

“It’s for you,” Conceptual Art and the Telephone

February 24 – March 25, 2011

Housatonic Museum of Art, Bridgeport, CT
Curated by Terri C Smith

Checklist with Project Descriptions

Various Artists

Art by Telephone

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1969

The *Art by Telephone* project involved conceptual artists calling in fabrication instructions to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Director, Jan van der Marck. These calls were recorded and made into a vinyl record. The sound recording became the entire show, as the works were never actually fabricated. The artists’ phone calls are played on a CD and the vinyl album is on view. Artists in *Art by Telephone* include: Siah Armajani, Arman, Richard Artschwager, John Baldassari, Iain Baxter, Mel Bochner, George Brecht, Jack Burnham, James Lee Byars, Robert H. Cumming, Françoise Dallegret, Jan Dibbets, John Giorno, Robert Grosvenor, Hans Haacke, Richard Hamilton, Dick Higgins, Robert Huot, Alani Jacquet, Ed Kienholz, Joseph Kosuth, Les Levine, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Claes Oldenburg, Dennis Oppenheim, Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, Guenther Uecker, Stan Vanderbeek, Bernard Venet, Frank Lincoln Viner, Wolf Vostell, William Wegman, and William T. Wiley.

Maurizio Bolognini

Untitled, 2010

Installation (computer, phone, video-projector)

Courtesy of the artist

Twenty years ago, Maurizio Bolognini began to use computers to produce endless flows of random images. In the 1990s, he programmed hundreds of computers (Programmed Machines series) and left them to run indefinitely (most of these are still working). From 2000 his work has focused on the possibility to develop “a generative, interactive and public art,” in the form of installations which connect some of his Programmed Machines to the mobile phone network, allowing anyone to modify the process of image generation by sending new inputs from their own cell phone. The work presented at the Housatonic Museum of Art consists of a computer, which has been programmed to produce an endless flux of random images (minimal, abstract, purposeless). The presence of the phone, while recalling Bolognini’s large public art installations, suggests the possibility that the artist can intervene in the generative process through communication at a distance.

Chris Burden

Wiretap, (KPFK-FM) Los Angeles, CA, January 17, 1977

Audio file on CD with headphones

Courtesy of the artist

Chris Burden was asked to make an audio piece for KPFK-FM as part of a series where artists created 14-minute audio pieces to be broadcast each week. With *Wiretap*, Burden recorded conversations between himself and two different art dealers – Anna Canepa and Ronald Feldman. According to Burden: “During this period, Anna Canepa, a New York art promoter and organizer, was trying to convince me that she should represent my video work and convince me that I should permit her to use my name in her advertisements. My regular art dealer in New York, Ronald Feldman, was opposed to the idea.” The piece aired at 11:45 a.m., January 17, 1977. Chris Burden is a California-based artist whose early performance work was provocative and visceral. In addition to works designed for galleries, Burden often used popular media such as television (*TV Hijack* and television advertisements such as *Chris Burden Promo* and *Full Financial Disclosure*) and radio (*Wiretap*, 1977; and *Send Me Your Money*, 1979) in his 1970s performative interventions.

John Cage

Telephones and Birds, 1977

Published Score

HMA permanent collection

The score of *Telephones and Birds* consists of a title page and three pages of instructions. There are also 12 pages of instructions on how to group numbers relating to the I Ching. Three people perform the work using birdcalls and public service messages from phones. In “*It’s for you*,” the Housatonic Museum of Art will exhibit the score. The museum is also working with students at the Housatonic Community College and the John Cage Trust to perform the piece. <http://www.johncage.info/workscage/telephonesbirds.html>

Bethany Fancher and Avanis Fancher

Mother/Daughter Skype Painting, 2011

Two paintings (egg tempera and watercolor respectively)

Courtesy of the artists

Bethany Fancher, who likes to include her retired mother in projects to bridge the distance between Fancher’s residence in New York City and her mother’s in Florida, conceived of this double Skype portrait especially for “*It’s for you*.” For the project, mother and daughter took screen shots of each other while talking on Skype. Due to a glitch in her computer, Fancher’s mother often appears sideways rather than upright on the monitor. Fancher sees her mother as a self-taught performance artists, adding, “Her Halloween costumes are insanely good. A few years back, she was Michael Jackson (before he died). I visited her some time after Halloween and had just gotten my new camera that I was looking at in her living room when, unannounced, she had put on her costume and came out moonwalking. The next year she was the Cat ‘n the Hat, which looked very much like her rendition of Michael Jackson, and the next year she was a bag lady, that was also reminiscent of both of those.” Fancher is a New York based artist

whose interest in exchange ties together a diverse body of work that includes performance, painting, photography, artist books, and sculpture.
<http://www.bethanyjean.com/>

T Foley

***Locally Toned* (ongoing)**

An interactive, online ringtone project

Courtesy of the artist

T. Foley's cell-phone based work *Locally Toned* is a public art/original ringtone creation project. Through it, the artist captures important or amusing sounds identified by participants, and turns those sounds into ringtones to be shared with others. All of the sounds are representative of collaborators' personal experiences, environments and/or geographical regions, and are described by Foley as "tiny audio documentaries that play back over cell phones." Since she began the project in 2009, her main focus has been on creating an audio portrait of Pittsburgh (where she lives). Because the project emphasizes shared creativity over commerce, the tones are distributed free-of-charge at www.locallytoned.org and via Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS). Unlike traditional works of public art, such as murals and outdoor sculptures, *Locally Toned* presents itself elusively, at unexpected times and in unexpected places (when users receive calls on their cell phones).

For "*It's for you*" Foley will give a talk about her project (open to the public) and will conduct two workshops that will help to turn the sounds of Bridgeport, CT into ringtones. A *Locally Toned* display in the gallery will feature locallytoned.org and take-away ringtone art cards that include special codes allowing visitors to send Pittsburgh tones directly to their cell phones.

Lukas Geronimas

***Nickname Game 2*, 2011**

Interactive installation: cell phone, chalkboard, text on wall

Courtesy of the artist

With Lukas Geronimas's *Nickname Game 2*, the artist reconfigures *Nickname Game* (2008) for the Housatonic Museum of Art. Tucked away in a public area of the college, anyone who stumbles upon Geronimas's makeshift phone/voting station – consisting of cell phone, pedestal, chalkboard and instructional text written directly on the wall – is invited to call the artist and chat. At the end of the conversation, the artist assigns each caller his or her nickname. The caller then has the option to accept, reject or take no action and marks the chalkboard in the corresponding column. According to Geronimas, *Nickname Game* "Empowers me to empower you to up and vote (as an elective, not an election)!" Lukas Geronimas, who is from Toronto, recently earned his MFA from Bard college and is currently living and working in Brooklyn, New York.
<http://www.lukasgeronimas.com/>

John Giorno***Dial-a-Poem, 1968 - 1972*****3 sound recordings, archival equipment from the original project, and reproductions of articles about the project.****Courtesy of the artist and Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, NY**

John Giorno's *Dial-a-Poem* was a technologically and conceptually innovative interactive project that spanned the late 1960s and early 1970s. *Dial-a-Poem* was initially conceived by John Giorno and writer William Burroughs. With *Dial-a-Poem* people could call a number from anywhere (home, work, a payphone, etc.) and hear a poem read by its author. Multiple phone lines were connected to answering machines and callers would hear a different poet depending on which message they received. More than one million people used the service while it was active. According to Giorno *Dial-A-Poem* began in 1968 and was sponsored by the Architectural League of New York. It was exhibited at the American Federation of the Arts Building (1968), the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago (1969), and as part of the *Information* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1970. The *Dial-a-Poem* Poets LP records began in 1972. For "It's for you," sound files featuring William Burroughs, Patti Smith, and Giorno are included along with archival documents and equipment from the project. <http://brainwashed.com/giorno/>

Peter Greenaway***Dear Phone, 1977*****Film converted to DVD****17 minutes****With permission of the artist**

The film short *Dear Phone* is Peter Greenaway's twelfth project and happened early in his career. In it a narrator reads phone-based stories of characters with the initials H.C. While each story is being told, the handwritten texts, which often include notations of a draft (corrections, additions, deletions, etc.), fill the frame. Between each narration a stationary camera films phone booths around Britain. *Dear Phone* is inhabited by a dry sense of humor as well as the structural rigor associated with conceptual art.

Jonn Herschend***Where I'm Calling From, 2007*****DVD, file cabinet, graph, painting, easel****Courtesy of the artist**

Where I'm Calling From is an installation piece that includes digital video shot with a Palm phone. In the video, there are ethereal images of everyday life, which are accompanied by an audio of the artist speaking with a Palm phone representative about the phone's potential to capture moments of the sublime. Abruptly, a couple appears in the frame. They argue about how to complete the artist's vision. One person wants to make a chart or a painting and the other wants to continue to record sublime moments. In addition to the video, a chart, a painting and a filing cabinet (which supports the monitor) form this multi-media installation. *Where I'm Calling From* was originally installed in November 2007 at Blank Space Gallery in Oakland, California, as part of the show *Workaday*, curated by Lorie Anderson and Lisa Solomon. Jonn Herschend is an

interdisciplinary artist, filmmaker and experimental publisher. According to the artist, he is “preoccupied with how emotional confusion, absurdity and veracity play out in the realm of the everyday.” He has exhibited internationally and is the co-founder/co-editor of the experimental publication THE THING quarterly. Herschend lives and works in San Francisco, California. <http://jonnherschend.com/>

Jeremy LeClair

Precise Tone Plan (2011)

am/fm radios with audio filters

Courtesy of the artist

With Jeremy LeClair’s *Precise Tone Plan*, live local radio broadcasts are filtered and tuned to emulate the familiar buzz of an in-service telephone dial tone (as specified in the Precise Tone Plan of North American telephone network -- 350Hz + 440Hz; -13dB continuous). The work was created specifically for “*It’s for you,*” *Conceptual Art and the Telephone*. *Precise Tone Plan* is an extension of LeClair’s general practice, which, according to the artist, often combines “research methods, labor-intensive processes and conceptual rigor to poetically disrupt behavioral patterns of hearing and seeing, and psychological patterns of expectation.” <http://www.jeremyleclair.com/>

Christian Marclay

Telephones, 1995

7-minute video with sound

Marieluise Hessel Collection, Hessel Museum of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

Marclay, known for his sound and video works, is a visual artist and composer who began exploring sound in 1979. With *Telephones*, Marclay appropriates scenes from various films, juxtaposing moments in movies where the phone rings. Sometimes people answer the phone and sometimes they do not. Spliced together in quick succession, Marclay composes a video that is driven by sound rather than narrative. Scenes that were once elements of a story gain a musical quality – narrative becomes notes, beats, lyrics and rests. In a *Bomb* magazine interview Marclay describes his thinking, “A few years ago I did a single channel piece called *Telephones*, for which I edited film clips of people on the telephone. Telephone scenes are ubiquitous in films. It’s a simple shot, cheap, based on a jump-cut edit, with which we are familiar and which we accept.” Marclay’s work is found in virtually every major museum collection and has been featured in major exhibitions worldwide, including solo shows at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, the Tate Modern, London, and the Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

Adam McEwen

Untitled Text Msg (David); Untitled Text Msg (Ethan); Untitled Text Msg (Jackie)

All titles 2007, matte black adhesive vinyl on wall

Courtesy of the Artist and Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, New York

Adam McEwen is an artist who has worked in a variety of media, including machined graphite, painting, photography, and text works. In “*It’s for you,*” actual text messages sent to McEwen’s phone form the content of the three vinyl panels applied to the gallery walls. McEwen describes the project in *Interview* magazine, “I had a standard Nokia

phone, which is the most common phone in Europe, and I got somebody to design a font that exactly matched my phone's-pixel by pixel. Because this context is so familiar and everyone sees it every day in its most banal function, you could surprise yourself with meaning. It's the same thing as walking down the street and seeing a sign on a store that says sorry, we're closed. The familiarity of that opens up the possibility of throwing in the unfamiliar." Three text messages are included in "It's for you." One is *Untitled Text Msg (David)*, 2007, which reads, "Feel lousy too. Headache and nausea. And boredom and penniless." Adam McEwen's work has been featured in more than 100 exhibitions, including the 2006 Whitney Biennial. The artist also curates and recently received critical praise for his 2010 curatorial project *Fresh Hell* at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris.

Max Neuhaus

Radio Net, 1977

Archival Sound recording, documentary on *Radio Net* and misc. archival materials

Courtesy of the Max Neuhaus Estate

This work was a sound piece meant, in part, to expand concepts about what constitutes music and how it is created. With *Radio Net*, Neuhaus networked NPR radio stations and wired the studio he was in for multiple live phone calls. Neuhaus instructed callers to phone in and whistle and then filtered the sounds through an audio system he created. Neuhaus elaborates: "As I continued with these [networking] ideas I began to implement two concepts which have proved important. One was to have the sounds phoned in activate instruments, instruments played by the voice. The other was to remove myself from the role of moderator and implement this function as an autonomous system. This was accomplished in *Radio Net* (1977) for the whole of the United States. I formed the National Public Radio network with its 190 radio stations into a vast cross country instrument played by callers' sounds autonomously." He called the music produced from these networks "loops." In 1977, radio stations did not yet have the technology to take listeners calls so Neuhaus needed to configure the technology that allowed for audience participation. <http://www.max-neuhaus.info/>

Yoko Ono

Telephone Piece (for Bridgeport), 1997/2011

Telephone, designated line, holograph instructions

Courtesy of the artist. Holograph Instructions promised gift to HMA.

Yoko Ono is an artist who began her conceptual and performance art practice in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In the winter of 1960-61, with La Monte Young, she organized a series of radical performance events at her loft on Chambers Street. In the summer of 1961, she has a solo exhibition of conceptual work at George Maciunas's legendary AG Gallery, where her work and ideas strongly influenced George Maciunas in the formation of Fluxus. In November of 1961, she held a solo concert of performance works at Carnegie Recital Hall. In 1964, she published a collection of her instructions and conceptual works in a book titled *Grapefruit*. Ono's body of work includes textual works, films, conceptual architecture and photography, and sound works. With *Telephone Piece*, a dedicated line in the gallery is installed so that Yoko Ono can call. If the phone

rings, any gallery visitor may pick up the phone and converse with the artist. There is no schedule.

Robert Peters

Naming Others: Manufacturing Yourself, 1993.

Sound recordings of outgoing messages and flow chart drawings

Courtesy of the artist

Sound files and flow charts from Robert Peters' *Naming Others* project, which was originally exhibited in Sculpture Chicago's *Culture in Action* public art project, are on display in "It's for you." In 1993 participants called an 800 number from any phone and, using a phone tree like program, chose which stereotype phrases described them best via the phone's keypad. The project was inspired by the artist's response to two things: the compilation of "Terms of Abuse for Some Chicago Social Groups" gathered by linguist Lee A. Pederson and the experience of living in Indonesia for six months which placed him, he writes, "on a daily basis in the position of the Other, that is, being overtly objectified and stereotyped in terms of race." Peters lives and works in Chicago, Illinois, where he is a professor at the University of Chicago. His work can be found in major public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Tate Gallery, and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

Pietro Pellini

Al Hansen on My Telephone, 2006

Phone, computer

Courtesy of Bibbe Hansen and the Al Hansen Archive

In this work, Pietro Pellini mines the messages he saved from Fluxus artist, colleague, and friend Al Hansen (1986-1995). The phone rings in the gallery. When visitors pick it up, Al Hansen is on the line talking about art, life, the Ultimate Akademie, and other topics. The computer program creates a random shuffling of these messages so, according to Pellini, "Al can pick what he wants to say." Pellini is a teacher, artist, and photographer from Germany. He has exhibited internationally and his photography has been featured in dozens of publications. Pietro Pellini currently lives and works in Cologne, Germany.

Adrian Piper

Seriation #1: Lecture (1968; 00:30:00)

Audio file on CD

Courtesy of the Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation

Piper's thirty-minute sound piece records the artist dialing the local time and recording the operator speaking the time at ten-second intervals. Piper writes: "Of course the time the operator says it is at that moment is not the time it is at the moment the listener is hearing it." The sounds of dialing on a rotary phone in the audio also serve as a reminder of the passage of time as the distinctive sound of a virtually obsolete type of phone (analogue, rotary, land line). Piper is a first-generation conceptual artist and philosopher. Her contributions to feminist and conceptual art are significant and groundbreaking. Piper writes that she "introduced issues of race and gender into the vocabulary of

Conceptual art and explicit political content into Minimalism.” Adrian Piper has exhibited art and taught philosophy internationally. She currently lives and works in Berlin where she runs the Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation Berlin.
<http://www.adrianpiper.com>

Rachel Perry Welty

Messages 2007-2008

Permanent Marker on 12 sheets of paper

Karaoke Wrong Number, 2001 – 2004

7-minute video

Courtesy of the artist, Barbara Krakow Gallery (Boston), Gallery Joe (Philadelphia), and Yancey Richardson Gallery (New York)

Both of Rachel Perry Welty’s works in “*It’s for you*” incorporate messages left on her answering machine. In *Messages 2007-2008*, Welty transcribes answering machine messages verbatim, writing them by hand on giant Post-its. She painstakingly includes phonetic spellings that indicate nuances of the spoken word as well as transition sounds and words such as “um” and “like.” An excerpt from one message reads: “Hi Mom, It’s Asa ahm, it’s like 8:15 I think you’re at thee concert right now with all that stuff, and um there’s a change of plans becuz.. ah, Mr. Baird? Never told our class....” According to Welty, *Messages 2007 - 2008*, “...is part of a larger body of work based on a year’s worth of saved voice messages, and refers to the grind of daily life, while alluding to the fragility of oral history.”

In *Karaoke Wrong Number*, Welty lip-synchs to wrong number calls left on her answering machine. As the messages play, Welty, wearing a white shirt and in front of a plain background, channels these voices by mouthing them complete with timed tics and gestures. Welty notes: “I couldn’t bear to erase these disembodied messages: humorous, poignant, slightly terrifying or mundane; each had an urgency I wanted to address. Issues of privacy, identity, expectations, and assumptions fueled my interest.” Rachel Perry Welty, who was born in Japan, studied art at School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts. Welty has exhibited extensively in the US. She lives and works in New York and Boston.

Hannah Wilke

Intercourse with... 1978

27 minute b&w video with sound

Marsie, Emanuelle, Damon and Andrew Scharlatt, Hannah Wilke Collection & Archive, Los Angeles. Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), NY.

Hannah Wilke’s performance in *Intercourse with...* incorporates messages from her answering machine, playing a series of messages while executing a low-key, sensual performance. A black-and-white video of the performance-lecture held at the London Arts Gallery, London, Ontario in 1977, is on view in “*It’s for you*.” During Wilke’s performance, family, friends and colleagues call Wilke, saying “hello,” asking to meet for drinks, telling Wilke about a new job, etc. Wilke’s direct, intimate performance addresses

the private and the public in relation to identity. Wilke was a renowned conceptual artist associated with feminist art. Her performances are considered to be some of the most significant works of that kind during the 1970s. <http://www.hannahwilke.com/id10.html>

Gary Wiseman

Cell Phone Novel: New Objects

First edition, 2010, & *Review Magazine*

Second edition, 2011, *Housatonic Horizons* Newspaper

Courtesy of the artist

In Gary Wiseman's *Cell Phone Novel: New Objects* he authors a cell phone novel, texting the narrative and then photographing each phone screen. The work is reproduced in the Housatonic Community College's *Housatonic Horizons* newspaper as part of a special insert in their spring edition. By beginning the story with a main character who researches the history of the cell phone novel, Wiseman creates a media-reflective moment where reader, character, and author all consider the form and process of the artwork. According to Wiseman, "I like the idea of translating a digital, immaterial medium, such as a text message, into the physicality of newsprint. Both have been used for impermanent communications and the dissemination of time-sensitive information, but all evidence points to the notion that newsprint is being superseded by the rise of the digital age. Is something obsolete if it still exists?" Gary Wiseman is an artist whose practice ranges from performance to music to sculpture. He is based in Portland, Oregon, where he also co-directs the programming for *The Settlement* -- a multi-venue, multi-disciplinary public art project located in a Portland shopping mall.
<http://garywiseman.tumblr.com/>