

Western Union telegram, announcing formation of FCPA and inviting recipients to a party at Allan Stone Gallery, November 23, 1962.

The Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts and a New Economy for Experimentation

Eva Díaz

WHEN THE FOUNDATION FOR Contemporary Performance Arts was created 50 years ago as an organization dedicated to intra-artist funding, it was a unique approach to a problem that lingers in the art world five decades later: how to address the uneven pressures exerted by market forces upon various artistic practices and to redistribute economic capital among a wider community of cultural producers. In this day of minimal state and national funding for individual artists' projects and of the atomization of philanthropy in the age of Kickstarter, the Foundation remains an example of arts funding well worth considering—in Merce Cunningham's charter words, "artists helping other artists." So successful, in fact, has been the legacy of the FCPA model—and in its latter-day form, the FCA—that its radical nature at the time of its formation may be less apparent to contemporary observers. The Foundation grew in part out of the efforts of Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and filmmaker Emile de Antonio to finance performances by John Cage and Merce Cunningham, under the auspices of Impresarios Inc., when there was little market support for their art. And as I will argue, it emerged in part from the melding of Cage's aesthetics and creative entrepreneurship, an inspired response to economic necessity and desperation. Above all, in organizing what would become the FCA, Johns, Cage, and others were catalyzed by the awareness that the viability of various art practices is too frequently determined by the distortion of the art market's demand for exchangeable commodities. Because of this, fleeting and ephemeral events like dance, theater, and other performance practices often found—and find—themselves with enthusiastic audiences though with never enough check-writing patrons. As Johns later reflected, "What is exciting about our Foundation is that it's rooted in the community from which art arises, not the community that uses art."¹

1. POVERTY

John Cage was ever the entrepreneur, if you consider acting on the necessity of raising money to make your art entrepreneurial. As early as 1938, when Cage was all of 26 years old, he began writing to colleges and universities throughout the United States proposing to fund an experimental music center, recommending himself as its director. When he met László Moholy-Nagy while working as Merce Cunningham's accompanist at Mills College

1. Mary Judge interview with Jasper Johns, 1999, FCA Archives.

in Oakland, California, Moholy-Nagy was enthusiastic about bringing the music center to the interdisciplinary Institute of Design he had founded in Chicago, but the institute had little money and few assets. As Cage later reflected on the disappointing experience, "I spent two years trying to establish a Center for Experimental Music, in a college or university or with corporate sponsorship. Though I found interest in my work I found no one willing to support it financially."²

Though the music center never panned out, one of his pitches, to Black Mountain College in North Carolina, put him on the radar of the faculty. In 1947 he and Cunningham visited the campus, and by the summer of 1948 Cage was invited to teach music composition there, his first gig of the sort.³ Black Mountain did not pay well, however, and offered only a small stipend and train fare to its rural campus. Cage slept on the hardwood floor.

But Black Mountain was a "galaxy of talent," according to college student Ray Johnson's (somewhat teasing) account.⁴ The individuals Cage met there from 1947 to 1953 became lifelong associates and, most important, frequent collaborators: Rauschenberg, R. Buckminster Fuller, M.C. Richards, Elaine and Willem de Kooning, and Cy Twombly, as well as the friends he already knew at the college such as David Tudor and Richard Lippold. In fact, it seems that in Cage's years at Black Mountain he shifted from the desire to found a music center he would lead as director to a much more collaborative sense of creativity as a uniquely generous and cooperative sort of practice.

The culmination of this spirit of collaboration was the first Happening, *Untitled Event* (also known as *Theater Piece No. 1*), which took place in August 1952. Cage and his close interlocutor Tudor formulated ideas for a performance with multiple participants who would carry out discrete activities during various overlapping time segments totaling 45 minutes. Cage proposed that college rector Charles Olson and faculty member Richards read their poetry, student Rauschenberg display his paintings and play records, and Cunningham dance. Tudor was to perform on the piano, and Cage to read from a previously prepared lecture on Zen and the medieval mystic Meister Eckhart. To Cage, the event represented the possibility of events taking place without being causally related; as he claimed, *Untitled Event* expressed "the centrality within each event and its non-dependence on other events," though he had in fact established strict temporal brackets and organized the performance with particular parameters of time, content, and location.⁵

Ever indefatigable, after his experiences at Black Mountain in 1953, Cage proposed another center of sorts, what he termed the "Package Festival," which bundled the elements of interdisciplinarity and simultaneity of *Untitled Event*. Cage's scheme for an itinerant cultural fete, as Cunningham dancer Carolyn Brown noted, was undertaken primarily as a means to provide financial support for the Cunningham troupe of six dancers, two musicians (Cage and Tudor), and a stage manager (in the early years, Rauschenberg). Listed on the large newsprint poster that circulated was a slate of nine possible and combinable events including dance programs, various lectures, and music recitals, as well as a panel discussion; Cage instructed interested parties to "choose your own schedule of events for a 4, 3, 2, or 1 day Festival of the Contemporary Arts." As with the projected music center, the Package Festival attracted inquiries but ultimately no takers. Money



Robert Rauschenberg, Merce Cunningham, John Cage, M. C. Richards, Jasper Johns, and Bob Cato, 1958. Photo: Bob Cato.

2. See John Cage, "Autobiographical Statement," 1990, on the website of the John Cage Trust, http://johncage.org/autobiographical_statement.html.

3. Cage had frequently accompanied Merce Cunningham (in 1947 Cage had visited Black Mountain College as Cunningham's backing musician) as well as other dancers as a pianist, and Cage had also taught music performance at various schools including Mills College and the Institute of Design in Chicago. His attempt to teach a course titled Sound Experiments at ID in 1941–42 was aborted when he realized that all classes were held in a common room. See "Oral History Interview with John Cage," May 2, 1974, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, available at <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-john-cage-12442>.

4. Ray Johnson, "Norman Solomon's Doberman Interviews Ray Johnson," n.d. (c. 1968) [NC State Archives]. Johnson's often parodic text was sent to historian Martin Duberman in lieu of granting an interview when Duberman was conducting the research on Black Mountain College that resulted in his book *Black Mountain College: An Exploration in Community* (New York: Norton, 1972).

5. Cage quoted in Martin Duberman, "Phone Interview with John Cage," April 26, 1969, 15 [Duberman Papers, NC State Archives]. Further discussion of the Black Mountain College Happening appears in my forthcoming book *The Experimenters: Chance and Design at Black Mountain College* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). See also my article "Experiment, Expression, and the Paradox of Black Mountain College" in *Starting at Zero: Black Mountain College, 1933–1957*, ed. Caroline Collier and Michael Harrison (Cambridge, UK: Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol and Kettle's Yard, Cambridge University, 2005).

It was fun. The whole thing started from this generous and loving idea of two visual artists who wanted to help their friends. Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg had just burst onto the scene and Merce Cunningham and John Cage were still struggling avant-garde artists. The impulse was to share—that was the Foundation's humble beginning and I was just implementing their humble idea.

—Jill Jakes

continued to be a problem for Cage, Cunningham, and the Cunningham dance company throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

2. NEW FINANCING

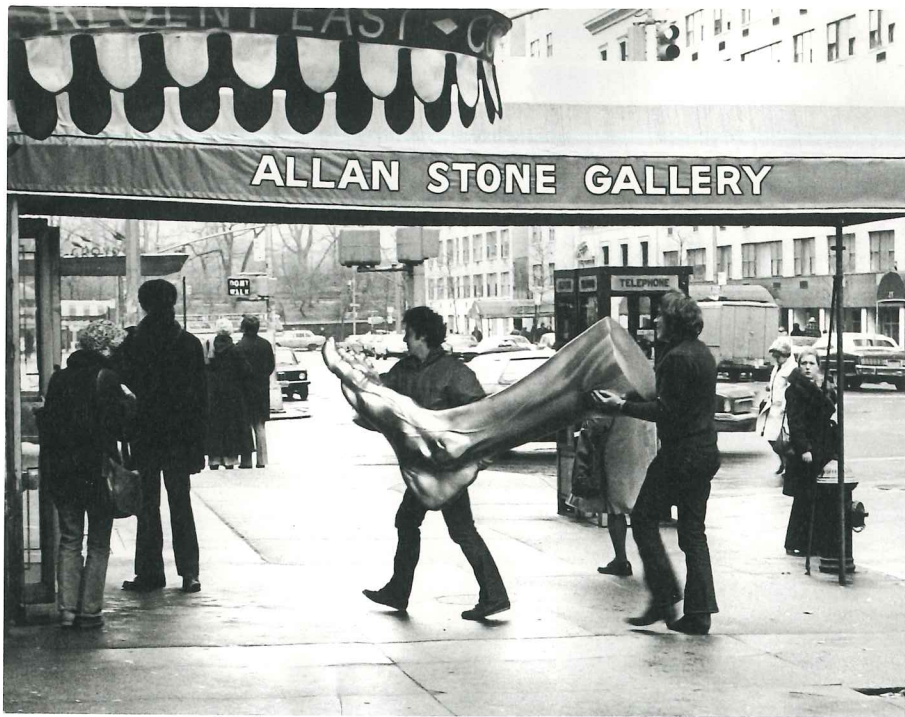
Unsuccessful in attracting institutional funders for his work, Cage was nonetheless able to stage his 1958 Town Hall concert in New York, thanks to the generosity of fellow artists. Through their group Impresarios Inc., Rauschenberg, Johns, and de Antonio each contributed \$1,000 to support the programming, and subsequently also produced the 1960 Merce Cunningham and Dance Company performances at the Phoenix Theatre on Second Avenue in New York (the first full program by the company in New York City since its Brooklyn Academy of Music run in 1957), for which Cage conducted an orchestra of fourteen musicians.

The experience of those concerts spurred Cage and Johns to initiate a major innovation in performance-arts funding, the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, or FCPA. In founding the FCPA, Cage, Johns, theater owner Lewis Lloyd, and attorney Alfred Geller pushed Cage's revelation about collaborative creativity and Johns's support for fellow artists further and began to question the existing models of financial support necessary to underwrite any "free" and creative act.

The FCPA originated out of the efforts of Cage, Johns, and Rauschenberg to donate their work or—in Cage's case—that of others to support a proposed 1963 run on Broadway for Merce Cunningham and Dance Company. Realizing the potential of reaching out to other visual artists to fund the nascent Foundation, they decided to organize a benefit exhibition to be held in February 1963 at the Allan Stone Gallery in New York, a show put together and installed at break-neck speed comprising donated works by more than 60 painters and sculptors. In addition to Rauschenberg, Johns, and Elaine de Kooning (as well as her husband, Willem), a multi-generational group of artists contributed work to the debut exhibition, including Lee Bontecou, Marcel Duchamp, Morris Graves, Philip Guston, Alex Katz, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Marisol, Robert Morris, Barnett Newman, Claes Oldenburg, Ad Reinhardt, James Rosenquist, George Segal, Frank Stella, Wayne Thiebaud, and Andy Warhol. In addition to Johns's *Map* (1962), which sold for nearly \$15,000, Rauschenberg's oil on canvas screenprint was a big earner; all told, some fifteen works sold during the course of the exhibition, and a sixteenth, a print by Sam Francis, was sold shortly after. The event raised more than \$34,000 dollars.

Thus was born an exceptional model—perhaps the first of its kind—of the benefit exhibition, one that has proved robust not just for other arts organizations but for the Foundation itself.⁶ The FCPA reprised its 1963 benefit in late 1965 with a monumental three-gallery show of 163 works on paper at Leo Castelli, Tibor de Nagy, and Kornblee and in 1967 in a print show at Kornblee. Together, the two ventures raised more than \$28,000. The simultaneous three-gallery 1965 endeavor itself was a mammoth undertaking, with some 159 artists showing works. Johns installed two of the three drawing shows himself (as he would the 1967 benefit and the ten

6. Though galleries such as Wildenstein and Paul Rosenberg held benefit exhibitions for hospitals and children's charities throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the events were ticketed and did not raise money through the sale of artwork. In 1961 the Living Theatre held a benefit auction that helped raise funds for a European tour, with works donated by Johns, de Kooning, and Rauschenberg, among others. According to Johns, the Living Theatre fund-raiser was "not common." Judge interview with Johns, 1999, FCA Archives.



Top: Exterior of Allan Stone Gallery, 48 East 86th Street, New York, 1970s. Bottom: Article on first FCPA benefit exhibition at Allan Stone Gallery, *Art Voices*, February 1963.

art on STAGE

AVANT-GARDE ARTISTS band together to assist DANCE, MUSIC, THEATRE

Seventy American painters and sculptors are contributing their works to an exhibition at the Allan Stone Gallery February 25 through March 2 for one purpose: to help the allied creative fields of the dance, music, the theatre—even a poetry reading or happening.

Among the artists contributing their work are Peter Agostini, Norman Blum, Iva Bolbowitz, Lee Bostwick, Paul Bruch, John Chamberlain, Clayton, Nasser Daghani, Elaine de Kooning, Sam Dineen, Jim Dine, Mared Duchamp, William de Kooning, Oyvind Fahlstrom, Sam Francis, Jane Freilicher, Michael Goldberg, Morris Graves, Philip Guston, Grace Hartigan, Al Held, Jasper Johns, Alex Katz, Frederick Kiesler, Ellsworth Kelly, Bruce Kowale, Hans LeFebvre, Al Leslie, Roy Lichtenstein, Richard Lippold, Richard Lindner, Robert Malley, Marshall Nichols, Martin Puryear, Fred Rautenberg, Robert Rauschenberg, Constantino Nivola, Barnett Newman, James Noguchi, Claes Oldenburg, George Otis, Brenda Otis, Richard Paetzler, East, Ad Reinhardt, Robert Rauschenberg, Suzanne Rivett, Larry Rivers, James Rosenquist, Mark Rothko, Niki de Saint Phalle, Salvatore Sciucchia, Miriam Schapiro, George Segal, Thomas Strykowski, Joan Sweeney, Tony Tasset, Jack Tworky, Kathleen Tynan, Andy Warhol, Jane Wilson, Jack Youngerman, Adja Afolayan.

Album—regard for, and devotion to, the present of culture—is generally held to be in short supply when speaking of Americans who make up the art world. Outdoors, outside artists to be self-absorbed to the point of self-loathing. Well, it's not true.

A few months ago a business venture was established to assist any present or future dance performers on Broadway this spring series played to full house, the company would have been 50 per cent of what operating expenses included Jasper Johns came to the fore and volunteered to give painting to help Cunningham break even. Then Elaine de Kooning stepped in with a painting. Five other friends of Cunningham came along to say they would contribute a work of art, too, to help cover expenses.

When it was found that the value of these works was in excess of Cunningham's immediate needs, he gallantly suggested that the most fund be established that would help performers in allied fields of artistic endeavor: people having the same kind of financial problems he does, by covering the costs of performance.

Thus, the non-profit Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts

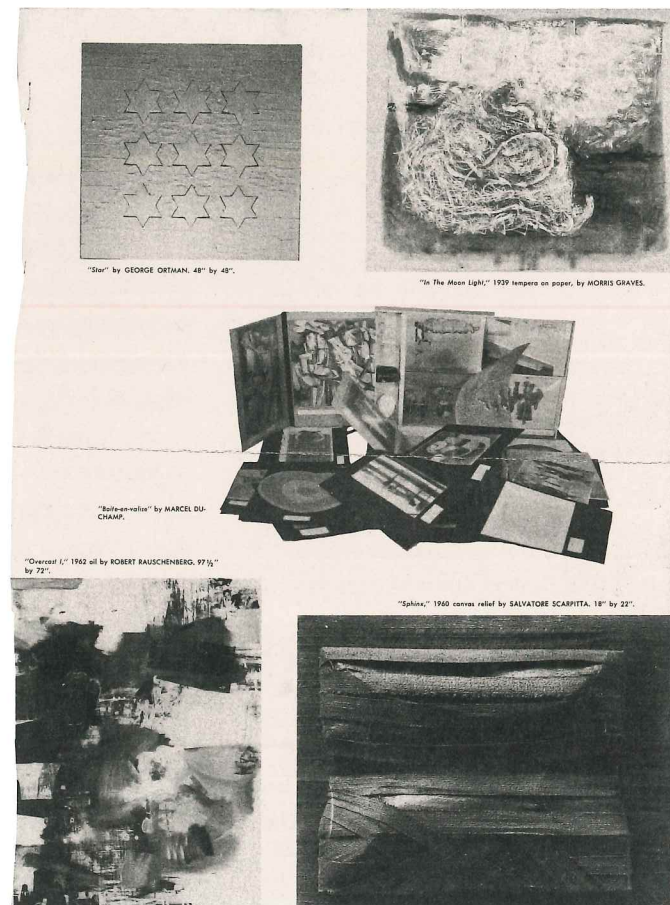
was born. Its address is 30 East 86th Street, New York City. Its directors are Mr. Johns and Mrs. de Kooning; Sam Dineen, the composer; David Hayes of the Cunningham Museum; Lewis Lurie, financial producer; and Alfred Geller, lawyer.

The Foundation welcomes applications for financial assistance and will be happy to consider the merits of any group and individual group (or individual) wishing to present a performance or a series of performances in the dance, music, experimental theatre, a poetry reading, a happening—anything of a theatrical nature that is interesting and has creative merit.

Many worthwhile artists in these fields need a large theatre to present, properly and effectively, their work. Especially dancers; there is nothing more painful for dancers than an inadequate stage and a cramped house. If they have a Broadway house, they immediately get involved with the same situation which makes things impossible. The Foundation is a new kind of "angel" with no strings attached. Its point of view is entirely objective and the sole criterion, in judging eligibility, will be art—there is quality, there will be assistance forthcoming; if not, not.

Some contemporary American artists today are able to make a living by painting and creating sculpture. This is not true in the field of dance, music and poetry. Many of the artists contributing to the album with people in these other fields have done the acts and accompanying music, and will create many for the future. Some have been in the original part of the Cunningham dance program. Kasper, Katz and Kelly also have created works for the dance.

The response from artists has been interesting. The directors initially made a list and sent out telegrams, inviting artists of their choice to the Stone Gallery where the unique proposal was set forth. Many came and others not in town at the time received letters with an explanation of what was being developed. Works of art that have been considered out of the first cut—out new recently (the "Grove" work is dated 1959; the Lippold 1947; for instance) but each piece is given an art of love and conviction. The prices are standard; set for each artist's gallery. This is not a bargain sale, and Allan Stone is taking no commission on sales. But such purchase will provide the buyer with a double satisfaction: a work of art he loves, and a work of art that transcends ownership by contributing to the cause of the arts in America today.



It was just before the Christmas holidays and Roy and I were spending Saturday as we usually did, going to galleries to see the latest art exhibitions. What we came upon at the Kornblee Gallery and the Castelli Gallery were walls filled salon style with work by contemporary artists, donated by the artists as usual, to raise money for the Foundation. I recall that everything had a price tag of under \$400. We acquired a mini-art collection that day . . . two Warhol drawings, a Twombly, a Christo, a Scarpitta; too bad we only had a few hundred dollars to spare! Roy had donated a drawing too, which was hung at Tibor de Nagy.

—Dorothy Lichtenstein

exhibitions the Foundation would hold after 1980). The 1969 change to the U.S. tax code, which barred artists from taking deductions on work donated to public causes, perhaps accounts for the fact that the 1967 exhibition would be the final one held by the Foundation until 1980.

Yet for all the benefit exhibition's success, it bears remembering that it was a unique model for its time. Other sources of funding that might be taken for granted today simply did not exist. The National Endowment for the Arts would not be established until 1965; the New York State Council on the Arts, which began in 1961, only funded arts organizations, not individuals; and the New York Foundation for the Arts, which does fund individual artists, was founded much later, in 1971. From the moment of its inception in 1925 the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation proved the exception in giving grants to individuals, though of course its wealth derived from the family's mining interests, not aid provided by artists. The same was true for the Ford Foundation (whose arts grants were established in 1959) and the Rockefeller Foundation (which made grants beginning in the 1930s), and neither focused exclusively on the arts.

Since a number of the FCPA's founding members and early donors had histories of collaboration in performance-based actions beyond the Black Mountain events of the previous decade, it is not surprising that some of the earliest grants the Foundation made went to dancers, composers, and choreographers who came out of the Cage/Cunningham circle, just as the original donations were drawn, in Johns's words from a "network of friends who asked other friends." When the 1963 Cunningham run on Broadway fell through, a victim of the longest newspaper strike in New York history, the Foundation gave its first round of grants to composer Earle Brown (then married to Cunningham dancer Carolyn Brown) and composer Morton Feldman, followed quickly by Judson Memorial Church, where many dances of the so-called Judson Dance Theater group were held (staged by those trained by or associated with Cunningham such as Trisha Brown, Lucinda

7. Judge interview with Johns, 1999, FCA Archives. Johns and Rauschenberg had at various times individually acted as visual director of the Cunningham dance company, designing its costumes, lighting schemes, props, and stage sets. In both these artists' cases, their interests in time-based performance were expressed in the ways their own paintings encouraged viewer participation and incorporated a sense of the duration a work required in its composition and reception. Johns's *Target with Plaster Casts* (1955) and *Device Circle* (1959), for example, included dynamic and movable portions that were hinged or that pivoted. In the former work, casts of actual body parts that had "performed" stillness in the composition of the work's components were a key element of the completed work. Rauschenberg's *White Paintings* (1951), according to a text Cage published about them, were "airports for lights, shadows and particles," and thereby functioned as screens for dynamic activities happening around them (Cage, "On Robert Rauschenberg, Artist, and His Work," *Silence* [Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961], 102). The fascination with activating or encouraging imagined movement on the part of the painting's beholder was, in a fashion, similar to the identification a dance performance promotes: a kind of empathetic experience of physical exertion by the audience (always tempered, in the case of dance, by the spectators' awe of the athleticism performed by the lithe bodies onstage). In this sense, working in dance seems to have activated Johns's and Rauschenberg's awareness of how a play of time and space could be depicted in painting.



Installation view, "Drawings," FCPA's second benefit exhibition, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, December 1965. Photo: Rudy Burckhardt. Leo Castelli Gallery records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

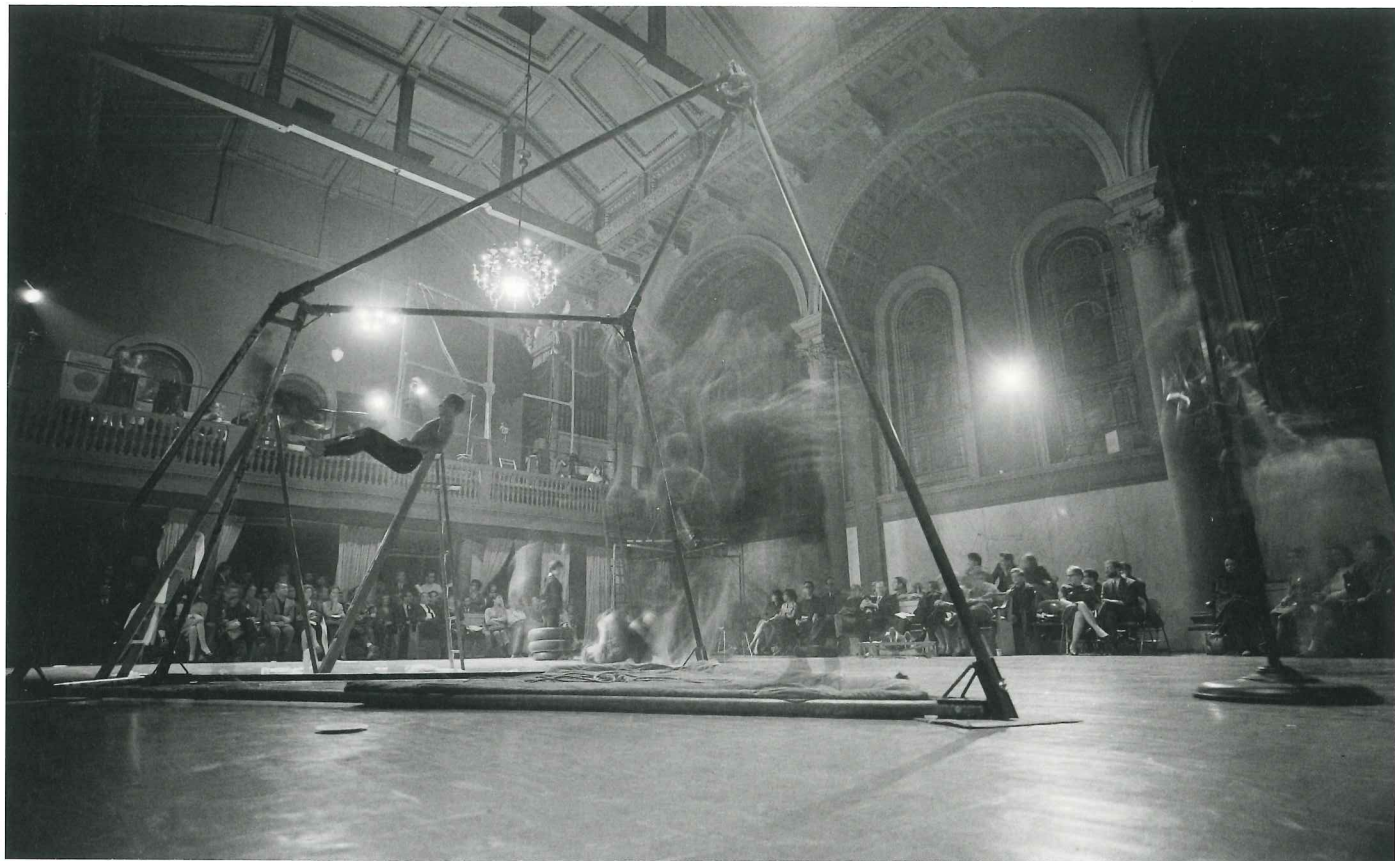


PHOTO: PETER MOORE

Judson Dance Theater, *Concert of Dance #13*, FCPA-supported collaborative performance, Judson Memorial Church, New York, November 20, 1963. Pictured: one of the set's elements by artist Charles Ross.

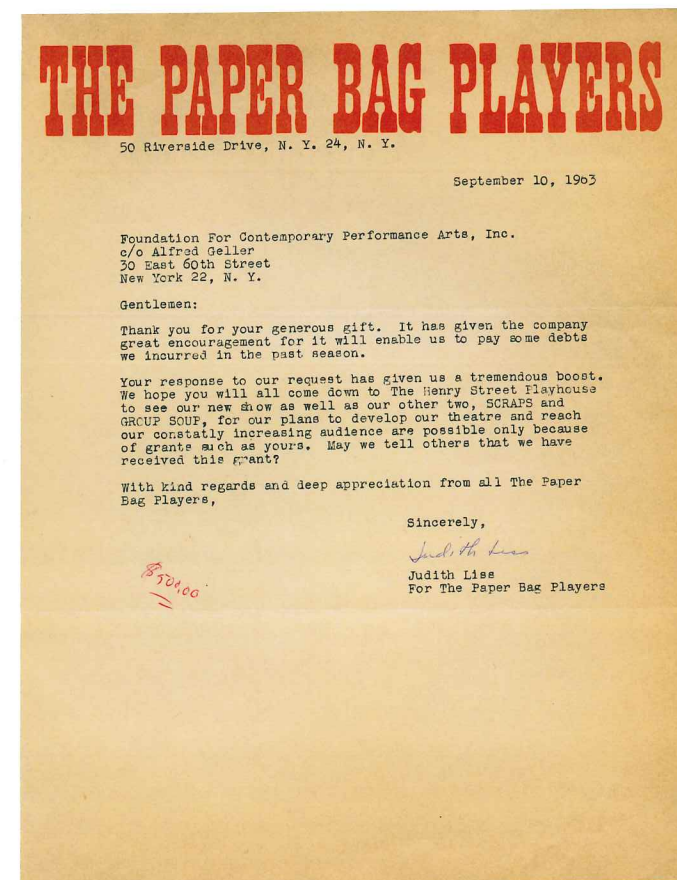
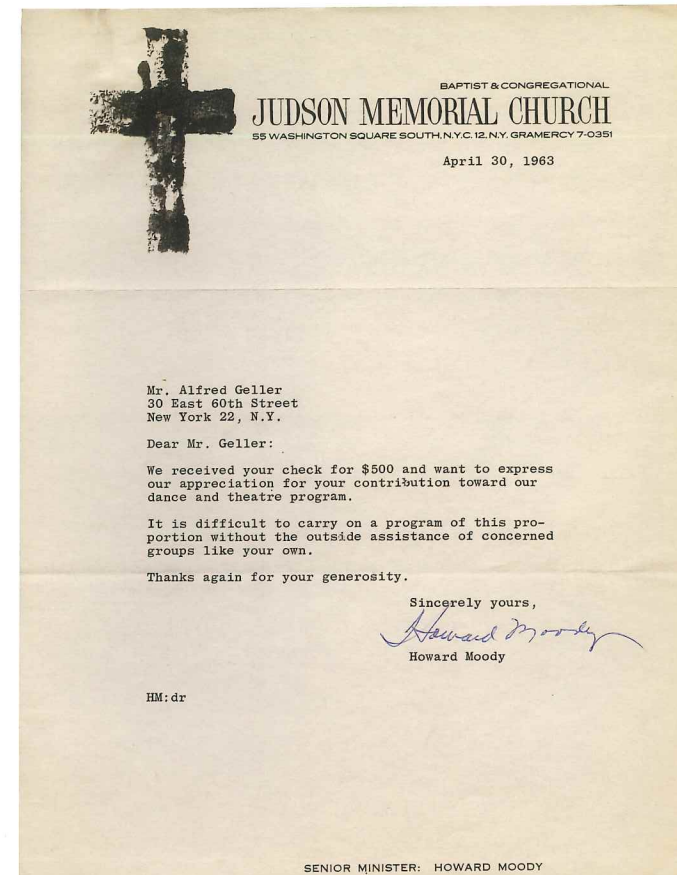
Childs, Deborah Hay, Fred Herko, Meredith Monk, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, and James Waring). Other grantees of the FCPA's first two years included the Paper Bag Players, cofounded by Cunningham dancer Remy Charlip, and dancer-choreographer Merle Marsicano. In subsequent grants throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, the circle of support expanded to encompass the Bread and Puppet Theater, Dance Theater Workshop, and composers and musicians Cornelius Cardew, Kurt Schwertsik, Max Neuhaus, and La Monte Young, as well as choreographers including Brown, Childs, Monk, Paxton, Rainer, and Midi Garth. The FCPA's grant-giving strategy had the particular effect of supporting artists at the formative stages of their careers—a move that would have a lasting influence on the constitution of the performance avant-garde of New York City. The most significant amount of FCPA funding would involve Cunningham's company itself: the 1964 world tour, for which the Foundation contributed some \$34,000 in 1964 alone at a time when the company was still at a loss for revenue and even faced hurdles in garnering support from the U.S. Department of State.⁸

In addition to the benefit exhibitions, in its early years the FCPA organized several public events that reflected in particular Cage's presence on the board of directors. There were three nights of performances that the Pocket Theatre in New York staged from June through August 1963 (including a marathon, nearly nineteen-hour performance of composer Erik Satie's score *Vexations*), an evening of Feldman's and Brown's music at

8. On the tour and State Department funding, see Seth McCormick, "Fête in Venice," *Art Journal* 70, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 113–16. The FCPA played an important role as well in the funding apparatus of the Experiments in Art and Technology's "9 Evenings" event in New York in October 1966, serving as fiscal sponsor. Under such an arrangement, a novelty in 1966 but now commonplace, an organization or performance group without tax-exempt foundation status (in this case, E.A.T.) works through an umbrella plan in which donations are made to one organization that in turn grants out the money to the unincorporated group. The donors receive a tax deduction, and the recipients get the benefits of avoiding legal and administrative costs attached to incorporating.

Awarding the grants was a joy because we knew how much some small monetary assistance would mean to these artists in doing their work, as well as being a confirmation of their worth made by established artists. Best of all were the times we awarded grants to people who hadn't applied but who one or the other of us knew were in need. My favorites: Grete Sultan, an extraordinary pianist who had escaped from Nazi Germany during World War II, and Edwin Denby, the dance critic, poet, and writer. In Grete's case, John Cage knew she would greatly benefit from a grant. A few years later, when I visited Edwin, then 72, and realized that he was living in very straitened circumstances, I suggested he be given a grant. The directors' response to both was overwhelmingly unanimous. The grants were made, much to the recipients' surprise and our delight.

—Carolyn Brown



Thank you letters from Judson Memorial Church and the Paper Bag Players, following receipt of FCPA grants, 1963.



John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and Robert Rauschenberg outside Sadler's Wells theater, London, late July–early August 1964. Photo: Douglas H. Jeffrey. © V&A Department of Theatre & Performance.

Town Hall in October 1963 featuring works commissioned by the FCPA, a benefit performance of Cage's *Variations IV* in January 1965, and a series of "Six Lectures" in March through May 1966 at the 92nd Street YMHA by Cunningham, Norman O. Brown, Peter Yates, R. Buckminster Fuller, Harold Rosenberg, and Marshall McLuhan.⁹ Other than "Six Lectures," which raised nearly \$5,000, the smaller benefits often raised only a few hundred dollars at most per evening—though fund-raising was a secondary concern in putting on such events. It was (and continues to be) the income raised by artwork sales that allowed the FCPA to stage these performance events and make cash awards to artists.

3. THE GAVEL FALLS?

The founders of the FCPA were able to extend the notion of participation and collaboration from the creative realm into the economic. Arts patronage is a funny thing. As Johns recognized, the people who make art are nearly always less affluent than the people who buy it, and artists who make saleable work are nearly always financially better off than those who do not. Visual artists and performing artists face entirely different pressures when it comes to private support. To paraphrase contemporary artist Andrea Fraser, collectors collect artists, in addition to their work. In contrast, performance events are by their very nature ephemeral and difficult to convert to exchange value; performers are difficult to "collect." Take, for example, Merce Cunningham's "Country Happening," performed on June 3, 1967, at the Glass House on the Philip Johnson estate in tony New Canaan, Connecticut (the eighth wealthiest city in the United States according to a recent study).¹⁰ The event, organized by Mr. and Mrs. John de Menil with Johnson, was billed as a benefit for the Merce Cunningham and Dance Company, with performances by Cage and the Velvet Underground. "For \$75 a ticket," the *Bridgeport Post* wrote, "guests will see an hour-long performance by the dance company and hear the premiere of a score by John Cage, electronic composer. . . . Dinner will be served and guests will help themselves to wine from barrels scattered in the gardens." Archival film from the evening shows white-jacketed waiters serving champagne and cocktails to some 400 wealthy-looking patrons across a rolling lawn. The Cunningham company performed for an hour on a raised platform stage at center, took a bow, piled into a white station wagon, and hastily drove off.¹¹ According to Carolyn Brown, the fast exit was the culmination of an evening of poor treatment: among other things, the music was deafening. "Once in the car, our pent-up fury erupted like a hornet's nest run over by a lawn mower. I'd rarely seen Merce so demonstrably angry and distraught. . . . But the benefit did what it set out to do: it wiped out the Cunningham Foundation's debts. Not only were we no longer in the red, we were actually just a little in the black."¹²

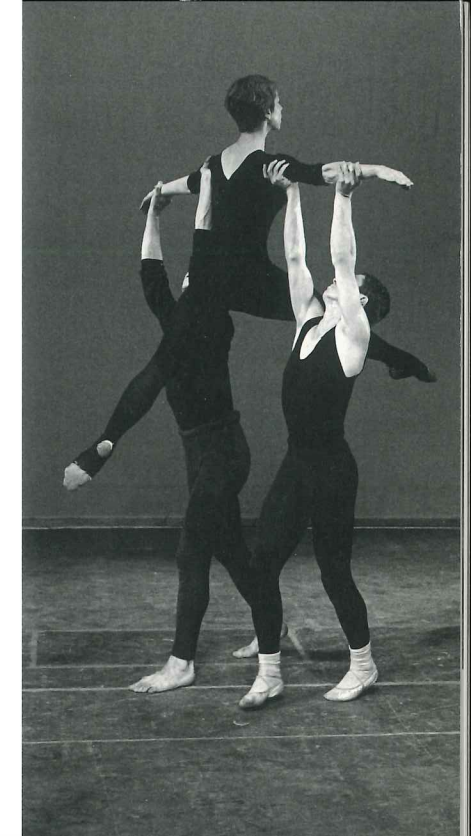
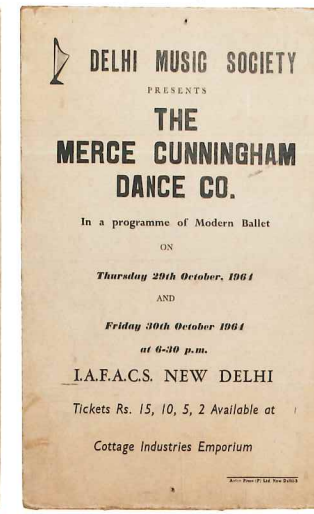
Indeed, benefits often require many sacrifices on the part of performers invited to entertain at the party (including being paid little or nothing to do so), and sometimes these parties seem to cost nearly as much as what they take in. There are back-end costs—staff, overhead, printed invitations, and anything else that might not be donated, like food, drinks, entertainment,

9. Transcripts of these lectures are reprinted in this volume.

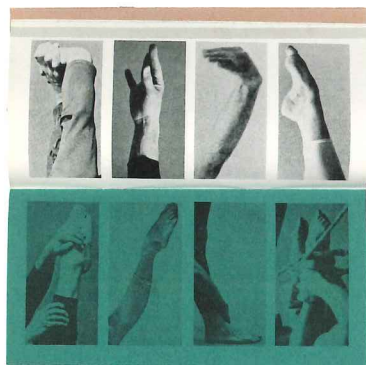
10. Assessed according to median family income, *CNN Money*, "Top Earning Towns," 2011, http://money.cnn.com/galleries/2011/moneymag/1108/gallery.best_places_top_earning_towns.money_mag/8.html.

11. *Women's Wear Daily* published a brief article on the event, and *Vogue* ran a spread, with photos showing fashionable guests dancing "to the frantic sounds of the Velvet Underground." See Richie Unterberger, "The Twelve Strangest Velvet Underground Concerts Ever Given," <http://www.richieunterberger.com/vucon.html>.

12. Carolyn Brown, *Chance and Circumstance: Twenty Years with Cage and Cunningham* (New York: Knopf, 2007), 492–93.



Clockwise from top left: Promotional posters, France, Japan, and India. *Septet* rehearsal, Sadler's Wells theater, London, July 1964. Pictured: Merce Cunningham (rear), Viola Farber, Steve Paxton (front) Photo: Douglas H. Jeffrey. Pre-tour rehearsal at the Cunningham Studio, New York, 1964. Seated: Barbara Dilley, John Cage, Sandra Neels, Sharen Blair, and Robert Rauschenberg; in mirror, standing: Merce Cunningham, Carolyn Brown, Steve Paxton, William Davis, and Viola Farber. Photo: Robert Rauschenberg. Courtesy Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives. Lewis Lloyd, Merce Cunningham, John Cage, and Viola Farber, India, October 1964. John Cage in front of Taj Mahal, India, October 1964.



Photographs and ephemera from FCPA-supported Merce Cunningham and Dance Company 1964 World Tour. Clockwise from top left: Company members boarding tour bus, location and date unknown. Pictured: Barbara Dilley holding son Benjamin Lloyd, Robert Rauschenberg, David Vaughan, and Merce Cunningham. Photo: attributed to Steve Paxton. Courtesy Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives. On the tour bus, date and location unknown. Pictured: Deborah Hay, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and David Vaughan, Photo: attributed to Steve Paxton. Courtesy Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives. David Vaughan, David Tudor, Carolyn Brown, and unidentified guide, Japan, November 1964. *Septet* rehearsal, Sadler's Wells theater, London, July 1964. Pictured: Sharen Blair, Carolyn Brown, Merce Cunningham, Viola Farber. Photo: Douglas H. Jeffrey. Japanese program, Sogetsu Art Center, Tokyo, November 1964.





David Tudor, Mark Nelson, John Cage, and Gordon Mumma, *Event #5*, benefit performance for Cunningham Dance Foundation, Philip Johnson's Glass House, New Canaan, CT, June 3, 1967. Photo: Dan Budnik.

and decor. Almost every arts organization has a development and fund-raising office of a size equal to or greater than the “creative” departments. Truth is, almost everyone in the arts—from John Cage to your local nonprofit arts organization—spends much of their time making rent, and benefits are a major way to do that.

So when visual artists do have successful careers, at least a few cultural producers can relax about the money hustle. But intra-artist philanthropy is a difficult path, and money tends to warp perspectives. As artist Robert Longo reflected, what happened to his generation can serve as a cautionary tale: “As things evolved in the 1980s, money flowed. . . . Generosity between artists and the aesthetic dialogue ended. Instead, drugs, sex, and business were the subject matter during the late nights at the Odeon, where we went instead of the rock clubs and the movie theaters.”¹³ It is interesting that Longo mentions a trendy expensive restaurant as the “end up” of choice rather than the cultural events he and his fellow artists once attended. In contrast, as Carolyn Brown recounts, in the 1950s and 1960s most of the audience for performance events was composed of visual artists, and many art gallery openings were populated by dancers and musicians.

In using John Cage’s experience at Black Mountain and the subsequent founding of FCPA to consider the changing economics of art production, I

13. Quoted in Richard Hertz, *Jack Goldstein and the CalArts Mafia* (Ojai, CA: Minneola Press, 2003), 173–74.

These days we are all used to hearing about this or that multimillion-dollar international business underwriting one arty event after another, from a major museum retrospective on West 53rd Street to an avant-garde opera at BAM. But for a long time now, there has been thriving quietly a more modest and disinterested grassroots support system that is not only for the arts but comes from the heart of the arts, namely, the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts. It is no secret that the prominent artists of our time make far more money than do their friends who struggle with, say, minimal poetry or aleatory music; and it should be equally common knowledge that there has long existed a community feeling among them, in which names like John Cage, Merce Cunningham, James Schuyler, and Philip Glass are talked about in the same breath as Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Alex Katz, and David Salle. As much to the point, since the days of Futurism and Dada, of Cocteau, Stravinsky, and Picasso, many of the best visual artists of our time have often joined forces with their colleagues in dance, poetry, theater, and music in order to blur old boundaries among the arts and to open new vistas. There are, of course, philanthropic organizations galore to help the artistically gifted and financially needy; but the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts is special. Its funding comes largely from the source, from art donated by artists who know what goes on outside their own walls and would like their works to be swiftly transformed through sales into funds that can help their less fortunate peers whose stock-market graphs don't make headlines in the daily newspaper. As the saying goes, charity begins at home; and we are lucky that so many of our best visual artists have opened the doors of their hearts and studios to embrace so many less well-heeled territories—dance, poetry, music, theater in every imaginable combination—where things other than pockets are enriched.

—Robert Rosenblum (1988)

14. Although most of the works’ final prices exceeded estimates, it should be noted that the Oldenburg boxed sculpture *Street Ray Guns* (1959–60), sold for less than its estimate, as did John Chamberlain’s *Zaar* (1959).

15. In response to Rauschenberg’s attack, Scull averred, “It works for you too, Bob. Now I hope you’ll get even bigger prices.”

have touched on examples from the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s to bring us to the model of collaborative financing begun by the FCPA and continued by the FCA. This model was ahead of its time, yet at the founding of the FCPA in 1963 it was of course not apparent how drastically the contemporary art market would change. Consider the following watershed event, which previewed just how the market would evolve, an example that coincidentally involves many of the major players in the FCPA’s 1963–65 events.

In 1973 art collectors Ethel and Robert Scull sold 50 works from their collection at a highly publicized auction at Sotheby Parke Bernet in New York. The flamboyant Sculls, proprietors of the so-called Scull’s Angels fleet of taxis, had been collecting contemporary art since 1954 and had acquired a substantial group of important Dada, Neo-Dada, AbEx, and Pop works. (In fact, they had bought Duchamp’s *Box in a Valise* for \$750 at the first FCPA exhibition in 1963.) At the 1973 auction of their collection, Rauschenberg’s *Thaw* (1958), which Robert Scull had purchased for \$900 out of the studio, went for \$85,000; a Twombly, purchased for \$750, sold for \$40,000; and Johns’s *Double White Map* (1965), bought for \$10,500, fetched a then-astronomical \$240,000. Works by Willem de Kooning, Newman, John Chamberlain, Warhol, and Oldenburg also earned exorbitant returns.¹⁴

When the final gavel fell, the auction netted an unprecedented \$2.24 million. Footage from E.J. Vaughn and John Schott’s remarkable vérité film about the auction, *America’s Pop Collector: Robert C. Scull—Contemporary Art at Auction*, depicts the carnivalesque lead-up to the auction and its aftermath. At the auction’s end, the film captures a quite tipsy Rauschenberg confronting Scull. Shoving Scull, Rauschenberg spits out a furious accusation, exposing the core of the speculative contemporary art market Scull had “worked” so well: “I’ve been working my ass off just for you to make that profit!”¹⁵

Indeed, the Sculls’ auction of Rauschenberg’s *Thaw* represented a 9,344 percent return on investment. Put another way, if the Resale Royalty Act, passed in California in the wake of the Scull sale, had been in effect in 1973, the Sculls would still have earned an 8,872 percent profit and Rauschenberg would have received a \$4,250 royalty from the \$85,000 Sotheby’s sale to do with what he pleased—like donate it to the Cunningham dance company, for example. Of course, the Sculls could have done the same with their \$84,100 profit.

The point is, they didn’t. It was Rauschenberg, Johns, and other visual artists of their generation who did. And the model they developed—and that artists of every stripe continue to embrace and to benefit by—meant that less saleable artists do not have to depend entirely on the market or collectors to provide funding for their work. ♦