

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

Rice and Beans: a music performance by Charles Curtis and Alison Knowles

Tuesday, March 25, 2008 • 7:30PM

I will do a poem titled *Mantra for Jessie* (some help in sleeping). It is a juxtaposition of sound and color in a literal narrative poem. In my mind it is a lullaby. I remember Simone Forti my friend in California who says her mother used to read her recipes to put her to sleep. This Mantra appears in a pamphlet put out by the Great Bear series of Something Else Press, 1979. The pamphlet is titled *More* by Alison Knowles.

Charles will play a score I made for him entitled *Rice and Beans* for Charles Curtis. He will also play a pieces by John Cage and Morton Feldman from the 1950s.

Lentils were eaten from the wild before domestication. They are the oldest bean in existence first found in the Franchthi Caves of Greece in 1,100 B.C. They appeared in the Bronze Age and then India and Ethiopia as well. Beans are the first food associated with the poor. Documents in tablet form with recipes have been discovered, but most recently in a rock crevice on cliffs off the Pacific coast what may be an ancient vestment has appeared. Its origins are completely unknown. It is made of paper melded with muslin containing red lentils, a tangle of cords and black curled marks perhaps some primitive language. Egyptians imagined it was sufficient to eat lentils to enlighten the mind and open the heart, and perhaps as well to make music!

— Alison Knowles

PROGRAM

Rice and Beans

1. *Mantra for Jessie* (some help in sleeping), 1979
Poem from Something Else Press Pamphlet *More* by Alison Knowles
written and performed by Alison Knowles
2. *Feldman and Cage: graphic notations from the 1950's*
Projection 1 for solo cello: Morton Feldman, 1950
Intersection 4 for solo cello: Morton Feldman, 1953
Solo for Cello: John Cage, 1957-58
3. *Rice and Beans for Charles Curtis*, 2008
60 x 100 cm graphic notation score of rice, beans, cloth and paper
made by Alison Knowles, performed on cello by Charles Curtis

Morton Feldman met John Cage in the winter of 1949-50 at a performance of the Webern Symphony opus 21; his *Projection 1 for solo cello* dates from 1950. In a graph-like form, Feldman classifies various ways of making sounds on the cello (plucking, bowing and touching harmonics), and fixes these with regard to high, medium and low registers in a more or less regular time grid. *Intersection 4* elaborates a similar notational method with a higher concentration of sounds.

Cage's class in *Composition of Experimental Music* at the New School was attended by most of the musicians and artists later grouped as Fluxus: Higgins, Brecht, Ichiyanagi, MacLow, Hansen etc. Also at the New School, Cage's class in mushroom identification led to the founding of the New York Mycological Society, under whose

auspices Alison Knowles' friendship with Cage began. The *Solo for Cello*, an extract from the orchestral parts of the *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, dates from the exact period of Cage's activities at the New School. In the *Solo*, all sounds are preceded and followed by silence, and are placed freely in time at the discretion of the performer.

A John Cage notation, while substantially altering the inherited notational logic of the marks on the page, never departs from the sense of the score as a logical representation. An Alison Knowles notation, on the other hand, is itself an instrument, as well as the record of an art-making process which, in the moment of its making, is inseparable from an audible and performed act. It is non-reproducible, except through the interpretation of a performance; and its performance is not intended to take place without the physical presence of the notation, there to be seen as its interpretation is heard.

For more information, please contact the gallery:

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Gallery hours: Wednesday – Sunday, 11:00 AM to 6:30 PM

Subway: F to East Broadway; B, D to Grand Street or J, M, Z to Delancey / Essex Street