

Art by Telephone, Maurizio Bolognini, Chris Burden, John Cage, Bethany Fancher, T Foley, Lukas Geronimas, John Giorno, Peter Greenaway, Jonn Herschend, Jeremy LeClair, Christian Marclay, Adam McEwen, Max Neuhaus, Yoko Ono, Robert Peters, Pietro Pellini, Adrian Piper, Rachel Perry Welty, Hannah Wilke, and Gary Wiseman



# IT'S FOR YOU

## CONCEPTUAL ART AND THE TELEPHONE

Housatonic Museum of Art

February 24 - March 25, 2011

Curated by Terri C Smith

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## February 17 - 24, 2011

"February 17 - 24, 2011" refers to the dates during which I wrote this text, and is a direct reference to a historic exhibition of Conceptual art that was curated by art dealer Seth Siegelaub and titled "January 5 – 31, 1969." The language of the title also mimics the straightforward concepts, dating, mapping and emphasis on real time found in the works of first generation Conceptual artists. For most Conceptual artists the idea behind a work of art was paramount, while the forms were often simple and involved ordinary materials. Artist Sol Lewitt explains in *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art* (*ArtForum*, June, 1967), "The idea becomes a machine that makes art," he continues, "The ideas need not be complex. Most ideas that are successful are ludicrously simple. Successful ideas generally have the appearance of simplicity because they seem inevitable. In terms of idea the artist is free to even surprise himself. Ideas are discovered through intuition."

"*It's For You*", *Conceptual Art and the Telephone* just might fit into the category of ludicrously simple ideas -- but one that allows itself to be complicated and expanded through a myriad of formal and intellectual approaches over a period of more than forty years. The idea is essentially to bring together artworks that use the telephone

as medium or as a mediator between artist and audience. The catalyst for this exhibition, however, was not so much intuitive as observational. Working at the Housatonic Museum of Art (HMA) for more than a year, I have been in the company of a remarkably diverse student body. One activity they share, however, is their pervasive use of the telephone. Students who traverse or relax in the interstitial spaces of the campus are usually texting, talking, surfing the Internet or listening to music on their phones. With approximately 6,000 students on site, the built-in audience that inspired the HMA's inception in 1969, continues to influence Museum's gallery exhibitions. With "*It's For You*", the phone becomes a familiar point of entry that invites students to explore the often challenging histories, processes, and thinking that surround Conceptual art practices.

Starting with knowledge of some historic artworks that incorporated the telephone, I investigated ways the phone could be an effective conduit for learning about Conceptual art practices – and how those practices influence art today. Conceptual art often includes one or more of the following: language-as-media; ephemeral forms, which critic Lucy R Lippard described as "dematerialized;"



democratic impulses that include audience participation and broader distribution methods (such as art dealer Seth Siegelaub's catalogs of Conceptual artworks); and real-time projects using time-based media or performance. After some research, it seemed that there was room for an exhibition that solely focused on Conceptual art and the telephone. There are, of course, exhibitions that have included the telephone and two of the works in "*It's For You*" were in those shows. Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art's exhibition *Art by Telephone* was based on artists calling in instructions on how to make their works, and the *Information* show at the Museum of Modern Art, New York included John Giorno's *Dial-a-Poem*.

The works in "*It's For You*" use sound, video, installation, film, and text as media. Some pieces are designed for the gallery – Maurizio Bolognini, Jonn Herschend, Chrisitan Marclay, Adam McEwen, Pietro Pellini, Adrian Piper, Rachel Perry Welty. Others consist of archival elements from pieces that were originally interactive, broadcasted, screened or performed – *Art by Telephone*, Chris Burden, John Cage, John Giorno, Peter Greenaway, Max Neuhaus, Robert Peters, and Hannah Wilke. A handful were designed specifically for this exhibition, including Jeremy LeClair's *Precise Tone Plan* and Bethany Fancher's *Mother/Daughter Skype Painting*. With T Foley's *Locally Toned*, Lukas Geronimas's *Nickname Game 2*, and Yoko Ono's *Telephone Piece (Bridgeport)* audience participation completes the works. Many of the formats and media in "*It's For You*", *Conceptual Art and the Telephone* discourage passive viewing. Instead, they encourage watching, listening, reading, touching, and talking.

Including works that are largely ephemeral, interactive and/

or archival is challenging (and perhaps problematic). For works originally intended to be activated from home phones or to be experienced in non-art environments, a gallery setting creates a need for mutually agreed upon adaptations. During the decade that many of these pieces were produced, Conceptual artist Robert Smithson wrote in his essay *Cultural Confinement* (*Artforum*, 1972):

Cultural confinement takes place when a curator imposes his own limits on an art exhibition, rather than asking the artist to set his limits. Artists are expected to fit into fraudulent categories.... Artists themselves are not confined but their output is. Museums, like asylums and jails, have wards and cells – in other words, neutral rooms called "galleries." A work of art when placed in a gallery loses its charge, and becomes a portable object or surface disengaged from the outside world. A vacant white room with lights is still a submission to the neutral.

Smithson makes good points in his essay. Yet, the gallery is one of the Housatonic Museum of Art's primary platforms, making it difficult to avoid the neutral ground of that space. Group exhibitions (and audiences) often benefit from a thematic structure when considering diverse bodies of works over time, but themes can often lead to an artist's work being narrowed in presentation and/or interpretation. By working directly with most of these artists, their studios or estates, I hoped to counterbalance pitfalls like those posited by Smithson. In addition to the exhibition's theme and the artists' materials/instructions, the installation is also influenced by this site and is constructed primarily from materials at hand. The aesthetic of an institution/educational facility (with its classrooms, offices, and labyrinthine halls) felt like a natural fit with the functions and environments of the telephone. Cubicles, dividers, boxes, tables consequently become mundane sculptural elements that are intended, in part, to provide unique spaces for artworks and to alter



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the architecture of the “vacant white room.”

Ultimately, I wish this exhibition could include a time and space machine that would take gallery visitors to a living room in the late 1960s. While there they could call Giorno's *Dial-a-Poem* on a rotary phone. Then a trip to Chicago in 1993 to interact from a push button phone with Robert Peters' programmed script for *Naming Other: Manufacturing Yourself*. With one visit to 1977, audiences could listen to Chris Burden's *Wiretap* broadcast on KPFK-FM in Los Angeles, hear Max Neuhaus's *Radio Net* on WABE-FM in Atlanta, or see Hannah Wilke perform *Intercourse with...* in Ontario. The newer contemporary works, of course, are meant to be viewed now (some in the gallery and some in other locations – Geronimas, LeClair, Wiseman). Similar to the exhibition's first generation Conceptual artists, several of the newest works (and various programming) in *It's For You* are intended to be experiential and ephemeral. Once completed, only documentation of these pieces will exist: between the dates of February 24 and March 25 Lukas Geronimas will give students nicknames; students will perform John Cage's *Telephones and Birds* in the HCC atrium; and T. Foley will work with students to create original ringtones as part of *Locally Toned*. Of course, exhibitions by their very nature are fleeting as well. After *It's For You* is no longer on view in the gallery, only archival photos, documents, videos, and the blog (which digitally stores these materials) will remain. Perhaps in 40 years someone will be in a gallery listening to, or looking at, archival materials from the works or programming we will experience first hand from February 24 – March 25, 2011.

-- Terri C Smith, Curator

## CONCEPTUAL ARTIST BIOS

### 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, Francoise 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, Bernar 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 year 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](http://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](http://locallytoned.org) and take-away ringtone art cards that include special codes allowing visitors to send Pittsburgh tones directly to their cell phones.



*Locally Tones, T Foley*



CALL  
718 812 3231  
TO GET  
YOUR  
NICKNAME





**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.

**Jonh 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. Jonh Herschend is

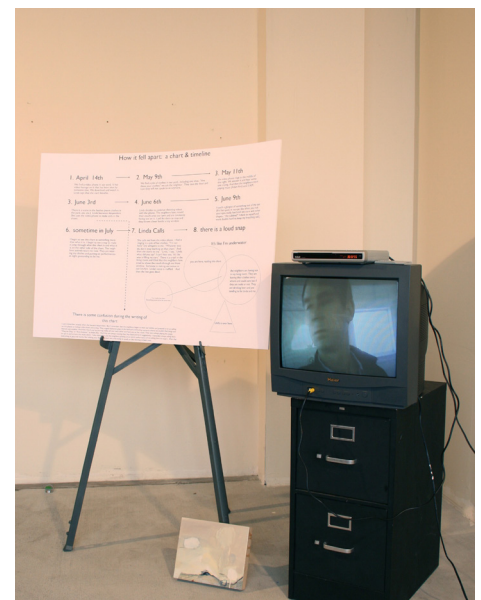
an interdisciplinary artist, filmmaker and experimental publisher. According to the artist, he is “preoccupied with how emotional confusion, absurdity and veracity play out in the realm of the everyday.” He has exhibited internationally and is the co-founder/co-editor of the experimental publication *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/>



*Where I'm Calling From*, Jonh Herschend



*Telephones*, Christian Marclay

### 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. Marclay describes his thinking, In a *Bomb* magazine interview, “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

DAVID

Feel lousy too.  
headache and  
nausea. And  
boredom and  
penniless.

Options Reply Back

*Untitled Text Msg (David)*; *Untitled Text Msg (Ethan)*; *Untitled Text Msg (Jackie)*, Adam McEwen



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.



*Al Hansen on My Telephone, Pietro Pellini*



# The New York Times

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NEW YORK, TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 1969

## Dial-A-Poem, or Even a Hindu Chant



The New York Times (by Patrick A. Burns)

**John Giorno, poet and organizer of the Dial-A-Poem project, setting up a reel of recorded poetry on a tape recorder at the Architectural League of New York headquarters.**

By RICHARD F. SHEPARD

A new service, yoking the genius of the telephone company to the genius of living poets, now makes it possible for anyone with access to a dial to listen to ready-to-roll verse at any hour of the day or night.

Dial-A-Poem went into action officially yesterday, although it has been previewing since last Thursday from the six phones—each one has a recording by a different poet—on the fifth floor of 41 East 65th Street, the offices of the Architectural League of New York, sponsor of the project, which will pay the phone bill.

The number to call is 628-0400. Yesterday you would have heard Allen Ginsberg doing his "Cannabilis" and chanting something Hindu, David Henderson reading a poem about the police and the blacks, Anne Waldman reciting "Generations" and ending with an ad lib lovely laugh, Lewis Warsh recounting "Home," which is about New York, Ron Padgett on "Wonderful Things" and John Giorno doing "Lucky Man"

with an echoing feedback that is not a technical difficulty, but part of the work itself.

Mr. Giorno, who created the project, was standing by the phone bank yesterday, watching lights go out as calls came in and then flash on again as the spiritually restored caller hung up.

"Someone called us to say they dialed a number almost like this one," he said. "The man must have been getting a lot of calls because he just shouted into the phone, 'I'm not a poet.'"

Mr. Giorno, who has worked in electronic and theatrical poetry presentations, though of the idea while dialing the weather last year. He had put on several nights of poetry readings in Central Park, drawn 400 persons a night and was thoroughly exhausted from the effort.

"I thought the telephone would be a way to reach a huge public," he said. "Anyone anywhere in the world can telephone and hear a poem of up to about two minutes."

He approached the Archi-

tectural League, which is interested in any subject artistic, architectural or technical. The league agreed to put Dial-A-Poem in business.

The only cost, according to Mr. Giorno, who is editor of the project, is the \$40-a-month rent for each of the six phones and equipment. Mr. Giorno assembled 13 poets, including himself. Each read 12 of his own poems to a tape machine in Mr. Giorno's Bowery studio. They are not paid.

The poems and poets are changed each day to accommodate six replacements. As soon as a caller has called and heard a poem he can call again immediately and be reasonably sure of hearing a different one on the next call. Although each phone has its own number, if one is busy, the next one answers.

In addition to yesterday's six, the other seven poets are Bill Berkson, William Burroughs, Taylor Mead, John Perreault, Ed Sanders, Peter Schjeldahl and Emmett Williams.



## Adrian Piper

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

Audio file on CD

Courtesy of the Adrian Piper Research

Archive Foundation, Berlin

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

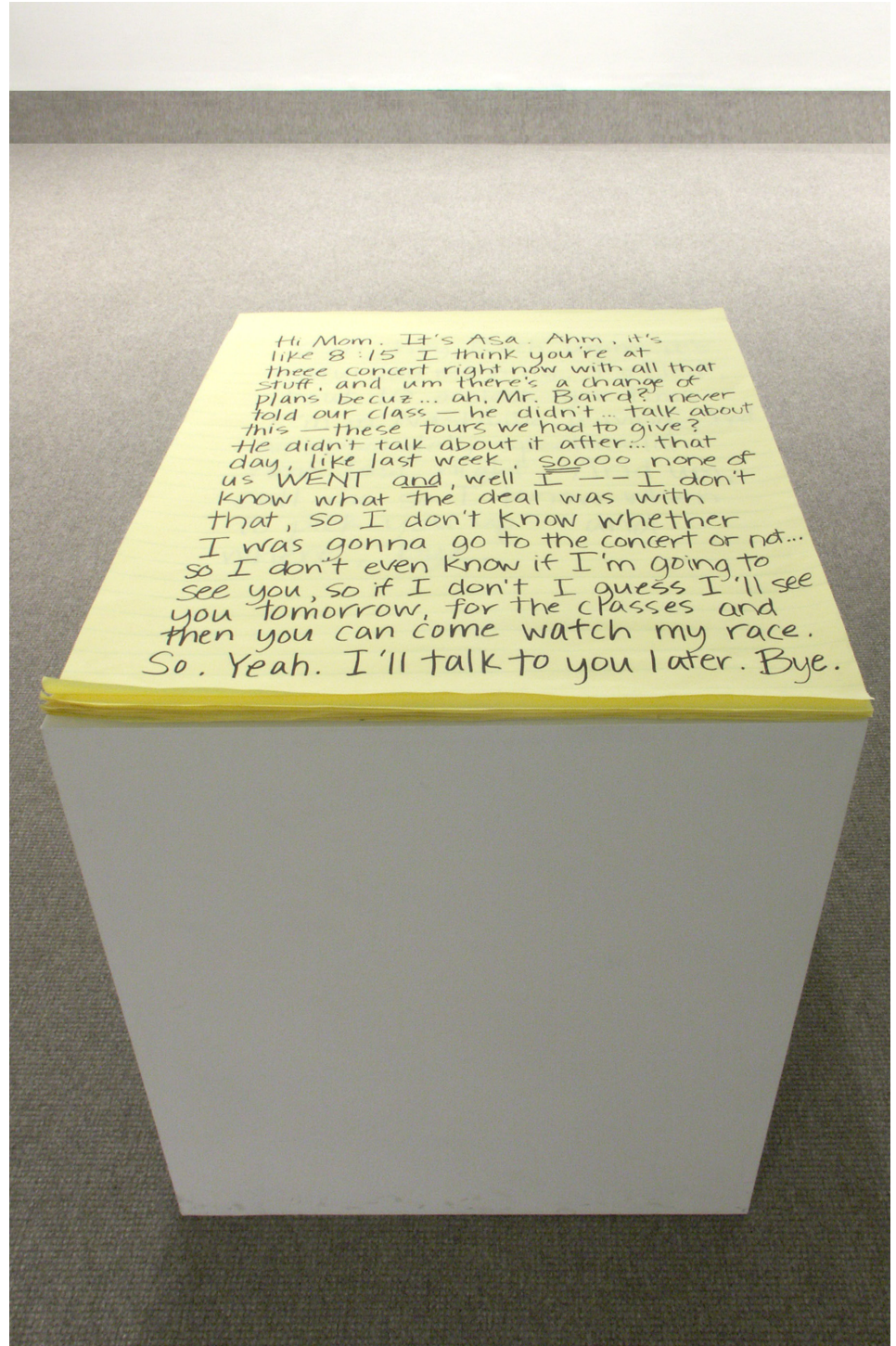
(Boston), Gallery Joe (Philadelphia), and Yancey

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/>



*Messages 2007-2008* , Rachel Perry Welty

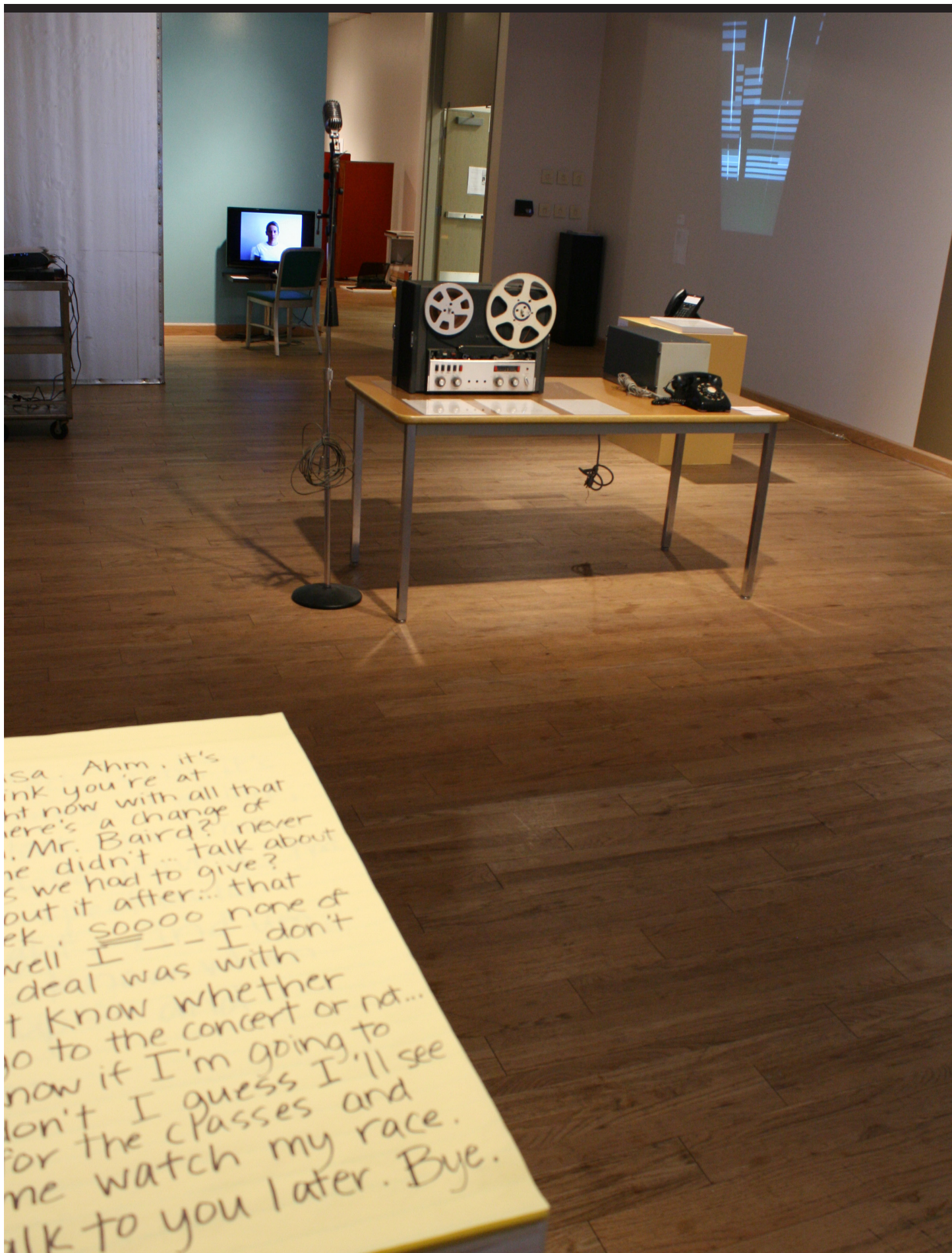


ANDREW

correcting ourselves -

Rachel, it's Andrew. Ahhmm I'm actually driving in today, and stuck in traffic and I got - I just got your email so, <sup>(smack)</sup>ah I thought I'd give you call back. Ahm, <sup>(P)</sup>I will be on my cell, ~~probably~~ for another 10 minutes or so ah then in the gallery for a bit ~~and~~ then <sup>(P)</sup>out at a meeting and then back in but give a call uh when you get a chance; Ahhmm, to go over things: pricing-feeliiiiing still the same? Ahhm, (just spoke to Barbara, she's on her way <sup>(P)</sup> OUT, ahm but she <sup>(P)</sup>ah still feels the same and want to make sure you're comfortable with that, etc. etc. Ahhm, but we can talk (about) the other things as well. So give a call when you get a chance. Hope all's well. Bye.





"It's For You", installation photo

Some quotes from Lucy R. Lippard in *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*.

Edited and annotated by Lucy R. Lippard, University of California Press (Berkeley, Los Angeles), 1973

“Communication (but not community) and distribution (but not accessibility) were inherent in Conceptual art. Although the forms pointed toward democratic outreach, the content did not. However rebellious the escape attempts, most of the work remained art-referential, and neither economic nor esthetic ties to the art world were fully severed (though at times we liked to think they were hanging by a thread). Contact with a broader audience was vague and underdeveloped.”

-- Lucy R. Lippard

“Verbal strategies enabled Conceptual art to be political, but not populist. Communication between people was subordinate to communication about communication. “Whereas it took years to get a work to Europe or California [from New York],” said Siegelau, “now it takes a telephone call. These are significant differences. The idea of swift communication implies that no one has anything.” In the era of faxes and the Internet, this seems quaint, but at the time the adoption of telex technology by N.E. Thing Co. and Haacke seemed daringly ‘beyond art.’”

-- Seth Siegelau

“I will refer to art in which I am involved as conceptual art. In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. (In other forms of art the concept may be changed in the process of execution.) When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art ....

Conceptual art is not necessarily logical. The logic of a piece or series of pieces is a device that is used at times only to be ruined.... The ideas need not be complex. Most ideas that are successful are ludicrously simple.... Ideas are discovered by intuition. What the work of art looks like isn't too important. It has to look like something if it has a physical form. No matter what form it may finally have it must begin with an idea. It is the process of conception and realization with which the artist is concerned....

Conceptual art doesn't really have much to do with mathematics, philosophy or other mental discipline. The mathematics used by most artists is simple arithmetic or simple number systems. The philosophy of the work is implicit in the work and is not an illustration of any system of philosophy....

Conceptual art is only good when the idea is good.”

-- Conceptual artist Sol LeWitt



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"It's For You", installation photo





*John Giorno, Dial-A-Poem. Photo courtesy of the artist.*

## **It's For You, Conceptual Art and the Telephone**

Curated by Terri C Smith

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