

Instructions/Event

First comprehensive restaging of the legendary first ‘Happening,’ John Cage’s ‘Event’ (*Theatre Piece No. 1*) originally performed at Black Mountain College in 1952.

Public painting workshops following Rudolf Stingel’s* 1989 book, *Instructions*.

Instructions/Event examines interpretation and documentation by combining two found cultural objects that embrace opposite ends of the spectrum: the artist, Rudolf Stingel’s book *Instructions* (1989), which explains how to re-create his silver paintings, and the most mythologised of all of John Cage’s performances, the infamous ‘Event’ at Black Mountain College—*Theatre Piece No. 1* (1952)—for which there is neither score nor documentation. Because of this lack of information, descriptions of *Theatre Piece No. 1* vary and often contain inaccuracies and, while *Instructions* details precisely how to make Stingel’s silver paintings in six languages with illustrations, instruction and translation are susceptible to misinterpretation and variation.

“The ‘instructions’ were a guide to calculate chance as a working method.” – Rudolf Stingel

Instructions debunks the myth of the artist as genius and the mystery that surrounds the process of creation. Workshops held over three days hosted by the artist Golden Drystone will enable members of the public to follow Stingel’s *Instructions*, making versions of his silver paintings that will be incorporated into the restaging of *Theatre Piece No. 1* where they will replace Robert Rauschenberg’s seminal series of White Paintings. A series of talks on art, music, and performance will take place in the evenings following the workshops, including a Q&A with Richard Wentworth.

While the significance of *Theatre Piece No. 1* was not fully appreciated at the time, it was subsequently described as the first ‘Happening’ by Allan Kaprow, and has since been acknowledged as one of the most influential predecessors of performance art. This restaging is based on the twin desire to ascertain whether a performance could be pieced together from the information and misinformation about the original and to incorporate contemporary art, music, and dance to produce a new version in the spirit of Cage and everyone originally involved.

“There is considerable disagreement about just what did happen in the performance, a circumstance that is as much a measure of its success as of the faulty memories of the faculty and students. Since the performance was organized as a multi-focus event in which simultaneous, unrelated activities would be taking place both in front of and around the audience, each person’s perception of the event depended on where he or she was sitting and on what happened to attract his or her attention. When Johanna Jalowetz arrived early to get a good seat, Cage told her, ‘Now, they are all equally good.’” – Mary Emma Harris

* Rudolf Stingel has very kindly granted permission to use his book *instructions* (1989) but is not directly associated with *Instructions/Event*.

The backbone of the performance remains the reading of Cage's *Juilliard Lecture*, performed by Jamie O'Hara. The other elements of this multimedia performance are determined using Cage's chance operations technique, with the exception of the new slide projection by Richard Wentworth, which uses the original time brackets established by Cage. Julie Cunningham, formerly of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, currently with the Michael Clark company, will perform her own choreography. The film produced by *Experiments in Art and Technology* of Robert Rauschenberg's performance *Open Score* (1966) at *9 Evenings: Theatre & Engineering* directed by Barbro Schultz Lundestam will, combined with Cage's lecture, tie this new performance to the original. Nonclassical and The Hermes Experiment have been invited to contribute new music. Poetry will be read from a ladder by Arthur Bruce and records played by William Fussell of *Promise Keeper*.

Cage believed that the best procedure for collaboration "*would be working independently, that is, in different places at about the same time and then later enjoying seeing/hearing the two workings coming together, paying attention to them both as they happened rather than expecting something preconceived, or an approximation of it to happen.*" In keeping with this, the different aspects of this multimedia event are developed independently and brought together only through simultaneity of performance. The audience will be seated in the same arrangement of four triangles as was the case at Black Mountain College and, as with the original, the performance ends with the serving of coffee.

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Smith+Brown is a curatorial and publishing venture guided by the belief that market forces should not dictate culture and that challenging and experimental work is fundamental to a thriving culture. Victoria Miguel is a writer and lecturer in contemporary art; she was the assistant to the Director of the John Cage Trust from 2001 to 2007, in 2013, she was commissioned by the John Cage Trust to create an online version of his composition *Reunion* (1968), which premiered in tandem with her play *Laquearia* at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Alana Pagnutti is a curator and the author of a forthcoming book on the radio-works of John Cage and Robert Rauschenberg.

Listings Information

Soho Revue, 14 Greek St., London, W1D 4DP

Instructions (1989) Painting Workshops:

5, 6, + 8 April, 11AM-4PM

Talks:

5, 6, + 8 April, 6PM

Restaging of John Cage's Theatre Piece No. 1:

7 April, 7PM

9 April, 6PM + 8PM

All events are free.

Tickets + Information: smithandbrown.org

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