

Ken Friedman: 92 Events

02.06.20 - 16.08.20

The distance from the sentence to your eyes is my sculpture.

Ken Friedman

92 *Events* presents works spanning six decades by American-born Swedish Fluxus artist Ken Friedman. Friedman produces conceptual, action-oriented, language-based works that attach themselves to daily life and challenge the idea of an artwork as a unique object.

This exhibition was conceived by the artist and Copenhagen-based art historian Peter van der Meijden. Adam Art Gallery is the first venue for this project. The exhibition will tour globally over the coming years.

Ken Friedman joined Fluxus in 1966 as the youngest member, invited by George Maciunas, co-founder of the international group. In the ten years before joining Fluxus, Friedman did not call these works 'art'. It was with the encouragement of Maciunas that Friedman began to notate his works as scores.

The earliest scores in this series are dated with the year he conceived the idea. Friedman conceived the first work in 1956, when he was six. It encourages readers to 'Go to a public monument on the first day of spring' to clean it thoroughly without any public announcement. Friedman's playful and idiosyncratic approach has remained remarkably consistent. The most recent work in the series, written in 2019, presciently posits the idea of an exhibition which is closed and locked for the duration of its presentation, with a sign announcing: 'There is a wonderful exhibition inside. You are not allowed to see it'.

For Friedman, the conditions of the exhibition are as important as what we might think of as the work itself. In the spirit of Fluxus, he questions the idea of his art having monetary value. His *Events* exhibitions have been devised to be shown simultaneously in multiple venues across the globe at minimal cost. As Friedman planned it, the scores exist as unlimited copies, provided to the gallery free. The exhibition can consist of up to 92 works from the 1950s to the present, each selected by the artist. Each venue must decide on the number of works it will exhibit, according to the allocated gallery space. Each venue determines whether the works are displayed only as text or also realised in objects, environments, or performances. In this sense, each exhibition is collaborative and site specific. It reflects the workings of the host organisation as much as any decision by the artist. Exhibiting venues with a collection can keep the entire set, adding the works to their collection.

Friedman's humble texts encompass the Fluxus group's anarchic approach to art making. His attraction to type-written events is consistent with a strategy developed by Fluxus artists (shared by later conceptualists) to dematerialise art making. It offers a radically

minimal and irreverent conception of what an art object can be. The works are deliberately playful—absurd even—evidencing the attitude of Fluxus artists to unseat authoritative structures. The works describe a series of actions that break with traditional notions of art, leaving their actual realisation in the hands or minds of the viewer. They also propose events far removed from traditional venues associated with art and performance. Friedman’s work often happens in the world, when paying a bill at a restaurant or navigating public space, without a forewarned audience.

These instructional texts navigate a fine line between sculptural proposition, absurdist action, and concrete poetry. Through these printed propositions, Friedman offers a range of actions that can be completed by anyone, or which invite professionals – such as musicians or performers – to work outside or against the constraints of traditional forms of their chosen medium. Friedman’s scores are live documents. By operating in language as instructions, descriptions and documents, they slip between past, present and future, operating in a suspended state of possibility with endless potential for variation and interpretation. They are a fitting model to envisage how art might function as a mental game: where the imagination can travel even if our bodies can’t.

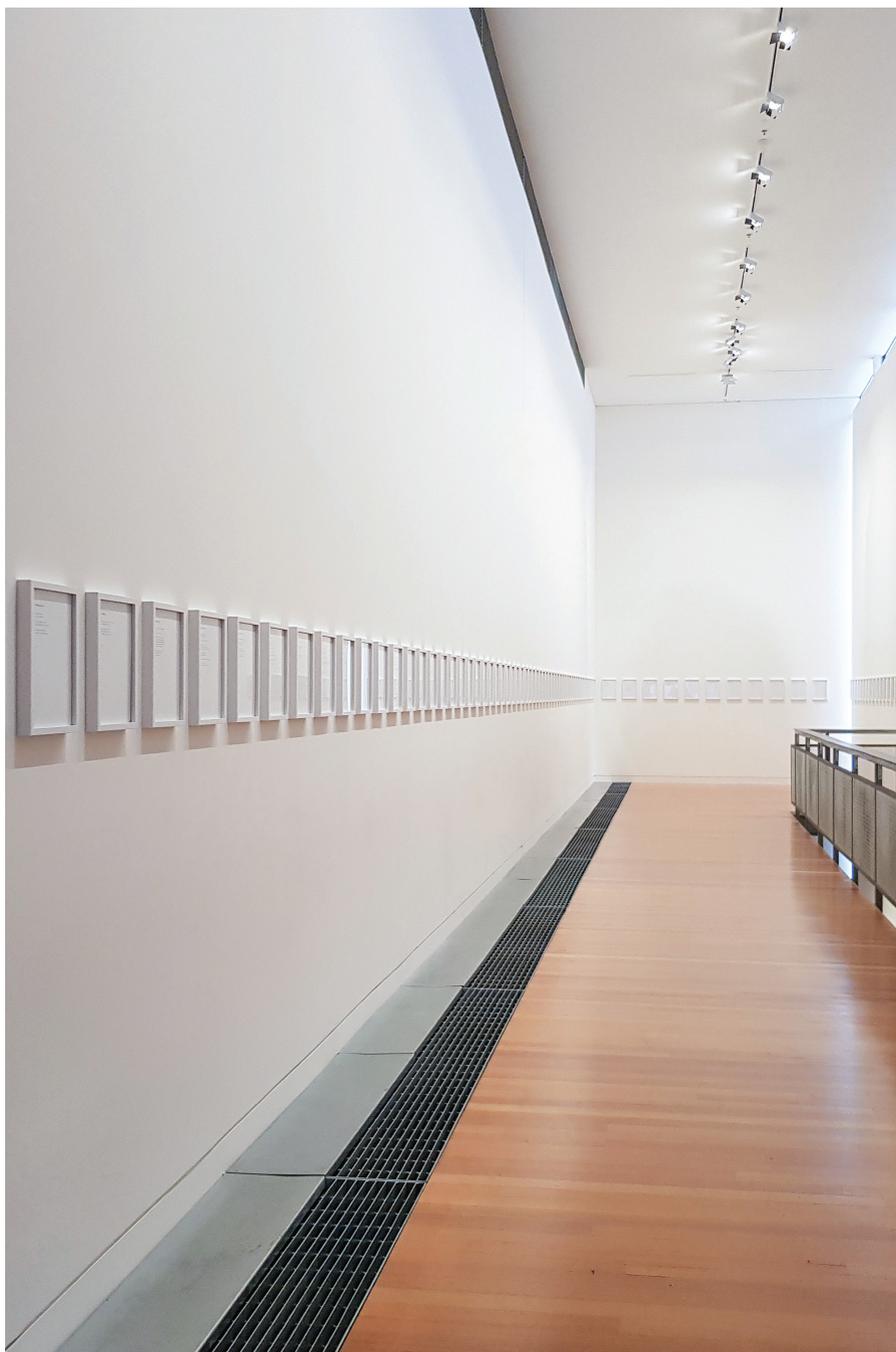
A catalogue with an essay by van der Meijden and an interview with Friedman is being printed and will be available in hardcopy soon. A digital version will be available for free download from the Adam Art Gallery website, and a printed version can be viewed in the Level 3 reading area.

Friedman’s works will be activated through the run of the exhibition. We have invited a range of artists to respond to selected scores. Their responses will be published on the Adam Art Gallery Instagram and website.

Stephen Cleland

Ken Friedman (1949, New London, Connecticut) joined Fluxus in 1966 as the youngest member of the group. He worked closely with artists and composers associated with Fluxus such as Dick Higgins, Nam June Paik, John Cage and others. Friedman was instrumental in establishing Fluxus West. Designed as a gathering point for Fluxus-related activities in the western states of America, it extended its reach to Germany and the UK in the late 1960s and 1970s. In 1971 Friedman participated in New Zealand post-object artist and composer Philip Dadson's *Earthworks* a 'composition' for film and audiotape realised simultaneously at fifteen locations across the globe.

In 1976, Friedman finished his doctoral thesis in behavioural science while working as an artist. He later worked as a publisher, management consultant, and designer. In 1994, he began an academic career, first as Professor of Leadership and Strategic Design at the Norwegian School of Management in Oslo, then as Dean of the Faculty of Design at Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne where he served as University Distinguished Professor. Friedman is now Chair Professor of Design Innovation Studies at Tongji University, Shanghai and Esteemed Scholar at the University of Cincinnati.



92 *Events*, installation view, Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi.

All works, inkjet prints on acid-free A4 paper
Courtesy of the artist

Scrub Piece, 1956
The Light Bulb, 1956
Table Stack, 1956
Untitled Card Event, 1956
Card Trace, 1958
Green Street, 1959
Christmas Tree Event, 1964
The Judgement of Paris, 1964
White Bar, 1964
Cheers, 1965
Copernicus, 1965 (Revised 2006)
Edison's Lighthouse, 1965
Open and Shut Case, 1965
Dark Mirror, 1966
Different Card Fluxdeck, 1966
Light Table Variation, 1966
Fluxus Television, 1966
Fruit in Three Acts, 1966
Imprint, 1966
Mandatory Happening, 1966
The Wanderer, 1966
Radio Chock, 1966
Notes for the Bartered Bride, 1966
Stage Reversal, 1966
Street Pieces, 1966
Tavern, 1966
Thirty Feet, 1966
Zen for Record, 1966
Zen Vaudeville, 1966
White Objects, 1966
Orchestra, 1967
City, 1967
Do-It-Yourself Monument, 1967
Empaquetage pour Christo, 1967
Chair, 1967
Mailing, 1967
Unfinished Symphony, 1967
Telephone Clock, 1967
Boxing Day, 1968
Telephone Event, 1967
Twenty Gallons, 1967
Contents, 1968
Paper Architecture, 1968
The Three Ages of Man, 1968
Aktual Walk, 1969
Cloud Chamber, 1969
Shadow Box, 1969
The General Assembly Social Justice Special, 1969
Continental Divide, 1969
Heat Transfer Event, 1970
The New Critic, 1970
The Silent Night, 1970
Earth Work, 1971
Silent Shoes, 1971
Water Table, 1971
Distance, 1971
10,000, 1971
Flow System, 1972
Replication, 1972
Centennial, 1973
Woolen Goods, 1973
24 Hours, 1974
The Last Days of Pompeii, 1985
Rotterdam Exchange, 1986
Rational Music, 1987

Homage to Mahler, 1989
Fluxus Balance Piece for Mieko Shiomi, 1991
Precinct, 1991
Alchemical Theater, 1992
Theft Event for J-C, 1981
Chair Event for Larry Miller, 1982
Anarchists' Showcase, 1982
Variation for Food and Piano, 1982
Viking Event, 1989
Neck Tie Party, 1989
Theater Exercise, 1989
Two Second Encore, 1989
Exhibition, 1991
Marching Band, 1991
New Shoes Dance Theater, 1991
Selection Event, 1991
Stage Fright Event, 1991
Bartholomew in Munich, 1992
Bird Call, 1992
Family Planning Event, 1992
Folk Dance, 1992
Magic Trick #2, 1993
Magic Trick #7, 1993
A Whispered History, 1994
Centre Piece, 2003
Decapitalism, 2019
Post-Calvinist Art, 2019

Exhibition guide produced to accompany *Ken Friedman: 92 Events*,
Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi, Victoria University of Wellington,
2 June – 16 August 2020

© Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi

Te Adam
Pātaka Art
Toi Gallery

