

From Abstraction to Model: George Brecht's Events and the Conceptual Turn in Art of the 1960s*

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Between 1959 and 1962, George Brecht developed a model of artistic practice called the Event score. A simple white card with a few lines of text, it was a linguistic proposition presented in lieu of the art object, designed to mediate a moment of the spectator's experience. The first wave of Event scores featured pieces such as *Drip Music (Drip Event)* (1959–62), which focuses an audience on the sensual effects to be discovered in the simple act of releasing water from one vessel into another; *Three Chair Events* (1961), which uses that modest furniture item, or rather three of them, to set up different relationships between object and context; and the famously brief *Word Event* (1961), the notation for which consists of one word: "exit." Derived from the way a musical score structures the experience of sound for a listener, the Event score sought a field beyond the aural. Its aim was to take momentary hold of the kind of attention we give to a work of art and to turn that attention to the details of everyday perceptual experience. Brecht developed the Event score in John Cage's Experimental Composition course in 1959 and tested it in his first one-person exhibition that same year. By 1962, he had expanded the parameters of the Event, refined the form, and written over one hundred short textual scores. Through its sustained work on language as an artistic intervention, Brecht's Event model stands as the precursor to the many linguistic propositions that entered the context of art in the decade that followed. Charting the contours of the Event score, and its criticality, I argue that historical accounts of the conceptual strategies of the 1960s, which begin later in the decade and plot the trajectory from Minimalism to Conceptual art, relinquish a pivotal case in this transition. In short, I contend that the *conceptual turn* of the 1960s actually started in 1959, with Brecht's first text-based score, and not, as most accounts would have it, almost a decade later.

At the outset of his career in the mid-1950s, Brecht was concerned with charting a way beyond Jackson Pollock and his extraordinary harnessing of chance. He did not want to continue abstract painting; he wanted to render Pollock's example—his

* This essay is dedicated to George Brecht, who passed away as it was going to press. My thanks go to Hal Foster, Yve-Alain Bois, and Suzanne Hudson for their generous editorial assistance.

EVENTS

6/57	Found	Structure
8/57 A	Dominos	Koan
	Xylophone	
Late 1957	Board	Marbles
1/57 D	4 Frames	Blair

THE CASE is found on a table. It is approached by one to several people and opened. The contents are removed and used in ways appropriate to their nature. The case is repacked and closed. The event (which lasts possibly 10 - 30 minutes) comprises all sensible occurrences between approach and abandonment of the case.

THE DOME stands on a cloth set for the array of its contents. This array accomplished, necessary actions taken, the pieces are returned to their places.

THE CABINET.

SOLITAIRE 1 is played with a unique set of 27 cards based on the variables number, size, and color. Each card carries one of three values for each of the variables (1, 2, or 3; large, medium, or small; black, white, or brown). Choose a single "effective variable". Mix the deck and deal three cards in a row. If two or more have the same value of the effective variable, move the other upon the one at the left. Continue dealing the whole pack by rows of three upon the previous piles and spaces. Move cards from right to left whenever they can be matched in value. These moves are made only with individual cards, not with piles. When the hand is exhausted, pick up piles in the same order as dealt, turn them over to form a new hand, and deal again by threes. Whenever three cards of the same value appear one at the top of each pile, discard them from the pack. The game is won if all nine threes of a kind are so discarded. Continue redealing the pack without limit until the game is won or reaches an impasse.

relinquishing of authorial control and his involvement of the subject in the process of the work—somehow transferable. Brecht knew Pollock's performance was inimitable. What he wanted to make repeatable was not the single, original expression, it was everything else that made Pollock radical. To move beyond him, Brecht recognized that he needed to translate the one-off performance—to move from singular abstraction to repeatable model.

The Mandates of the Readymade and the Score

The significant transformation in artistic practice seen in the wake of Pollock was accelerated by the presence of two important catalysts: Marcel Duchamp and John Cage. Duchamp's art had gained visibility through the 1950s in museum installations in Philadelphia and New York, and exhibitions at the Sidney Janis Gallery.¹ Cage's unorthodox composition methods had already drawn considerable attention in avant-garde circles and were to become better understood through the courses he taught at The New School for Social Research between 1956 and 1960. Both figures stood for the removal of subjectivity from the work of art and the pioneering use of chance.

In 1957, Duchamp himself went on record about the conceptual basis of his art, presenting "The Creative Act" as a public lecture in the United States.² In doing so, he explicitly intervened in the reception of his work, so that it would not be left entirely to the caprices of American interpretation, and his basic concerns might be registered.

Formulating crucial questions, which would emerge at the heart of the challenges of the decade ahead, Duchamp asked: "If the artist . . . plays no role at all in the judgment of his own work, how can one describe the phenomenon which prompts the spectator to react critically to the work of art?" He went on to explain:

In the creative act, the artist goes from intention to realization through a chain of totally subjective reactions. His struggle toward the realization is a series of efforts, pains, satisfactions, refusals, decisions, which cannot and must not be fully self-conscious, at least on the aesthetic plane. The result of this struggle is a difference between the intention and its realization Consequently, in the chain of reactions accompanying the creative act, a link is missing. This gap, representing the inability of the artist to express fully his intention, this difference between what he intended to realize and what he did realize,

1. The Duchamp exhibitions/installations appeared in New York at the Sidney Janis Gallery (in 1953 and afterwards); at the Museum of Modern Art, as part of the display of the Katherine Dreier Bequest in 1954; and, in the same year, at the Philadelphia Museum, with the initial installation of the Arensberg Collection.

2. The lecture was first presented at the Convention of the American Federation of Arts, Houston, Texas, in April of 1957, and published in *Art News* in the same year (see *Art News*, vol. 56, no. 4, summer, 1957).

is the personal “art coefficient” contained in the work. In other words, the personal “art coefficient” is like an arithmetical relation between the unexpressed but intended and the unintentionally expressed.³

Duchamp’s demystification of the creator’s subjective investment in the work of art, and his explanation of the extent to which this investment is in fact irredeemable, could not have been more timely, coming the year after Pollock’s dramatic death, as artists were beginning to doubt the ongoing viability of the latter’s painterly model. By putting forward these ideas then, Duchamp must have felt that the key issues surrounding the readymade and his oeuvre at large were relevant, perhaps more so than ever, but that they were far from self-evident in the American context of the late 1950s. With “The Creative Act,” Duchamp articulated his longstanding concern with the determinant functions of language, with artistic intention, and with the vagaries of interpretation. Two years later, with the 1959 translation of *Marcel Duchamp*, the monograph by Robert Lebel, American artists finally had the materials for a sophisticated and complex grasp of Duchamp’s project.

For his part, Cage had been astutely aligning his own radical concepts of non-subjective, chance-based composition with art at large, which would ensure that the impact of his work would register well beyond the discipline of music. Of course, Cage was in regular contact with many artists, and his ideas were definitely circulating. However, he buttressed this crucial formal connection through a succession of rhetorical moves, the best-known of which was the link he made between his “silent” score, *4'33''* (1952), and Rauschenberg’s *White Paintings* (1951). This theoretical alignment culminated in the deceptively simple statement in Cage’s 1961 book, *Silence*: “To Whom It May Concern: The white paintings came first; my silent piece came later.”⁴

First drafted in 1952, the so-called “silent piece” stands out as an exceptionally concise model of Cagean chance and indeterminacy. *4'33''* (or “four minutes and thirty-three seconds”) is defined as a given time frame in which no intentional sounds are made. What is most significant about *4'33''*, of course, is the breath-taking void Cage creates, as if to structure the crucial gap that Duchamp had identified between creator and receiver, handing over some of the power of creation to the audience. But there is another side of this momentous work that remains surprisingly under-remarked: it continued to be a work-in-progress, moving in step with developments around it, for almost seven years. Indeed, through the 1950s, *4'33''* was far from the stable object that subsequent criticism has made of it. While the work is still the most discussed of Cage’s scores, what has rarely been highlighted is that, between 1952 and the end of the decade, Cage (re)formulated this landmark conceptual proposition for listening

3. Marcel Duchamp, “The Creative Act,” in Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Grove Press, 1959), pp. 77–78.

4. John Cage, “On Robert Rauschenberg, artist, and his work,” in *Silence* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), p. 98.

60

16 sec. dt

David Tudor.
 Reconstruction of
 John Cage's original
 score for 4'33"
 (1952). 1989.
 Courtesy of
 William Fetterman.

I
 TACET

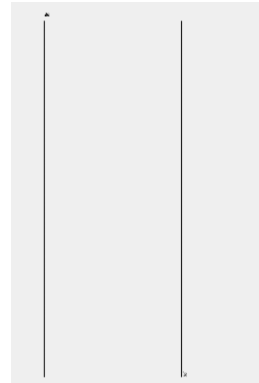
II
 TACET

III
 TACET

NOTE: The title of this work is the total length in minutes and seconds of its performance. At Woodstock, N.Y., August 29, 1952, the title was 4' 33" and the three parts were 33", 2' 40", and 1' 20". It was performed by David Tudor, pianist, who indicated the beginnings of parts by closing, the endings by opening, the keyboard lid. However, the work may be performed by an instrumentalist or combination of instrumentalists and last any length of time.

FOR IRWIN KREMEN JOHN CAGE

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Cage. Graphic score
 for first movement of
 4'33" (1952). 1953.
 © 1993 by Henmar
 Press, Inc.
 Used by permission of
 C.F. Peters Corp.

Cage. Text version of 4'33" (1952). 1958-60.
 © 1993 by Henmar Press, Inc.
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no fewer than three times.⁵ The score was effectively re-conceptualized, as it shifted from the format of staff notation (1952) to graphic, space-time notation (1953) to pure text (c. 1958–60).⁶ At such an important time of transition for all points of reference in contemporary practice—as painters and sculptors looked to time-based arts and musical paradigms, and medium-specificity yielded to hybrid forms (from “Combines” to “Intermedia”)—Cage’s responsiveness in regard to his own model score, keeping it relevant by changing its format in line with the changes around him, remains a critical part of the picture.⁷

4'33'' and the *White Paintings* are now legible as a brilliant retort to Pollock’s model of chance in painterly composition. These works reverse the expressionistic gesture by advancing a promise (rather than registering a result): to capture the ambient effects of their surroundings over and over, in perpetuity. Moreover, in Cage’s precise formulation, *4'33''* also functions as a theoretical extension of the readymade: it is an object defined by its context, but its meaning is updated, even renewed, whenever it is experienced. Existing in the ideal, liminal state of a score, constantly awaiting enactment, it stands as the very marker of the gap between intention and realization.

Abstracting Chance via Pollock and Cage

Brecht wrote about Cage and Duchamp before coming into close contact with the work of either. While Allan Kaprow’s essay “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock,” published in *Art News* in January 1958, remains the most noted (and the most explicit) of this generation’s responses to Pollock, Brecht’s extensive research in this area is less known.⁸ With Pollock’s example as a springboard, Brecht developed a paper called “Chance-Imagery,” which traces the use of chance in art from Duchamp and Dada through Surrealism to Pollock and Cage, finally proposing ideas for current practice.⁹ In tandem with this writing, Brecht conducted systematic

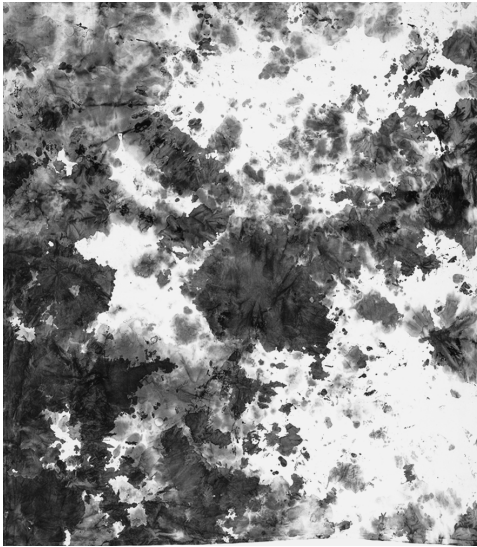
5. Recent scholarship has tilted this record slightly. Branden Joseph mentions the original score in *Random Order: Robert Rauschenberg and the Neo-Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), p. 49; and Liz Kotz has expanded upon her own earlier accounts (which focus on the final text score) to discuss the three scores, in *Words To Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007).

6. To elaborate: in 1952, *4'33''* was conventionally notated. In 1953, when Cage began to frame the piece in relation to his project at large, he reformulated the score as a graphic object. It appeared as a series of vertical lines on white pages (where 1/8 inch equaled 1 second), elegantly echoing the abutments of Rauschenberg’s white canvases. At the end of the 1950s, as he was teaching his class, the most radical transformation came. Since the artists and poets among Cage’s students could not write music, they composed their own experimental works with words, widening the conceptual scope of the score in the process. At this time, Cage redefined his *4'33''* for the last time, casting it into text, with one word for each of the three movements: “tacet,” “tacet,” “tacet.”

7. The term “Combine” was Rauschenberg’s: to define his own work, as *not painting* and *not sculpture*. “Intermedia” was coined by Dick Higgins (Brecht’s Fluxus peer and fellow member of the Cage class).

8. Allan Kaprow, “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock,” *Art News* 57, no. 6 (1958); repr. in Jeff Kelley, ed., *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life: Allan Kaprow* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993), pp. 1–9.

9. The text was published, almost a decade after it was written, as “Chance-Imagery,” *Great Bear Pamphlet* (New York: Something Else Press, 1966).



Left: Brecht. 6/57. 1957.

Right: Brecht. 8/57. 1957.

chance experiments, and by 1956–57, he was working on a series of paintings registering uneven deposits of dye—captured in pockets, twisted with marbles, and drying at different rates—on the surface of bed sheets. The *expressive* appearance of these “paintings” was an illusion. In fact, they intensified the relinquishing of authorial control Brecht had seen in Pollock, because their chromatic incident was generated by indirect means, if not quite via systematic “indeterminacy” (Brecht did not yet have that Cagean concept fully integrated in his repertoire). In 1957, he explained the conceptual basis of his process:

Each painting is an entity which organizes itself and guides its own development. Because of my method of working, each form in the painting exists from the first as paint, rather than as an idea in my mind, later to be transformed into paint. Thus my paintings have no pre-existent life, external or antecedent to themselves, and my function consists, not in design, but in choosing among various elements already present. Since I am not concerned with the origin of the elements from which I choose, recent paintings have placed intentional emphasis on a chance genesis of the first forms, and some experimental paintings have been based on a concept of strict randomness.¹⁰

10. Brecht, brochure for exhibition, Old Mill Gallery, Tinton Falls, New Jersey, March 8–April 11, 1956. Collection Hermann Braun, Remscheid; repr. Alfred Fischer, ed., *George Brecht Events: A Heterospective* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2005), p. 222.



*Robert Morris. Untitled (No. 31).
1956–60. © 2008 Robert Morris/
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.*

Brecht's distanced approach to making chance paintings was not the only one. It happens to be surprisingly close to that of Robert Morris, who, at around the same time, was also working through Pollock's techniques, both emulating and questioning them.¹¹ Describing over a dozen of Morris's Pollockian paintings, and several drawings, shown in San Francisco in 1957–58, Maurice Berger explains: "Rather than working with a pre-determined image, [Morris] explored the dynamics of painting by making a priori decisions only about tools and application. While departing little from Pollock's painting technique, these works nevertheless showed Morris' disenchantment with the static, precious art object."¹² By the mid-1960s, both artists had moved away from Pollock and towards Cage. When Brecht's Pollock research from 1957, "Chance-Imagery," was finally published in 1966, he addressed the issue explicitly, explaining in a note that he had originally failed to appreciate the centrality of Cage's work, as opposed to Pollock's, as a model for composing with chance.

In 1957 Brecht sent his "Chance-Imagery" paper to Cage, who soon visited Brecht at his home in New Jersey, inviting him to join his Experimental Composition class at the New School. Between 1958 and 1959, while attending the class, Brecht began using chance to write scores, which he chose to notate with

11. This description is drawn from Maurice Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 24.

12. *Ibid.*

conventional prose.¹³ Still processing Pollock, Brecht attempted to translate that artistic model of chance into a more flexible form using the conceptual premises of the score. *Confetti Music* (1958) was one of his first scores to experiment with providing cues not only to sound but to other perceptual registers as well, with realizations played out in physical space and real time. The *Confetti Music* score called for the observer to react and contribute to an ambient environment of changing light and sound conditions, deriving cues from a gridded floor strewn with colored cards. Reflecting his dawning sense that aspects of Pollock's chance process could now be captured by the score, Brecht wrote in a notebook: "The sound becomes a projection of the record of a state (like an abstract expressionist painting). The cards represent a record of a more or less momentary state."¹⁴

During the second series of classes Brecht took with Cage in the summer of 1959, Brecht continued to create propositions that extended the aural experience of a musical score by giving weight to visual events, while also beginning to shorten his scores. In July 1959, he wrote a score called *Time-Table Music*, his simplest to date. First realized by members of the Cage class at Grand Central Station in New York, the piece required performers to select times at random from train timetables. The time would designate the length of their given period of perceptual attentiveness (e.g., 7:16, or 7 minutes and 16 seconds), during which all occurrences observed by the performers in the train station could figure as part of the piece. Recognized as the first short textual score of its kind, *Time-Table Music* was the most significant of Brecht's linguistic propositions to date because of its concise format, which would become the template for his future Event scores as well as a model for other artists, especially those associated with Fluxus.¹⁵

Brecht elaborated on the dimension of real everyday experience in *Time-Table Music* with the scores that followed. Perhaps the most performed piece is the one that incorporates the physical presence of water, *Drip Music* (1959–62).¹⁶

13. As noted above, the fact that the first wave of student scores in Cage's class were not rendered in musical notation but in words was significant for the development of the short textual score (including Cage's role in it, at the moment when he changed his 4'33'').

14. Brecht, *Notebook I: June–September 1958*, vol. I of *Notebooks I–VII*, ed. Dieter Daniels and Hermann Braun (Cologne: Walther König, 1991–2005), p. 22. As Liz Kotz has observed, Brecht "proposes an indexical model of sound production." See Kotz, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics and the Event Score," *October* 95 (Winter 2001), p. 67. See also the chapter of the same title in Kotz, *Words To Be Looked At*.

15. In the following year, 1960, La Monte Young began composing short textual scores, and, starting in 1962, many others would follow. In an article devoted to Young's scores, Henry Flynt notes: "Already in 1959, though, there is an anticipatory development which must be mentioned. Musical scores begin to appear which consist of short verbal texts. There is, for example, Brecht's *Time-Table Music* (Summer 1959)." See Flynt, "Mutations of the Vanguard: Pre-Fluxus, During Fluxus, Late Fluxus," in Gino Di Maggio, ed., *Ubi Fluxus ibi motus, 1990–1962* (Milan: Nuove Edizioni Gabriele Mazzotta, 1990), p. 103.

16. Brecht also pondered the possibility that "[t]he second version of *Drip Music* includes the Pollock paintings of ca. 1947–51." Brecht, *Notebook VII: June 1961–September 1962*, vol. VII of *Notebooks I–VII*, ed. Dieter Daniels and Hermann Braun (Cologne: Walther König, 1991–2005), p. 144. George Maciunas's various interpretations of *Drip Music* for the first Fluxus concerts in Wiesbaden, Düsseldorf, and Amsterdam, which Brecht did not attend, reflect the scope of the event as a de-authored cue handed over to a spectrum of realizations in the context of performance. For a discussion of the role of Brecht's scores in Fluxus performance, see my "The Brechtian Event Score: A Structure in Fluxus," *Performance Research*, vol. 7, no. 3 (Fall 2002), pp. 110–123, and "In the Event of George Brecht," in *George Brecht Events: A Heterospective*, pp. 16–181.

TIME-TABLE MUSIC

For performance in a railway station.

The performers enter a railway station and obtain time-tables.

They stand or seat themselves so as to be visible to each other, and, when ready, start their stopwatches simultaneously.

Each performer interprets the tabled time indications in terms of minutes and seconds (e.g. 7:16 = 7 minutes and 16 seconds). He selects one time by chance to determine the total duration of his performing. This done, he selects one row or column, and makes a sound at all points where tabled times within that row or column fall within the total duration of his performance.

George Brecht
Summer, 1959

TIME-TABLE EVENT

to occur in a railway station

A time-table is obtained.

A tabled time indication is interpreted in minutes and seconds (7:16 equalling, for example, 7 minutes and 16 seconds). This determines the duration of the event.

Spring, 1961
G. Brecht

Left: Brecht. Score for Time-Table Music. 1959.

Top right: Brecht. Score for Time-Table Event. 1961.

Right: Brecht. Score for Drip Music (Drip Event). 1959-62.

DRIP MUSIC (DRIP EVENT)

For single or multiple performance.

A source of dripping water and an empty vessel are arranged so that the water falls into the vessel.

Second version: Dripping.

G. Brecht
(1959-62)

This score, consisting of brief instructions for dripping water, defined an all-over acoustic and visual experience: suddenly, the act of dripping was not one of solipsistic expression, but an amplified expression of sound to be perceived collectively. As Brecht began to develop the concept of the Event, he gave that score the composite title *Drip Music (Drip Event)*. *Time-Table Music* was also developed in the next years, and a new score dropped the composite title (and largely relinquished the overt sense of music and performance per se): the new score was called *Time-Table Event* (1961). The disappearance of the music dimension in Brecht's titles was a signal that the musical paradigm had been fully integrated into the artistic proposition. It also coincided with Brecht's move away from Cage, back to the realm of objects and to the presentation of Events in the context of visual art.



*Anita Reuben interacting with George Brecht's Medicine Cabinet. 1959.
Photo © Scott Hyde/Licensed by VAGA, N.Y.*

Toward Events

Brecht's first one-person exhibition in New York, *toward events: an arrangement*, held at the Reuben Gallery in October 1959, presented a diverse mix of work characteristic of this transitional moment in the wake of Abstract Expressionism. The earliest pieces in the show were the two chance paintings from 1957, which might have struck viewers as having something to do with Pollock. The rest differed markedly; it was in three dimensions rather than two, and its appearance was decidedly Duchampian. Using instructions but not yet fully incorporating the short textual score, the latter work comprised collections of everyday objects presented in different ways—laid out on a card table, wall-mounted in a medicine cabinet, piled into an open suitcase, etc. The last piece, titled *The Case* (1959), included the following notation:

THE CASE is found on a table. It is approached by one to several people and opened. The contents are removed and used in ways appropriate to their nature. The case is repacked and closed. The event (which

lasts possibly 10–30 minutes) comprises all sensible occurrences between approach and abandonment of the case.¹⁷

The instructions for *The Case* and other works mediated the space between the intentions of the artist and the experience of the viewer/participant. In this sense, they evoke the lessons of Duchamp's "Creative Act" lecture, especially with regard to the disenchantment of expressive art, while also reflecting Brecht's attempt to incorporate into his art the scoring practices he had learned from Cage.

The press release for *toward events* manifests an uneasy effort at categorization on the part of the gallery, with its language still defaulting to medium-driven concerns, not yet fully absorbing the shift in artistic strategies:

Mr. Brecht's latest work suggests that art is to become actively rather than passively existent, to be enjoyed as an unfolding experience. These are constructions to be hung on the wall as a painting, but whose elements may be moved about by the viewer in a manner determined by the nature of the work. Other works, or "events" such as "The Dome," "The Case," or "The Cabinet," are *presented three-dimensionally*. The sounds of the components as they are manipulated by the viewer, their smells, as well as their visual, tactile and symbolic values, contribute to the effect of the experience.¹⁸

Immediately after the *toward events* show, Brecht's participatory pieces appeared in various exhibitions with a wide range of other work, and the little clarity he had achieved in isolation was somewhat dissipated. A November 1959 exhibition called *Group 3* featured *The Case* surrounded predominantly by paintings.¹⁹ The following month, for a show called *Below Zero* at the Reuben Gallery, Brecht submitted another realization of the suitcase, *The Case 2*. This time, the work appeared with that of closer contemporaries, whose prop-like pieces reflected their focus on Happenings rather than registering more conventionally as autonomous works of art.²⁰ In that context, Rauschenberg showed the Combine *Coca-Cola Plan* (1958), a piece that remains unusual in his oeuvre for the rather hermetic set of instructions that accompanied it: "PLAN: Lay out stretcher on floor/ Match markings and join."

Two months later, at the Leo Castelli Gallery, Jasper Johns presented paintings that included language games and readymade objects. One work, *Thermometer*

17. Flyer for *toward events: an arrangement*, reproduced in *George Brecht Events: A Heterospective*, p. 42.

18. Press release for *toward events: an arrangement*, Reuben Gallery, New York, October 16–November 5, 1959, in Brecht Artist File, at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. (emphasis mine)

19. The *Group 3* show at Rutgers University (November 30–December 16, 1959) included Abstract Expressionist painting first and second generation, and Rauschenberg's *Factum I* and *Factum II* (1957). Besides Brecht, the artists who participated were Alberto Burri, Arthur Cohen, Bruce Conner, Joseph Cornell, Jean Follett, Kaprow, Andrew Leslie, Conrad Marca-Relli, Robert Motherwell, George Ortman, Rauschenberg, Esteban Vicente, and Robert Watts.

20. Kaprow's *Mountain*, Robert Whitman's *Small Cannon*, and Claes Oldenburg's *Woman's Leg* (all 1959) were works conceived in the context of Happenings.

(1959), featured the actual object sandwiched between two painted canvases. Pondering the emergent vocabulary of everyday objects in current art, Brecht clipped a review of this show from the newspaper, underlined its mention of the thermometer, and wrote the word “Blair” alongside it; this is the title of a cabinet piece he had shown in *toward events*, which had also used a real thermometer. Though the two artists deployed the object to different ends, both Brecht and Johns were probably aware of the thermometer in Duchamp’s *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?* (1921) at the Philadelphia Museum.²¹ A photograph of this work in Lebel’s book shows the thermometer plunged into the pile of marble sugar cubes that fill the birdcage, the thermometer’s top half left well out, asserting Duchamp’s interest in linking the work itself to the changing conditions of the spectator’s space.

Like Johns and Morris, Brecht came to study Duchamp systematically via Lebel in late 1959 and early 1960. At that time, he had a singular focus: the readymades. Although this research was integral to his own artistic project, Brecht had decided to write an article called “On the Nature of Readymades,” probably in response to the increasing involvement with everyday objects he was witnessing among his peers. His interest in covering a range of work, including Cage’s, led him to a number of crucial observations:

Note that Cage uses ambient sounds like readymades
 Readymades: What is the relation to photography? . . .
 Readymade structure [vs.] readymade content . . .
 The position (importance) of the concept of “choice.” The elements of all works of art have always been “chosen.” What is chosen? . . .
 Note the relation of things one “has made” (the door opening both ways), the hand in *Tu m’* . . .²²

These brief excerpts—part of a thought process in regard to the readymades that runs across many pages of Brecht’s notebook—suggest a rare understanding of the complex set of possibilities that had opened up for art by 1960.²³ Brecht’s careful analysis sets him apart from the artists pioneering the use of everyday objects with whom he was showing at the time, most notably Johns and Rauschenberg. The striking connection Brecht makes between Cage’s use of ambient sound and the function of the readymade suggests that he had recognized a way to recalibrate Duchamp’s model object to the current moment. Clearly, he had begun to see the readymade in relation to the score: how each encompassed a wide referential field and functioned as an index of that field. Ostensibly, the readymade had

21. Another important case of the insertion of an actual thermometer into a work of art, which Brecht and Johns could have seen, is Kazimir Malevich’s *Reservist of the First Division* (1914) in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York since the 1930s. I thank Yve-Alain Bois for reminding me of this.

22. Brecht, *Notebook IV: September 1959–March 1960*, vol. IV of *Notebooks I–VII*, ed. Dieter Daniels and Hermann Braun (Cologne: Walther König, 1991–2005), pp. 129–131. (emphasis in the original)

23. Almost a decade later, Conceptual art would take up the question of the relationship of the readymade to photography, as well as the distinction between “readymade structure” and “readymade content.”

used a preexisting object to qualify the creative act; at the same time, however, it encapsulated the compromised meaning that industrialized production had imposed on the work of art. For its part, Cage's open score questioned the creative act as a conduit of personal expression, offering instead a frame that focused attention on the ambient sound world. Of course, both readymade and score had also initiated a de-authoring and deskilling, reflecting Duchamp's and Cage's respective critiques of the age-old criterion of taste.

The salient question Brecht asked of the readymade—"What is the relation to photography?"—highlights his sense of a temporal field through which the space between the work and the spectator might be organized. Of course, the readymade/photograph question had been answered by Duchamp in his definition of the readymade as "a snapshot," "a rendezvous," and "a delay." However, when Brecht first isolated the question of the readymade's relation to the photograph, asserting its temporal structure, it was a rare detail to emphasize as the key to Duchamp's contemporary relevance.

Another observation Brecht makes in this context clarifies the driving force behind his speculations: "The whole thing has to do with a concern for the object."²⁴ And indeed, at the beginning of the 1960s, the implications of using everyday objects revealed much with which to be concerned.²⁵ Although the readymade may have represented the most sophisticated point of departure, it had to be activated in ways that acknowledged the constant threats to its radicality.²⁶ Brecht sketched out how he felt the readymade should be extended beyond the context of its invention; for him this was, ultimately, the "self-made." If the making of the work could happen independently, then all the emphasis would be on the observer.²⁷

Assemblage and Arrangement, Readymade and Self-Made

"Despite the differences between . . . more conceptually based artists and those involved with Happenings and junk assemblages," Barbara Haskell has written, "the art world vanguard was sufficiently small in the years 1958–64 that

24. Brecht, *Notebook IV*, p. 131.

25. At the moment of the turn to everyday objects via a diverse spectrum of approaches, which the Museum of Modern Art would soon collectively characterize as "assemblage"—amid an escalating commodity culture—the status of the object had to be assessed with precision. On this subject, see Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Sculpture, Publicity and the Poverty of Experience," in Sabine Breitwieser, ed., *White Cube/Black Box* (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 1996).

26. The readymade's threatened status did not merely manifest itself among the uninitiated, it was even reflected in the interpretations of some of the most advanced artists of the day. Branden Joseph describes Rauschenberg's response to Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel* at the Sidney Janis Gallery, explaining that "he had completely failed to register its transgressive stance toward traditional art, finding it instead 'more beautiful than any painting in the exhibition.'" See Joseph, *Random Order*, p. 89.

27. Robert Morris's *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961) is a work that seems to turn on this issue. Brecht's idea of the "self-made" (in relation to the readymade) is sketched out in *Notebook IV*. Brecht achieved this emphasis on the work's "own making," as presented to an observer, to his personal satisfaction, two decades later in a series of box constellations of live crystals. See *George Brecht Events: A Heterospective*, pp. 162–69.

initially the distinction between them was not rigidly drawn. Brecht, in particular, floated easily between these two worlds.²⁸ The lack of boundaries may have been liberating, but there were attendant problems. To the consternation of artists like Brecht, audiences in 1960–61 were not recognizing differences in the new work, and continued to attach metaphorical associations to objects generated from diametrically opposite approaches.²⁹ Brecht had devised the Event structure precisely to activate the work and, ideally, to neutralize the will to metaphor through the prospect of use. At this time, he drafted a letter that attempted to explain this to Rauschenberg: “If you saw my arrangement called *toward events* at the Reuben Gallery last October (including, for example, a case and a cabinet one could become involved with), you can imagine how sympathetic I was to your remark at the April 22 NYU forum panel [“Art 1960”], about the undesirably static qualities of ‘painting.’” He added that he had enclosed an Event score as a “sort of comment” on this issue.³⁰

The conventional language of modern art—even basic terms such as “painting,” “sculpture,” and “composition”—was rendered obsolete by the range of new approaches at the turn of the 1960s. Artists began to decide on the *arrangement* of shows, making efforts to assert the new (as yet uncodified) character of their works, while galleries attempted to announce new ideas *en masse* with ambitious group shows. As Donald Judd observed: “In 1960 there were several unpredicted shows, and things began to get complicated again.”³¹ The two *New Forms—New Media* shows at the Martha Jackson Gallery in the summer and fall of 1960, each encompassing over seventy artists, provided a panorama of this “complication.”³² The 1960–61 exhibition activity culminated in the massive traveling museum shows *Bewogen beweging* [“Art in motion”], organized by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and *The Art of Assemblage*, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.³³ With grand institutions came grand generalizations. Given that Brecht’s was the only work offered to the

28. Barbara Haskell, *Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism and Performance 1958–1964* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art/W. W. Norton, 1984), p. 51. The Reuben Gallery was considered a Happenings Gallery.

29. Such associations had been bothering Rauschenberg for some time. Describing the response to his textured black paintings of 1953, Rauschenberg complained: “They moved immediately to an association with ‘burned out,’ ‘tearing,’ ‘nihilism’ and ‘destruction.’ That began to bother me.” Cited in Joseph, *Random Order*, p. 86. When Brecht began to be compared with Joseph Cornell, who was still assembling boxed collections through the 1960s, the trap of metaphor and narrative began to pose problems for him as well. Brecht had complained of his horror of Cornelian “nostalgia.” Recalled by Hermann Braun, interview by the author, February, 2003.

30. The panel, “Art 1960,” was moderated by Robert Goldwater; other speakers included Johns, Alfred Leslie, Louise Nevelson, Richard Stankewicz, and Frank Stella. It was staged at the Loeb Student Center, Washington Square South, on Thursday, April 21, 1960. Brecht was incorrect in dating it April 22. Brecht’s letter of April 1960 appears as a draft insert in *Notebook V: March–November 1960*, vol. V of *Notebooks I–VII*, ed. Dieter Daniels and Hermann Braun (Cologne: Walther König, 1991–2005), p. 68–69.

31. Donald Judd: *Complete Writings 1959–1975* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975/2005), p. 149.

32. This show was mounted in two installments; the title was reversed for the second. In both versions, a number of more anthropomorphically-oriented assemblage artists were grouped together with those approaching found objects more radically (e.g., from the point-of-view of the readymade).

33. *Bewogen Beweging* (“moved movement”) ran from March 10 to April 17, 1961, at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and from May 17 to September 3, 1961, at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm.

public to rearrange, and that this intention had guided the organization of the objects in the work, obviously he was not concerned with composition in the manner suggested by the MoMA rubric “assemblage.” Feeling the urgency of the need to mark this conceptual divide, Brecht appended notes to his work:

The aspect of this work which (to me) is of most interest is not the object-like part, that is, the cabinet and its contents, but rather, what occurs when someone is involved with its object-like part. That is, the work to me is more in the nature of a performance (music and dance) than of an object. It is therefore of the greatest importance that the spectator, participant, be free to open and close the door and handle the objects freely. In this way both major phases of the work, the placid, reflective phase of the closed cabinet and the manifold, changing phase of the interior are open to him. It is within the spirit of the work that (as in life in general) parts may be lost, broken, spilled, stolen, replaced, contributed, soiled, cleaned, constructed, destroyed . . . How should an exhibitor cope with this? First, by relaxing, since I absolve him completely of returning the work in its original form, secondly, by doing what seems to him appropriate to do. When (if) parts disappear, replace these with parts that seem equivalent (able to substitute). If no equivalent parts are available, substitute something else, or nothing, if you'd rather. / Everyone will do what is appropriate for him to do. No catastrophes are possible.³⁴

In the hands of the first generation to seek a way beyond Abstract Expressionism, the use of everyday objects had been initiated as a strategy to renew painting with non-subjective elements, but many of the younger artists quickly moved away from painting altogether.³⁵ What had started out as a quarrel with expressive painting developed into other challenges, including that of registering the role of the viewer/perceiver, on the one hand, and the complex status of everyday objects, on the other. For the more analytical artists in touch with Cage and Duchamp, it was also a matter of not repeating their moves, or merely pictorializing the readymade, but using the mediation of temporal structures to extend its radical logic.

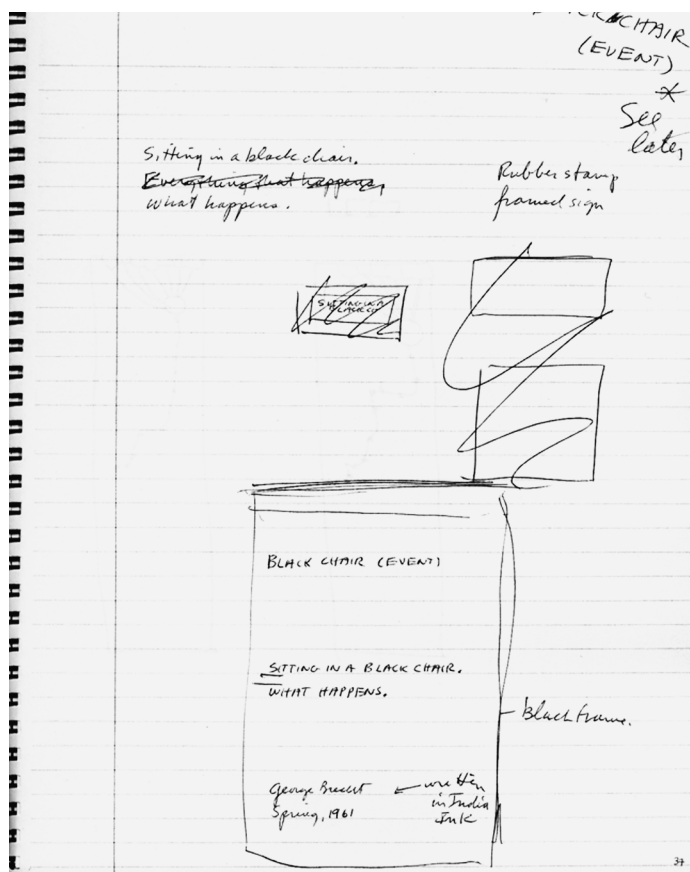
Readymade and Photograph, Object and Score

In early 1961, Brecht was working intensely on the form of his Event scores. Seeking the most concise and flexible verbal structure, he eradicated excess verbiage,

34. Excerpt from Brecht's “Notes on shipping and exhibiting . . . CABINET” written for the Museum of Modern Art. Brecht Artist File, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

35. Morris stated: “Painting ceased to interest me. There were certain things about it that seemed very problematic to me. I couldn't solve the problems. There was a big conflict between the fact of doing this thing, and what it looked like later.” See Berger, *Labyrinths*, p. 25. Two years later, Brecht explained the problem to *Village Voice* critic Jill Johnston as “the object-like nature of paintings in a world of process . . . the distance imposed by conventional attitudes toward painting on the viewer/painting relationship (the distance between a painting of a soup-can and the viewer being much greater than the distance between the painter and the actual can).” Jill Johnston archive, New York.

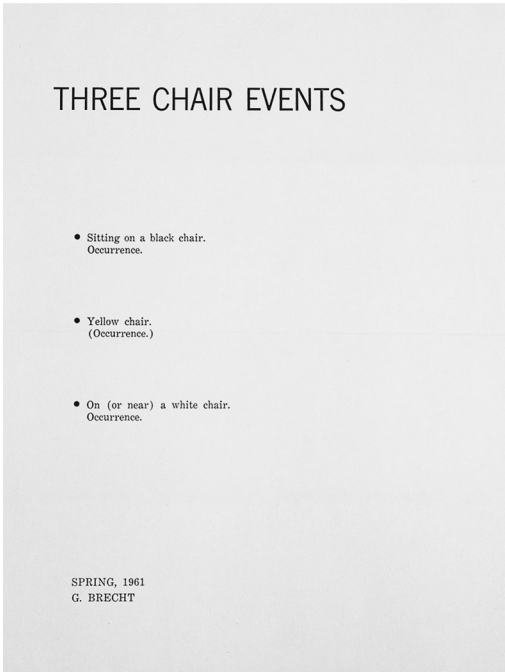
Brecht. Loose page
inserted in a notebook
dated March–June
1961. Courtesy The
Gilbert and Lila
Silverman Fluxus
Collection, Detroit.



whittling the length of his new propositions down from that of previous scores. In April 1961, he had a breakthrough in the form of a piece titled *Black Chair (Event)*. The notation simply read: “sitting in a black chair/what happens.” This sudden clarity sparked an avalanche of new Event scores in early 1961, using objects as the starting point for a widening field of observation, culminating in the pivotal *Three Chair Events*.

The score for *Three Chair Events* called for a white, a black, and a yellow chair, and directed the viewer very generally toward “occurrences” in their midst. Brecht had the chance to present his own realization of *Three Chair Events* for a group show at Martha Jackson Gallery called *Environments, Situations, Spaces* in April 1961.³⁶ On this occasion, he placed the white chair in the gallery space designated to him, where it was spot lit, with his name on the wall nearby. In the vicinity of that chair, he left a stack of printed *Three Chair Events* scores. People standing in the gallery reading the

36. This exhibition, which opened in April 1961, included Allan Kaprow, Jim Dine, Oldenburg, et al.



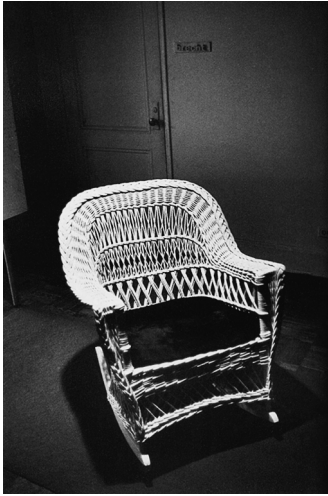
*Brecht. Score for Three
Chair Events. 1961.*

score would therefore notice that the piece announced three chairs and that they were only encountering one. Brecht had placed the black chair in the bathroom, and the yellow chair on the sidewalk outside the front entrance to the gallery.

Ultimately, the only chair that received what Brecht called “art-like attention” was the white chair, and he was satisfied with this result. Through this unique installation, Brecht revealed aspects of the Event concept, also demonstrating how the arrangement (conceptual as much as physical) affects the legibility of the work (of its being considered art at all). Apart from constructing an implicit hypothesis in the direction of what might now be understood as institutional critique—showing the impact of the designated gallery space on the interpretation of the objects—Brecht’s *Three Chair Events* united the readymade and the score, opening up a new perspective on how they might function together.³⁷

The testimony of Brecht’s peers reveals that they had grasped his Event concept. Kaprow wrote an astute account of events in his book on this transformative

37. The role of readymade and score in Brecht’s realization of *Three Chair Events* at Martha Jackson reveals his score model explicitly as an intervention in the context of art. Since La Monte Young and Brecht are repeatedly discussed together as the two pioneers of the short textual score, it seems apposite to distinguish Brecht’s *Three Chair Events* from Young’s 1960 *Poem for Tables, Chairs, Benches, etc.*, which deals with similar objects. It is crucial to note that Young’s score was a sound piece (of indeterminate duration). Henry Flynt writes: “In *Poem*, Young allowed that the composition might be ten days long.” See Flynt, “La Monte Young in New York, 1960–62,” in *Sound and Light*, pp. 49–50.



*Brecht. Realization of Three Chair Events (details).
1961. Photos by Robert McElroy. © Robert R.
McElroy/Licensed by VAGA, New York, N.Y.*

period.³⁸ Morris sent Brecht a poetic note the month of the exhibition, expressing his sense of events: “Was the glass of water I drank at Brecht’s Brecht’s Glass of Water? Was the moment of quiet there Brecht’s Silence? When I creaked moving in the chair was that Brecht’s Sound?”³⁹ Morris also observed how Brecht had escaped the media embroilments that seemed to claim the art of most of his peers, and he linked Brecht’s project to the figure both young artists held in high esteem: Duchamp.⁴⁰ Brecht and Morris were particularly interested in Duchamp’s concern with language. While engrossed in his research into the readymades, Brecht had transcribed Duchamp’s *Anemic Cinema* carefully in his notebooks, circling in different colors the various parts of the multi-layered wordplay. Morris would later state: “My fascination with and respect for Duchamp was related to his linguistic fixation, to the idea that all of his operations were ultimately built on a sophisticated understanding of language itself.”⁴¹

In Brecht’s structuring of the linguistic proposition—a score for a single black chair, say—the object was not identified with any specificity but left endlessly substitutable. Through the score, Brecht asserts the conceptual nature of the denotative function of language—precisely the relationship between signifier and

38. Speaking in this period of Brecht’s principal articulations of the scores, which were sent through the mail to be enacted by the recipients, Kaprow concluded: “As we mentioned before in connection with another of Brecht’s pieces . . . [the] implication is the most radical potential in all the work discussed in this book. Beyond a small group of initiates, there are few who could appreciate the moral dignity of such scores, and fewer still who could derive pleasure from going ahead and doing them without self-consciousness.” See Kaprow, *Assemblage, Environments and Happenings* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1966), p. 195.

39. Morris, typed note, spring 1961; interleaf in Brecht, *Notebook VII*.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Morris, quoted in Berger, *Labyrinths*, p. 22.

signified—using it as the matrix for engaging a subject. The score’s material object (or referent) is never completed, or *depicted*, by the artist; it is supplied by the reader, each time it is read. Based on Brecht’s input alone, it could be any black chair. In a complex manner, the score therefore traffics in the functions of the “shifter.” “The shifter is Jakobson’s term for that category of linguistic sign which is ‘filled with signification’ only because it is ‘empty,’” Rosalind Krauss writes in “Notes on the Index.” “The word ‘this’ is such a sign, waiting each time it is invoked for its referent to be supplied. ‘This chair,’ ‘this table,’ or ‘this . . .’ and we point to something lying on the desk.”⁴² Krauss describes the shifter as a type of index, and here we might recall the discussion of Pollock’s unrepeatable indexical mark, and the ways in which Cage’s “silent” score and Rauschenberg’s “empty” paintings functionally reverse it, allowing the ambient sound or light in the space around the work to generate the incident. Brecht’s Event score departed from this base but with a new emphasis on the subject/perceiver. Shifters such as “I” and “you” are “part of the symbolic code of language insofar as they are arbitrary,” Krauss writes. “But insofar as their meaning depends on the existential presence of a given speaker, the pronouns (as is true of other shifters) announce themselves as belonging to a different type of sign: the kind known as the index.”⁴³ For any realization, an Event score, like language itself, requires a subject, much more emphatically than a painting requires a viewer. All Brecht’s Event scores use the shifter function because they remain open and require a subject to be filled with meaning.⁴⁴

Three Chair Events had addressed several of Brecht’s initial questions about the readymade. In effect, it gave a new articulation to the readymade’s indexicality—its contingency in each new context, its (critical) designation of a discursive field—and did so through the logic of the score. The situation of the score and the white chair in the gallery—where one not only refers to the other but also relies on the other—restages both Duchamp’s own privileging of language and the question of the readymade’s relationship to the photograph. It was obviously not lost on Brecht that both the readymade and the photograph have an Event structure, that both are temporal, contingent fragments. The *Three Chair Events* score stopped the subject in language, calling for the visitor first to read it, then to ponder the single white chair, and perhaps to notice that it is but one chair while the score evokes “three chair Events.”⁴⁵ The relationship between the text and the object, which is supposed to act as referent, seems arbitrary, and the gap between one chair and three chairs seems imposing. At

42. Rosalind Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Part I,” in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), p. 197. (emphasis mine)

43. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

44. It is worth reminding the reader that during the period under consideration—the pre-Fluxus moment of 1961—Brecht’s scores had yet to be mobilized in the context of Fluxus performance and were being tested as another kind of proposition, from thought to object.

45. My use of the word “stopped” here is admittedly unusual: bringing together the photographic notion of stopping, the Duchampian one of stoppage, and the (linguistic) means Brecht deployed to arrest the habitual trajectory of the subject moving through an exhibition space.

the same time, language becomes the site of suture: we stay with the score; it stops us from acting; we read. It alters our experience of the object as the expectation of two more chairs qualifies the assertive presence of the singular unaltered readymade. For once, the readymade appears as incomplete.

Referring to Duchamp's *Green Box* notes as functioning like an "extended caption" to the *Large Glass*, Krauss constructs a theoretical proposition that resonates with the Event score. Neither the *Large Glass* nor Brecht's Events are photographs, of course, but they do enact certain functions of the photograph. Krauss notes that captions, particularly those attached to photographs, operate very differently from the titles of paintings; the same could be said of an Event score. "Photography heralds a disruption in the autonomy of the sign," she writes. "A meaninglessness surrounds it which can only be filled by the addition of text."⁴⁶ The photograph thus announces an unrecoverable rupture in representation, one that artistic practice is always bound to confront. "It is also, then, not surprising that Duchamp should have described the readymade in just these terms," Krauss claims. "It was to be a 'snapshot' to which there was attached a tremendous arbitrariness with regard to meaning, a breakdown of the relatedness of the linguistic sign."⁴⁷

By the 1960s, this condition of arbitrariness, which Krauss locates in the relationship between photograph and caption, image and language, had come to implicate everyday objects in transit from one context to another (from the commodity economy to the work of art). Brecht's Event scores confronted this newly complicated realm of disrupted meaning and turned it on its head, using it to reanimate reified subject-object relations. If both the readymade and the photograph register the impact of mass production on the work of art—in their rejection of tactility and facture, in their serial condition—Brecht saw the need to render explicit what Duchamp had incorporated seamlessly. That is, he needed to mark the decontextualization and the temporality—the Event structure—intrinsic to readymade and photograph alike. Again, Duchamp had defined the readymade in terms of a "delay." To respond to the new object conditions of the 1960s, Brecht did not construct "a delay in glass," or even in the object, but a delay in language, generated through the temporal structure of the Event score. Krauss's explication of the readymade in relation to the photograph is helpful here:

The readymade's parallel with the photograph is established by its process of production. It is about the physical transportation of an art object from the continuum of reality into the fixed condition of an art-image by a moment of isolation, or selection. And in this process, it also recalls the function of the shifter. It is a sign which is inherently "empty," its signification a function of only this one instance, guaranteed by the existential presence of just this object. It

46. Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Part I," p. 205.

47. Ibid.

is the meaningless meaning that is instituted through the terms of the index.⁴⁸

In a manner that extends the function of the readymade, the “three chair Events” in Brecht’s realization of that score at Martha Jackson immediately bring into focus the placement of the chairs in particular contexts. What is it about a specific situation (whether gallery, bathroom, or street) that gives one meaning to one chair and a different one to another? Brecht understood, at an important moment in contemporary practice, which ran parallel to a thriving commodity culture, that it was not the photograph that required a caption, but the object. To extend Krauss’s formulation, the Event score is a caption that addresses the “meaninglessness” that surrounds the everyday object.

Just as Brecht’s Event scores removed his subjective presence from the work through language, Morris would soon use Duchampian techniques to investigate subjectivity in the work of art. His *I-Box* (1962) is a box featuring a cabinet structure with a door in the shape of the letter “I,” which the viewer/participant may open to reveal a photograph of the artist (naked). The *I-Box* keeps the subject position unstable: the artist’s photographic surrogate is represented as shifting, based on the viewer’s encounter with the object (open or closed). Though Morris does not use textual prompts to remove himself as subject, as Brecht does with his open-ended, neutral Event score, he touches on the same issue through comparable strategies. “The self is spelled out in the *I-Box*,” writes Berger, “not as centered but as an arbitrary function that hinges on an external action.”⁴⁹ Thus, the viewer/participant can him- or herself negate the subject of the work by closing the door, and thus negate the referent of the “I.”

Around the same time, Brecht made use of the photograph in relation to his Events. For a forward-looking 1962 exhibition in Philadelphia called *Art 1963: A New Vocabulary*, he contributed a realization of a score titled *Table and Chairs*.⁵⁰ But for his representation in the catalog, Brecht sent a photograph of a completely different piece, his *Word Event*. His intention was to use the temporal contingency of the photograph to better define his concept of the Event. Brecht stated that the photograph of his *Word Event* realization, which depicted the back door of his house in Metuchen, New Jersey, surmounted by an Exit sign, obviated his having to give definite form in the catalog to the *Table and Chairs* event realized in the exhibition.⁵¹ That is, the constellation of elements in the photograph evoked events generally: the circumstantial, contingent details that become part of each

48. Ibid., p. 206.

49. Berger, *Labyrinths*, p. 37.

50. The exhibition, curated by Audrey Sabol, was arranged under the auspices of the Arts Council, at the YM/YWHA in Philadelphia (and also included Johns, Rauschenberg, Jean Tinguely, Robert Watts, et al.).

51. In a letter to the curator, Audrey Sabol, dated October 10, 1962, Brecht stipulates that *Table and Chairs*—which included a tablecloth, two wine glasses, a knife, fork, spoon, plate, playing cards, a checkerboard with checkers, and a newspaper—should be exhibited in *three* different realizations during the run of the exhibition. The first was to lay the cards at one end and at the other end, a newspaper changed



Above: Brecht.
Realization of Three
Table and Chair
Events (detail). 1962.



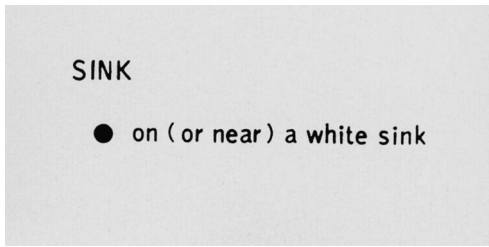
Right: Brecht.
Realization of
Word Event.
1961. Photograph
by Ernest Mogor.

realization. Brecht preferred not to provide an image of the object arrangement that at any one time would be encountered anew in the exhibition. In its non-correspondence to the work in the show, the photograph of *Word Event* cast into doubt the apparent finality of any of the three object-realizations of *Table and Chairs* (or any other event, for that matter).

Table and Chairs was one of a number of 1961 pieces Brecht rewrote in order to open out the perspective of the score, shifting the representation from one given view to three. In Brecht's 1963 collection of scores, we find *Three Table and Chair Events* along with many other pieces bearing titles starting with "three."⁵² Perhaps this was an application of the ideal test-space Duchamp had created using threes and their multiples (such as the *Three Standard Stoppages* or the "nine shots" in the *Large Glass*). In any case, Brecht appreciated that three different results offered a more comprehensive demonstration of whatever idea or object one was attempting to evoke. For example, his *Gap Event* (1961), which became *Three Gap Events*, proposed three very different kinds of "gaps." The later score reads: "missing letter sign, between two sounds, meeting again." Here, while still holding out a spectrum of possibilities that could fill in the meaning,

daily to reflect the day on which it would be seen. The second iteration was to leave the cards in place and include the place setting and wine glass. In the third everything had to be removed, and the checker game set up in the middle of the table, ready for play, with a wine glass at each place. The letter is in the Gilbert & Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection / Museum of Modern Art, New York.

52. The box collection of Brecht's scores, called *Water Yam*, was designed by George Maciunas and published by Fluxus in 1963.



*Brecht. Score
for sink. 1962.*



*Brecht.
Realization of
sink. 1962.*

Brecht moved from the prospect of a fairly concrete definition of a gap (a ready-made: a sign, missing a letter, thus bearing a gap between the remaining letters), toward the increasingly abstract (an aural definition: *between two sounds*), and then to the most abstract of all (conjuring the space between interpersonal encounters through the notion of *meeting again*).

The role of language in reorienting the subject's view on everyday objects was further developed in Brecht's work as he tried reversing his modus operandi by writing a score "about" an object already there for his contemplation. One such Event, which he also rendered as "three" possibilities (though not by means of the title), was *sink* (1963). The actual sink appeared akin to Duchamp's urinal, *Fountain* (1917), except that Brecht did not sign his porcelain object. Ultimately, he reversed the ready-made concept by returning the sink to the world of unremarkable objects. Devising an ad for the *Village Voice*, he floated three possible perspectives on the piece:

FOR SALE: WHITE SINK and certificate entitling you to all the events in which it takes part.

\$300. Best offer. G. Brecht.

FOR SALE: Sculpture, "white sink" by G. Brecht.

\$750 . . . dimensions . . . send for slide, 25¢

FOR SALE: white sink, porcelain, on stand, with chrome faucets.
Excellent condition. Will deliver. Best offer.

This use of language to redefine an existing object distinguishes Brecht's concerns from those of most of his peers, rendering the act of designation a performative one, as it was for Duchamp (though more open-ended).⁵³ One exception was Morris's *Document*, which appeared in 1963, the same year as *sink*, and functioned similarly. Like Brecht's *Village Voice* advertisement, Morris deployed an agreed-upon type of language to change the meaning of the object: he created a work around the act of signing a notarized document that withdrew the aesthetic value of an earlier piece, *Litanies*.⁵⁴

Perception Models and Unremarkable Objects: Brecht and Morris

Brecht's *Table and Chairs Event* was set in a new context in Samuel Wagstaff's 1964 *Black, White, and Gray* exhibition at the Wadsworth Athenaeum. Rather than his everyday objects being related to a Pop sensibility, as they had been in Philadelphia, they now appeared as part of the new, cool ethos of reduction later defined as Minimalism. James Meyer notes that this exhibition is sometimes referred to as "the first minimal show," and goes on to speak of its predominantly "conceptual" dimension.⁵⁵ Above all, writes Meyer, the show "identified an anti-subjective tendency permeating a broad spectrum of advanced work."⁵⁶ Although this exhibition included a wide range of artists—from Rauschenberg to Robert Indiana, from Anne Truitt to Andy Warhol—Judd was canny enough to discuss Morris and Brecht in relation to one another. For the first time, it might have appeared that Morris's large columns, slabs, and portals, painted in neutral gray and laid out for various encounters with the subject, bore some comparison with Brecht's common objects arranged as an Event, in that both made the perceptual experience of the spectator the subject of the work.⁵⁷ Judd's commentary on

53. Barbara Haskell observed "the absence of painterly gesture on Brecht's objects contrasted markedly with the found objects and figurative work of his colleagues *Sink* . . . for example, was just an ordinary white porcelain sink, on which rested toothbrushes, soap, and a glass." Haskell, *Blam!*, p. 53.

54. For a more extensive account of this work, see Berger, *Labyrinths*, 19–22.

55. Quoting the curator, Meyer asserts that it had become the "idea . . . as opposed to [a] retinal or visceral art"—a neo-dada or conceptual practice that Wagstaff attributed to the singular influence of John Cage." See James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 77. Meyer later notes that the "conceptual" dimension discovered in this early Minimal moment is not that of Conceptual art but was undoubtedly a foundation for it. Less important than the catch-all titles is the fact that Brecht and Morris, in this context, could be seen to be working *conceptually*, removing the subjectivity from the work and focusing on the spectator—albeit with different means.

56. Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 78.

57. Although they invite different subjective responses—Morris's blocky, bodily forms anchoring spatial perception, and drawing upon the thought of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, versus Brecht's plotting of a kind of syntax of perception via familiar objects, derived from Ernst Cassirer—the subtle link in Judd's text remains compelling. See Judd, "Black, White and Gray," *Nationwide Arts Report: Hartford, Arts Magazine* (March 1964), in *Complete Writings*, p. 117. Brecht's engagement with Cassirer is discussed at length in the fourth chapter of my dissertation. See "A Critique of Abstraction," in *From Abstraction to Model: In the Event of George Brecht and the Conceptual Turn in the Art of the 1960s*, Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2008.

Morris leads, in several instances, to his making similar observations about Brecht, effectively placing him in a larger field of current work, with which he has rarely been associated since:

The importance of art is extended to everything, most of which is slight, ordinary, unconsidered. You are forced to consider ordinary things and to question whatever was thought important in art. *Table and Chair Event*, by George Brecht, is the most extreme instance in this exhibition.⁵⁸

He continues with a matter-of-fact description of Brecht's *Table and Chairs Event*—"a white kitchen chair at either end of a white kitchen table . . ."—and concludes that there is an "attitude" in this arrangement. Though he does not specify what this attitude is, he goes on to link the work of Brecht (and Morris) to Johns's *Canvas* and *Alphabet*, which for Judd are the precursors.⁵⁹ With this connection made, we are reminded of the common ground for all three artists—Johns, Morris, and Brecht—in the work of Duchamp, while recognizing that both Brecht and Morris are working to translate the lessons of the readymade object through a greater emphasis on the subject. Notably, this evacuation of personal expression is not merely a matter of an "unhierarchical view of things," which Judd also sees in works by Dan Flavin and Frank Stella, adding that theirs is a view "not related to Morris's or Brecht's."⁶⁰

While Duchamp's legacy repeatedly enters accounts of Johns and Morris, Judd's link between Johns, Morris, and Brecht has been all but dropped. An exception to this is Maurice Berger's monograph on Morris.⁶¹ At the outset, Berger describes the important role Fluxus played in New York in the early 1960s, invigorating a radical performance sensibility. "Their performances," he writes, "called *Events* to distinguish them from Happenings were cool and conceptual."⁶² Of course, "Events" was Brecht's concept, and Berger proceeds to explain how they were "deeply rooted in Cage's respect for everyday sounds." Rather than works of Fluxus more generally, as he claims in this context, Berger's examples—such as turning on a lamp or drinking a glass of water—are based on specific pieces by Brecht (*Three Lamp Events* and *Three Aqueous Events*, 1961). In any case, he asserts that this work was significant for Morris, and that Morris encountered it through his friendship with Young and indeed through his own participation in some of the performances.⁶³ Although Morris later

58. Judd, *Complete Writings*, p. 118. Meyer cites Brecht's work as being "representative of the show's Cagean vein" and Judd's connection between Brecht and Morris as a moment when "the dividing line between modernism and Dada, between abstract sculpture and the readymade, [began] to collapse." See Meyer, *Minimalism*, p. 86.

59. Judd, *ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

61. See Berger, *Labyrinths*.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

63. Morris had considerable contact with Brecht in the early 1960s. He participated in Brecht and Robert Watts's Yam Festival concerts, which culminated in May 1963, and proposed a set of gray flags to be made as part of the "objects" for sale from the "Yam Warehouse." In January 1963, Brecht and Watts

distanced himself from Fluxus, he befriended Brecht and seems to have respected him from the outset. He apparently appreciated the conceptual basis of Brecht's work and was interested in trying to apprehend it. As Berger explains:

The Duchampian, task-oriented sensibility of these events appealed to Morris. Significantly, figures like Young and Brecht waged a major challenge to the concept of artistic authorship as they reformulated the aesthetic strategies of Duchamp. Like his teacher Cage, Brecht believed that music was not simply a construction of refined sounds played on special instruments but an extension of ordinary sounds and events.⁶⁴

Yet it was not Young who reformulated Duchamp's aesthetic strategies or who was concerned with giving up authorship, it was Brecht. Berger proceeds to argue that Morris drew his "process pieces" from this milieu in New York around 1961, as well as from the work of Duchamp. Since both Morris and Brecht were concerned with Duchamp, language, and the idea that the work is not a vehicle of expression but a cue to perception, and since their art took such different forms, it is instructive to compare contemporaneous pieces that reflect this constellation of models.

The most overtly Duchampian works of Morris continue his concern with the shifting perceptual conditions of the encounter between subject and object. *Three Rulers (Yardsticks)* comprises three metal rulers—not standard issue rulers, but devices of Morris's own making—suspended at equal level from individual hooks. Though their vertical descent down the wall ends with staggered lengths, the number at the extremity of the ruler is the same for each (thirty six inches). This work clearly draws on Duchamp's perceptual joke *Three Standard Stoppages*—its three different definitions of a meter—and extends it.⁶⁵ In contrast to the concrete physical presence of Morris's works, Brecht's most Duchampian Event scores—such as *Three Gap Events*, which conjures three very different "gaps," and *Three Yellow Events (to Rose)*, which defines yellow in three different ways—shift Duchamp's proposition toward a spectrum of perception issuing exclusively from language.⁶⁶ The figuring of alternate perceptual registers in *Three Gap*

presented a faux lecture event as part of their Yam Festival (called the *Yam Lecture*). As a critique of the lecture format, the two artists dressed in white lab coats, played various soundtracks, and projected altered slides. Morris's faux Panofsky lecture of the following year, *21.3* (1964), for which the artist dressed as an art historian and used an out-of-sync tape recording of the lecture, seems to continue this idea.

64. Berger, *Labyrinths*, p. 27.

65. Berger writes, "... standardized relations of scale are suddenly relegated to individual perception and subjectivity and the *concept* of measure becomes our *percept* of it." See Berger, *Labyrinths*, p. 33. For another account of this work, in relation to Duchamp, see Krauss, *Robert Morris: The Mind/Body Problem* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1994), p.134.

66. Considering the notation for *Three Yellow Events*—enigmatic as it might first seem—we can take the word "yellow" and envisage several possibilities: the color in many shades, or even the verb, "to yellow." To these Brecht adds the possibility of an aural definition of strong color ("loud"), and, finally, the way one color can prompt the thought of another ("red").

Events is echoed in a new guise in the *Three Yellow Events* score; both demonstrate how Brecht develops Duchamp's strategy into an entirely different form without repeating it.

Morris's overtly Duchampian *Fountain* (1963) consists of a bucket containing recirculating water hanging from a wood bracket attached to the wall at eye level. But mere comparisons of Morris's piece to Duchamp's readymade of the same title are too limited. It may be more accurate, and more productive, to read Morris's sound-making bucket of water in relation to Brecht's *Drip Music (Drip Event)* (1959–62). In this context, the encounter with the subject, which Morris will later translate in his neutral floor-bound forms, appears to come out of the performance ethos with which Morris and Brecht were both involved.⁶⁷ The Brecht-Morris connection is one that has disappeared from histories of postwar art.⁶⁸ Since Morris is often discussed as one of the key mediators of the Duchamp legacy (and more recently is discussed in similar terms in regard to Cage), and as the figure whose work leads logically from Minimalism to Conceptual Art, Judd's perception of a common attitude between Brecht and Morris, which even the most advanced revisions of the art-historical canon of the 1960s ignore, merits consideration.⁶⁹

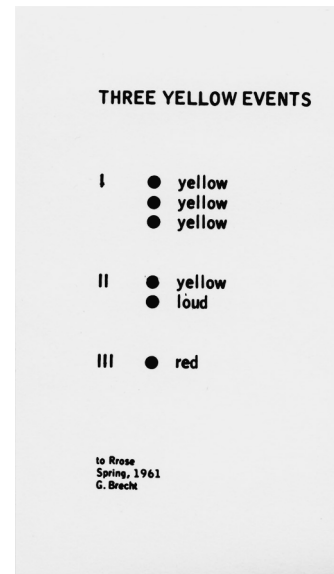
From minimal and conceptual art to Minimal and Conceptual Art

Even a preliminary consideration of Brecht and Morris suggests the ways in which the Event model complicates the account of 1960s art, particularly the way

67. Berger's choice of words to describe Morris's *Fountain* suggests this resonance: "What might have been a silent pun on modernist history instead becomes an endless performance piece." Berger, *Labyrinths*, p. 27.

68. It is a connection that Judd reasserts elsewhere in his criticism, in one instance obliquely, through a simple observation about "understatement." He writes, "George Brecht, in extreme understatement, just exhibits something, in one case a blue stool upon which a white glove is lying." He follows this with: "Robert Morris exhibited a gray column, a gray slab, and a suspended gray slab, all also understated." Judd, *Complete Writings*, p. 153.

69. Branden Joseph's essay "The Tower and the Line," to which we now turn, is the most recent revision of the genealogy of Minimalism. Joseph focuses on Cage and discusses the work of Morris (as well as the musicians, dancers, and composers in Morris/Brecht's immediate circle), but makes no mention of Brecht. See Joseph, "The Tower and the Line: Toward a Genealogy of Minimalism," *Grey Room 27* (Spring 2007), pp. 56–81.



Brecht. Score for Three Yellow Events. 1961.

in which it has been localized in the context of Fluxus. Though Brecht's Events became known in the Fluxus repertoire, he did not initially define them exclusively as performance scores. They started out more as mobile conceptual propositions brought into the realm of art to focus on the relationship between subject and object. The Event scores were cues to the spectator suggesting ways to engage with the idea Brecht set forth, if not to complete it. They were indeterminate propositions: realizable equally as an object, a performance, or even a thought. Simply to read an Event score and reflect upon it without acting already constitutes an adequate realization. With the arrival of Conceptual art by the late 1960s, Lawrence Weiner developed statements functioning in a manner that places them directly in the lineage of Brecht's Events (albeit with important differences).⁷⁰ The difference is evident in Weiner's most famous such text, his "Statement of Artistic Intent" (1968), which begins: "The artist may construct the work. The work may be fabricated. The work need not be built." In the next line, Weiner opts to bring the authorial subject back, reasserting the dimension of intention, which Brecht had consciously eschewed: "Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist, the position as to condition rests with the receiver, on the occasion of receivership."⁷¹ While this may have been Weiner's convoluted response to Duchamp's "The Creative Act," that text's emphasis on the spectator explicitly contested the hubris of artistic intention. In any case, Weiner's explicit statement regarding the issue of making and the contingency of the work should be considered in relation to the propositions inherent in Brecht's Event scores: it hardly seems possible to isolate Weiner's proposition as a newly minted paradigm, a singular expression of Conceptual art, without thinking of its relationship to the Brecht Event concept.

Contemporary texts concerning this work did make such connections. For example, Judd ends his landmark "Specific Objects" essay with reference to Brecht, linking him to Morris.⁷² And, in one of the earliest and best known books treating the gradual appearance of Conceptual art, Lucy Lippard's *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object, 1966–1972*, Brecht does not get the last word; he gets the first. Lippard's chronological, encyclopedic compendium begins with Brecht's "Chance-Imagery" essay, and examples of his Event scores. In that context, Lippard wrote: "Independently, and in association with the

70. I discuss this at length, comparing Brecht's and Weiner's uses of language, in the final chapter of my dissertation (cited above).

71. Cited in Donna de Salvo and Ann Goldstein, *Lawrence Weiner: As Far As The Eye Can See* (New York: Whitney Museum of Art; Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008), p. 325. Weiner has stated that he had been a "fan" of Brecht, conversation with the author, November 2001. Another foundation shared between Brecht and Weiner is their mutual interest in the "process philosophy" of Alfred North Whitehead. See Kathryn Chiong, "Sympathy for Lawrence Weiner (One Plus One)," in *ibid.*, p. 328.

72. The last line of "Specific Objects," often cut in abridged versions of the text, reads: "George Brecht and Robert Morris use real objects and depend on the viewer's knowledge of these objects." See Judd, *Complete Writings*, p. 189.

Fluxus group, Brecht has been making ‘events’ that anticipate a stricter ‘conceptual art’ since around 1960.”⁷³

Writing in the late 1980s, Benjamin Buchloh was the only art historian to think of asking the Conceptual artists about their knowledge of Fluxus.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, since they denied any exposure to this work, Buchloh’s account of such strategies placed all the weight on Conceptual art. At a time when very little was known of Brecht’s Event scores, attention moved squarely to the younger generation: “Confronting the full range of the implications of Duchamp’s legacy for the first time,” Buchloh writes, “Conceptual practices . . . reflected on the construction and the role (or the death) of the author just as much as they redefined the conditions of receivership and the role of the spectator.”⁷⁵ Through their extensive engagement with language and thorough appropriation of dialogic means to represent their activities, Conceptual artists have played a greater role in writing their own history than the previous generation did in writing theirs. But despite all that they have stated to critics, the material evidence of the work and the new scholarship on the 1960s call for revisions to that history.

The recent work of Liz Kotz and Branden Joseph has reopened the story of this period.⁷⁶ Kotz’s “Language Between Performance and Photography” provides a much-needed elaboration of the range of uses of language in the 1960s and one of the clearest delineations to date of this under-explored field of musical, poetic, and artistic production.⁷⁷ She positions Minimalism as the key intermediary between the language practices of the early 1960s (which, for her, remain in the performance category) and the later strategies of Conceptual art (which she sees functioning in relation to “photography”). For Kotz, Minimalism is distinct enough from “post-Cagean events” that it can stand alone as the point of reference for Conceptual art. And yet she starts with the rather

73. Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966–1972* (1973; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 11.

74. In his essay “Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” Buchloh explains: “Barry, Kosuth and Weiner, for example, vehemently denied in recent conversations with the author any historical connection to or even knowledge of the Fluxus movement of the early sixties.” Buchloh, published in *October* 55 (Winter 1990), pp. 105–43 (fn. 1).

75. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

76. Liz Kotz, “Post-Cagean Aesthetics and the ‘Event’ Score,” *October* 95 (Winter, 2001), pp. 55–89; and Kotz, “Between Language and Photography,” *October* 111 (Winter 2005), pp. 3–21. These are revised as chapters in Kotz’s *Words To Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art*. Branden Joseph’s essay is “The Tower and the Line” (cited above), which also appears revised in his book *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts After Cage* (New York: Zone Books, 2008).

77. Kotz makes a distinction between the “perception-oriented and ‘participatory’ post-Cagean paradigms of the early 1960s to the overtly representational, systematized, and self-reflexive structures of Conceptual Art.” See Kotz, “Language between performance and photography,” in *Words to Be Looked At*, p. 175. “Only in acknowledging this relation,” between the scoring practices of the early 1960s and later Conceptual Art practices, Kotz continues, “can we understand what is different, what is distinct, about the emergence of more explicit and self-consciously ‘conceptual’ uses of language, which employed it as both iterative structure and representational medium.” *Ibid.*

open-ended observation that “Brecht also produced a number of more prosaic table and chair pieces that point more toward something like Minimalism.”⁷⁸

Kotz’s demarcation of performance versus photography as points of reference for this work relegates Brecht’s Events to the realm of performance.⁷⁹ At the same time, she dismisses Brecht’s concern with the photographic dimension of the readymade in defining his Events. This is clearest in Kotz’s forceful statement that “Brecht is programmatically unable to recognize the extent to which the indexicality of events structurally aligns them with the photograph.”⁸⁰ Kotz is right in arguing that the overt emphasis on photography only emerged with Conceptual art, in works such as Joseph Kosuth’s *One and Three Chairs* (1965), which she discusses at length, but a closer look at the constellation of ideas—deriving from increasing knowledge of Duchamp, and from Cage’s influential and continually developing models of the indeterminate score—suggests that the photographic condition was present conceptually in the earlier work.⁸¹

Joseph’s argument does not focus on Conceptual art, but seeks to construct a new genealogy of Minimalism, starting with Cage, and from his own useful and complex definition of Cage’s notion of theatricality.⁸² Systematically delineating the key points of Cagean aesthetics, introduced as an explicit challenge to modernism, Joseph presents a field opened by Cage’s restructuring of perception as a paradigmatic conceptual matrix for postwar practice. Interestingly, Joseph positions Morris on the regressive side of the Cagean legacy, in the sense that his sculptural gestalts are comparable to Young’s single sounds, both of which opposed the open and interpenetrating model of perceptual experience Cage espoused.⁸³ Inexplicably, Joseph neglects to mention Brecht when he speaks of “a generation situated in Cage’s wake,” which no longer accepted disciplinary

78. Ibid., p. 177. In relation to Brecht and Morris, Kotz also cites Judd’s criticism (she refers to the *Black, White, and Gray* review) but uses it to put weight on a differentiation Judd makes between the “deliberateness” of Morris’s sculpture and the essential readymade dimension of Brecht’s work. Given Morris’s engagement with Duchamp, it is arguable that the traits of the readymade are present as an implicit structure in Morris’s objects and their contexts, just as the photograph implicitly enters into the definition of Brecht’s Events.

79. Before Fluxus started in late 1962, Brecht had only occasional contexts for his Events to be realized as performance. As discussed, between 1959 and 1962 he was focused on the other two forms events could take: as object realizations, and as pure linguistic propositions, sent as a printed card through the mail (to be realized or not).

80. Kotz, “Language Between Performance and Photography,” in *Words To Be Looked At*, p. 191.

81. I have treated this subject in detail, tracing the experimentation with the photographic condition—as means of charting a way out of Pollock, and inscribing contingency into the artwork—back to Rauschenberg’s work of 1949–53. See my Ph.D. dissertation, *From Abstraction to Model*.

82. See Joseph’s “The Tower and the Line: Towards a Genealogy of Minimalism.”

83. This is not to say “regressive” in general, but regressive from Cage’s point of view. Joseph discusses Young’s interest in *giving oneself up to sounds* and, as he put it, “getting inside of them to some extent so we can experience another world.” He adds that “Cage labeled this aspect of Young’s work ‘fixation,’ juxtaposing it to his idea of ‘transparency’ and pointing out their opposition: ‘I would like that you consider . . . that *I am where I must be*,’ Cage explained, ‘but Young finds that where you must be is *elsewhere*.’” Finally, Joseph writes: “Cage considered Young’s aesthetic not merely different but (literally) regressive.” See Joseph, “The Tower and the Line,” pp. 68–69.

distinctions but considered “the very idea of an ‘advanced’ work” to imply “not only that the status of the work (as object or process or both) was already in question but that the work had to take up that question and keep it in question.”⁸⁴ He explains that Young and Morris were particularly close at this time and that Young’s work was a touchstone for Fluxus, giving the example of his *Composition 1960 #10 to Bob Morris*: “Draw a straight line and follow it.”⁸⁵ Of course, if Joseph’s argument ultimately suggests that neither Young nor Morris took up Cage’s model in the sense proper to it, which he positions as fundamental to the reorientation of postwar art, then his analysis raises the question of how, if at all, it was mediated for subsequent practice.

Brecht has long hovered as a missing detail in accounts of the early 1960s that endeavor to explain the conceptual turn: the turn to objects as processes, to a consideration of Cage, Duchamp, performance, photography, and language. The Event score is perhaps the first postwar case of a linguistic proposition offered in toto in the realm of art, as a way to mediate the space between artist and spectator. It also figures an alternate model of seriality, neither Minimalist nor Pop, not only in its structure of “threes” but in the prospect it holds out of successive realizations of a single score. If Morris is presented as the only mediating figure, it remains impossible to account for the development of Cagean models as language, rather than as sculpture, and to recognize a genesis for the range of purely linguistic models that emerged later in the 1960s.

Without Brecht’s Event score, defined at the turning point between the dominance of painting and the conceptual reorientations that followed, this history lacks a key term. It excludes the possibility of an alternative to Hal Foster’s “crux of Minimalism” argument, which Joseph draws upon—where Minimalism stands as the point of rupture between modern and postmodern—and to Joseph’s own formulation of the Young-Morris side of the Cagean legacy.⁸⁶ It lacks a third way, which is neither the commodified seriality of Pop nor the industrialized seriality of Minimalism. Without the Event score, we forfeit the prospect of art in the 1960s that posits seriality without repetition. Omitting Brecht removes the initial postwar instance of systematic work on the linguistic proposition presented in lieu of the art object—work aimed at redeeming reified subjective experience and defining the creative act as perception not grounded physically as an object, but temporally as an Event.

84. Ibid., p. 63.

85. Ibid., p. 66.

86. Hal Foster, “The Crux of Minimalism,” in *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 35–69.

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