
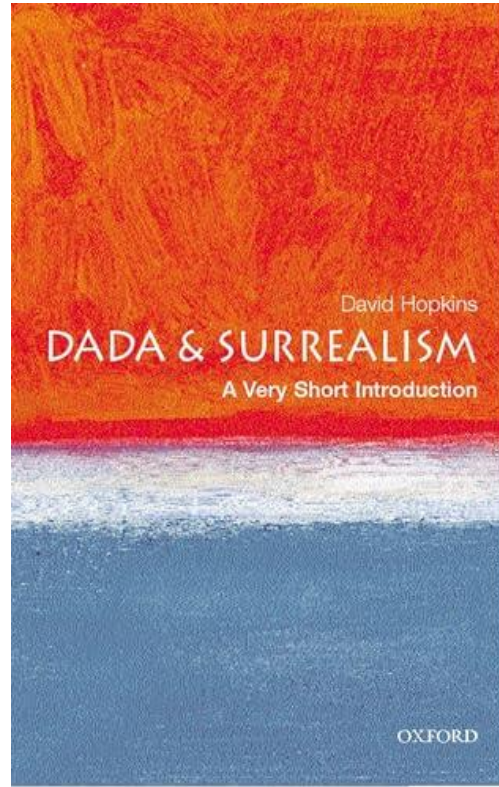
a game, an adventure, a number of activities engaged in by participants for the sake of playing....

a cooperative event in which viewers become active participants in partly planned, partly spontaneous performances that combine loose scenarios and considerable improvisation

Group 11: AI Generated Happening

Aims

Our video presentation we will be showing a piece layered with absurdity and randomness. We embraced mistakes, debates, responsibility, confusion, journey and the unknown as per our original manifesto.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dChZISqg7Sc>



We also applied principles of Dada movement, in particular their focus on Collaboration and Collective Creativity. Dadaists promoted collaboration, organizing group exhibitions and performances to foster collective creativity (Hopkins, 2004). In the spirit of Dada, our group meetings blurred into Happenings; they were performative and explorative and were the raw material for our film that archived our process.

I consider a collaboration to be nearer to real world experience with messy and interdependent relationships, and group work tends to be more facilitated by an established order, and with a common aim. The Fluxus movement is an example of group work in art performance. Fluxus artists, such as Yoko Ono and Nam June Paik, engaged in collective performances that often involved unconventional and participatory elements, encouraging audience involvement, blurring the lines between art and everyday life.



In contrast, Aborigines' collaboration with their ancestors and land through The Dreaming and their interpretation of dreams linking them back to their Ancestral time. "Aboriginal people often interpret dreams as being the memory of things that happened during this Creation Period. " (Aboriginal Religion, 2020, Para 19) Experiential transmission is essential for Aborigines. They use stories, rituals, and paintings to convey cultural heritage and to pass down songlines, whereas the avant-garde Fluxus artists created experimental art performances with the focus on the process rather than the product and inviting others in.



Sarah Grossey (1902340)



Craig Wood



Catherine Brown



Shellie Holden



Catherine Wynn...

Our collaboration demonstrates adaptability, prolific creation, and a blend of chaos and structure, fostering individual and collective growth while navigating the unknown. Managing expectations involved thinking together, communicating fluently with respect, while deliberately expanding our performance settings into public 'spheres', therefore being vulnerable together.

Amidst the chaos of post-pandemic life, we embraced moments of play, of pause, resisting the urge to rush into activity and instead found a way of thinking/being together.

We explored Fluxus, Dada, Neo-Dada movements and Allan Kaprow's happenings. We embraced uncertainty, echoing Foucault's notion of building a language to navigate the unknown.



Our manifesto, which was shaped by AI with little instruction, described a **non-hierarchical collaboration**. AI aided in writing, condensing meeting notes, creating videos, and music. Like Nick Jordan's spontaneous documentary video of 'Larksong' whose "hybrid documentaries are filmed and edited with a direct, unplanned or intuitive response to material, people and environments." (Jordan, 2024) our performances are intuitive, while also being uncomfortable.

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Happenings

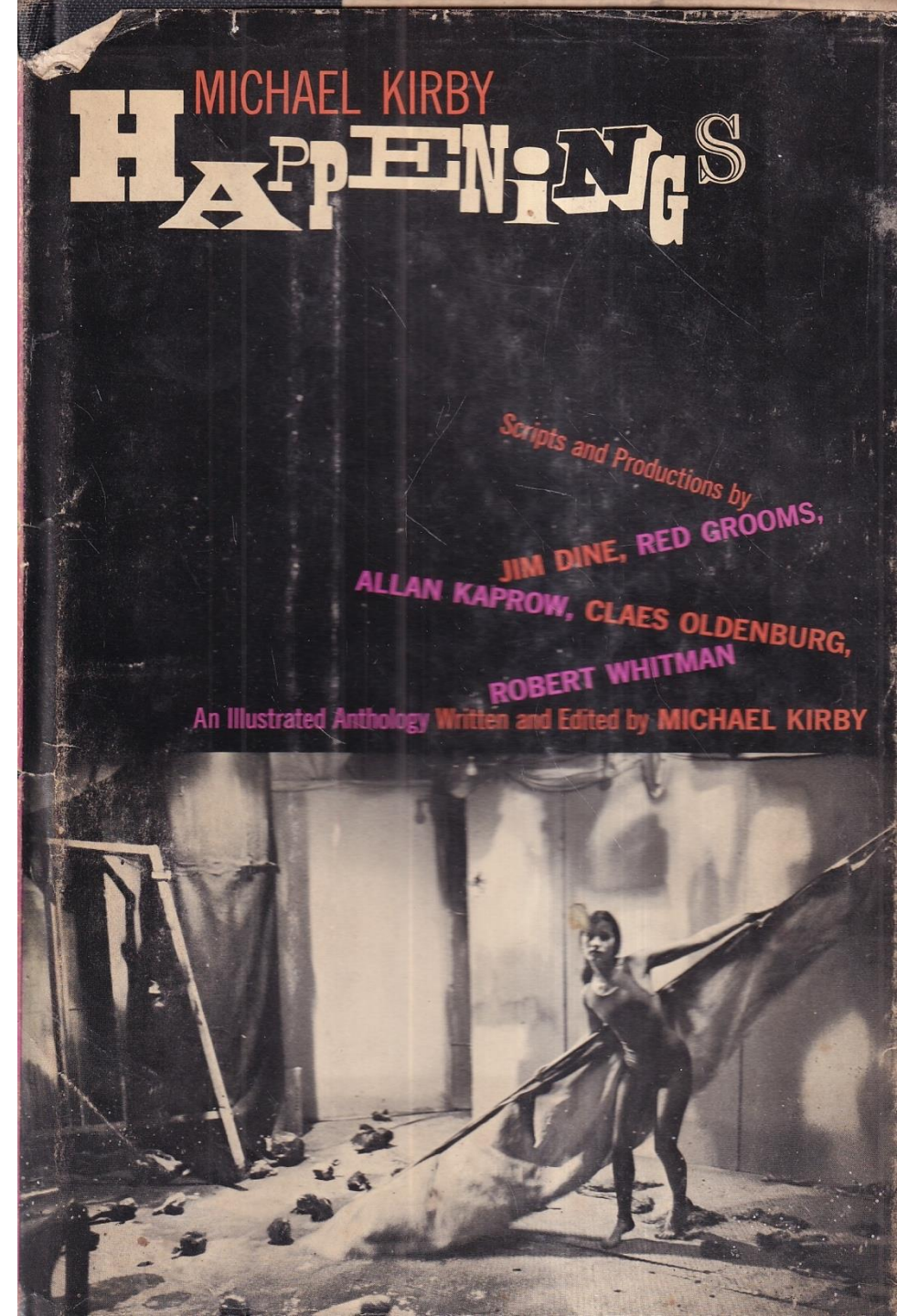
a performative event, including
an element of spectator participation

Fluxus

was a broader, international, and
interdisciplinary art **movement** that
included happenings as one of its forms of
expression.

Performance art

increasingly focused on the actions of the
artist, as apposed to its participants



Fluxus: Joseph Beuys

Experimental art performances and participation

...encompasses intangible experiences such as dancing samba (Helio Oiticica) or funk; (Adrian Piper); **drinking beer (Tom Marioni)**; discussing philosophy (Ian Wilson) or **politics Joseph Beuys)**; organizing a garage sale (Martha Rosler); running a cafe (Allen Ruppersberg; Daniel Spoerri; Gordon Matta-Clark), a hotel (Alighiero Boetti; Ruppersberg) or a travel agency (Christo and Jeanne-Claude)[.....

(Claire Bishop, Participation: Documents of Contemporary Art, 2006)



Politics, Joseph Beuys, 1982

FEAST

RADICAL
HOSPITALITY IN
CONTEMPORARY
ART

Joseph Beuys – multiples



Ja Ja Ja Ja Ja, Nee Nee Nee Nee Nee 1969

<https://pinakothek-beuys-multiples.de/product/ja-ja-ja-ja-ja-nee-nee-nee-nee-nee/?lang=en>

Fluxus -

Founded in 1960 by the Lithuanian/American artist **George Maciunas**, Fluxus began as a small but international network of artists and composers, and was **characterised as a shared attitude rather than a movement**. Rooted in experimental music, it was named after a magazine which featured the work of musicians and artists centred around avant-garde composer John Cage.





[Enter Digital Archives of the 1960s Fluxus Movement and Explore the Avant-Garde Art of John Cage, Yoko Ono, John Cale, Nam June Paik & More](https://1960sdaysofrage.wordpress.com/2020/07/11/fluxus-1/) <https://1960sdaysofrage.wordpress.com/2020/07/11/fluxus-1/>

Work by [Ay-O](#), [George Brecht](#), [Alison Knowles](#), [György Ligeti](#), [Yoko Ono](#), [Robert Watts](#) and [La Monte Young](#) amongst many others. The work has become famous as an early example of [conceptual art](#), and as one of the defining products of the Fluxus collective

The Latin word Fluxus means flowing, in English a flux is a flowing out. Fluxus founder Maciunas said that the purpose of Fluxus was to 'promote a revolutionary flood and tide in art, promote living art, anti-art'. This has strong echoes of dada, the early twentieth century art movement.

Fluxus played an important role in opening up the definitions of what art can be. It has profoundly influenced the nature of art production since the 1960s, which has seen a diverse range of art forms and approaches existing and flourishing side-by-side.

Fluxus had no single unifying style. Artists used a range of media and processes adopting a 'do-it-yourself' attitude to creative activity, often staging random performances and using whatever materials were at hand to make art. Seeing themselves as an alternative to academic art and music.

Fluxus was a democratic form of creativity open to anyone. Collaborations were encouraged between artists and across artforms, and also with the audience or spectator. It valued simplicity and anti-commercialism, with chance and accident playing a big part in the creation of works, and humour also being an important element.

Manifesto:

2. To affect, or bring to a certain state, by subjecting to, or treating with, a flux. "Fluxed into another world." South.
3. Med. To cause a discharge from, as in purging.

flux (flŭks), n. [OF., fr. L. *fluxus*, fr. *fluere*, *fluxum*, to flow. See FLUENT; cf. FLUSH, n. (of cards).] 1. Med. a A flowing or fluid discharge from the bowels or other part: esp., an excessive and morbid discharge: as, the bloody *flux*, or dysentery. b The matter thus discharged.

Purge the world of bourgeois sickness, "intellectual", professional & commercialized culture, PURGE the world of dead art, imitation, artificial art, abstract art, illusionistic art, mathematical art, — PURGE THE WORLD OF "EUROPANISM"!

2. Act of flowing: a continuous moving on or passing by, as of a flowing stream; a continuing succession of changes.
3. A stream; copious flow; flood; outflow.
4. The setting in of the tide toward the shore. Cf. REFLEX.
5. State of being liquid through heat; fusion. Rare.

PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART,
Promote living art, anti-art, promote NON ART REALITY to be fully grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals.

7. Chem. & Metal. a Any substance or mixture used to promote fusion, esp. the fusion of metals or minerals. Common metallurgical fluxes are silica and silicates (acidic), lime and limestone (basic), and fluorite (neutral). b Any substance applied to surfaces to be joined by soldering or welding, just prior to or during the operation, to clean and free them from oxide, thus promoting their union; as rosin.

FUSE the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front & action.

John Cage (1912 -1992)

4'33" 1952

x 5

=

22' 25"



The ambient sound
of the performance
Space.

The absent sound of
a single music note.

John Cage, chance operations and the chaos game. Cage and the *I ching*

John Cage used the [I Ching](#), an ancient Chinese classic text, as a primary tool for **composition through [chance operations](#)**. He would use the book to ask questions about a composition and use the answers from its chance-based system to decide elements like tempo, dynamics, and even silence. This method allowed him to filter out his own preferences and intentions, leading to works like [Music of Changes](#), and fundamentally influenced his experimental and avant-garde approach to music

MARC G. JENSEN

John Cage, chance operations, and the chaos game: Cage and the *I ching*

CHANCE OPERATIONS played a carefully controlled role within John Cage's compositional process, but the use of chance still remains a controversial aspect of his work that many simply fail to understand, seeing it primarily as an abdication of composerly control. In part, this scepticism may result from Cage's justification of using chance operations through reference to Chinese philosophy, while not fully embracing that philosophy in other aspects of his life. In his work, Cage's mingled appropriation of Asian philosophies ranged freely from Coomaraswamy to Zen, while he failed to comprehensively embrace or utilise any one system of belief in an orthodox sense.¹ Cage's applications of Asian philosophy – particularly the idea of chance operations and the *I ching* – were clearly filtered through the lens of Western thought. From quantum indeterminacy to chaos theory, the interplay of chance and order also played an extremely important role in Western science and mathematics, providing new modes of understanding the universe. With this perspective, and the Cagean idea that the role of art is the 'imitation of nature in her mode of operation',² this article will explore how the mechanics of chance operations actually function in Cage's work, first by examining his use of the *I ching*, and then comparing his use of chance with apparently similar ideas from chaos theory.

In all of his work with chance, Cage sought a balance between the rational and the irrational by allowing random events to function within the context of a controlled system. As James Pritchett described this dynamic, 'The compositional system is the product of the composer's deliberation and has a fixed nature. It cannot be made audible, however, except through the score, its partially random product, of which there are an infinite number of possible versions.'³ The amount and type of composerly control varied from piece to piece, but these fundamental ideas of control and randomness remain constant throughout Cage's indeterminate and chance derived output.

With his watershed work the *Music of changes* (1951), Cage first used chance operations to organise material from pre-composed charts, as a means to construct the final aesthetic surface of the piece in a way that bypassed a reliance on his aesthetic judgment.⁴ In this way, deliberately selected compositional materials and rules governing their use are manipulated by

1. For a detailed discussion of Cage's tendency to embrace, mingle, and appropriate isolated ideas from Eastern philosophy without ever really accepting any one system as a unified whole, see David W. Patterson: 'Appraising the catchwords, c. 1942–1959: John Cage's Asian-derived rhetoric and the historical reference of Black Mountain College', Ph.D. thesis (Columbia University, 1996).

2. One of Cage's favourite quotes from Coomaraswamy, it is also extremely apt when applied to the role of chance in chaos theory: David Revell: *The roaring silence: John Cage: a life* (New York, 1992), p.189.

3. James Pritchett: 'Understanding John Cage's chance music: an analytical approach', in Richard Fleming & William Duckworth, edd.: *John Cage at seventy-five* (Lewisburg, 1989), p.252.

4. For a detailed analysis of the *Music of changes*, see David W. Bernstein: 'In order to thicken the plot: toward a critical reception of Cage's music', in David W. Bernstein & Christopher Hatch, edd.: *Writings through John Cage's music, poetry, and art* (Chicago, 2001).

The whole idea was a bit of a joke on the postmodern ability to spin ideas. So, as the Rules pic. explains, the original I Ching has 64 possibilities in total - all you need to interpret the workings of the cosmos and one's place in time and space. John Cage was onto this. The Postmodern version has over one and a half trillion possible outcomes. However, as there is personal, physical engagement in throwing the dice and constructing the hexagram, we are likely to strive to make sense of the random outcome, to find meaning in it, which would not necessarily be the case if the hexagram was just created with a simple software programme.



It was a response to my Thought Experiment challenge - "Embrace Chance". And the game is enclosed in "The Readers Digest Library of Modern Knowledge" (very 20th c,) which opens to disclose the game itself on the page headed: The Uniqueness of Man.

Performance and Performativity

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/performance-art/introduction-performance-art>

(Feminist) Fluxus



Having experienced sexism and male dominance as a student and in professional art, Schneemann sought to deconstruct and re-write narratives around gender, feminist issues and the female body. *Meat Joy* (1964) challenged stereotypes about female sexuality.

Linder, Ludos performance, Hacienda

Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic Jana Sterbak 1987 mannequin, flank steak, salt, thread, color photograph on paper.

Yoko Ono

Participatory work of artist and activist and campaigner Tate
Modern, Music of the Mind 15th Feb - 1st September 2024

Ideas are central to her art, often expressed in poetic, humorous, profound and radical ways.

YOKO ONO: MUSIC OF THE MIND is the UK's largest exhibition celebrating key moments in Ono's groundbreaking, influential and multidisciplinary career, from the mid-1950s to now –

Ono's most talked about and powerful artworks and performances includes *Cut Piece* (1964), where people were invited to cut off her clothing,

Visitors are invited to take part in both simple acts of the imagination and active encounters with Ono's works, such as *Wish Trees for London*, where visitors can contribute personal wishes for peace.

Audiences will discover over 200 works including instruction pieces, scores, installations, films, music and photography. The exhibition reveals a groundbreaking approach to language, art and participation that continues to speak to the present moment.



Performance Art



The Performative Virtuality of Art and Its Education

In the late 1980s, John Baldacchino (Penn State University Museum of Art Education Director) organised a series of “happenings” with artist Allan Kaprow as **cross-college workshops** between “ag” students from the College of Agriculture, and “art” students from the College of Arts and Architecture.

This was an exploratory and experimental activity that would expose the aesthetics and politics of local land and water use for examination through the lens of the museum's exhibition of sixteenth-century Dutch landscape paintings.



<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/9781118978061.ead061>

Swansea Performance weekend - in conjunction with the exhibition Linder: Danger Came Smiling - Thursday 20 Nov 2025 - Sunday 23 Nov 2025



Performers will test how disparate bodies can sonically and gesturally influence a collective encounter. Like rogue particles in a cultural collider, SGÔR circulates through the crowd, observing how gestures ripple, how atmospheres shift, and how formality might spill over into play. The collective embraces the cut-and-paste sensibility as a method for exploring and subverting received notions of good behavior.

<https://www.glynnvivian.co.uk/whats-on/performance-weekend/>

Task

In your collaborative groups, embody the ethos of a 'happening', 'fluxus' ethos or 'performance/performativity'.

Consider the following as resources:

- Select artists and texts to consider.
- Consider what are your 'collaborative takeaways' from this lecture
- Use yourself and/or others in a series of experimental responses
- Use/ consider props – (i.e tables, chairs), your environment (art college, surrounding area)
- Create props, environments. (games (i.e) I ching, artists books, posters, multiples....
- Consider if/ **how** to document.
- What apparatus? – Phones, cameras, notebooks.....

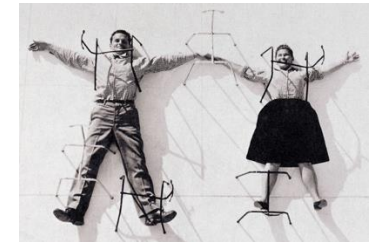
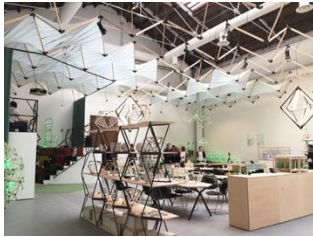
Simon O'Sullivan on Collaboration

Collaboration is not easy – at least for me – so the question is: why do it?

There are a few ways to answer this question in relation to my own experiences in and with collaborative practices (especially artistic), But hopefully with some traction for others.¹
(see paper on moodle)

Developing and documenting work around a theme.
Collaborative Mini thread Event: Reading Room, Fri 28 Nov
Please bring some THREAD of your choice.

“A thread is a filament of some kind, that may be entangled with other threads or suspended between points in three-dimensional space. At a relatively microscopic level threads have surfaces, however they are not drawn on surfaces. Here are some common examples: a ball of wool, a skein of yarn, a necklace, a cat’s cradle, a hammock, a fishing net, a ship’s rigging, a washing line, a plumb-line, an electrical circuit, telephone lines, violin strings, the barbed-wire fence, the tightrope, the suspension bridge. These are all fashioned in one way or another by human hands”.
(Ingold, T: 2007.2016, P.42)



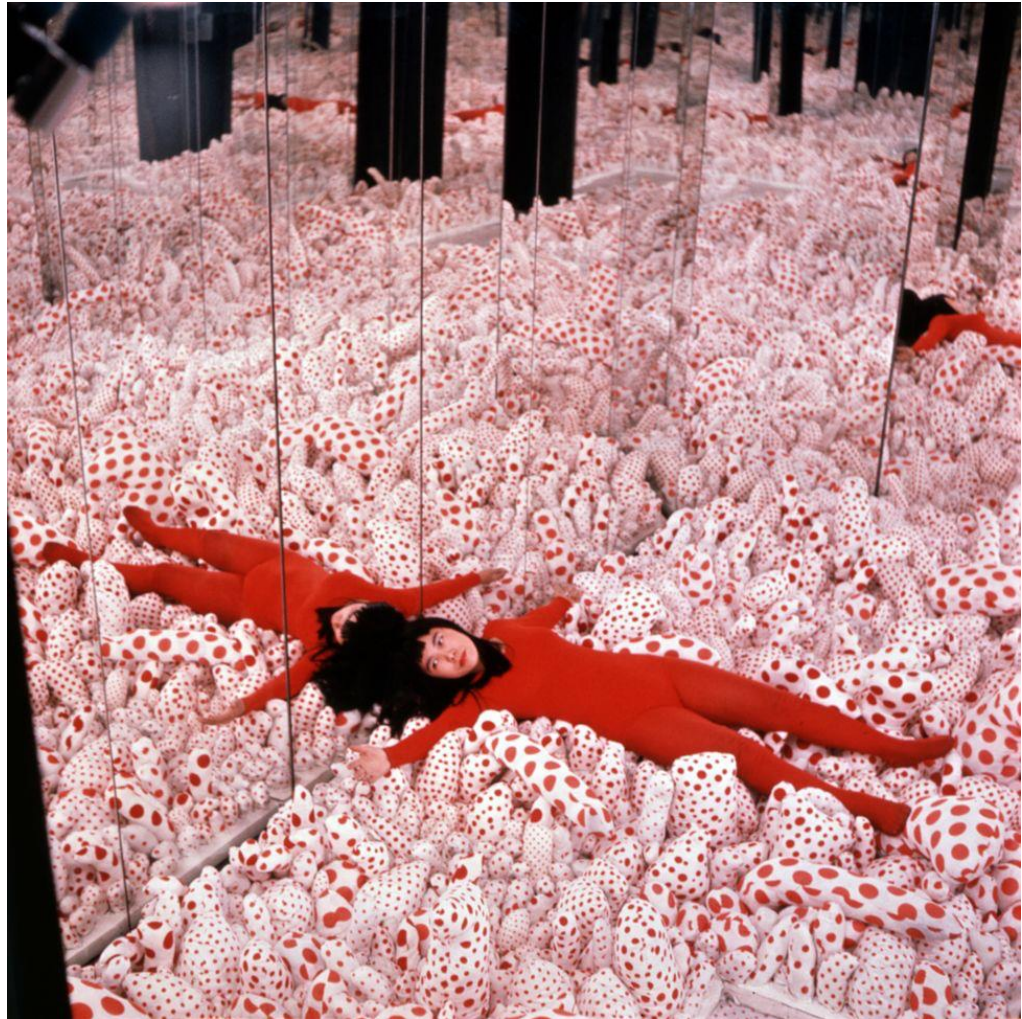
Maria Lau, Cats Cradle, [https://thefabricofcultures.com/project_ital204/Field Playing](https://thefabricofcultures.com/project_ital204/Field%20Playing), Assemble in collaboration with Structure Workshop, 2014/Olafur Eliasson’s project, installation view, Central Pavilion, 57th Venice Biennale, 2017/Ninakatchadourian, Do-it-Yourself Spiderweb Repair Kit, *Plastic box with foam and thread, tweezers, scissors and glue*, 1998.
<http://www.ninakatchadourian.com/uninvitedcollaborations/spiderwebs.php>/Boss Morris, 2015 -current) [https://www.bossmorris.com/gallery/Eames Experimentation](https://www.bossmorris.com/gallery/Eames%20Experimentation), Eames Design - 1933 1965, Mid Century Modern /Bridget Harvey, Climate Change Protest Banners, London, March 2015



Naomi Pearce's notion of D.I.Y. as **“a messy affair, both ‘sticky and knotty’ (Pearce, 2021)**

Feminist method and theories have instead offered a socially concerned alternative to the increasingly mechanized evolution of art about art. The 1970's might not have been pluralistic at all if woman had not emerged during the decade to introduce the multicolored threads of female experience into the male fabric of modern art.

A few perspectives.....Feminism



Feminist method and theories have instead offered a socially concerned alternative to the increasingly mechanized evolution of art about art. The 1970's might not have been pluralistic at all if woman had not emerged during the decade to introduce the multicolored threads of female experience into the male fabric of modern art.

1. Faith Wilding, (born 1943) Crocheted Environment, 1972/1995, Woolworth's Sweetheart acrylic yarn and sisal (Lip, 1988: 198, 198, 11, 112, 234, 236, 274.3 cm) (variable)
2. Yoyoi Kasuma (born 1929) Infinity Mirror Room (Phalli's Field) 1965

Cleave, by Cash Aspeek, Karen Byrne and Anno Mitchell,
One Week Residency at APT Gallery, Deptford, London



The word 'cleave' can mean either to 'split or sever' or 'to come or be in close contact'. Using a large collection of bed-sheets donated to the project by family and friends the group explored this apparent duality transforming them through a collective reimagining – moving through the space, dividing, folding, bundling and wrapping both the sheets and themselves.

24 - hour Residency at Spit & Sawdust, Cardiff



On the second 24 Hour Residency, artists Bob Gelsthorpe, Helen Anna Flanagan, Libita Clayton, Natalie Ramus and Sophie Lindsey were invited to spend 24 hours working in trying out new ideas and experimenting.

The residency is an opportunity to take risk and work intensively within a critical environment with no pressure for finished outcomes.

<https://cargocollective.com/bobgelsthorpe>

<http://www.helenannaflanagan.com/>

<https://www.gasworks.org.uk/exhibitions/libita-clayton-2019-01-24/>

<https://www.sophielindsey.co.uk/>

<https://afterdark.co/events/cardiff/spit-and-sawdust-/24-hour-residency>

The **One Week** Collaborative Residency

In 2018 APT launched the first August Collectives to gain a better insight into how collaborations can develop in our spaces and how we can support such projects at their early stages.

Last year, four artistic collectives and artists were invited to take over APT's Gallery **for one week each**:

Cleave

Deptford island Disco

South Speak, a gathering of poets;

The BOAT collective.



The BOAT collective.

END