

OCTOBER 5, 2010
PRESS

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**ALWAYS FRESH
ALWAYS FREE**

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is pleased to present the retrospective *Benjamin Patterson: Born in the State of FLUX/us*.

Benjamin Patterson: Born in the State of FLUX/us
November 6, 2010 – January 23, 2011

Opening Reception
Friday, November 5, 2010
7–10pm

Artists/Scholars Talk with Benjamin Patterson
Saturday, November 6, 2010
2pm

Musiqqa Loft Concert*
Sunday, November 7, 2010
7:30pm
*Special location: Zilkha Hall, The Hobby Center, 800 Bagby Street, Houston

HOUSTON, TX (October 5, 2010)—*Benjamin Patterson: Born in the State of FLUX/us* is a retrospective of the artist's career, which now spans nearly fifty years. The exhibition includes both early and recent work by the artist that range from annotated scores and books to painting and sculpture. Video documentation from performances and audio files of Patterson's music will also be featured. As a founding member of Fluxus, a loose and international



Benjamin Patterson's restaging of Nam June Paik's *One for Violin*, 1962. Benjamin Patterson and Peter Kotik, SEM-Ensemble performing at the Akademie der Bildenden Kunst, Vienna, June 1992. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Wolfgang Traeger.

CAMH



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collective of artists who infused avant-garde practices of the day with humor and anarchic energy, Patterson helped revolutionize the artistic landscape at the advent of the 1960s and usher in an era of new and experimental music. Now in his seventies, Patterson is being discovered by a new generation of artists. *Benjamin Patterson: Born in the State of FLUX/us* marks the artist's first major exhibition, bringing together a multitude of works never before seen in the United States. The exhibition is curated by CAMH Senior Curator Valerie Cassel Oliver.

Trained in classical music instrumentation and composition, Patterson made his most significant contribution to Fluxus with his concept of the "action as composition"—the resulting sound from simple and complex actions. This "spectacle of music" is rooted within the precepts of Dada, a movement that aimed at reinventing art in the midst of the cultural apocalypse of World War I. As with Dada, Fluxus saw the body as material, hence the group's strong emphasis on the practice of performance. Of all the Fluxus artists, it is Patterson who explores the connection between action and music, creating compositions for both the body in action and unconventional playing of his instrument, the contra bass, through ordinary gestures and other actions.

Like many artists who became affiliated with Fluxus, Patterson was trained in traditional classical music, but soon turned to experiments in new music composition. After a brief encounter with John Cage in 1960, Patterson soon became a fixture in the experimental music scene in Germany. In 1961, he co-organized the first International Festival of New Music with George Macuinias. The event which debuted at the Staatmuseum in Wiesbaden, Germany, later became known as the first official Fluxus event. Patterson is one of the few surviving members of that constellation of artists whose works were featured at the festival, including John Cage, Philip Corner, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, George Macuinias, Nam June Paik, David Tudor, Emmett Williams, among others.

Iconic works by Patterson, including *Paper Piece* (1960), *Variations on Double Bass* (1961), and later *Lick Piece* (1964), have all become staples in the Fluxus performance handbook. For the first time, his annotated scores and instructions for performances will be on exhibit. Accompanying these scores is audio and video documentation of the artist's performances over the last five decades.

In addition to scores and performance documentation, *Born in the State of FLUX/us* will feature a series of

unique artist books, puzzle poems, paintings, sculptures, and installation works created by Patterson. More than a hundred works—works that are often provocative, with a tongue-in-cheek humor—are featured in the exhibition along with ephemera from Patterson's "ordinary life." For twenty years, Patterson withdrew from his career as an artist to embrace an "ordinary life." During this period, Patterson was employed as a reference librarian, became an arts administrator, and entrepreneur, launching his own music management company, Ben Patterson Ltd.

After a nearly twenty-year hiatus, Patterson reemerged in the 1980s to resume his prolific career as an artist. In 1989, Patterson returned to Europe to live, creating a vast repository of scores, paintings, and sculptures that have been assembled in the United States for the first time with this exhibition.

Benjamin Patterson: Born in the State of FLUX/us underscores the significant contributions of this artist, whose presence within the dynamic constellation of Fluxus is palpable. The exhibition provides audiences with their first comprehensive look at Patterson's work and explores his contributions to both Fluxus and the larger contemporary art landscape.

PUBLICATION

Benjamin Patterson: Born In the State of FLUX/us is organized by Valerie Cassel Oliver, Senior Curator for the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, and is accompanied by a 250-page illustrated catalogue containing essays by Valerie Cassel Oliver, Bertrand Clavez, Charles Gaines, George E. Lewis, Fred Moten, and Marcia Reed. The catalogue will also feature an anthology of scores created by Patterson with an introduction by Jon Hendricks, a chronology of the artist's life and work, and a double compact disc compilation of his musical performances from 1961-2007 produced by Alga Marghen.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

All events are free and open to the public, and take place at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston unless otherwise noted. For complete listings and current information, please check www.camh.org.

Opening Reception

Benjamin Patterson: Born in the State of FLUX/us
Friday, November 5, 7-10pm

Help us celebrate the work of Benjamin Patterson, a groundbreaking artist who was a founding member of the avant-garde group Fluxus and whose work explores

the experimental and improvisational possibilities in music. Reception with cash bar.

Artists/Scholars Talk: Benjamin Patterson
Saturday, November 6, 2pm

Meet the artist and learn more about his fifty-year career as he leads a gallery walk-through of his exhibition.

Musiq̃a Loft Concert*

Sunday, November 7, 2010, 7:30pm

*Special location: Zilkha Hall, The Hobby Center, 800 Bagby Street, Houston, 77002

Musiq̃a will team up with artist Benjamin Patterson to perform an evening of compositions penned by the artist, including *A Simple Opera*, *Paper Piece*, and a world premiere created especially for the occasion.

Concert: Pamela Z*

Saturday, December 4, 2010, 7pm

*Special location: Houston Museum of African American Culture, 4807 Caroline St., Houston
Internationally renowned musician and performance artist, **Pamela Z** will perform an evening of her own compositions.

This event is co-sponsored by the Houston Museum of African American Culture.

Family Day

Sunday, December 5, 2010, 1-4pm

Join us for family tours and hands-on art activities in conjunction with *Benjamin Patterson: Born in the State of FLUX/us*. At 2pm, **Alchemist Theatre** will present a special interactive performance. All art supplies are provided free of charge.

Artists/Scholars Talk: The Art Guys

Saturday, January 8, 2011, 2pm

The Art Guys (Michael Galbreth and Jack Massing) have been making art and performing collaboratively since they met at the University of Houston in 1982. Conceptual artists who explore social and artistic conventions, The Art Guys will lead a gallery walk-through of *Benjamin Patterson: Born in the State of FLUX/us*.

Concert: Texas Noise and Ambient Environment #1

Thursday, January 13, 2011, 6:30pm

Texas musicians perform works inspired by the exhibition, curated by **Carlos Pozo**. Texas Noise and Ambient Environment is an ongoing series curated by Marcus Cone and Ian Travis that spotlights the works of Ambient, Drone, and Noise based musicians currently located and performing in Texas. Through the use of acoustic instruments, auxiliary percussion,

electronics, and devices, the musicians in the series strive to create sound collages and musical environments challenging the listener's notion of active and passive listening

Artists/Scholars Talk: Valerie Cassel Oliver

Saturday, January 15, 2011, 2pm

Learn more about the exhibition with **Valerie Cassel Oliver**, organizing curator and CAMH Senior Curator.

Concert: Texas Noise and Ambient Environment #2

Thursday, January 20, 2011, 6:30pm

Texas musicians perform works inspired by the exhibition, curated by **Marcus Cone**.

Artists/Scholars Talk: George E. Lewis: *In Search of Benjamin Patterson: An Improvised Journey*

Saturday, January 22, 2011, 2pm

Join us for a talk by **George E. Lewis**, Edwin H. Case Professor of American Music, Columbia University, and catalogue essayist, Department of Music, Columbia University. The recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship in 2002, an Alpert Award in the Arts in 1999, and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Lewis studied composition with Muhal Richard Abrams at the AACM School of Music, and trombone with Dean Hey.

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

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EDUCATION SUPPORT

The Museum receives support for its education programs from: Anonymous, Baker Botts L.L.P., Baker Hughes Foundation, Ruth Dreessen and Thomas Van Laan, Louise D. Jamail, John P. McGovern Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. I.H. Kempner III, Kinder Morgan Foundation, M.D. Anderson Foundation, Marian and Speros Martel Foundation Endowment, Mrs. Louisa Stude Sarofim, and 20K Group, LLC.

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Continental Airlines is the official airline of the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

CAMH MISSION

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is an idea and a place shaped by the present moment. The Museum exemplifies the dynamic relationship between contemporary art and contemporary society through its exhibitions, public and educational programs, and publications. The CAMH provides the physical and intellectual framework essential to the presentation, interpretation, and advancement of contemporary art; it is a vibrant forum for artists and all audiences, and for critical, scholarly, and public discourse.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston is located at 5216 Montrose Boulevard, at the corner of Montrose and Bissonnet, in the heart of Houston's Museum District. Hours are Wednesday 11am-7pm, Thursday 11am-9pm, Friday 11am-7pm, Saturday and Sunday 11am-6pm. Admission is always free. For more information, visit www.camh.org or call (713) 284-8250.