(EN)

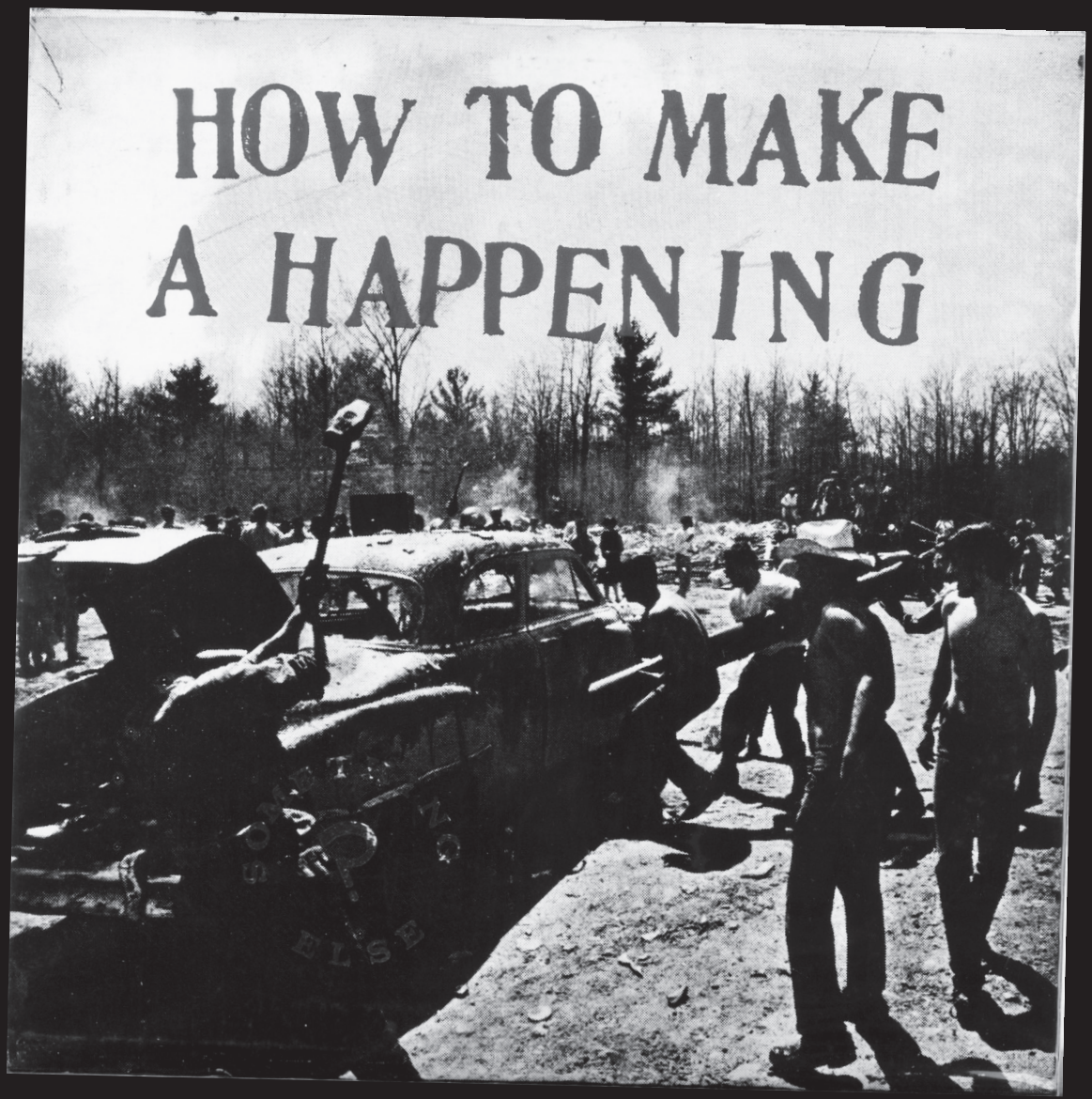
Ant Farm
John Baldessari
Peter Baum
George Brecht
Allan Kaprow
Corita Kent
Milan Knížák
Július Koller
George Maciunas
Park McArthur
Robert R. McElroy
Christian Philipp Müller
Yoko Ono
Cora Pongracz
Franz West
Heimo Zobernig

mumok

PUSH AND PULL

A FURNITURE COMEDY

ALLAN KAPROW
HOW TO MAKE A HAPPENING, n. d.
Vinyl record
© The Allan Kaprow Estate / Hauser & Wirth



"Anyone can find or make one or more rooms of any shape, size, proportion, and color—
then furnish them perhaps, maybe paint some part or everything. Everyone else can
come in and, if the room(s) are furnished, they can also arrange them, accommodating
themselves as they see fit. Each day things will change."

*– Allan Kaprow, Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy for Hans Hofmann**

Allan Kaprow's 1963 "furniture comedy" *Push and Pull* invites us to collectively reflect on what a museum can be or aspires to be: a place where objects are not only to be viewed, but also activated and transformed. The work serves as the starting point for a new collection exhibition at mumok that specifically brings together works whose qualities derive from the way they are suspended in a kind of limbo: Artworks or everyday objects? To look at or to use? Disruption or invitation?

One central focus of mumok's collection is a generation of artists working in Europe and North America during the 1960s, who challenged the museum as a site of collection and preservation, while questioning the object-based and commodity-driven conception of art. They often addressed their viewers directly, inviting them to complete the work by touching or transforming it. Participation was not a matter of comfortably going with the flow, but a process of negotiation that entailed friction and uncertainty. In their works, art and life become entwined, while their restlessness reflects the tensions of the period in which they were made.

Allan Kaprow is often considered the founder of the Happening as an art form, and the event-like character of everyday life was of central importance to him. His work *Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy for Hans Hofmann* lies at the heart of the exhibition: a performative and participatory installation that is constantly being updated by the audience's interventions. Visitors are invited to rearrange furniture and objects into new configurations within the given space. Each such intervention becomes part of the open-ended work as it constantly takes on new forms. Here, "pushing" and "pulling" also entail a redistribution of roles: the curators who "furnish" the space become artists, while the visitors who

continually alter and "compose" the installation's materials become its curators. Another central concern of the work is its liveliness: Kaprow's piece has its roots in the 1960s, yet it explicitly stipulates that each new staging must reinvent the work. This is but one reason why the present version also embodies a spirit and freedom that connect art history with the present.

As an exhibition, *Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy* is part of a broader exploration of forms of attention. Alongside *Terminal Piec*e, which hinges on the act of looking, and Verena Paravel's exhibition *Exuviae*, which focuses on listening, *Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy* turns to the embodied experience of the space: touching and actively engaging with one's surroundings. For mumok, such gestures of openness and a generous attitude toward the audience are essential. Kaprow's radical plea for an institution in flux is thus complemented by works from the collection that make museum routines visible and encourage active participation, articulating forms of openness and collectivity. They thus invite visitors to reconsider the relationship between art and everyday life beyond the confines of the museum itself.

* The full version of Kaprow's instructions can be found at https://www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen6A/pushAndPull.html

PUSH AND PULL:
A FURNITURE COMEDY FOR HANS HOFMANN, 1963

Allan Kaprow is considered a seminal figure in the development of Happenings, which rejected traditional art forms such as painting and sculpture in favor of the immediacy and unpredictability of events involving the audience. Interaction among participants and with their environment became crucial as they collectively negotiated a situation.

In 1963, Kaprow was invited to participate in an exhibition held alongside a retrospective of his teacher, the German-American painter Hans Hofmann, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Curator William C. Seitz asked former students of Hofmann to engage with his ideas and his Abstract Expressionist painting. Kaprow interpreted the invitation rather freely and placed Hofmann's teaching method of "push and pull"—the composition of an image through static and dynamic, geometric and gestural elements—at the center of a set of instructions that was as simple as it was subversive. He translated the delicate balance between compositional calculation and the random emergence of the image, the pushing and pulling of forms on the canvas, into a spatial constellation that radically revised Hofmann's formalism and transposed it into everyday life.

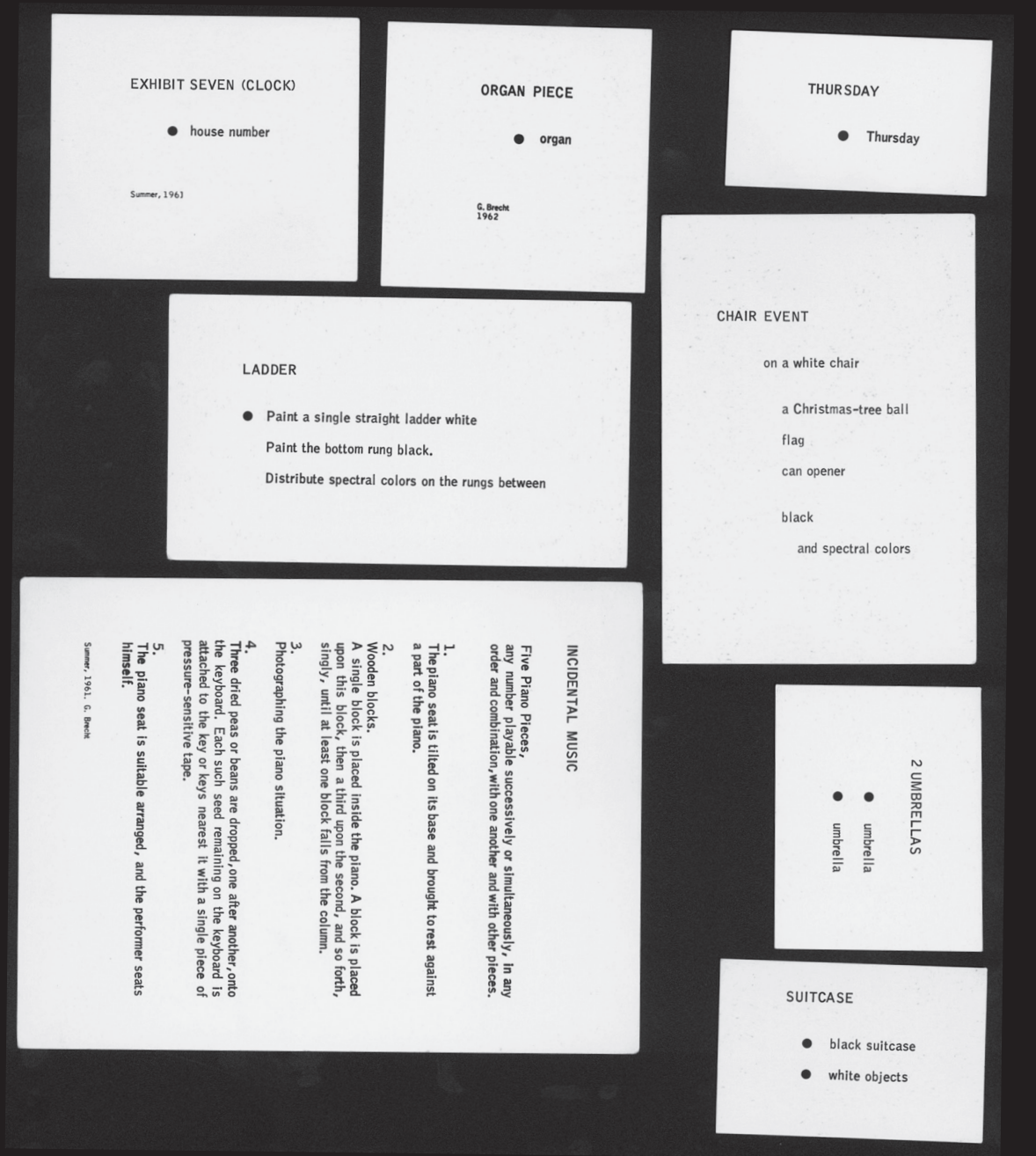
Through a deliberately open-ended instruction, *Push and Pull* creates a scenario in which the audience can experiment with Hofmann's teaching method firsthand. The original version from 1963 consisted of two rooms: a brightly lit, furnished room and a dark one filled with all kinds of clutter. Visitors were invited to actively redesign these spaces, moving furniture and objects back and forth in order to transform the overall impression. They became participants in a "furniture comedy" that rebelled against established painting as well as the institutional rigidity of the museum. The performative installation consists in the realization of many possible arrangements of the objects and continuously takes on new forms. Ultimately, all participants become part of the work as it manifests itself on site.

Today, the box containing the panels on which Kaprow's instructions were painted in black is held in mumok's collection. For a "reinvention" of *Push and Pull* realized by Kaprow himself at mumok in 2002, the artist



ALLAN KAPROW
Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy for Hans Hofmann, 1963
Photograph from the opening of *Hans Hofmann and His Students*, April 17, 1963, at the Santini Brothers Warehouse, New York
© The Allan Kaprow Estate / Hauser & Wirth

GEORGE BRECHT & GEORGE MACIUNAS
Water Yam, 1963 (detail)
Wooden box with instruction cards by George Brecht
Bildrecht, Vienna, 2026



designed a setting comprising two rooms: one whose walls were covered with black plastic sheeting and another decorated with silver aluminum foil. By inviting visitors to rearrange the furniture and objects, Kaprow once again encouraged them to help co-create his work of art. Furniture—sofas, armchairs, lamps, tables—from Caritas, along with books, suitcases, and other items, was moved around the performance area within the museum during the various activations. A deliberate troublemaker within the orderly operations of the exhibition, *Push and Pull*, along with its ever-changing iterations, continues to offer a space for disorder and idiosyncrasy with lasting resonance. The work must be reinvented, realized, and activated, again and again.

The laconic statement that concludes Kaprow's brief instructions—"every day things will look different"—is taken literally in the current version of *Push and Pull*, which photographically documents the various constellations that emerge from day to day.



ALLAN KAPROW
Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy for Hans Hofmann, 1963
Wooden box with 55 panels
© The Allan Kaprow Estate / Hauser & Wirth

How to Update Clothing (1965) by Milan Knížák exemplifies a tendency within 1960s Fluxus art to encourage the audience to perform everyday actions through sets of instructions known as "scores." Once these actions are framed by the heightened attention associated with an artistic context, they acquire a surprising new meaning or emphasis that they would not possess otherwise. The format of written instructions on which they are based derives from musical notation systems, particularly the highly open-ended compositions of John Cage, in which performers are not merely interpreters of a work but actively help determine its form.

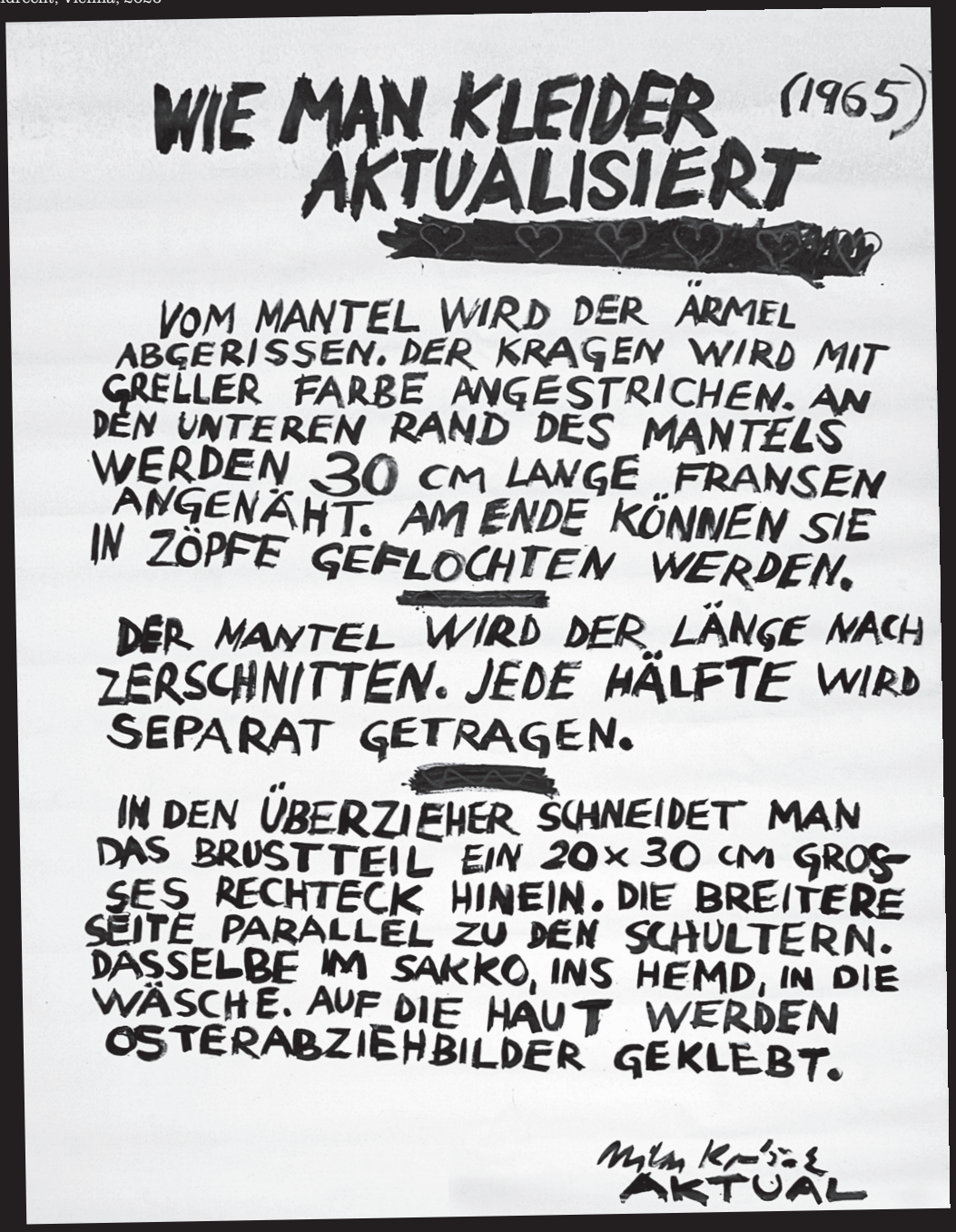
Scores in the visual arts are likewise characterized by an open structure and aim to be completed through the viewers' participation. In principle, they can be performed at any time and by anyone. By inviting audiences to become active participants of a process themselves, such scores were seen in the 1960s as a radical expansion of the concept of art that freed the artwork from its attachment to a specific object. These action-based works also challenged institutions associated with traditional forms such as painting and sculpture, including museums and galleries, as well as the assumption that the value of art is tied to its financial worth.

Yoko Ono is represented in the exhibition by *Painting to Hammer a Nail,* an early work from 1961. Conceived as an "instruction painting," it calls on the viewer to hammer nails into the surface of a wooden board. Only when the surface is entirely covered with nails is the work considered complete. Here, the instruction alone is exhibited, foregrounding the active role of participants while leaving the action itself in the realm of possibility.

This openness toward how a piece might actually be realized also characterizes the early work of George Brecht, who was interested in translating musical notation systems into conceptual art practices and created various "event scores" that directed attention toward minimal events, almost arbitrary processes, or objects. Whether the described action is to be carried out or merely observed is deliberately left open. This is also the case with the many cards that together constitute *Water Yam* (1963). Even when a word evokes an object—"suitcase" or "table"—Brecht is not concerned with exhibiting the actual object, but with the viewer's imaginary interaction with it.

Brecht's early "Chair Event," shown in 1961 at a group exhibition at the Martha Jackson Gallery in New York, consisted of a chair in the exhibition space, a chair in

MILAN KNÍŽÁK
How to Update Clothing, 1965–1990
Acrylic on paper
Bildrecht, Vienna, 2026





CORITA KENT
come off it, 1966
Screen print
Bildrecht, Vienna, 2026

the restroom, and one in front of the gallery. Deliberately not demarcated as part of an artwork, the chairs were understood less as places to sit than as a reflection on the relationship between object and event, the behavior of the viewers, and their role within the constellation orchestrated by the artist.

John Baldessari likewise rejected traditional art forms in an ironic manner. In his video works, he repeatedly used instructions in the style of conceptual art to demand that artists stop producing "boring art" (*I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art*, 1971) or reduced the practice of art making to a performative utterance (*I Am Making Art*, 1971).

In the former Czechoslovakia, Július Koller likewise created so-called "anti-happenings" from the 1970s onward, which took place in both private and public spaces. Koller understood art not as the production of objects, but as a form of action that engages with everyday life and social responsibility. During a period of political and cultural repression, he developed simple yet symbolically charged gestures and actions that communicated beyond institutional and ideological boundaries. Sports and games, especially table tennis, became metaphors for dialogue and democratic interaction. In response to the suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968, he founded the *J.K. Ping-Pong Club*, which challenged sporting and social rules as well as patterns of collective control in favor of new forms of social interaction.

In 1970, the architectural group Haus-Rucker-Co transformed Vienna's 20er Haus, mumok's predecessor, into a public interior and a space for collective action as part of its exhibition *LIVE*. Futuristic pneumatic furniture and a giant inflatable PVC mat with large balls, known as "giant billiards," invited visitors to bounce around and hang out but also raised fundamental questions about the relationship between art and life. Conceived as an open invitation, the installation could be used by anyone. In 1969, the museum's then-director, Alfred Schmeller, had set out to open up the institution and playfully question the status of its audiences. Photographs by Peter Baum and Cora Pongracz documented the exhibition.

The spirit of radical change in the late 1960s and early 1970s, along with a joy in experimenting with new materials, is equally reflected in the video *Inflatables Illustrated* (1971) by the artists' group Ant Farm. It shows how large-scale inflatable sculptures can become metaphors for collective coexistence and new forms of connection.

Ree Morton's flags in *Something in the Wind* (1975) can also be interpreted as a rejection of art as isolated, individualistic production. On them, the artist commemorated the names of family members and (artist) friends who played important roles in her life. Originally, these flags were hung on a ship anchored in New York Harbor. Morton also sketched a public presentation on flagpoles at Rockefeller Center. The hand-sewn flags each bear a person's first name alongside a motif associated with them. Together, they make a highly personal system of relationships public and emphasize that art is almost always embedded in a broader social and creative fabric.

The artist, Catholic nun, and activist Corita Kent, known for her Pop Art-inspired silkscreen prints, also emphasized the communal aspect of the creative process. She taught at her convent college, which was recognized as an experimental art school in the 1960s, and invited figures such as filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock, architect Buckminster Fuller, and composer John Cage to give guest lectures. Corita Kent's motto was "plork," an original fusion of "play" and "work."



ANT FARM
Inflatables Illustrated, 1971–2003
Film stills
© Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York



GEORGE BRECHT & ROBERT R. MCELROY
"Chair Event" in the Martha Jackson Gallery, New York, 1961
B/W photograph
Bildrecht, Vienna, 2026


GALLERY
32
east
69
Mrs HENRY PARISH II

Efforts to open up the museum and enable new forms of participation are common threads running through artistic developments over recent decades.

In Austria, Franz West created furniture objects starting in the 1980s, which deliberately negated the strict separation between the art object and the viewer, as well as between art and usability. They combine an exploration of bodily experiences with an invitation to interaction. Chairs, tables, lamps, or coat racks are fashioned out of simple, untreated materials, then repurposed and treated with irony. Questions about the organization of our sensory experience, the conditions of our perception, the relationship between touching and understanding, and, not least, the distinction between an artwork and an everyday object is quite literally brought into space.

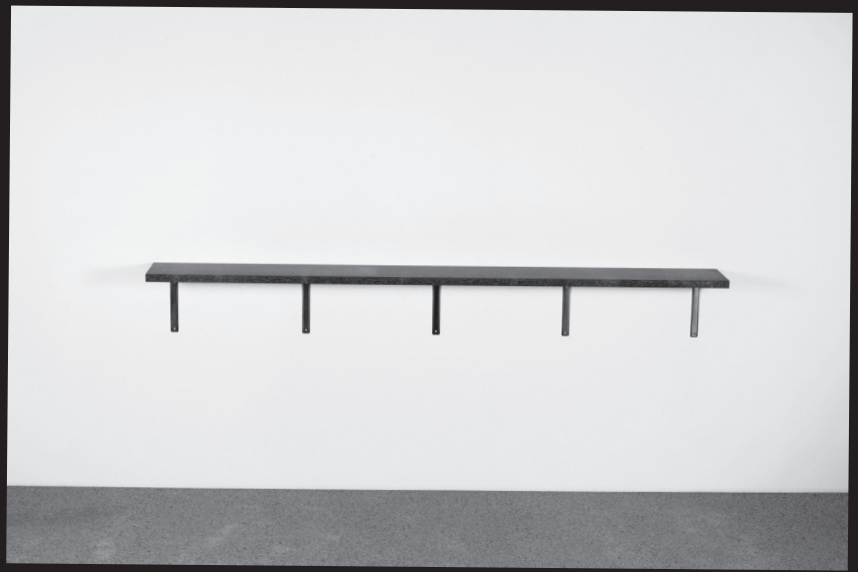
The exhibition *Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy* features several tables and shelves designed by artists. Alongside a white table by Franz West originally used to serve wine at an opening, there is an untitled wall-mounted shelf by Heimo Zobernig, which functioned as a guestbook stand when it was originally shown.

Both objects refer to practical functions, visitors' activities, and the rituals, roles, and rules of the museum. Through the tension between its original function and its current status as an object exhibited only for display, the wall shelf reflects a contradictory relationship between activity and passivity. At the same time, it raises the question of what these categories actually mean and what significance we ascribe to them.

The same applies to Zobernig's furniture arrangement *Untitled* (2015). Here, the artist is interested in the rules and systems through which art, exhibitions, and everyday objects are organized. He frequently works with simple, industrially manufactured elements and alters their arrangement or context. His ensemble of two benches and a table, constructed from standardized wooden slats, is plain and functional. It meets the basic requirements of a reading area. However, the fact that the books and brochures on the table are "secured" with heavy iron chains cannot be explained by any practical considerations. What initially appears to be an ironic response to the risk of theft also points toward the institution's rules and control mechanisms, questions of distribution and possibilities of appropriation, as well as the relationship between materiality and immateriality. Ultimately, the act of chaining this discursive material in place provokes a confrontation with the underlying structures that govern what can be said, heard, or thought in a museum, not to mention who is allowed to participate and in which ways.



FRANZ WEST
Untitled (Wine Table), 1996
Iron, plywood, jute, gypsum
© Archiv Franz West



HEIMO ZOBERNIG
Untitled, 1996
Chipboard, steel brackets
Bildrecht, Vienna, 2026

Christian Philipp Müller's *Garden Table* was created as part of an exhibition in the Austrian Pavilion at the 1993 Venice Biennale. There, Müller explored the transformation of national identity, not least in light of the Iron Curtain recently being lifted. Using the most common types of wood found in Austria, he constructed a round table-like object that gives statistical data a visual form while also serving as a display surface. This wooden pie chart, which doubled as a portrait of Austria, rests on casters that allow the tabletop to rotate. To change its position, however, visitors must first coordinate their efforts: only when everyone involved agrees does the object begin to move.

With its understated wit, Müller's *hat rack* also expresses an institution-critical approach that informs the artist's sociological investigations of the art world. The forty-nine white fishing hats are divided into seven groups of seven, each group bearing one of the following designations: "Künstler" (artist), "Kritiker" (critic), "Betrachter" (viewer), "Vermittler" (mediator), "Förderer" (patron), "Sammler" (collector), and "Händler" (dealer). Visitors can try on the hats and are invited to take on the roles alongside the other visitors. The hierarchies, social conventions, and traditional rules of the art world and museums are playfully enacted and pushed to absurd extremes.

BODY AND CONTACT

22

Park McArthur's *Contact E* consists of a metal tray presented on a pedestal. It contains hand sanitizer, COVID-19 tests, menthol balm, and condoms. These unassuming everyday objects point to a social space in which forms of coexistence take shape, highlighting physical contact, vulnerability, and the need for precaution. At the same time, the tray evokes the instrument trays found in medical institutions, raising questions of care and mutual support. Visitors are therefore not presented as abstract, sovereign subjects contemplating art, but as bodies with needs: dependent, vulnerable, and interacting with others.

Here, McArthur challenges the museum's presumed bodily neutrality. Its organizational principles, geared toward visual perception, distance, and autonomous reception, presuppose certain physical abilities and modes of sensory perception as the norm. *Contact E*, by contrast, reveals that accessibility is always embodied and situated, and that risks, needs, and dependencies are unequally distributed. The work can thus be read as a form of institutional critique that pivots away from established notions of sovereign subjectivity toward an emphasis on interdependence. This becomes particularly striking through the pedestal: it transforms everyday objects into artworks while simultaneously raising the question of whether they can still be used or taken. The museum's rules are thus brought into conflict with bodily needs. *Contact E* consequently addresses not only the body within the museum but also the conditions under which certain kinds of bodies are treated as the norm. In place of autonomous art reception, it foregrounds contact, dependency, care, and the question of how a museum can be opened up to bodies of different kinds.

PARK MCARTHUR
Contact E, 2025
Stainless steel, COVID tests, condoms, prophylactics
© Park McArthur





WORKS

ANT FARM
1968–1978 San Francisco, CA, USA
Inflatables Illustrated, 1971
Single-channel standard-definition video, B/W, color, sound
21 min 20 sec
mumok—acquired in 2008

JOHN BALDESSARI
1931 National City, CA – 2020 Los Angeles, CA, USA
I Am Making Art, 1971
Single-channel standard-definition video, sound
18 min 40 sec
mumok—acquired in 2005

I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art, 1971
Single-channel standard-definition video, B/W, sound
13 min 6 sec
mumok—acquired in 2005

PETER BAUM
1939 Vienna, Austria
Exhibition Haus-Rucker-Co at the 20er Haus, 1970
B/W photographs
20.3 × 30.5 cm each
mumok—donated by Peter Baum, 2019

GEORGE BRECHT
1926 New York City, NY, USA – 2008 Cologne, Germany
GEORGE MACIUNAS
1931 Kaunas, Lithuania – 1978 New York City, NY, USA
Water Yam, 1963
Wooden box with instruction cards by George Brecht
24.4 × 22.5 × 4.6 cm
mumok—on loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation, since 1993

GEORGE BRECHT
1926 New York City, NY, USA – 2008 Cologne, Germany
ROBERT R. MCELROY
1928 Chicago, IL – White Plains, NY, USA
"*Chair Event*" at the Martha Jackson Gallery, New York, 1961
2 B/W photographs
21.5 × 28 cm and 28 × 21.5 cm
mumok—acquired in 2008

ALLAN KAPROW
1927 Atlantic City, NJ – 2006 Encinitas, CA, USA
HOW TO MAKE A HAPPENING, n. d.
Vinyl record
24 min 3 sec
mumok—donated by Hildegard Hahn, 2003

Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy for Hans Hofmann, 1963
A Re-Invention by Vanessa Joan Müller, Matthias Michalka, and Robert Müller, 2026
Mixed media
mumok—former Hahn Collection, Cologne, acquired in 2004

4-Cities Happening, 1973
Photocopy, printed paper
29 × 21 cm
mumok—donation by Joachim Diederichs, 2007

CORITA KENT
1918 Fort Dodge, IA – 1986 Boston, MA, USA
an unfolding, 1971
Screen print
28 × 35.6 cm
mumok—acquired in 2020

come alive, 1967
Screen print
33.2 × 58.6 cm
mumok—acquired in 2020

come off it, 1966
75.9 × 92 cm
Screen print
mumok—acquired in 2020

handle with care, 1967
Screen print
58.6 × 89 cm
mumok—acquired in 2020

highly prized, 1967
Screen print
75.9 × 91.6 cm
mumok—acquired with the support of the mumok Board in 2020

i in daisy, 1969
Screen print
52.5 × 67.5 × 3 cm
mumok—acquired in 2020

king's dream, 1969
Screen print
58.6 × 30.6 cm
mumok—acquired in 2020

left, 1967
Screen print
75.8 × 91.8 cm
mumok—acquired in 2020

magpie in the sky #1, 1965
Screen print
68.1 × 86.5 cm
mumok—acquired with the support of the mumok Board in 2020

only you and i (part 1), 1969
Screen print
58.4 × 29.2 cm
mumok—acquired in 2020

only you and i (part 2), 1969
Screen print
58.5 × 29.6 cm
mumok—acquired in 2020

the sea queen, 1973
Screen print
50.5 × 58.6 cm
mumok—acquired with support of mumok Board in 2020

t is for two, 1968
Screen print
71 × 81.5 × 3.5 cm
mumok—acquired in 2020

v is for vibrations, 1968
Screen print
44.6 × 58.7 cm
mumok—acquired in 2020

MILAN KNÍŽÁK
1940 Pilsen – 2026 Prague, Czech Republic
How to Update Clothing, 1965–1990
Acrylic on paper
355 × 271 cm
mumok—on loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation, since 1993

JÚLIUS KOLLER
1939 Piešťany – 2007 Bratislava, Slovakia
Otázniková kultúrna situácia (U.F.O.), 1992
Latex on textile
328.5 × 226 cm
mumok—on loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation, since 2016

U.F.O.-nautická Foto-Operácia (U.F.O.), 1970
B/W photograph
22.8 × 17.2 cm
mumok—on loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation, since 2016

U.F.O.-naut J.K. (U.F.O.), 1970
B/W photograph
24.8 × 18.7 cm
mumok—on loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation, since 2016

Univerzálna Fyzkultúrna Operácia – Obranná (U.F.O.), 1970
B/W photograph
21 × 17 cm
mumok—on loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation, since 2016

Univerzálna Fyzkultúrna Operácia – Obranná (U.F.O.), 1970
B/W photograph
23 × 17.4 cm
mumok—on loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation, since 2016

Univerzálna Fyzkultúrna Operácia – Obranná (U.F.O.), 1970
B/W photograph
18.6 × 13.3 cm
mumok—on loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation, since 2016

PARK MCARTHUR
1984 Raleigh, NC, USA
Contact E, 2025
Stainless steel, COVID tests, condoms, prophylactics
Dimensions variable
mumok—on loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation, since 2025

REE MORTON
1936 Ossining, NY – 1977 Chicago, IL, USA
Something in the Wind, 1975
43 nylon flags
Dimensions variable
mumok—on loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation, since 2018

Flag Piece (Drawing for "Something in the Wind"), 1975
Crayon and ink on paper
24 cm × 34.5 cm
On loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation, since 2018

Notebook Pages for 'Something in the Wind', 1974
Crayon and ink on paper
35.5 cm × 28 cm
On loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation, since 2018

CHRISTIAN PHILIPP MÜLLER
1957 Biel, Switzerland
Garden Table, 1993
Wood, metal
Height: 90 cm, Ø: 400 cm
mumok—donated by Günter Lorenz, 2013

Rollenspiel, 1994
MDF shelf, 49 cloth hats, color-printed
211 × 144.4 × 34 cm
mumok—donation from the Alexander Schröder Collection, Hamburg, Berlin, 2013

YOKO ONO
1933 Tokyo, Japan
Painting to Hammer a Nail, 1961/1990
Silkscreen on acrylic primer on canvas , 72 × 100 cm
mumok—on loan from the Austrian Ludwig Foundation, since 1993

CORA PONGRACZ
1943 Buenos Aires, Argentina – 2003 Vienna, Austria
Exhibition Haus-Rucker-Co at the 20er Haus, 1970
B/W photographs
Courtesy of Estate Cora Pongracz – Ostlicht, Vienna

FRANZ WEST
1947–2012 Vienna, Austria
Untitled (Wine Table), 1996
Iron, plywood, jute, gypsum
76 × 86 × 67 cm
mumok—acquired in 1999

Onkel, 2002
Tubular steel, woven textile belts
87.5 × 48.5 × 54.5 cm each
mumok—acquired with the support of the Society of the Friends of Fine Arts Vienna, 2003

Sinnlos, 2008
Steel, lacquered
193 × 40 × 10 cm
mumok—acquired with the support of mumok Friends, 2011

HEIMO ZOBERNIG
1958 Mauthen, Austria
Untitled, 1991
Lacquered chipboard on steel
Height: 84.5 cm each, Ø: 30 cm each
Dieter and Gertraud Bogner Collection at mumok

Untitled, 1996
Chipboard, steel angle
3.8 × 280 × 30 cm
Dieter and Gertraud Bogner Collection at mumok

Untitled, 2015
Wood, synthetic resin lacquer, steel chains, publications
75 × 500 × 86.5 cm (table)
mumok—donated by Heimo Zobernig, 2017

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Stiftung Ludwig Wien
Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Vienna
www.mumok.at

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EXHIBITION

Push and Pull: A Furniture Comedy
November 14, 2026 — April 4, 2027

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Christina Linher

Exhibition Organization
Claudia Dohr

Exhibition Design
Robert Müller

Exhibition Installation
must. museum standards

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