

Proposal for Project Week 2022, Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp

Lee Lozano, hand-written text on her decision to boycott any communication with women, 1971 (facsimile exhibited at Mimosa House, London, 2019)

*Initially planned for a short term, it became a lifelong piece that Lozano carried through until her passing in 1999, leaving no direct documentations.

Title	Human Life as the Site and Duration of a (Conceptual) Performance
Form	Workshop for students
Subject	Performance in the context of conceptual art
Tutor	Yuki Okumura
Where	Winter Garden (just a corner of it) (or any suggestion appreciated)
How	One short, introductory session (or it could be repeated a few times over the week) given by the tutor, followed by participants conceiving an idea immediately or afterwards, hand-writing or typing a set of instructions, and leaving the text on the wall.
Language	English (students' instructions can be in Dutch)
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- There will be basically no actual performances in front of audience; rather, each student will come up with an idea of a certain action for them to keep performing in life, and for life.- For the Project Week, the only visible result will be a corner of the space filled with pieces of paper hung on the walls.

Overview

I will be human first, artist second.

—Lee Lozano, September 8, 1971

A close reading of the initial 1967 definition posed by artist Sol LeWitt makes it clear that what he termed conceptual art is not a kind of art where the artist's deliberate *concept* is presented explanatorily but one where the artist's intuitive *conception* is realized just as conceived, through a pre-determined set of simple instructions to which no additional modifications should be arbitrarily made over the course.

In other words, what characterizes conceptual art is not the intention (idea) or the result (object) but the process (action) of the work; the artist's body functions as a quasi-machine to carry through the self-imposed task, mostly with no companions around.

Thus, a work of conceptual art is best described as a piece of *performance*. Indeed, etymologically, 'perform' means 'carrying out in a perfect manner what is required' (*par-*: 'to completion' + *fournir*: 'provide') for which being seen is not essential like theater (*thea*: 'a view'). Each object resultant from a conceptual process, whether taking the form of a painting, a photograph, a sculpture, or a text, is a *documentation* of how the executant has performed the action—documenting it physically from within, not visually from outside.

This perspective, however, is not just applicable to any instructed action: only to technically easy ones that virtually anybody could carry out. Because what conceptual art intends is not to exhibit the artist's special sensitivity and/or skillfulness but to explore the world's miraculous unpredictability—to frame how it reacts to human actions. For this purpose, the executant/performer's body serves literally as *any body*—a mere sample of humankind—which in turn reveals the fundamental characteristics of her/him as a holistic being, because the more you forget who you are, the more eloquently your body and life begin to speak.

Yes, conceptual art is extremely *human*; the executant/performer's artistry has almost faded away and instead, their humanhood—the state of living a life with a particular human body—has come to the fore.

This perspective is particularly relevant to artists who carried out (or is still carrying out) one same set of conceptual instructions for many decades—to the point of their own death—such as Stanley Broun, On Kawara, Roman Opalka, Lee Lozano, Niele Toroni, Ian Wilson (along with shorter, years-long ones by André Cadere, Tehching Hsieh, among others). A series of documentation-objects resultant from each of their durational performances not only serve as self-portraits; together, they also form an autobiography. Or, in extreme cases such as Lozano's practice to 'boycott women', no objects were produced; it was just a principle that she was enacting on a day-to-day basis for nearly thirty years—the whole piece merged into her life.

This workshop aims at offering an occasion for each participant to meditate and experiment upon a possible piece of conceptual performance to test one's humanhood, a process that may be performed by themselves or somebody else—that is, *any body*—not on stage but in life, not for once but for life.

References



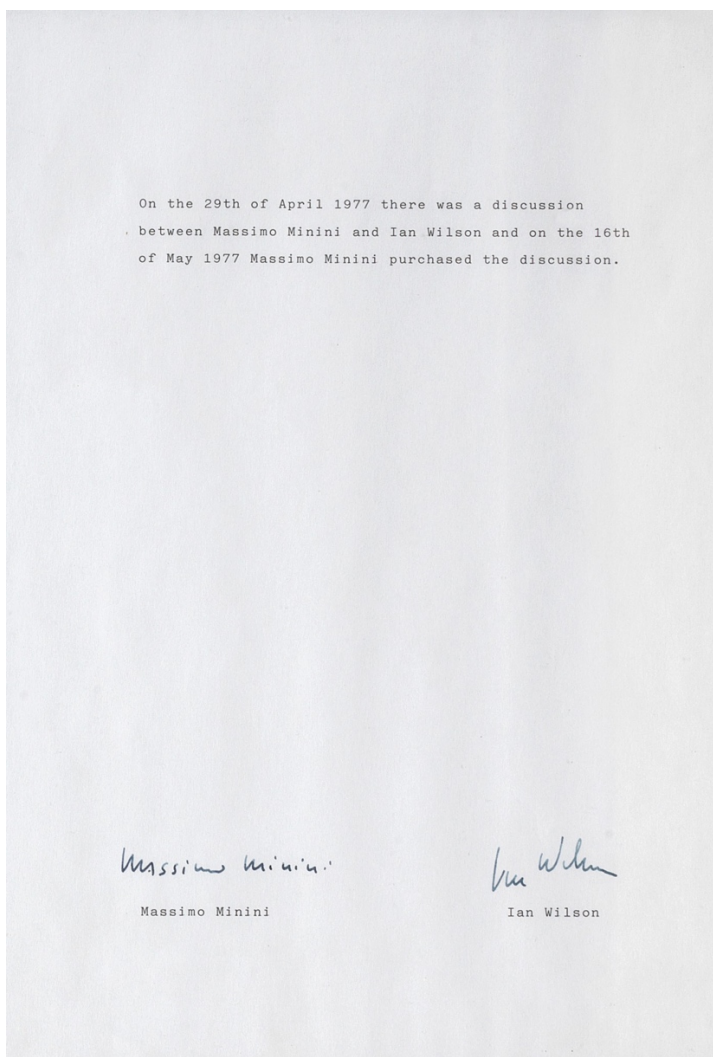
On Kawara, from the series *Today* (1966–2013)



Roman Opalka, detail of a piece from the series *Opaka* 1965/1 – ∞ , 1965–2011



Niele Toroni, from the series *Empreintes de pinceau n°50 à intervalles réguliers de 30 cm*, 1966–ongoing



Ian Wilson, a certificate from the series of Discussions, 1968–86 / 1994–2020



André Cadere, from the series
Barres de bois ronds, 1970–1978

NO. 220

PERFORMER: SAM HSIEH
Sam Hsieh
 SIGNATURE

WITNESS: DAVID MILNE
David Milne
 SIGNATURE

		LATE
SU	P11 :00	
SU	P10 :00	
SU	P9 :00	
SU	P8 :00	
SU	P7 :00	
SU	P6 :00	
SU	P5 :00	
SU	P4 :00	
SU	P3 :00	
SU	P2 :00	
SU	P1 :00	
SU	P12 :00	
SU	A11 :00	
SU	A10 :00	
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SU	A4 :00	
SU	A3 :00	
SU	A2 :00	
SU	A1 :00	
SU	A12 :00	

DATE: *November 16, 1980*

111 HUDSON ST 2nd/FL N.Y. N.Y. 10013

SU A8:00
sleeping

Tehching (Sam) Hsieh, from the series
One Year Performances, 1980–1986