AHST 4342-501 (27532)
History of Media and New Media Art
Spring 2018
Dr. Charissa N. Terranova
University of Texas at Dallas
Arts & Humanities
T-Th 1:00-2:15

Tuesday 03/20/18

Sound, Algorithms, and Performance Art

James Tenney (1934-2006)

Carolee Schneemann with the composer James Tenney

Carolee Schneemann (1939-)

James Tenney (1934-2006)

- American composer and music theorist
- Born in New Mexico, lived in Arizona and Colorado as a child
- Attended Univ. Denver, Julliard School of Music, Bennington College, Univ. Illinois [MA 1961]
- Tenney went to Juilliard to study piano with Eduard Steuermann, a student of Schoenberg's
- He met composers through his roommate, the filmmaker Stan Brakhage, who let him tag along to meetings with John Cage and Edgar Varèse.
- After a year, Mr. Tenney dropped out to study composition with a student of Varèse's, Chou Wen-Chung.
- A meeting with the pianist and composer Lionel Nowak led to his entering Bennington, where he also worked with Henry Brant and Carl Ruggles.
- When he saw an advertisement announcing the first class in electronic music, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, he and Ms. Schneemannnn drove there, and Mr. Tenney ended up working with another scientist-composer, Lejaren Hiller.
- At Bell Labs, Mr. Tenney, though working as a composer, was technically hired to do research in psychoacoustics, which involves sound perception.
- After he left Bell, he was able to support himself by doing technical research at places like the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute.

James Tenney, psychoacoustics, and Bell Labs (1961-64)

Psychoacoustics is the scientific study of sound perception and audiology. More specifically, it is the branch of science studying the psychological and physiological responses associated with sound (including noise, speech, and music). It can be further categorized as a branch of psychophysics. Psychoacoustics received its name from a field within psychology—i.e., recognition science—which deals with all kinds of human perceptions. It is an interdisciplinary field of many areas, including psychology, acoustics, electronic engineering, physics, biology, physiology, and computer science.

James Tenney (1934-2006)

Each of his computer pieces in the 1960's was an experiment of sorts.

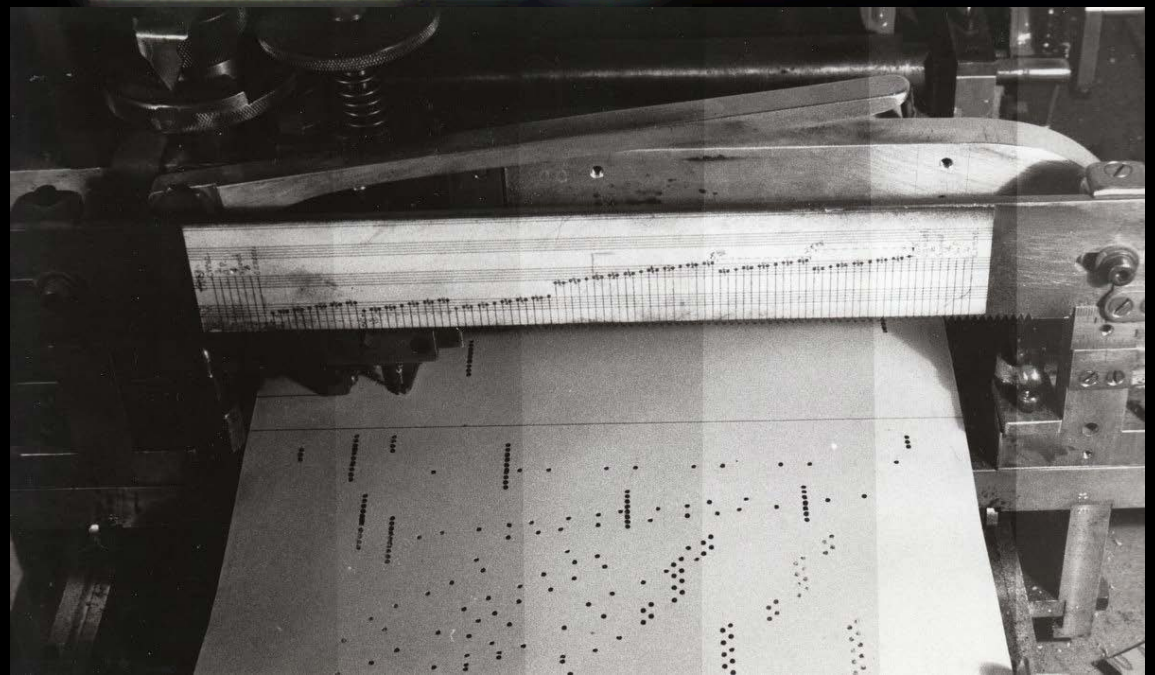
- Electronic Music (1961-69)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9TGvSUUR7s&list=PLeARseTVO6iLPsVXqKJ2LTxLeighYaqxZ
- Music for Player Piano (1963-64)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMUrdAztGcs

Tenney's electronic compositions culminated in 1969 in "For Ann (rising)," which explores something called a Shepard tone, a sound creating the illusion that it is continually getting higher. And with that, Mr. Tenney left computer music altogether.

- For Ann Rising (1969)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbKbE8y95sg

After the birth of his first daughter, he took his first teaching job at CalArts, where the computer equipment ran to Moog synthesizers.

James Tenney -- INFLUENCES



Conlon Nancarrow
[1912-1997]

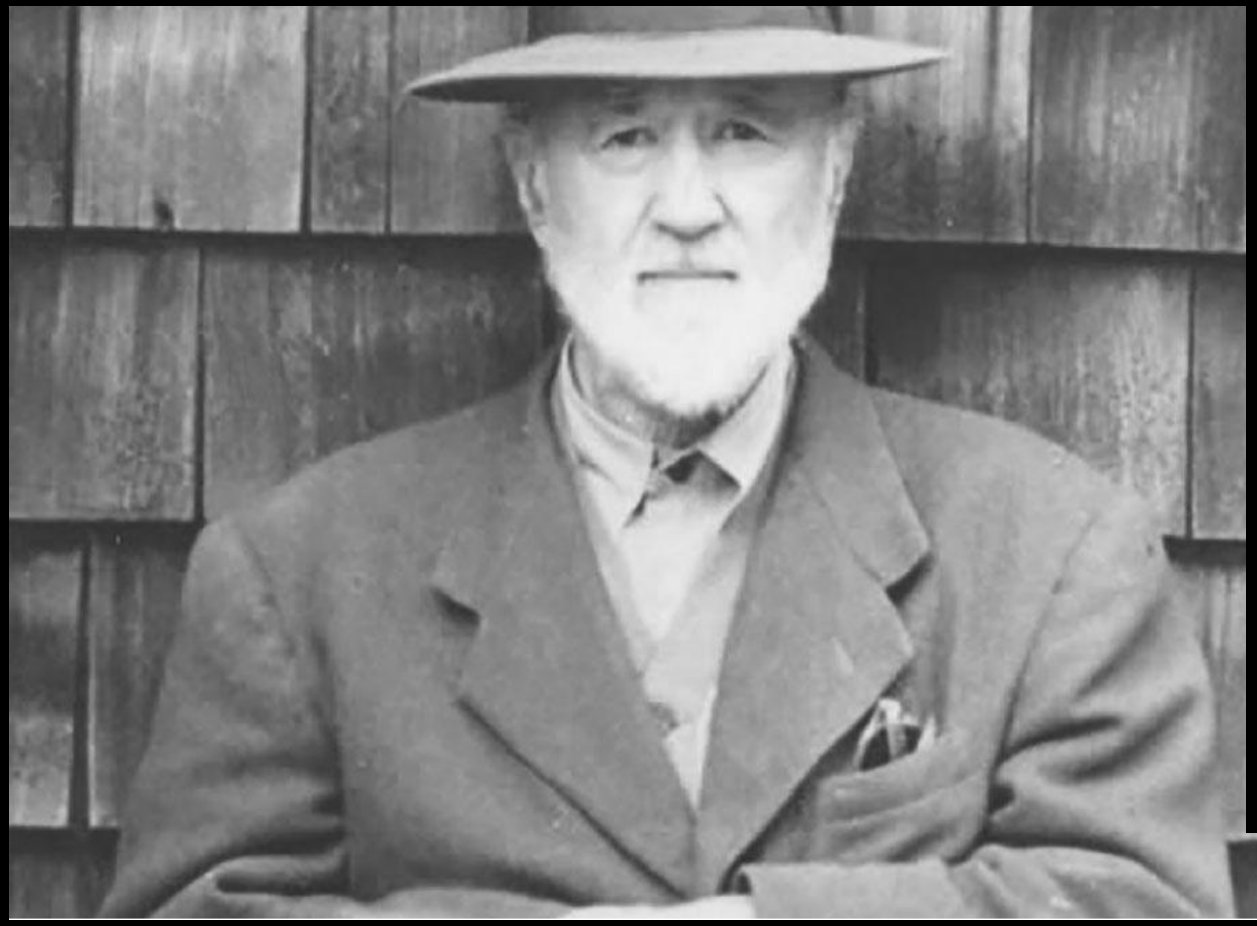
- Born in Texarkana, Arkansas
- Studied music in Cincinnati and Boston
- Met Arnold Schoenberg in Boston in 1933
- In Boston in the 1930s Nancarrow joined the Communist Party
- He traveled to Spain to join the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War fighting against dictator Francisco Franco
- In 1940 moved to Mexico

- Example of Player Piano
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aseMAEctM1s

- Conlon Nancarrow, Study for Player Piano #21 (1951-1965)
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2gVhBxwRg

- Conlon Nancarrow, Study for Player Piano #37 (1966-1969)
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFz2lCEkjFk

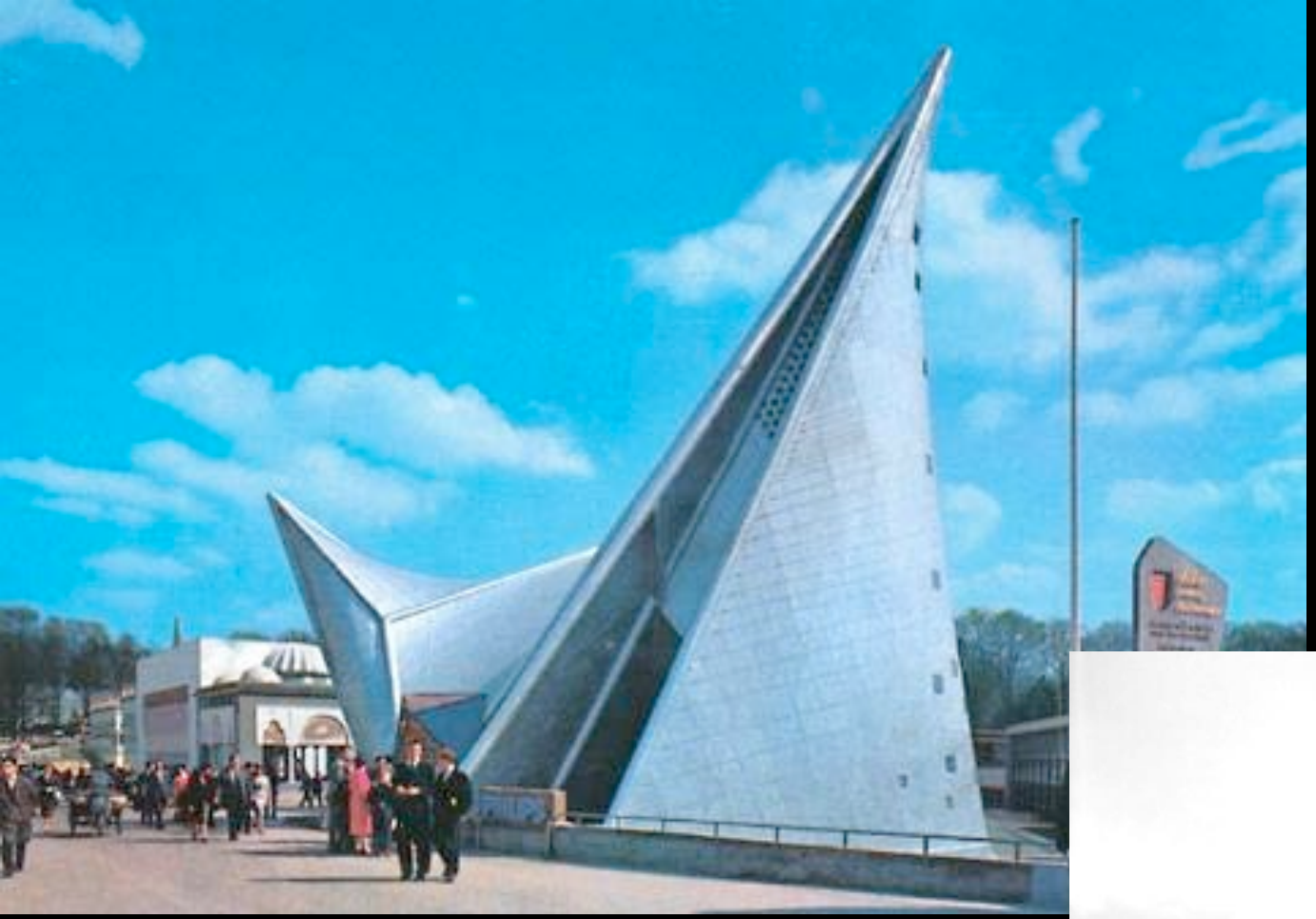
Charles Ives
[1874-1954]



- American classical music composer
- He is one of the first American composers of international renown, though his music was largely ignored during his life, and many of his works went unperformed for many years.
- "American original".
- Combined the American popular and church-music traditions of his youth with European art music,
- Early composer to engage with systematic programming of experimental music
- Polytonality, polyrhythm, tone clusters, aleatory elements
- Charles Ives, Variations on America, 1891 (composed when Ives was 17) – composition for organ
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXIeGswfzLc
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hs0VjhNWqn8
- Charles Ives, Three Places in New England (1903-1929)
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kP0yMg6_Yaw

Edgar Varèse
[1883-1965]

- French-born composer, lived in US for most of his career
- Emphasized timbre and rhythm
- He coined the term "organized sound" in reference to his own musical aesthetic.
- Varèse's conception of music reflected his vision of "sound as living matter" and of "musical space as open rather than bounded".
- He conceived the elements of his music in terms of ”sound masses", likening their organization to the natural phenomenon of crystallization.
- Varèse thought that "to stubbornly conditioned ears, anything new in music has always been called noise", and he posed the question, "what is music but organized noises?”
- Varèse saw potential in using electronic media for sound production, and his use of new instruments and electronic resources led to his being known as the "Father of Electronic Music.”
- Trained in music and engineering

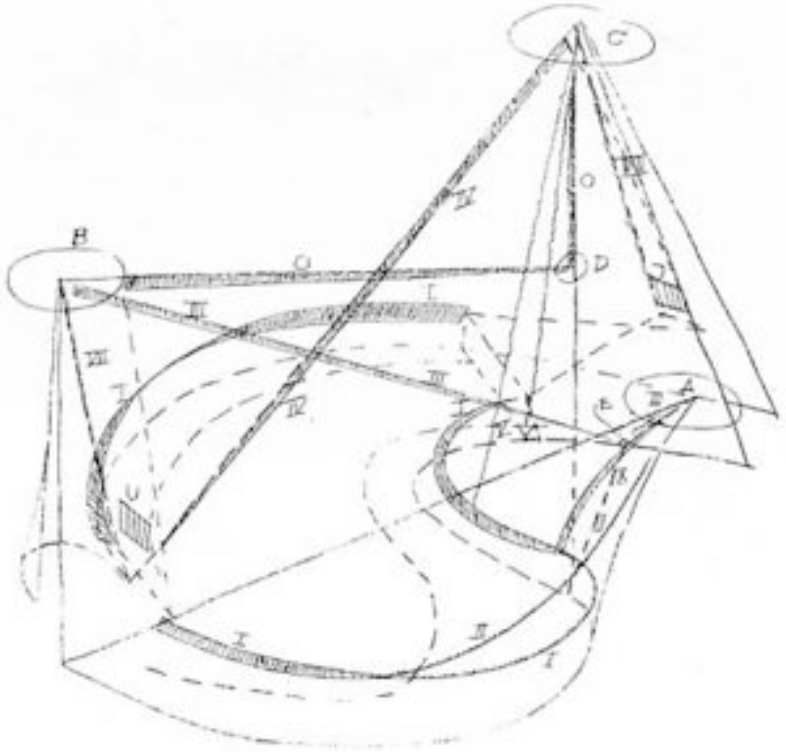


Le Corbusier, Iaannis Zenakis, Edgard Varèse, Philips Pavilion, 1958 for the 1958 Brussel's Worlds Fair: Le Corbusier came up with the title *Poème électronique*, saying he wanted to create a "poem in a bottle". Varèse composed the piece with the intention of creating a liberation between sounds and as a result uses noises not usually considered "musical" throughout the piece.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuDzS0EYixQ

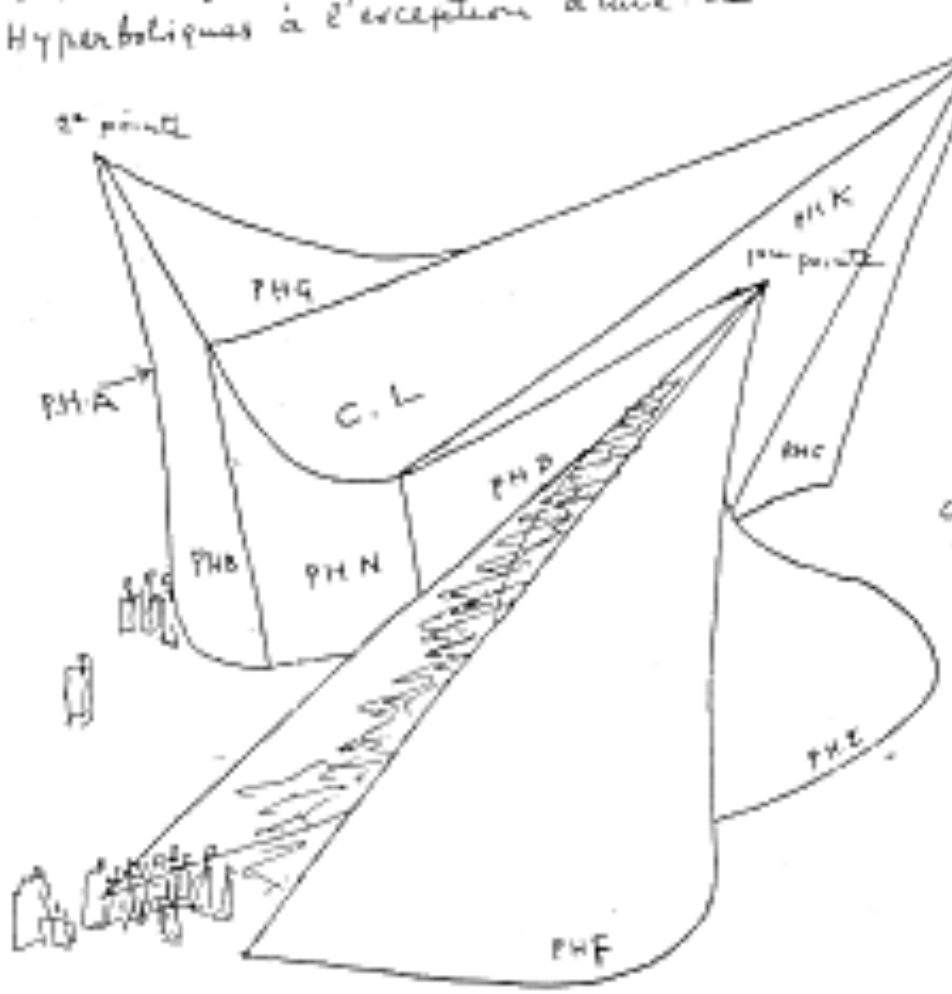
5-15
Diagram of the "Sound Routes" Iannis Xenakis. [Philips Technical Review]

Route I horizontal
II I ▸A
III B ▸E ▸A
IV U ▸C
V B ▸D ▸C
VI along the warped surface
VII B ▸U
VIII C ▸J
IX A ▾



2e PROJET

Toutes les surfaces du 1er projet sont transformées en Paraboloïdes Hyperboliques à l'exception d'une : le cône L.



Le troisième projet qui est le définitif ne constitue qu'une variante par rapport au 2e. Il ne diffère du 2e que : dans le cône L et le P.H.N qui sont remplacés par un P.H.M et dans le P.H.C qui est maintenant convexe.

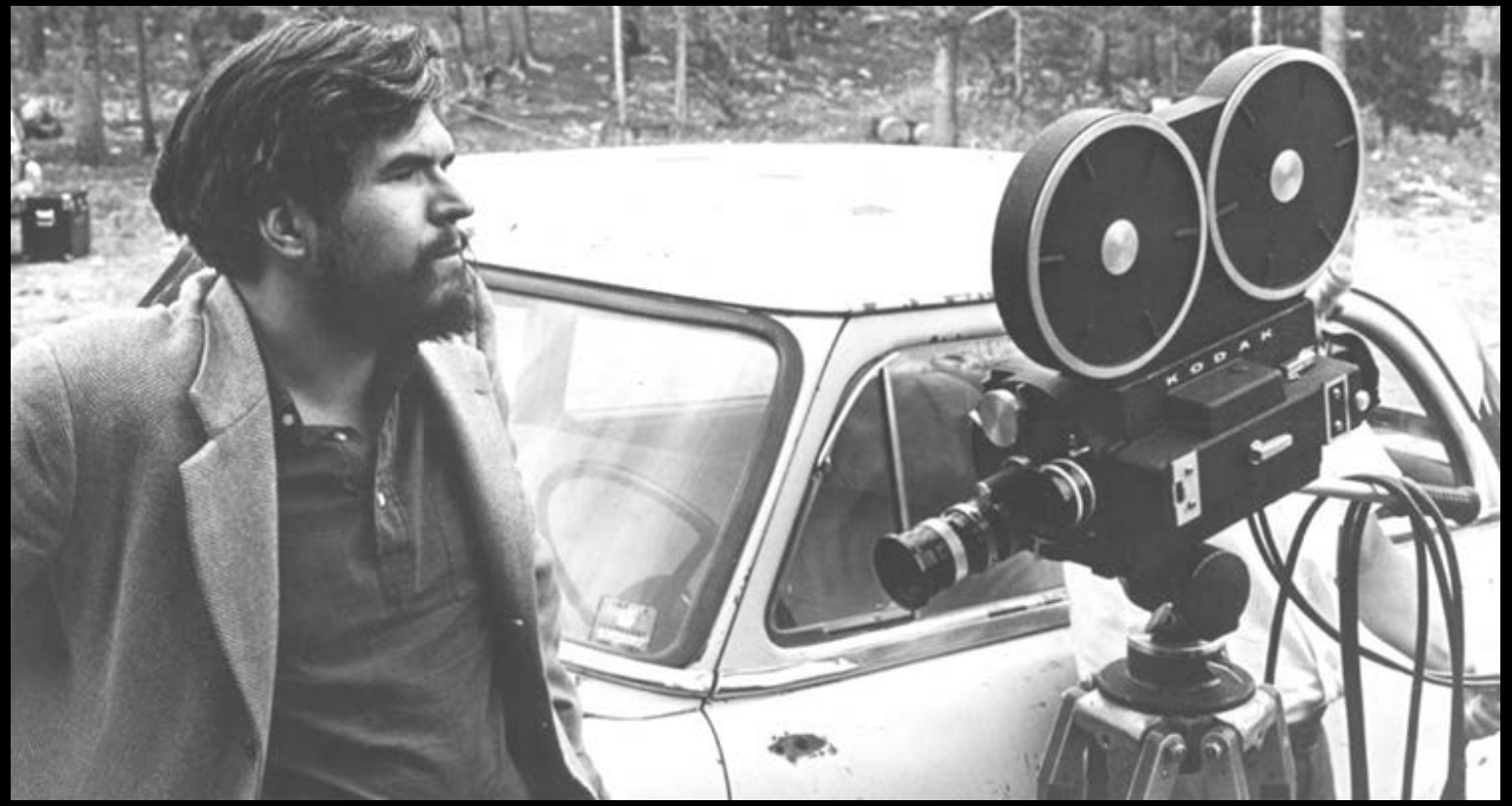
05408

Morton Feldman
[1926-1987]

- Pioneer of indeterminate music
- Indeterminacy is a composing approach in which some aspects of a musical work are left open to chance or to the interpreter's free choice.
- Born in New York
- With John Cage's encouragement, Feldman began to write pieces that had no relation to compositional systems of the past, such as traditional harmony or the serialtechnique. H
- He experimented with nonstandard systems of musical notation, often using grids in his scores, and specifying how many notes should be played at a certain time but not which ones.
- Feldman's experiments with chance in turn inspired Cage to write pieces like Music of Changes, where the notes to be played are determined by consulting the I Ching.
- Morton Feldman, De Kooning (1963)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5vf9BI0Fhw

Stan Brakhage
[1933-2003]



- American non-narrative/experimental filmmaker
- Born in Kansas City, Missouri
- Roommate of James Tenney in 1950s in NYC
- Dropped out of Dartmouth College to pursue filmmaking; then re-enrolled at the San Francisco Art Institute where he felt more comfortable
- In his filmmaking, he explored handheld camera work, painting directly on celluloid, fast cutting, in-camera editing, scratching on film, collage film, and the use of multiple exposures.

Stan Brakhage, Cat's Cradle (1959)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cur2P5Ym3Yw

Stan Brakhage, Mothlight (1963)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaGh0D2NXCA

Tenney's specific interest in noise belonged to the twentieth-century avant-garde tendency to correlate noise with timbre.

-- Kahn, 138

WHAT IS TIMBRE?

timbre

- *noun*
- the character or quality of a musical sound or voice as distinct from its pitch and intensity.
- also known as **tone** color or tone quality
- Timbre distinguishes different types of sound production, such as choir voices and musical instruments, such as string instruments, wind instruments, and percussion instruments. It also enables listeners to distinguish different instruments in the same category (e.g. an oboe and a clarinet).

Tenney's specific interest in noise belonged to the twentieth-century avant-garde tendency to correlate noise with timbre. At the inception of the historical discussion on noise, the Italian Futurist Luigi Russolo's proposal (sic), in his *Art of Noises Manifesto* (1913), to incorporate hitherto nonmusical sounds into music became in reality a program for extending the scope of timbre. Tenney concentrated on timbre by bringing to bear a scientific approach that included substantive readings and research into acoustics (including the exceedingly complex acoustics of bells) and psychoacoustics, and saw the computer as a dynamic instrument for musically realizing what he called "attentive listening."

-- Kahn, 138

attentive listening

negative dialectic
(Theodor Adorno)

Arnold Schoenberg
(1874-1951)

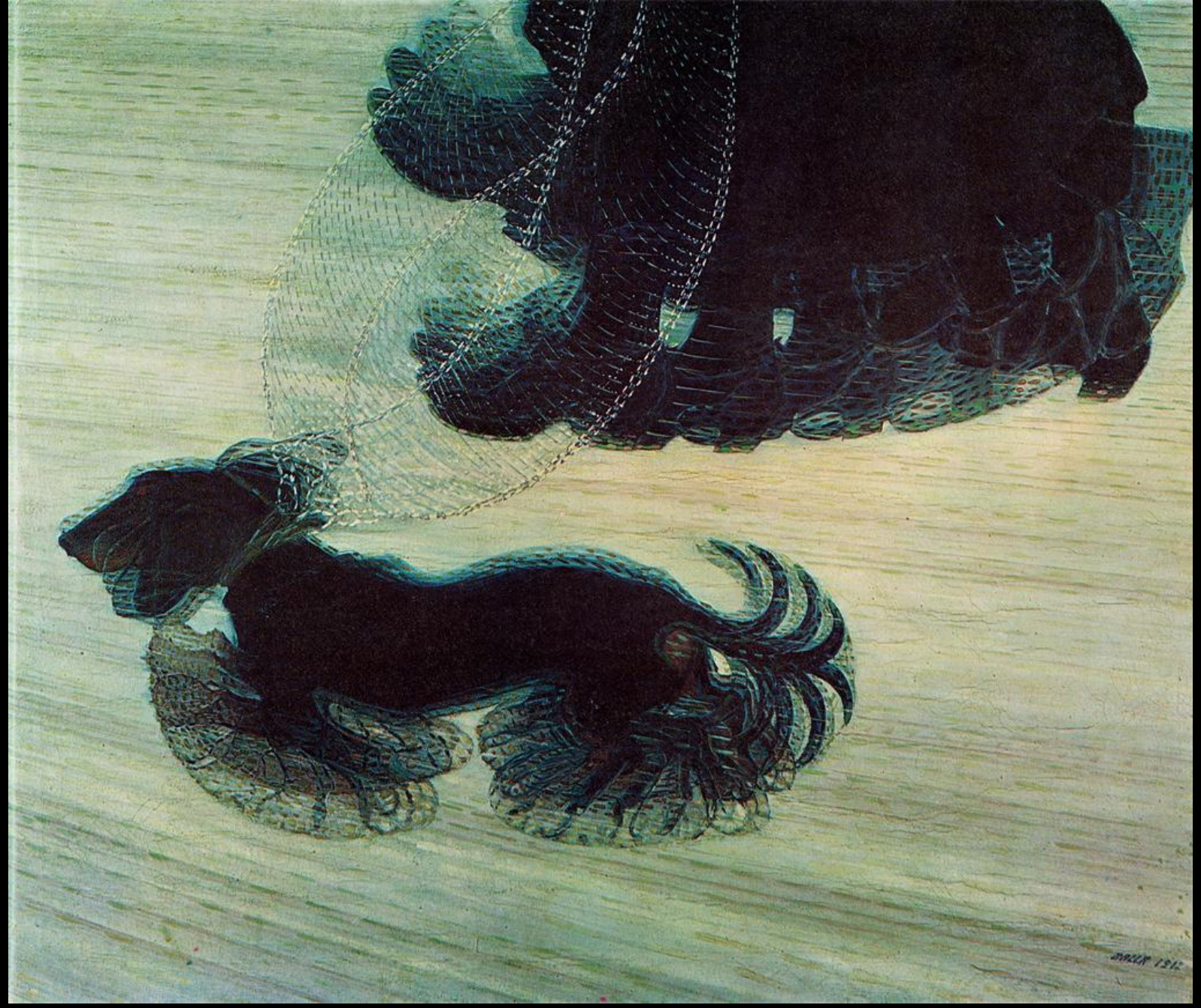
- Arnold Schoenberg, Piano Concerto, Op. 42 (1942) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEY9lmCZbIc
- Twelve-tone technique/Twelve-tone row (serialism)
- The technique is a means of ensuring that all 12 notes of the chromatic scale are sounded as often as one another in a piece of music while preventing the emphasis of any one note through the use of tone rows, orderings of the 12 pitch classes.
- All 12 notes are thus given more or less equal importance, and the music avoids being in a key.

The Futurist Manifesto, F. T. Marinetti, 1909

1. We want to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and rashness.
2. The essential elements of our poetry will be courage, audacity and revolt.
3. Literature has up to now magnified pensive immobility, ecstasy and slumber. We want to exalt movements of aggression, feverish sleeplessness, the double march, the perilous leap, the slap and the blow with the fist.
4. We declare that the splendor of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing automobile with its bonnet adorned with great tubes like serpents with explosive breath ... a roaring motor car which seems to run on machine-gun fire, is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace.
5. We want to sing the man at the wheel, the ideal axis of which crosses the earth, itself hurled along its orbit.
6. The poet must spend himself with warmth, glamour and prodigality to increase the enthusiastic fervor of the primordial elements.
7. Beauty exists only in struggle. There is no masterpiece that has not an aggressive character. Poetry must be a violent assault on the forces of the unknown, to force them to bow before man.
8. We are on the extreme promontory of the centuries! What is the use of looking behind at the moment when we must open the mysterious shutters of the impossible? Time and Space died yesterday. We are already living in the absolute, since we have already created eternal, omnipresent speed.
9. We want to glorify war — the only cure for the world — militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of the anarchists, the beautiful ideas which kill, and contempt for woman.
10. We want to demolish museums and libraries, fight morality, feminism and all opportunist and utilitarian cowardice.
11. We will sing of the great crowds agitated by work, pleasure and revolt; the multi-colored and polyphonic surf of revolutions in modern capitals: the nocturnal vibration of the arsenals and the workshops beneath their violent electric moons: the gluttonous railway stations devouring smoking serpents; factories suspended from the clouds by the thread of their smoke; bridges with the leap of gymnasts flung across the diabolic cutlery of sunny rivers: adventurous steamers sniffing the horizon; great-breasted locomotives, puffing on the rails like enormous steel horses with long tubes for bridle, and the gliding flight of aeroplanes whose propeller sounds like the flapping of a flag and the applause of enthusiastic crowds.

LINES OF FORCE

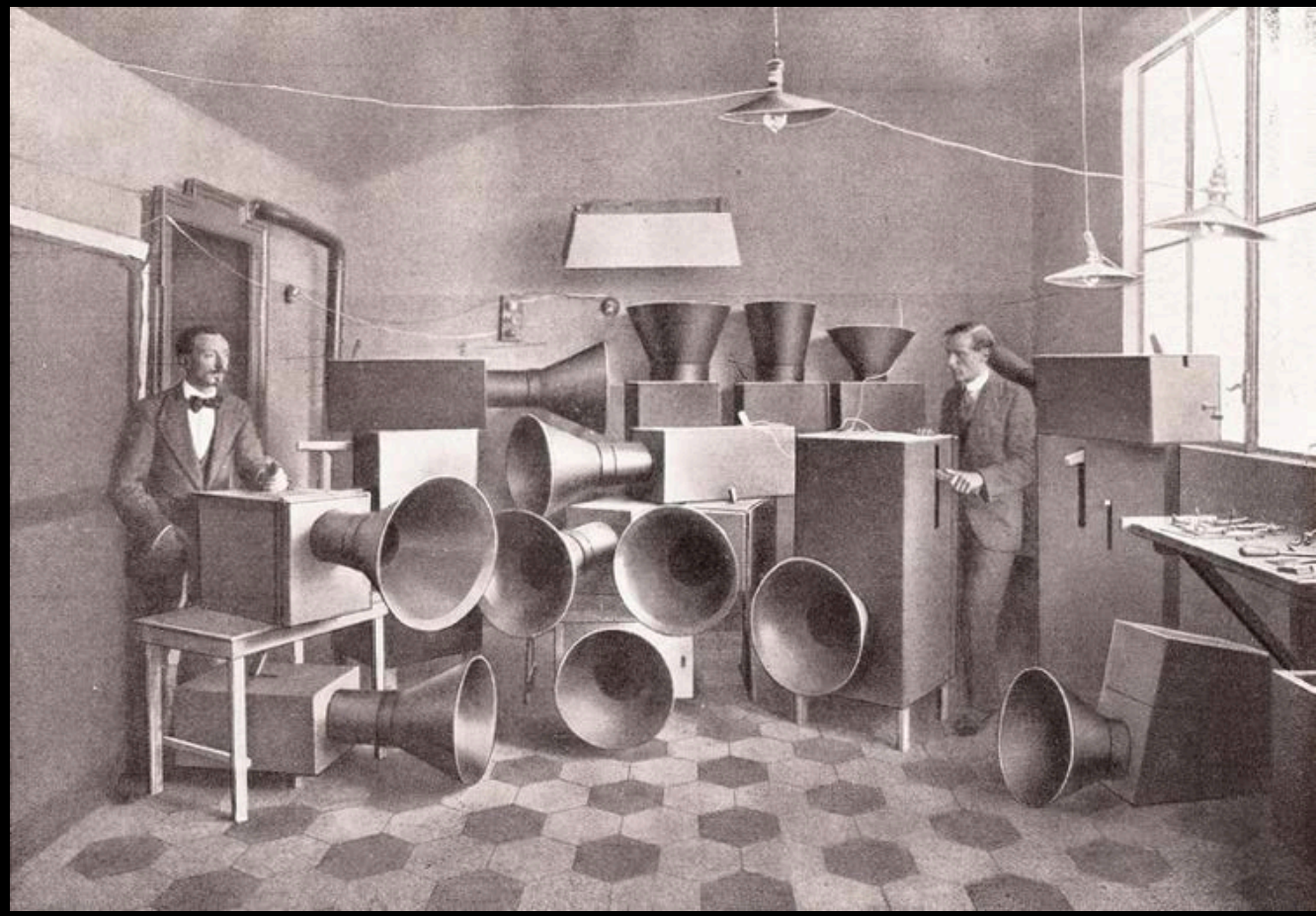
Umberto Boccioni, The City Rises, 1910-11



Giacomo Balla, Dynamism of Dog on a Leash, 1912

The *Art of Noises* by Luigi Russolo (1913)
Russolo classified "noise-sound" into six groups:

- Roars, Thunderings, Explosions, Hissing roars, Bangs, Booms
- Whistling, Hissing, Puffing
- Whispers, Murmurs, Mumbling, Muttering, Gurgling
- Noises obtained by beating on metals, woods, skins, stones, pottery, etc.
- Voices of animals and people, Shouts, Screams, Shrieks, Wails, Hoots, Howls, Death rattles, Sobs
- Screeching, Creaking, Rustling, Buzzing, Crackling, Scraping



Luigi Russolo and Ugo Piatti with noise machines, Milan, 1913.

James Tenney (1934-2006)

Carolee Schneemann with the composer James Tenney

Carolee Schneemann (1939-)

Yet there was something different about Tenney. By day, he was in New Jersey, working with engineers in pristine environments home to room-sized computers humming away obediently under banks of fluorescent lights; at night, he could be found in Manhattan, say, rolling around half-naked with other performers on the floor in wet paint, paper scraps, chunks of meat, and plucked chickens in Carolee Schneemannn's performance Meat Joy. This was a giddy time of experimental arts, Fluxus, Happenings, intermedia art, Judson Dance Theater, experimental cinema, music, poetry, and much more, and Tenney was at the very heart of the scene. He was married to Schneemannn and participated in her performances and films, and he was a good friend of the filmmaker Stan Brakhage, whom he had known since high school, and he had provided sound and appeared in Brakhage's films.

-- Douglas Kahn (132-133)

The painter, performance artist and filmmaker Carolee Schneemann met composer James Tenney in New York in 1955 and they maintained contact with one another until his death in 2006. Their relationship was especially intense in the mid-’60s, during which time they collaborated in a number of ways; in *Fuses* their lovemaking formed the core of a film that remains an enduring expression of both art and love; Tenney created the sound collages for *Viet Flakes*, 1965, and *Snows*, 1970, and performed in the New York production of *Meat Joy*, 1964, Schneemann’s orgiastic celebration of the expressive body.

There is a picture of the two of you taken in 1955. You're both adorable but you look like kids.

Schneemann: We absolutely were kids. We met through a set of magic coincidences. He was on a fellowship and he lived in a tiny little closet of a room for graduate students. He was going down to the Thalia Theater to see a movie and on the bus he suddenly hallucinated this girl's face, huge, like the Cheshire cat, and he missed his stop. So instead he came to a concert on 57th Street at Judson Hall. I had gone there to hear Charles Ives and Bach; I wanted so much to hear the Bach and I didn't know anything about Ives. It was the 19th of May, a mystical day for me, and I knew I had to do something special. I was on leave from Bard and I had a year to live in the city. So suddenly this skinny guy who I had seen three times in a little café near Columbia came in. I had seen him eating out of a bowl and he did it with the intensity of a tiger. He had a different energy that I would come to understand was western—he was born in New Mexico, grew up in Colorado—and his presence was unique. He walked in late for the concert, which I thought was odd, because he was very shy. He sat down and then just as the pianist was coming in, he stood up, changed to the aisle, and ended up sitting opposite to me. Then at intermission I had to figure out how we could meet. Finally I went over and said, "I've seen you at the café" and he said, "Yes, I remember you," and I said, "I'm a painting student at Columbia" and he said, "I'm a musician at Julliard," and then I said something like, "That's so interesting, I'm thinking of painting as space becoming time," and he said, "And I'm doing my music so that time is becoming space." We were half joking but that's what we told one another. We laid out that affinity immediately.

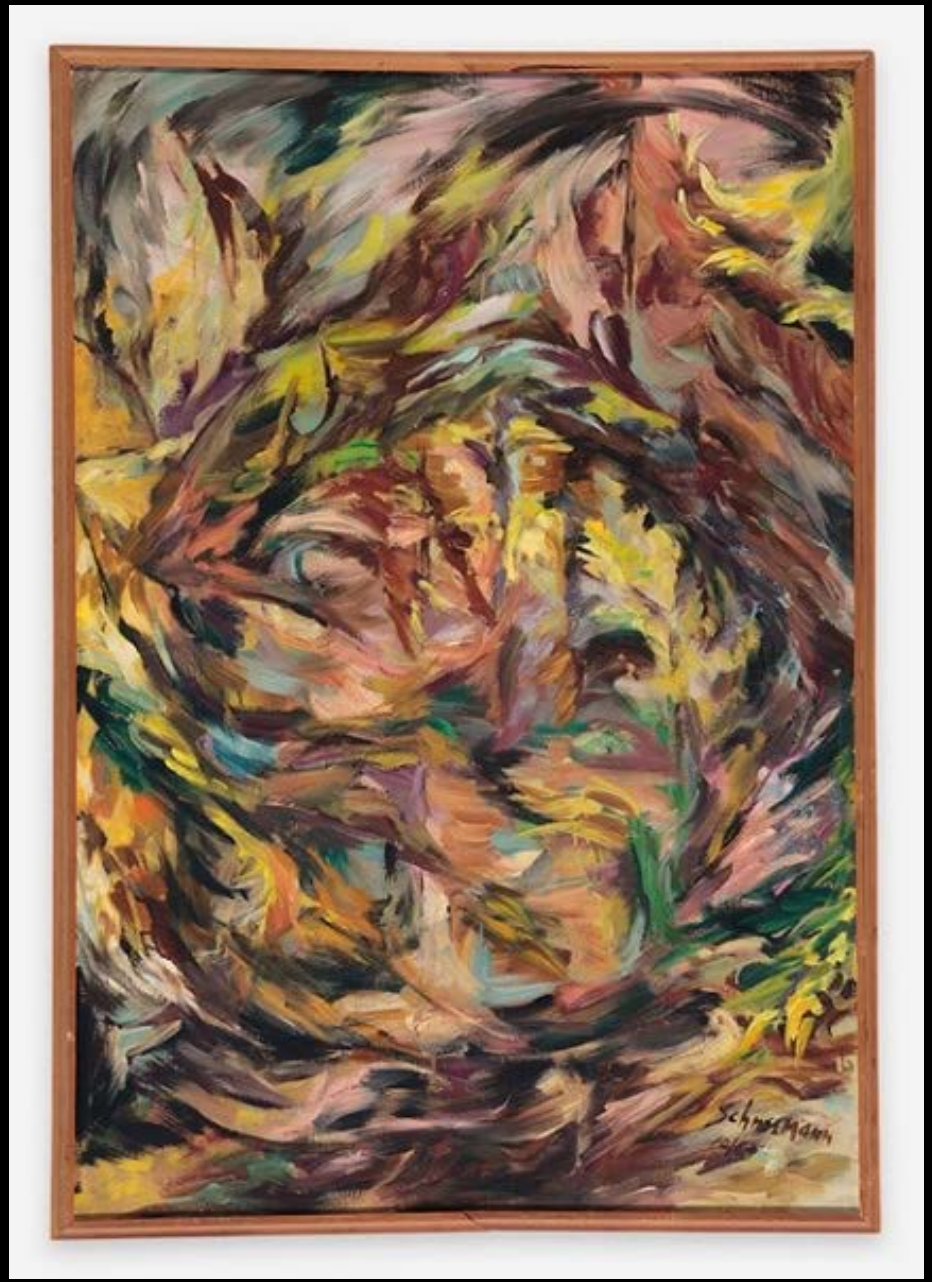
Carolee Schneemann (1939-)

Carolee Schneemann, Infinity kisses (1981-1987)

“Mad pantheist”

- Her work is primarily characterized by research into visual traditions, taboos, and the body of the individual in relation to social bodies.
- When she was a child, her friends described her as "a mad pantheist," due to her relationship with, and respect for, nature.
- From childhood Schneemannn had an affinity for nature
- Started her career as a teenager painting
- Schneemannnn was awarded a full scholarship to New York's Bard College
- She was the first woman from her family to attend college, but her father discouraged her from an art education.
- While at Bard, Schneemannnn began to realize the differences between male and female perceptions of each other's bodies while serving as a nude model for her boyfriend's portraits and while painting nude self-portraits.
- While still in college, Schneemann adopted a feminist perspective, citing the hierarchal ideals of the 1950s American gallery system, the negative attitudes of male teachers, and the erasure of women's art history as influences. She incorporates feminist ideas into her art as well as her writing, teaching and lecturing, constantly reaffirming her position as a pivotal figure in the feminist movement.
- Schneemann's explorations in the early 1960s opened performance art to include inquiries about sensuality and sexuality. Prior to her works, the majority of performance art was formal experimentation, rather than a specific investigation into the taboo realm of the liberating possibilities of the sexual female body.
- By using her body as her primary medium, Schneemann emphasized women's agency, situating women as both the creator and an active part of the creation itself, giving the female form in art a subjectivity it previously lacked. She firmly established her practice in opposition to the traditional representation of women merely as nude objects.
- While on leave from Bard and on a separate scholarship to Columbia University, she met musician James Tenney, who was attending The Julliard school – in 1955
- Her first experience with experimental film was through Stan Brakhage, her and Tenney's friend.
- After graduating from Bard, Schneemannnn attended the University of Iliinois for an MFA

Carolee Schneemann, Self-portrait, 1955



Carolee Schneemann, Landscape, 1959

Above Right: Carolee Schneemann, Personae: JT and the 3 Kitch, 1958

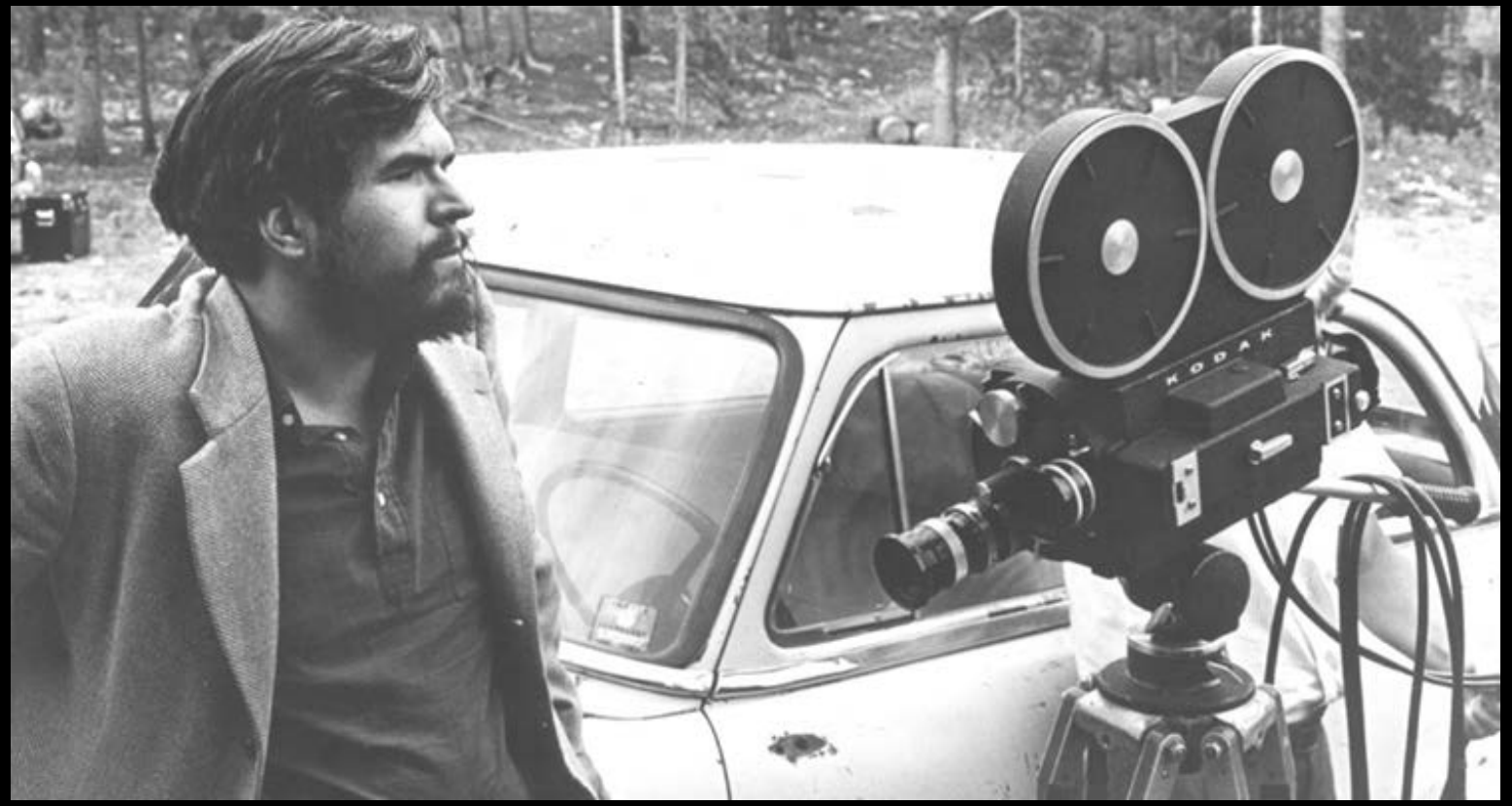
In 1958 you painted a rather remarkable portrait of Tenney that looks like Oskar Kokoschka meets Henri Matisse. Kitch, the cat, is in the portrait as is an elegant coffee pot. What were you trying to capture in that portrait?

Schneemann: I simply wanted to have Jim's presence in a painting. It was full of the dailyness, the intimacy and the constancy of our work. I was listening to Ives, chords, fragments, broken phrases over and over again and that was very important for how I was thinking about pictorial space. I wanted to increase fracture, I didn't know quite how that would work, but I knew there was something incremental in collage and in the breaking of form. As an 11-year-old kid I had wandered into a classroom in the basement of the Philadelphia Museum of Art where there were grown-ups painting still life. The teacher let me come in and he took somebody's lunch bag and tore it up into hundreds of tiny pieces and dropped them on the floor in front of us. Then he asked the grown-ups, "Why have I torn up this paper bag and what do you see?" No one moved a muscle, so I said, "Is it because of the rhythm between the pieces?" and the teacher was thrilled and said, "Yes, it's Gestalt." So I learned a big German word and a concept that would always be influential. In *Meta (+) Hodos*, Tenney wrote a very intense and cohesive analytic essay on Gestalt. That was how we wove through each other's sensibilities.

Above Right: Carolee Schneemann, Personae: JT and the 3 Kitch, 1958

Right: Carolee Schneemann, Jane Brakhage, c. 1959

Stan Brakhage
[1933-2003]



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Stan Brakhage, Mothlight (1963)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaGh0D2NXCA

Carolee Schneemann, *Eye Body: 36 Transformative Actions* 1963, Paint, glue, fur, feathers, garden snakes, glass, plastic with the studio installation "Big Boards". Photographs by Icelandic artist Erró, on 35 mm black and white film.

I wanted my actual body to be combined with the work as an integral material-- a further dimension of the construction... I am both image maker and image. The body may remain erotic, sexual, desired, desiring, but it is as well votive: marked, written over in a text of stroke and gesture discovered by my creative female will.

-- Carolee Schneemann

Embodiment

Polymorphous Perversity

Empowerment and agency based on sexuality and gender on the cusp of identity politics…

Polymorphous Perversity

The ability to find erotic pleasure out of any part of the body.

Sigmund Freud theorized that some are born with unfocused pleasure / libidinal drives, deriving pleasure from any part of the body. The objects and modes of pleasurable satisfaction are multifarious, directed at every object that might provide pleasure. Polymorphous perverse sexuality continues from infancy through about age five, progressing through three distinct developmental stages: the oral stage, anal stage, and genital / phallic stage.

Freud taught that during this stage of undifferentiated impulse for pleasure, incestuous and bisexual urges are normal. Lacking knowledge that certain modes of gratification are forbidden, the polymorphously perverse child seeks gratification wherever it occurs. In the earliest phase, the oral phase, the child forms a libidinal bond with the mother via the inherent pleasure gained from suckling at the breast.

For Freud, "perversion" is a non-judgmental term. He used it to designate behavior outside the socially acceptable norms of his era.

Carolee Schneemann, Fuses, 1965
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPXVjVL7C3A

A silent film of collaged and painted sequences of lovemaking between Schneemannnn and her then partner, composer James Tenney; observed by the cat, Kitch.

I wanted to see if the experience of what I saw would have any correspondence to what I felt-- the intimacy of the lovemaking... And I wanted to put into that materiality of film the energies of the body, so that the film itself dissolves and recombines and is transparent and dense-- as one feels during lovemaking... It is different from any pornographic work that you've ever seen-- that's why people are still looking at it! And there's no objectification or fetishization of the woman.

– Carolee Schneemann

Carolee Schneemann, Still from Viet Flakes, 1965-66
http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x59m4ac
Viet Flakes was composed from an obsessive collection of Vietnam atrocity images, compiled over five years, from foreign magazines and newspapers. Schneemannnn uses the 8mm camera to "travel" within the photographs, producing a volatile animation. Broken rhythms and visual fractures are heightened by a sound collage by James Tenney, which features Vietnamese religious chants and secular songs, fragments of Bach, and '60s pop hits. "One of the most effective indictments of the Vietnam War ever made". — Robert Enright, *Border Crossings*.

https://www.eai.org/titles/viet-flakes

James Tenney, Viet Flakes, 1966
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MIldfuXwdZY

Carolee Schneemann,
Meat Joy, 1964

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiVQFSG58Hs

Carolee Schneemann, Up to and Including Her Limits, 1973–76

The installation *Up to and Including Her Limits* (1971-1976) has its origin in the performance *Tracking* (1973), executed by the artist in an abandoned rail car, using the same method of drawing on a piece of paper placed on the floor while hanging from a rope and harness. The current version shows the artist herself in action, on a group of video monitors, since for Schneemann the body in movement is central to this work. The drawings that make up the setting are only a by-product and represent the image left behind by the performance, as opposed to the paintings resulting from *Action Painting*, considered to be independent works of art. The installation is thus a critique of abstract expressionism, a pictorial movement associated with the male spirit and, to that end, she uses the nude female body as an active instrument inseparable from her condition as an artist and with which she also challenges the dominant structures of visual desire.

https://www.khanacademy.org/partner-content/moma/moma-artist-interviews/v/schneemann-on-line

In the 1975 performance *Interior Scroll*, she stood naked on a table and painted her naked body with mud. She struck several poses while reading aloud from a paper scroll as she slowly extracted it from her vagina.

I thought of the vagina in many ways– physically, conceptually: as a sculptural form, an architectural referent, the sources of sacred knowledge, ecstasy, birth passage, transformation. I saw the vagina enlivened by its passage from the visible to the invisible, a spiraled coil ringed with the shape of desire and generative mysteries, attributes of both female and male sexual power.
-- Carolee Schneemannnn

Carolee Schneemann, Interior Scroll, 1975

Carolee Schneemann, Infinity Kisses II (Vesper), 1990–1988

The roughly nine-minute film brings together the 140 photographs that Schneemann shot for her *Infinity Kises Series* (1981–98), which captures her cat Vesper's ritual of giving her a kiss every morning. But soft little kitty kisses these are not; they are "deep kisses," in which the cat full-on plants its lips on Schneemann's often open mouth

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_m4wuJH4M8I

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