

Sense Sound / Sound Sense

Fluxus Music, Scores & Records in the Luigi Bonotto Collection

3 September – 2 February 2020

Gallery 4, Free Entry

#sensesound

From the snap of biting a carrot to the screech of dismantling a piano, this display explores the interest in music and sound amongst artists of the Fluxus movement. Featuring works by artists central to the Fluxus movement including **John Cage** (1912 - 1992), **Philip Corner** (b. 1933), **Dick Higgins** (1938 - 1998), **Alison Knowles** (b. 1933), **George Maciunas** (1931 - 1978), **George Brecht** (1924 – 2008), and **Yoko Ono** (b. 1933), it presents for the first time in the UK scores, records, performance documentation and objects from the Luigi Bonotto Collection.

The Fluxus movement emerged in the 1960s as an international network of artists, musicians and performers who staged experimental happenings using everyday materials in a subversive way. They shared an attitude to creativity that was anti-academic, quotidian and open to all. Profoundly influencing the nature of art production since the 1960s, the movement continues to resonate today.

Established in the early 1970s, the Luigi Bonotto Collection is the largest collection of Fluxus documents in Italy. Containing over 15,000 works, it stems from the connections made by textile merchant and patron Luigi Bonotto with Fluxus artists, who often created works exclusively for him, or gave him their works and documentation directly. Focusing primarily on 1960s and 1970s Fluxus happenings, this archive display includes 150 objects ranging from LPs to ephemera, artworks and musical scores.

Fluxus scores intended to provide direct actions for viewers /participants which were open to interpretation and invited them to contribute to the works performed. Works on display include *Carrot Chew Performance* (1964) with instructions from Philip Corner for eating a carrot, transforming this every day activity into a musical composition. Material relating to Corner's *Piano Activities* (1962) is also on show. In a free interpretation of this score, artists destroyed a grand piano during one of the first Fluxus concerts.

Fluxus' artists approach to music scores was equally radical: breaking free from traditional sheet music, they devised notational systems based on graphics, poetry and the visual arts. Experimentation with musical notation is evident in Dick Higgins' seminal *The Thousand Symphonies* (1968). For this work Higgins arranged for fellow Fluxus artists to fire a machine gun at sheets of orchestral music paper, and devised instructions for an ensemble to interpret the holes produced.

Press Release

.....

Whitechapel Gallery
77–82 Whitechapel High Street
London E1 7QX

T +44 (0)20 7522 7888
F +44 (0)20 7539 3340

whitechapelgallery.org

Whitechapel Gallery Trustee Limited is a private limited company, registered in England and Wales, registered company no. 4093862 and the corporate trustee of Whitechapel Gallery, registered charity no. 312162. VAT no. 863 586 582.

Assigning importance to musical production, Fluxus artists presented public events as concerts that challenged conventional form and content in music. Archive documentation makes reference to the performance given by artists **Charlotte Moorman** (1933 – 1991). and **Nam June Paik** (1932 – 2006) of John Cage's composition *26'1.1499" For a String Player* (1955) in which sound is created by drawing a cello bow across a range of extraordinary objects including, in some legendary performances, playing Nam June Paik's nude back as a "Human Cello" and even an actual aircraft bomb as a "Bomb Cello".

Artworks on show include *Miniature soft drum set* (1967) by **Claes Oldenburg** (b. 1929), a multiple of a drum set formed from canvas. With this material the essential property of the drum – its ability to make noise – has been removed and the set becomes a shapeless indeterminate object.

A wall feature of LPs created by Joseph Beuys, George Brecht, John Cage, Robert Filliou and Yoko Ono further evidence Fluxus artists interaction with sound.

Further artists represented include **Ben Vautier** (b.1935), **La Monte Young** (b. 1935), **Giuseppe Chiari** (1925 – 2007) and **Charlotte Moorman** (1933 – 1991). In Spain the ZAJ movement developed in parallel to Fluxus on a similar path, following the teachings of John Cage and transforming every day objects and actions into art. Works from this group by **Walter Marchetti** (1931 – 2015), **Juan Hidalgo** (1927 – 2018), **Esther Ferrer** (b. 1937) and others are also on display.

Notes to Editors

- For the Whitechapel Gallery, the exhibition is curated by Nayia Yiakoumaki, Curator: Archive Gallery and Wells Fray-Smith, Assistant Curator: Special Projects with the assistance of Emily Gray, Archive Exhibitions Assistant.
- Sense Sound/ Sound Sense was produced and first shown at Fondazione Musica per Roma, Auditorium – Parco della Musica Roma, in 2016. It is updated for Whitechapel Gallery.
- Sense Sound / Sound Sense is curated by Patrizio Peterlini (director of Fondazione Bonotto) and Walter Rovere, and is organised with Fondazione Bonotto, Molvena with assistance from Anna Cestelli Guidi (Fondazione Musica per Roma)
- A new edition of the fully illustrated exhibition catalogue *Sense Sound/Sound Sense: Fluxus Music, Scores & Records in the Luigi Bonotto Collection* includes texts in English and Italian by the curators and artist Alison Knowles, published by Danilo Montanari

About Whitechapel Gallery

For over a century the Whitechapel Gallery has premiered world class artists from modern masters such as Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Frida Kahlo to contemporaries such as Sophie Calle, Lucian Freud, Gilbert & George and Mark Wallinger. With beautiful galleries, exhibitions, artist commissions, collection displays, historic archives, education resources, inspiring art courses, dining room and bookshop, the Gallery is open all year round, so there is always something free to see. It is a touchstone for contemporary art internationally, plays a central role in London's cultural landscape and is pivotal to the continued growth of the world's most vibrant contemporary art quarter.

About Fondazione Bonotto

Fondazione Bonotto was established in order to promote the Luigi Bonotto Collection which has collected, since the early Seventies, numerous testimonies: works, audio documents, videos, posters, books, magazines and editions of Fluxus artists. It aims to promote and develop a new way of relating between art, business and contemporary culture at an international level.

www.fondazionebonotto.org
info@fondazionebonotto.org

FONDAZIONE
BONOTTO

Visitor Information

Admission: Free

Opening times: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am – 6pm; Thursdays, 11am – 9pm

Whitechapel Gallery, 77 – 82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Nearest Underground Stations: Aldgate East, Liverpool Street, Tower Gateway DLR

T + 44 (0) 20 7522 7888 | E info@whitechapelgallery.org | W whitechapelgallery.org

Press Information

For more information, interviews and images, contact:

Lucy Hawes, T +44 (0)20 7522 7871 | E lucyhawes@whitechapelgallery.org