

Exhibition Guide

1 *Project for the Recycling Plant* 2005

Marclay created this series of works—made from various used electronic goods and discarded urban waste—for an exhibition held at a recycling plant in Tokyo in 2005. For Marclay, who gained inspiration for his early deejay practice when he came across an abandoned record on the street while a student in Boston, garbage is a state that strips an object from its original function down to its raw materials. Here, Marclay documents the recycling process that breaks down the electronic equipment into its separate material components. The audience can see and hear the process on the same devices that are being recycled, as a kind of musical composition generated by chance. Marclay overlays the multiple transformation of these unwanted, discarded objects and gives them new life as visually and sonically stimulating artworks. They are also self-referential explorations of the object itself. In the suite of works on paper titled *Studies for Variations on a Silence*, made in preparation for his *Recycling Plant* project, Marclay moves documents around on a copy machine to distort and print over the previous copies, layering information and forming not a copy, but a unique print.

2 *Mixed Reviews* 1999-

The long string of text that runs along the wall is a compilation of sound descriptions sampled from various reviews of musical performances and recordings, found in newspapers and music magazines, and arranged by Marclay into a composition of verbal music. *Mixed Reviews* is always translated into the language of the country in which it is exhibited, every time the last translation becoming the new original to be translated. The text has been translated many times since its initial English version. Like the children game of telephone it keeps transforming itself. It has been translated once before into Japanese, from the German, for an installation at the Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery in 1999. This exhibit marks the work's second time in Japan, but this time it was translated from Catalan. *Mixed Reviews* illustrates Marclay's interest in incompleteness, with works often undergoing changes over time. Due to his experiences traversing between multiple cultures, Marclay has long been attracted to non-linguistic communication. His interest here lies in the impossibility to translate music into language, as repeated translation takes us further and further away from the original reviewers experience of listening to music.

3 *Fast Music*

1982

Record Players

1984

In 1979, Marclay formed a band called The Bachelors, *Even* (quoting *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* by Marcel Duchamp), which fused together influences ranging from post-punk to Fluxus performance and beyond. Marclay's use of records and turntables as musical instruments attracted attention in a completely different way than the hip-hop scene, which was on the rise at the time. The idea to treat the record as a musical instrument evolved into one of Marclay's earliest video work, a recording of his own performance. In *Fast Music*, he is seen eating a vinyl record using stop motion animation. In *Record Players*, Marclay orchestrates acoustic sounds made with LPs: hitting, bending, breaking. Marclay asks the audience to listen to the record itself, not the sound captured in its grooves. His deejay performance also repositions the record as an object to create live music in the present, not in the past recorded in its grooves.

4 *Record Without a Cover*

1985

This record was released in 1985 with no cover or protective packaging. Thus the accidental damages from shipping and handling became part of the work, as "noise" blending with the original recording. The more one plays the record, the more the record's condition and sound undergo further transformations, accepting its own entropy and bringing together both past and present. In the music industry, "noise" is something that should be eliminated at all points of the production process, from recording to distribution. For Marclay the noise created by the damaged vinyl is a positive element that allows unpredictable outcomes. A reissue of *Record Without a Cover* was released in 1999 by the Japanese label Locus Solus.

5 *Recycled Records*

1979 - 1986

In his work as a turntablist, Marclay used multiple turntables to play records and interact with other improvising musicians. Not only did he physically alter the records, often marking them with markers or stickers to help finding sounds during performances, he also made collages by cutting the vinyl discs, slicing and pasting together record fragments as if they were pieces of a puzzle. When actually played, these collages give rise to unexpected musical compositions. *Recycled Records*, made as a series between 1979 and 1986, contradict the idea of the record as a multiple mass-produced object. Here it is reborn as a hand-made, unique, one-of-a-kind record that never plays the same twice.

6 *Abstract Music*

1989 - 1990

Upon discovering one of the foundational records of avant-garde jazz, Ornette Coleman's 1961 album "Free Jazz," which is illustrated by a Jackson Pollock painting in its cover, he began to consider the relationship between music and abstract painting. In art history, the emergence of abstraction has a great deal to do with artists' longing for the abstract nature of sound, leading them to develop approaches that used sound as an analogy. Because this style of art seemed so effective with translating the essence of sound it became popular for musicians to use abstract paintings by famous and unknown artists alike as album covers. Marclay suggests that the use of abstract art on record covers cover may have been a strategy for record companies to give these pop objects a "high art" status. Marclay paints over the cover's printed text to hide the specificity of the album and musical genre, lending the record a sense of anonymity and abstraction. His precise brushstrokes imitate the painting style of the printed cover. This transformation gives the plastic multiple from pop culture a new life as a unique work of art.

7 *Manga Scroll*

2010

Non-verbal communication is a hallmark of Japanese culture, and it can be seen in the diversity of onomatopoeia in manga, used to express sounds, movements, and even emotions. It's only natural that Marclay, who explores non-verbal acts of translation in his work, would take a particular interest in onomatopoeia. For *Manga Scroll*, Marclay cut out onomatopoeias from manga originally published in Japan and translated into English for U.S. audiences, stringing them into a long sound collage. The work takes on the format of a Japanese picture scroll, originally invented as a narrative system of horizontal illustrations that suggests the passage of time. It also functions as a "graphic score" that can be performed by a vocalist.

8 *Video Quartet*

2002

Video Quartet is one of Marclay's most well-known works. It brings together film clips from movies, old and new, from all around the world. On four screens, a continuous collage centered around hundreds of scenes of actors playing musical instruments is juxtaposed with scenes of screams, noise, and various sounds. In *Video Quartet*, Marclay treats fragments of films, which are in essence visual clips, as sonic material, choreographing them into an entirely new, balanced composition. While the selected clips are a comprehensive index of musical formats such as rock, opera, and musical theater, they are simultaneously excerpts of famous stars and films, making them samples of various cultural histories. As the audience listens and watches, they contemplate and draw connections to their own memories of the featured films.

9 *Imaginary Records*

1988 - 1997

In the early 1980s, Marclay went around various thrift stores and built up a collection of used and unwanted records costing less than a dollar. The cover designs and illustrations of these records inspired him to imagine music that he had never heard before. The *Imaginary Records* series explores the possibilities of such record covers to evoke music. Marclay altered and remixed the record covers, for example, by taking the title from one album and embedding it into a different cover, or erasing the background altogether. In some cases, his alterations allude to the presence of hidden themes like death and rebirth. In the context of Marclay's practice, records are "lifeless recordings" of "live music," making them a medium that invokes a two-way metamorphosis between life and death.

10 *Photograms*

2004

A photogram is a photographic image made by placing light-obstructing objects directly onto the surface of sensitized paper and then exposing it to light. Marclay used records and cassette tapes to allude to their properties as analog recording devices. Some of these photograms feature enlarged record grooves, which Marclay created by placing records directly into a photographic enlarger instead of using film. By enlarging the grooves, Marclay emphasizes the fundamental physicality of records where the needle rubbing the grooves is what creates sound, in contrast with contemporary digital recording. Modernist artists, led by László Moholy-Nagy, proved with their photograms that it was possible to go beyond the arbitrary tools available by making images directly with light. One of Marclay's cameraless work show his hand holding a record. It reveals the manipulating presence of the artist at work touching the physical substance of the medium like a deejay selecting a record.

11 *Shuffle*

2007

To Be Continued

2016

Published as a graphic score, *Shuffle* is a collection of 75 photographs taken by Marclay over the course of his everyday wanderings. These photographs of musical notations found in mundane settings, such as shop awnings, chocolate tins, and T-shirts are evidence of Marclay's keen eye for musical notes waiting to be discovered and played. The box contains these instructions from the artist: "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." *To Be Continued*, a collage from comics, was published as a graphic score in the form of a comic book to be interpreted by an ensemble of guitar, drums, bass, saxophone, and flute.

12 *Body Mix*

1991 - 1992

The sexual politics of commercial packaging in music has always been of interest to Marclay, who has constantly explored the ways that music is symbolized and represented in society. Previously, Marclay presented a collection of record covers from classical music showing conductors with the title "Dictators." In the series *Body Mix*, Marclay creates collages by sewing together two standard images often seen on album covers—the heads and torsos of men such as rock stars and conductors that are presented as dominant, iconic figures, and the lower body parts of anonymous women. This minimal yet striking visual manipulation serves to challenge the portrayal of exaggerated masculinity, creating a chimeral image of different genders. The collision of images also enables us to visually "listen" to two or more records simultaneously.

13 *Chorus II* 1988

Since the late 1980s, Marclay has used found photographs with ties to sound. *Chorus II* consists of a series of black and white close-ups of open mouths, made by rephotographing images found in magazines and placing them in old antique frames. The cropping introduces ambiguity, disguising the original emotions and states of the people involved. Marclay arranges the frames in an oval formation, as if to give shape to a much larger mouth. According to this composition, the array of mouths comes to look like a choir, an ensemble brought together by the artist. "Inaudible music" is one of the main themes that Marclay has explored throughout his career. While the voices of the chorus cannot be heard, we can each imagine what they sound like and the nature of the sounds by comparing the images with memories of our own bodies. Marclay allows photographs, static documents that capture a single moment of the past, to come alive in the present as they create different sounds for every viewer.

14 *Actions* 2013-2014

Actions is a series of work that visualizes the numerous translations, conversions, and changes that take place during the process of artistic production. Marclay samples movements in art history that revolve around engaging with the canvas, bringing together elements of action painting, which sheds a light on the physical motion involved with the act of painting, and pop art, which uses its silkscreen technique to print comics without actually drawing. Marclay performed a "score" that represents the dripping and splashing found in manga onomatopoeia by dropping paint onto a panel laid out on the floor from high above, and throwing paint against a canvas propped up on the wall. After he completed this self-described "performance that only he himself can listen to," he used silkscreen to overlay the results of his endeavors with the original onomatopoeic collages on which they were based. In the process of this translation, which turns cause and effect on its head by shifting back and forth between visual and sonic impetus, liquid objects turn solid, wet ones become dry. Marclay attempts to facilitate a crossing point between a painting with an essence that belongs exclusively to the past, and sounds that exist only in the present.

15 *Screams* 2018-2019

Faces in the act of vocalization, which suggest sounds but cannot be heard, are an important motif for Marclay. To create the woodcut prints series *Screams*, Marclay cut out fragments of screaming faces found in Japanese manga and other comic books and collaged them into newly restructured faces. The small collages were scanned and enlarged, then carved into large plywood sheets. Lastly, these woodblocks were printed using an etching press. In this series, Marclay references Edvard Munch's *The Scream*. He replaces the sound waves conveyed by Munch's array of swirling lines surrounding the figure with the unique texture of the plywood woodgrain. The technique of expressing invisible energy through the use of lines is often seen in Japanese manga, and Marclay's translation/conversion of manga into art is reminiscent of the significant influence of Ukiyo-e, Japanese ink wash painting, on Munch's work. These large images in which multiple reference points coalesce stimulate viewers' memories, thoughts, and feelings.

16 *Ephemera: A Musical Score* 2009

Fragments of Marclay's eclectic collection of newspaper advertisements, magazine illustrations, restaurant menus, candy wrappers, and other disposable printed matter decorated with musical notations were photographed and reproduced as twenty-eight unbound prints. These images constitute a score that can be organized and interpreted using one or more instruments. Marclay sheds a fleeting light on these ephemeral objects—not meant to be retained or preserved, but used for only a short time. These short-lived images remind us of how, before recording equipment existed, music captured the hearts of so many precisely because of the way it vanishes the moment of its birth.

17 *Graffiti Composition*

2002

Investigations

2018

At the 1996 Sonambiente sound art festival in Berlin, Marclay plastered 5,000 blank posters of sheet music throughout the city. Passerby freely added in musical notes, drawings, words, and all sorts of graffiti. Some people wrote on top of previous inscriptions. After some time, Marclay returned to photograph these posters. He selected 150 photographs to turn into a score. Musicians are free to select any number of them for use in performances or as inspiration for writing their own music.

First performed in 2018 at the Huddersfield Music Festival, *Investigations* is a graphic score meant to be interpreted by a large ensemble of pianists. It premiered with 20 pianos. Marclay made the score from a collection of found and cropped images of pianists. The performers are asked to decipher each image, and reconstruct the sound seen in each image, writing the notes on the provided staves, and also reenacting the body gestures.

18 *Screen Play*

2005

Screen Play is a silent video montage compiled from old film footage on which Marclay overlaid simple, colorful digital animations of lines and dots, reminiscent of the staves and notes of a musical score. The work functions as a graphic score to be interpreted by musicians, where the abstract animations provide visual instructions regarding the rhythm and duration. While the majority of Marclay's graphic scores are not shown to the audience during the performance and are musical notations meant only for the performer, *Screen Play* is projected for all to see.

19 *Surround Sounds*

2014 - 2015

Surround Sounds is an immersive, silent video installation that uses onomatopoeia from comics. Marclay animates the maelstrom of words scanned from comic books in a way that suggests their acoustic properties, providing viewers with an experience for the imagination. "SLAM" dashes against the wall, "POP" bursts like a bubble, and "BEEP" blinks persistently, while "KLINK" gently collide against one another. For Marclay, silence reveals the existence of sound via its absence. In this silent space, the audience has to imagine sound through sight, surrounded into a made-up symphony powered by memories.

20 *Faces*

2020

In 2020, as the world struggled through the coronavirus pandemic, Marclay worked in isolation, continuing to produce small collages made from cut and torn fragments from comic books. Although he has long explored screaming faces as a motif that merges sound and image, here the faces are constructed by the dissonance of the various onomatopoeia, or noise itself. "Voice" is not only a concrete sound, but also a metaphor for human will and emotion. The global pandemic served as an opportunity to visualize the anxiety and frustration rampant within the world, as reflected through social movements such as Black Lives Matter or the fight against climate change. Marclay's collages evoke catharsis and empathy for the many voices and emotions that have been hidden away behind masks.

21 *No!*

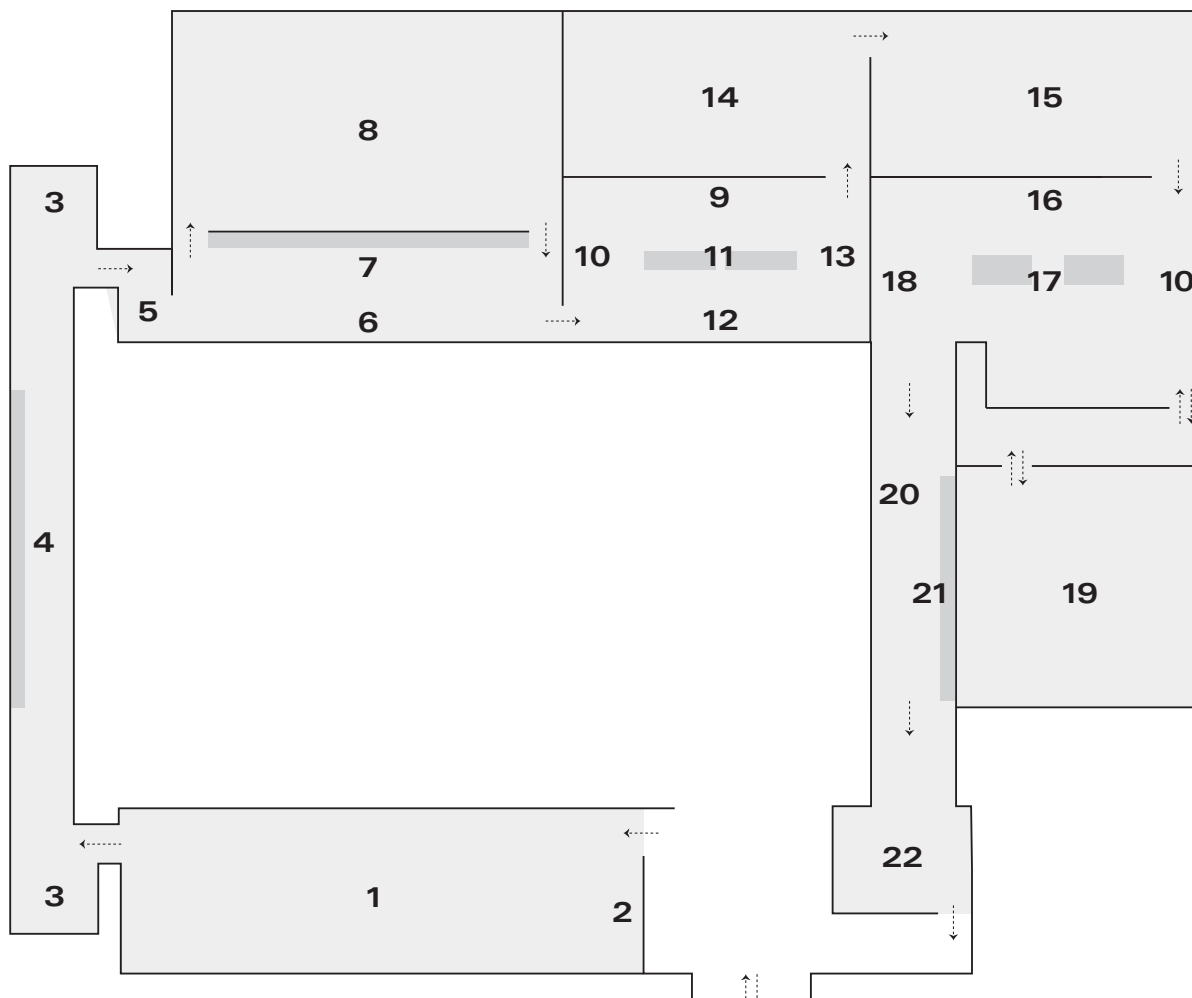
2020

No! is a portfolio of 15 prints made from collages using comic book fragments, and conceived as a graphic score for a solo voice. Unlike *Manga Scroll*, which is a composition consisting of onomatopoeias disconnected from their generative actions, this work shows more of the context in which these fragments were sampled from, thus prompting the performers to present a rendition of the emotional states and body movements illustrated. The resulting work superimposes many meanings, including political and social circumstances, onto the primal human expression of resistance, "no!", while enabling us to experience shared emotions, the fundamental function of music.

22 *Mixed Reviews (Japanese)*

2021

When Helen Keller met with prominent opera singer Enrico Caruso, she placed her fingers upon his lips and throat in order to experience his performance. Ever since producing the work *Keller and Caruso* (2000), which documents this encounter, Marclay has continued to maintain an interest in the expression of sound by those who are deaf and hard of hearing. *Mixed Reviews (Japanese)* is a silent video of a deaf performer using sign language and body language to translate *Mixed Reviews* (1999-2021), the collaged string of text describing music that is presented at the beginning of the exhibition. Marclay states, "There's a tremendous loss between the original music and these silent gestures, but you still get a sense that it's music." Here, the impossibility of translation becomes the key to opening another avenue for shared experience. This exhibition, so full of music, even if you cannot hear it, begins and ends with two different versions of the same work.



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