

# WHITNEY

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## Press Release

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### ***CHRISTIAN MARCLAY: FESTIVAL TO BE PRESENTED AT THE WHITNEY***

*Featuring live performances by Butch Morris, Zeena Parkins, Marina Rosenfeld, Elliott Sharp, Joan LaBarbara, Anthony Coleman, Okkyung Lee, Bill Frisell, Lee Ranaldo, Mary Halvorson, David Moss, o.blaat/Keiko Uenishi, Cyro Baptista, John Zorn and many others*

*July 1 - September 26, 2010*



Christian Marclay, *Graffiti Composition*, 1996–2002. Portfolio of 150 digital prints. Printed by Muse X Editions, Los Angeles, published by Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. Courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. © Christian Marclay

**NEW YORK, May 3, 2010** – Artist/composer Christian Marclay (b. 1955), known for the distinctive fusion of sound and image in his art, is the subject of a major exhibition this summer at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Activated by daily musical performances, the show explores Marclay’s approach to the world around him with a

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particular focus on his “graphic scores.” Approximately fifty renowned instrumentalists and vocalists, some of whom have collaborated regularly with the artist over the course of the past three decades, are scheduled to interpret the scores exhibited, enabling museum audiences to experience Marclay’s work brought to life. The exhibition, curated by David Kiehl, the Whitney’s curator of prints and special collections, with Limor Tomer, adjunct curator of performing arts, will be on view from July 1 through September 26, 2010, in the Whitney’s fourth-floor Emily Fisher Landau Galleries.

Celebrated as a pioneer of turntablism, Marclay transforms sound and music into visual and physical forms; in the past, his work has included performance, photography, collages, sculpture, large-scale installations, and video. At the Whitney, a dozen scores by Marclay, including the premiere of a new scroll sixty feet in length designed to be interpreted by vocalists, and three scores conceived as projections, will be continually on view and performed on a regular basis. Visitors will be encouraged to make their own marks and compositions on a wall-sized chalkboard with musical staff lines, thereby creating a collective musical score which will be seen and heard throughout the run of the show.

For the past fifteen years, Marclay has created scores from sources as diverse as found objects, clothing, record covers, boxes, photographs, works on paper, collage, and video projections. All of these musical notations will be interpreted in innovative ways by musicians. Some examples of Marclay’s scores include: *Ephemera* (2009), a portfolio of photographed objects such as restaurant bills, flyers, book covers, and packaging for household articles, all replete with ready-made musical notations; *Graffiti Composition* (1996-2002), a project Marclay completed in Berlin in which blank sheet music was pasted up throughout the city to be scored, marked up, graffiti-tagged, or torn—and now a score for interpretation by musicians; *Prêt-à-Porter* (2010), a piece in which Marclay’s collection of clothing and accessories containing musical notations is worn by models while musicians interpret the notes on the garments; and *Manga Scroll* (2010), a brand new vocal score based on onomatopoeias from Japanese cartoons, which will receive its world premiere at the Whitney.

The exhibition will also include objects that are to be played by musicians, such as *Wind Up Guitar* (1994), a custom-made guitar fitted with twelve music boxes, and *Sixty-four Bells and a Bow* (2009), which involves the playing of glass, ceramic, and metal bells collected by the artist.

As Marclay himself has noted, “For the last decade I have been photographing musical notations that I find in everyday life. Musical symbols are often used as decoration or as trade emblems to signify music. They adorn the awning of a record store, the wall of a club, or the door handle of an instrument shop, but they can also be found in non-musical contexts such as fashion and advertising. These notations were created not by composers but rather by graphic designers, illustrators, and decorators, so they often contain errors, lack basic information, or are otherwise incomplete. They do not need to be correct because they are symbols; they stand for the essence of music, not specific notes. Their unconventionality also reminds me of the graphic scores of experimental music; they are their kitschy cousins. One can also use them as charts to play music. I hope these images will reveal unexpected sounds, rhythms, and even melodies.”

The Whitney is planning multiple scheduled performances daily, between July 1 and September 26, during regular museum hours (Wednesdays through Sundays), as well as special evening events on pay-what-you-wish Friday nights. Performances will take place in the main gallery of the exhibition and will range from solos to large ensembles. Participating musicians comprise a Who’s Who of the progressive and experimental music scene of the past thirty years and most have a long history of collaborating with Marclay. The performers include Butch Morris, a composer, cornetist, and principle innovator of "conduction," a type of structured improvisation in which Morris directs and conducts an improvising ensemble with a series of gestures; Zeena Parkins, a multi-instrumentalist composer, improviser, and well-known pioneer of the electric harp; Marina Rosenfeld, turntablist, sound artist, composer, and creator of her own custom "dub plates"; and Elliott Sharp, experimental guitarist, composer, and improviser, who is central to the avant-garde music scene in New York. Other performers include Anthony Coleman (piano), Okkyung Lee (cello/electronics), John Zorn (saxophone), Joan LaBarbara (voice), Mary Halvorson (guitar), David Moss (voice), o.blaat/Keiko Uenishi

(electronics), Bill Frisell (guitar), Cyro Baptista (percussion), and Lee Ranaldo (guitar), among some fifty participating musicians. (Updates will be posted on whitney.org.)

### **A Descriptive Sampling of Some of Marclay's Scores**

#### ***Graffiti Composition, 1996-2002***

*(Portfolio of 150 digital prints, Sheet (each): 13 x 8 7/16" (33 x 21.5 cm). Publisher: Paula Cooper Gallery, New York. Edition: 25.)*

In 1996 Marclay was commissioned by the *Akademie der Künste* in Berlin to create a work for the summer festival *Sonambiente: Festival für Hören und Sehen*. Five thousand posters were printed as blank sheet music, with the traditional staff lines, and fly-posted all over the city during the month long festival. Many anonymous people left marks on the posters, scribbled graffiti, tore them up, or used them as background for their own flyers, and very often left musical notations. These altered posters were photographed, and the final score consists of a portfolio of 150 images, unbound so as not to impose an order. Musicians are free to select any number of them and use them in performance or use them as inspiration to write their own music.

#### ***The Bell and the Glass, 2003***

*(Two synchronized video projection loops, color and black & white, with sound.)*

This is Marclay's first endeavor to guide musicians through the use of video. This projected score was inspired by two of Philadelphia's most famous icons, The Liberty Bell and Marcel Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)*. These two objects never had anything to do with one another, until Marclay found surprising and often humorous affinities between this unlikely pair, and not just the fact that they are both cracked and both situated in Philadelphia.

*The Bell and the Glass* was originally presented as an installation with several components: a looped video projection; three traditionally written scores based on Duchamp's voice; an installation of objects culled from the Philadelphia Museum of Art and other local institutions, as well as from the artist's own collection. This work was a joint commission by the Relâche Ensemble and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

The double-screen projection mimics the structure of the Large Glass, with the "Bride's Domain" in the upper half and the "Bachelors' Domain" in the lower half. The video juxtaposes footage of the Liberty Bell and the *Large Glass* with found film footage, such as Duchamp discussing the cracks in his *Glass*, clips from Hollywood movies, and new footage shot by the artist in Philadelphia. Musicians are freely prompted by the two screens, but come together in unison to accompany Marcel Duchamp's voice, which has been transcribed into notes following the modulation of his speech.

#### ***Screen Play, 2005***

*(Single screen video projection, black & white, with color, silent.)*

*Screen Play* is a projected musical score of carefully selected black-and-white images overlaid with brightly colored computer animated graphics reminiscent of the dots and

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lines of traditional music notation. *“I provide a framework in which live music can develop. Moving images and graphics give musicians visual cues suggesting emotion, energy, rhythm, pitch, volume, and duration. I believe in the power of images to evoke sound.”* While no instrumentation is specified, it only suggests to be performed by “a small ensemble.” *Screen Play* initiates performances while leaving ample room for interpretation and improvisation. *Screen Play* was made possible with support from Eyebeam’s Moving Image Commission.

***Shuffle, 2007***

*(75 four-color images on unbound cards enclosed in a box, each card: 6.635" x 4.75". Photographs and text by Christian Marclay. Published by Aperture Foundation.)*

Marclay has extensively photographed the appearance of musical notation in everyday life, on shop awnings, chocolate tins, T-shirts, underwear, and in other unexpected places. The work reveals Marclay to be an obsessive photographic note-taker with a witty flair for uncovering music hidden in the urban landscape. All around us, it seems, are musical notes just waiting to be discovered and played.

*“This deck of cards can be used as a musical score.  
Shuffle the deck and draw your cards.  
Create a sequence using as many or as few of the cards as you wish.  
Play alone or with others.  
Invent your own rules.  
Sounds may be generated or simply imagined.”* CM

***Ephemera, 2009***

*(Published by mfc-Michèle Didier, Brussels, 2009. Edition of 100 in slipcase.)*

Marclay continues to amass an eclectic collection of decorative musical notations found in newspaper advertisements, magazine illustrations, restaurant menus, candy wrappers, and other cheap throwaways. These fragments of graphic music were organized, photographed, and reproduced as a suite of twenty-eight color folios. These unbound prints now constitute a score that can be organized and interpreted by any instrument or group of instruments.

**About the Artist**

With his exploration into sound and art coupled with a pioneering use of gramophone records and turntables, Marclay has become known for his often visually stunning audio-visual collages. His early work includes a series entitled *Recycled Records* (1980-86), which consisted of fragmented and reassembled vinyl records that became hybrid objects that could be played, replete with abrupt leaps in tone and sound. More recently, *Video Quartet* (2002), a work in the collection of the Whitney, involves a large, four-screen projection featuring hundreds of clips from old Hollywood films, with actors and

musicians making sounds or playing instruments, creating a striking visual montage that evokes pop culture, reuse, and sampling.

Born in California, in 1955, and raised in Switzerland, Marclay now splits his time between New York and London. At the Whitney, Marclay was first featured in the 1991 and 2002 Biennials. He has participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions at museums throughout the world, including Tate Modern, London; UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Kunsthaus, Zurich, as well as many others.

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### About the Whitney

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the leading advocate of 20th- and 21st-century American art. Founded in 1930, the Museum is regarded as the preeminent collection of American art and includes major works and materials from the estate of Edward Hopper, the largest public collection of works by Alexander Calder, as well as significant works by Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Bruce Nauman, Georgia O'Keeffe, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, Kiki Smith, and Andy Warhol, among other artists. With its history of exhibiting the most promising and influential American artists and provoking intense critical and public debate, the Whitney's signature show, the Biennial, has become the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in America today. First housed on West 8th Street, the Whitney relocated in 1954 to West 54th Street and in 1966 inaugurated its present home at 945 Madison Avenue, designed by Marcel Breuer. The Whitney is currently moving ahead with plans to build a second facility, designed by Renzo Piano, located in downtown New York at the entrance to the High Line in the Meatpacking District.

### Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art:

**2010, the Whitney Biennial**

**Collecting Biennials**

**Heat Waves in a Swamp: The Paintings of Charles Burchfield**

**Christian Marclay: Festival**

**Jill Magid: A Reasonable Man in a Box**

**Paul Thek: Diver**

**Modern Life: Edward Hopper and His Time**

**Charles LeDray: workworkworkworkwork**

**Through May 30, 2010**

**Through November 28, 2010**

**June 24–October 17, 2010**

**July 1–September 26, 2010**

**Opens July 1, 2010**

**Oct. 21, 2010-Jan. 9, 2011**

**Opens October 27, 2010**

**Nov. 18, 2010-Feb. 13, 2011**

*The Whitney Museum is located at 945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street, New York City. Museum hours are: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday. General admission: \$18. Full-time students and visitors ages 19–25 and 62 & over: \$12. Visitors 18 & under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission to the Kaufman Astoria Studios Film & Video Gallery only: \$6. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 6–9 p.m. For general information, please call (212) 570-3600 or visit [whitney.org](http://whitney.org).*

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