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## One Time Over Another: Tom Marioni's Conceptual Art

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# ONE TIME OVER ANOTHER

## Tom Marioni's Conceptual Art

**Nick Kaye**

*Early California performance allied itself very closely with life and there is a non-artful vigor in much of the best work. There was only a thin membrane separating the life of the performance from that of the artist and of his or her audience of close friends; and dividing the art from the moods, tastes and actions of the decade.*

Moira Roth, PAJ 12 (1980)

### ART (NOT LIFE)

Defining his conceptual practice as “[i]dea oriented situations not directed at the production of static objects,”<sup>1</sup> Tom Marioni’s work poses questions about where and when the “presence” of his artwork is constructed and perceived. Here, and while engaging with media including drawing, painting, sculpture, installation, and photography, the narratives Marioni sets around his individual works consistently emphasize processes that precede or surround his presentation of objects, installations, events, and actions. Articulating the different times—and tenses—in which his work occurs, Marioni’s approach casts a contradiction and a quandary over his frequent exhibition of prints, objects, and the staging of performances and events. Reflecting on this in an extensive interview with Robin White published as an issue of *View* in 1978,<sup>2</sup> Marioni concluded that, with regard to the inclusion of process “as a direct element” in his work: “There is something that results. The end isn’t the art, but it has a history and that history gives it power.” In this approach, Marioni’s work directly challenges the viewer’s encounter with a singular artwork, re-positioning objects and events as cyphers of activities now ended, and as provocations to a thinking of his processes, actions, and themes.

Questions around both the time and tense of Marioni’s work are foregrounded in his earliest elaborations of conceptual art. In his first photographic work in relation to actions such as *One Second Sculpture* (1969) as well as the explicitly live works that followed, Marioni’s presentations challenged the viewer’s ability to configure his work as individual and bounded “performances,” while his display of objects invariably served to report earlier acts, or other times and places. In this context, too, and over time, specific occasions or aspects of Marioni’s work have come to be defined

as passages between forms and events, rather than discrete moments. The image of *One Second Sculpture* thus not only “reports” Marioni’s action, but has been evolved through implicitly recursive forms, re-emerging as print images (of the photograph) and object-displays (of the steel tape) and so as a network of points of reference. Marioni’s most well-known installation and “social work,” *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art* (1970), finds its continuance in his *Free Beer* (1973–74) and *Café Society* (1976–84) comprising of invitations to a “salo(o)n” event every Wednesday, and held latterly in Breen’s Bar immediately below the spaces Marioni rented over the same period for his *Museum of Conceptual Art* (MOCA), which he has articulated as itself a “social” work. For those joining the Wednesday events, Marioni’s rules for invitation and behavior at once shaped the tenor of each occasion, while inviting an association with his artworks in an implicit layering and structural history of events that have subsequently extended beyond MOCA itself. Following MOCA’s closure in 1984, Marioni continued *Café Society* as the *Academy of MOCA* at various locations until 1990, as *Archives of MOCA* at his studio on Hawthorne Street until 1992 and subsequently as *Café Wednesday*, in which form it remains. Within this process, too, Marioni has periodically foregrounded and formalized this layering of places and events by presenting specific works that articulate these histories, including in 1979 *The Museum of Conceptual Art at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art* comprising “an installation with free beer” that implied the occupation of one “place” by another. Across these occasions as a whole, and in their recurrence and variation, Marioni purposefully defers attention to the margins or periphery of a conventional staged event, and toward that which occurs mutually within it, precedes it, or continues through its presentation.

In this approach to performance, too, Marioni’s early tactics departed from other contemporaneous steps from the conventional object of art and into live or time-based activity. Thus, Marioni’s specific tie between actions and conceptual art, which played a key role and influence in the development of San Francisco Bay Area work throughout the 1970s, was from its inception at a distinct remove from the contemporaneous body art performance work of Chris Burden in Los Angeles or Vito Acconci, Dennis Oppenheim, and others in New York, which frequently hinged on the documentary and textual record of an ephemeral, located, and past performance. In contrast, not only do Marioni’s exhibited works rarely overtly “document,” but where the live event comes most readily to the fore in his work so too do performance’s most open, mutual, processual, and elusive qualities seem to be amplified, leading him to rehearse another seeming contradiction in his 1978 conversation with White, at which time he noted that: “my main activity is social, and what I’m trying to do is make art that’s as close to real life as I can without its being real life.”

Marioni’s concentration on the performance of a social event also marks his work as distinct from earlier displacements of art experience toward practices of the everyday. Thus, while Allan Kaprow’s happenings in New York from 1959, and especially his turn toward events “for performers only” from 1965, provide a key point of reference, in contrast to Marioni, Kaprow worked systematically to counter the tendency to conceptualize the artwork separately from each individual participant’s experience of

the place, time, and network in which, for them, the work manifests. To this end, in events such as *Calling* (1965), orchestrated between Long Island and Grand Central Station over two separate days, and *Self-Service* (1967), taking place across three cities over three months through a network of dispersed individual assignments, Kaprow's emphasis fell on the dissolution of the conventional apparatus of art practice and any resolution into a form or residue in which "art" may return. Correspondingly, in Kaprow's "rules-of-thumb" for the creation of happenings in his book *Assemblages, Environments, and Happenings*, published in 1966, he ruled not only that "themes, materials, actions, and the relationships between them are to be derived from any place or period except from the arts" but that "Happenings should be performed once only" (original emphasis), thus putting emphasis on ephemeral phenomena of action, encounter, participation, and collaboration in these game-like networks of activity. Following Kaprow's return to California in 1966 as a faculty member of CalArts, his practice evolved toward smaller scale, quasi-private performances, emerging as a form from 1967 that Kaprow designated as "Activities," in which familiar rituals of everyday action and interaction were enacted by participants to produce reflections on conventionally "nonconscious behaviors" to produce "Art Which Can't Be Art,"<sup>3</sup> a development into which Kaprow's growing commitment to Buddhism was also inflected.

In contrast, Marioni's conceptualism presses forward a dynamic whereby, while his "performances" present themselves as conflated with everyday actions and social exchanges, they also rest on distinctive processual and conceptual dimensions of this "art" gaining ground for the participant. It is toward this tension that Marioni directs his practice. Thus, while events such as *The Museum of Conceptual Art at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art* seemingly inhabit or take the form of "non-art" processes and interactions, in their history and underlying structure such "social works" implicitly invite participants to consider their role as agents of Marioni's larger "art" project, frequently located in quasi-theatrical as well as in found sites. These events orchestrate specific and sharp distinctions between differing orders and modes of social and art experience. Indeed, in the development of his work, Marioni continually returns to structures through which his processes at once occupy—and yet are marked out from—quotidian circumstances and events. Here, too, Marioni engages with temporality in ways very different from Kaprow's overt focus on the present-tense of experience, traversing, instead, different times and tenses to approach art as temporally layered and multiple: a complexity frequently explored in relation to liveness, relic, and memory.

In this regard, too, Marioni's work provides one of the earliest examples of the distinctive nature of a wider burgeoning of conceptual and performance art emergent in San Francisco in the early 1970s. Shortly following Marioni's first conceptual works, new performance modes engaging with the everyday also proliferated through the work of artists such as Lynn Hershman, whose *The Dante Hotel* (1973–74) and *Roberta Breitmore* series (1974–78) interrogated the performance of social identity through temporally extended engagements with site, narrative, and media, as well as the construction of works across multiple modes of representation and encounter.

While radically different in form and purpose, these processes mark a tendency within early Bay Area conceptual and performance art for works to emerge in articulations across dispersed events and points of reference: as network, persistence, recurrence.

Marioni's own step into conceptual art and performance from 1969 had followed his early engagement with color and sculptural form influenced by the emerging Californian minimalist aesthetic of John McCracken, who had taught at the California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland at various times between 1957 and 1965, as well as by the presence of artists such as Doug Wheeler, Larry Bell, and James Turrell in southern California in the mid-1960s. Appearing assertively object-based, the West Coast "finish fetish" style of minimalism, as it was pejoratively styled by East Coast critics, emerged out of Los Angeles in 1963 and 1964 and differed radically in appearance and effect from the simplicity of form and material that underpinned its East Coast counterpart. In contrast to the white unitary, wooden forms with which, for example, Robert Morris had originally confronted the visitor to the "empty" white-walled gallery space, California minimalism tended to emphasize the geometric object's color, precision, and clarity of form. Yet while appearing to assert the material presence of the object, these works' highly polished and frequently translucent plastic and glass surfaces nevertheless effected a diffusion of the limits and experience of the work into the immediate environment. It is a displacement of color and light into the object's context and surrounding space that presaged the post-minimal dissolution of such object-forms into the frequently large-scale light and space installations of Wheeler, Turrell, Robert Irwin, and other predominantly southern California artists. In these respects, California minimalism foregrounds a dynamic reflected in Marioni's subsequent work, whereby a clarity of focus and expression of structure acts as a foil to a dispersal and diffusion of the viewer's experience into perceptions of the environment. Where the light and space artists opened the object-form into large-scale installations inviting experiences of a frequently changing fall of light, Marioni transposed this structural opening of sculpture toward time and the social.

Here, too, the influence of John Cage, as well as European conceptual and performance art presses on Marioni's framing of objects and conflation of performance events with social acts and processes. Significantly, Marioni's early work evolved in his knowledge of Marcel Duchamp's conceptualism, in which the readymade simultaneously occupies "art" and "non-art" contexts and frames; John Cage's use of duration, sound, and time in relation to the everyday, in which "the function of Art is to imitate Nature in her manner of operation,"<sup>4</sup> and Joseph Beuys's concept of "social sculpture," aimed toward characterizing political and social processes as art. Yet while these sources are clearly resonant in Marioni's early work, in particular, the identity of his conceptual art lies in the structural distinction of art from the everyday, even as its processes appear bound to quotidian experiences. Thus, and in contrast to Cage's view that the synthesis of art and life served to celebrate life, or Beuys's contemporaneous articulation of discursive, political, and latterly ecological processes *as* art, Marioni has insisted on the assertion of art practices, aesthetics, and forms from *within* the stream of the everyday, claiming unequivocally in his memoir *Beer, Art and Philosophy*,<sup>5</sup> that, "Art and life should not be confused." It



Top: Tom Marioni, *One Second Sculpture* (1969). © Tom Marioni. Courtesy the artist. Bottom: Tom Marioni, *Drawing a Line As Far As I Can Reach* (1972, ongoing). © Tom Marioni. Courtesy the artist.





Top: Tom Marioni, *Café Wednesday* (1992). © Tom Marioni. Courtesy the artist. Left: Tom Marioni, *By The Fire* (1994). Tableau sculpture. 7 x 4 x 1 feet. Wood and framed drum brush drawing. © Tom Marioni. Courtesy the artist.



is in these various contexts also that the place and purpose of “performance” in Marioni’s work becomes clearer. Emphasizing to Robin White that “I don’t call what I do performances . . . Actions imply directness, without illusion,” Marioni’s earliest engagement with actions had the effect of *making space*, of traversing and opening a field for interaction between different modes of practice while positioning objects as images as the “debris” of an ongoing process.

*One Second Sculpture*, then, which in many ways set Marioni’s agenda for performance and thus his social art, comprises simply: “Instrument made from a metal tape measure that flies open like a spring in one second, making a loud sound. The object leaves the hand as a circle, makes a drawing in space and falls to the ground as a line.” First exhibited as the photographic image of Marioni’s release of a compressed steel tape, the action introduced his approach to “sculpture” as a conceptual field (and by implication a site) to be *acted in*, an approach reflected in his view, expressed to White, that: “Sculpture is about the relationship of elements in space . . . more recently, it’s the relationship of elements in space and time; so it’s evolved into the fourth dimension.” Emphasizing “concreteness” over theatricality, *One Second Sculpture* is articulated in the juxtaposition of conventional forms and practices, including photography, performance, and object-based presentations, to lodge the idea of multiple times and tenses in the viewer’s experience. Marioni’s choice of image and title amplifies this, directing attention toward different and distinct “seconds” in which the work potentially takes place: to the act of release that precedes the image; to the viewer’s present-tense projection, back, toward the “sculpture” through its remains; to the evident completion of the image itself at any given moment. Advancing Marioni’s definition of the temporality of sculpture, *One Second Sculpture* finds its form not in any one of these moments or points of reference, but in the potential and mobility of these relationships over time and in the concept and experience of “sculpture” as a field of mutually connected acts, moments, and materials. In these ways, it is the idea of separation and recurrence on which the creation of this sculptural field rests. Indeed, *One Second Sculpture* poses firstly the question of where and when “the artwork” occurs, provoking this mode of sculpture precisely in its claim to identity in both present and past events and objects.

## OBJECT AS ARTIFACT

This approach, in which an underlying structure of performance displaces and qualifies the encounter with the object or image, forms one of the principal means by which Marioni carries forward his engagement with time and duration. Indeed, Marioni’s work is rarely “object-less” but instead approaches objects and images as cyphers or relics of activity. Even Marioni’s processual, social works, including his continuing variations of *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art*, produce “object” remains—in its earliest form, accumulated, empty Anchor Steam beer bottles, arranged formally as the debris or traces of the event. In this sense, too, Marioni’s objects and installations foreground a layer—materially and in time—through which the work is remembered and read, to create an archaeological allusion and feel. Here the object or image is presented as an accretion or concen-



tration of performance histories: as the evidence that carries forward the experience and idea to a new audience.

It is a practice exemplified not only in Marioni's explicitly time-based presentations, but by his gestural drawings, including *Drawing a Line as Far as I Can Reach* (1972), *Running and Jumping Holding a Pencil While Trying to Fly* (1972), *Flying With Friends* (1999) as well as his drum brush drawings that have been ongoing since 1972, among others. Presented as images suggesting various measures of the body in action, these works are frequently installed on the gallery wall in direct reference to Marioni's original act, or as overt spatial memories of a series of events. It is a charge taken forward also in the repetition and variation of these actions and images. Thus, *Drawing a Line as Far as I Can Reach*, while originally marking the limits of Marioni's efforts to draw a line from a static, sitting position during a seven-day continuous performance in 1972 at the Reese Palley Gallery in San Francisco, also marks the first occasion of his many line drawings, including re-doings of this event in 1972, 1985, 1999, as well as *Finger Line* (1986), and *Finger Lines* (1998). His later series of *11 Line Drawings* (1997) opened this articulation of real and remembered actions and spaces further, presenting, as a group on one wall, eleven line images executed by Marioni on a single occasion. Framed separately, these abstract images are hung in positions that reproduce the spatial relationships of Marioni's original act, so recollecting his presence and process.

This engagement with time and memory is elaborated further in Marioni's brush drawings, initiated in 1972, and extended again in his more recent *Out-of-Body Free-Hand Circles* (2007) that trace the relationship between Marioni's extended action, his body and the site and space of their production. Created through a rhythmic beating and drumming with two wire brushes on materials ranging from paper, linen, sandpaper, and steel, the brush drawings explicitly recall Marioni's engagement with jazz. Executed as quasi-musical performances, the bird-like images of the brush drawings, exhibited singly, as well as in groups and series, capture visually the ambiguity of the image as figure and record: the "bird" plainly records the action of the drum brush, yet its various allusions recall musical time, purpose, and process. Here, the visual order and completion of the image becomes an analogue to the musical organization of Marioni's "act." More recently, the extensive series of *Out-of-Body* action drawings has varied this further. Produced *in situ*, on paper already installed on the gallery wall, these acts extend Marioni's bodily charge of his images through a rhythmic drawing that is tracked and articulated in multiple circles left over from his process. Blending action, image, and installation, the *Out-of-Body Free-Hand Circles* foreground Marioni's construction of his work as collocations of times, spaces, and actions drawn over the image or object as charged remains or debris.

Jazz, too, has provided Marioni with references through which to capture the artisanal and functional mode of his actions, which also serves to ensure attention is thrown forward to the image even as the image refers back to the act. Citing Miles Davis playing with his back to the audience, Marioni stresses that in such performance, and specifically with reference to the drum brush drawings, which, in the retrospective

survey of his sculpture and installations 1969–1997,<sup>6</sup> he suggested that “you’re not playing to the audience, you’re playing to the material that you’re working with or manipulating . . . performing a kind of miracle.” The “miracle” referred to here is less the transformation of material into an object with its “own” aesthetic identity—its own time and space—and more the production of an image in which one time and process is recalled through another to produce a restless dynamic.

It is in this relationship, too, that Marioni’s work counters the “static” object. Set in relation to his actions, Marioni’s process articulates both objects and images as artifacts, returning again to a sense of the archaeological. Describing an object defined by its alteration or use, the artifact presents itself as evidence of a past action or purpose. In this context, and rather than emphasize the art-object as end-point, Marioni’s processes play instead toward the “aura” of the object or image, where, following Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks in *Theatre/Archaeology*, “aura refers to the life of things”: to the “sense of associations and evocations that cluster round an object, correspondences and interrelations, engendered by an object.”<sup>7</sup> The installed remains of *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art* thus act as mnemonic prompts rather than the work itself, offering only beer bottles seemingly “altered” by their use to evidence the story or history of the work. The gestural drawings also suspend the final resolution of objects or images into Marioni’s “art” by stressing their function as evidence, and as the means of carrying forward a gesture now consigned to the past production and acting out of performance. Furthermore, Marioni’s positioning of the object between meanings and functions has resonance with contemporary re-conceptions of the artifact. Building on the conventional understanding of the archaeological artifact as “a multitude of data points, an infinity of possible attributes and measurement,” Pearson and Shanks extend this to argue that: “[t]he artifact does not only possess a multitude of data attributes, but is also itself multiplicity. We come to an object in relationships with it, through it, perceiving it, referring to it, talking of it, feeling it *as something*”<sup>8</sup> (original emphasis). It is this reading of the artifact as a multiplicity whose definition is a function of its “life-cycle” that brings this figure and effect so directly toward Marioni’s objects and their functioning as concentrations of absent acts and processes.

Here, then, and analogously to his performances, Marioni’s conceptual art resists the “static object” by refusing to allow “the work” to occupy a single position, foregrounding instead histories of activity that charge but are not resolved into its remains. It is an emphasis that implicitly approaches the artwork as a nexus of relationships, where “the work” encompasses objects and images in order to displace them.

## SITES FOR DRINKING BEER

It is such a layering of histories, too, that informs Marioni’s approach to site, performance, and the positioning of “audience” in his participatory events.

Where Marioni’s first site for performance is the social, so the places and occasions in which this work has occurred have tended to be defined in his brushing off of “art” as a context or purpose for his activity. Indeed, while Marioni’s objects seem

to frequently announce themselves as the relic of an action, so these social artworks begin in a denial of artistic purpose or aesthetic. Thus, reflecting on *Café Society* in his interview with White recorded at the time of its location in Breen's Bar, Marioni emphasized that, "It's never been advertised as art . . . I've advertised it as an activity of the museum." MOCA, similarly, was conceived by Marioni as an "underground museum," such that, he suggested to White, "the only way I can stay underground is to do things disguised as non-art." Beginning in this way, *Café Society* gains its identity in its tone and manner, in Marioni's conscious "effort to make it elegant and refined" through his rules for invitation and behavior, which were then reproduced in the manifestation of these events as installations. For *Café Wednesday*, Marioni recounts in *Beer, Philosophy and Art*, the house rules included:

*People bring their own drinks except for first timers who don't know any better.  
Two-drink minimum; this means at least two.  
No beer cans except Tecate.  
No drinking from beer bottles except in character.  
No one behind the bar except the bartender.  
Guests do not invite guests without checking with the management.  
No theatre people except famous movie stars.  
No art students except those who can pass as professionals.  
No art collectors except in disguise.  
Hours 5–8, except on special occasions.  
Leave the bathroom light on.*

These rules not only give form and shape to the social occupation of a place, whether Marioni's Studio or, earlier, Breen's Bar, but also create the event itself as a performed "site" with specific characteristics that may be entered into, occupied, and enacted, and that others may be "present to" but outside. Equally, to be "in" this event, as part of its tenor and purpose provides the opportunity to recognize Marioni's work, in a reflection of a note in his memoir that "I am fascinated by art that can only be seen if you know it is art."

In this respect, too, Marioni's approach to these events drew directly on his activity as curator at the Richmond Art Center in Oakland from 1968 to 1971, as well as his curatorial work through MOCA. Here, he recalled:

I also saw my activities at the Richmond Art Center as activities in which I could realize my sculpture concerns by organizing exhibitions of other people's work in group shows and theme shows. Assembling shows according to relationships of people and styles is the same as putting relationships of objects together in more traditional sculpture.<sup>9</sup>

Later, through MOCA, Marioni came explicitly to understand the curation and exhibition of work as the social site of his own art activity, remarking to White that: "when I organize shows of artists, I don't think of it as my art. But MOCA's social activities and the idea of this museum are my art."

In other ways, too, Marioni's early curation directly abutted his sculpture and performance. While working at Richmond, Marioni continued to produce his own work under the pseudonym Allan Fish to keep his curatorial activities distinct from his art practice. In retrospect, his doubled identity then provided a structure through which the "everyday" acquired the mantel of performance, lending his activity a shifting or dual identity. Indeed, read back through his evolving "sculptural field," Marioni's curation at Richmond operated through twinned and layered activities: in enactments of Fish's work, and, looking back, through the performance of Fish "himself," a performance visible now in the retelling of events that had in certain respects remained hidden at the time. It is in this context that Marioni recalls, in *Beer, Art and Philosophy*, his inauguration of Allan Fish's work through his curation of *Birds in Flight* (1969) as part of the exhibition *The Return of Abstract Expressionism*. On the occasion of presenting this work, Marioni announced that:

The artist, Allan Fish, sent instructions to me (the curator) so I could execute his work. These were the instructions: "Enclosed is a packet of multicolored instruction paper. To install the sculpture, sit in a chair about ten feet from a wall. Take one sheet at a time and crumple each one, as if you were in a hurry and throwing it into a waste paper basket. Throw each piece at the wall, trying to keep them generally in a confined area. The result should be multicolored birds at the moment of flight after being frightened by the stamping of feet."

Subsequently narrated and reframed in the context of Marioni's doubled role as artist and curator, *Birds in Flight* has now joined Marioni's history of "performance," such that his curatorial process has gained further meaning as part of the body of his work. In 1971, to end his association with the Richmond Center, Marioni publicly revealed his doubled role by performing *Allan Fish Drinks a Case of Beer*, which he then reprised in 1984. Subsequently, Marioni changed the title of the piece to *The Creation of a Situation and Environment while Becoming Increasingly More Intoxicated*, implicitly consigning the role of Fish back to his earlier period of work in a further play with temporal narrative and the accretion of histories.

Through these approaches, Marioni's performances occupy their spatial and social sites in another form of layering. Thus, where the object and image in his work presents itself as multiple in its identities and functions, retrospectively these roles accrue around Marioni's curation and performed works to reconfigure his activity through its history, its accretion of meaning over time, and after the "event itself." It is a mode of work that becomes explicit, too, in his frequent re-doing, or re-framing, of these events through their "installation" into "other" sites, and that reflect contemporary notions of site and place. In the context of anthropological and performance theory addressing the performance of place and site, including Marc Auge's influential *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1995), Miwon Kwon's *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2004), and linked concepts of "theatre/archaeology," the stability and continuity of site is called into question.

In this work, a site is approached firstly as a construct that is a function of multiple aspects: sites are palimpsestual and simultaneous, embracing diverse material, historical, cultural, spatial, and personal aspects, for different visitors or occupants at different times. The temporal dimension of site is also complex: a “site” does not exist simply in the “now” of its present-tense occupation by any individual or group, but is a function of memory and anticipation, and of disjunctions and differences between experiences of being in a place and knowing or reading “its” signs and texts. Like any located object, too, the specific occasion of a media or performance artwork also defines the place or places it occupies, so performing and changing the contingencies that influence its meaning.

Marioni’s “social works” inflect this conception of site as layered and palimpsestual. Indeed, Marioni’s orchestration of social events as artworks also bears on the question of location and site, as each event accrues its meaning within the “field” of his work in relation to “other,” earlier places and enactments, and so in tacit structures of the everyday that could be viewed as strata or a layering in time. This interest is apparent, too, in Marioni’s curation of individual works at MOCA. It is evident specifically in his commissioning of the conceptual and performance artist David Ireland’s celebrated site-specific work, *The Restoration of a Portion of the Back Wall, Ceiling and Floor of the Main Gallery of the Museum of Conceptual Art at MOCA* in February 1976. Comprising a stripping away of the physical surface of the MOCA spaces that had been marked and colored by an earlier work, to take their surfaces back toward their previous appearance under the building’s occupation by a printing company, this displacement and uncovering of the “present” MOCA site provides a further analogy to Marioni’s own processes and his articulation of time and history. Integral and inseparable from the fabric of MOCA’s spaces, Ireland’s work “looks back,” treating its rooms as a cypher to a past moment, to show the multipleness of what “this site” is.

A key question giving form to Marioni’s practice is how the fabric and experience of one time and place may be elaborated through and invested in another. This layering that also directly shapes the experience of the participant to Marioni’s social events. Thus, in *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art*, as well as its continuances and variations, the participant occupies an “already occupied” place and process. It is a multiplication amplified in these works’ continual variation and re-performance and that forms a structural context for the viewer-participants’ experiences “in” and “of” Marioni’s “social work”—and “in” and “outside” of its various conceptual aspects and roles. Indeed, in the event, Marioni’s “work” may also manifest itself for the participant “afterwards” in reflection—as a conceptual turn and re-framing of what happened—and thus as the realization of what was an “Invisible Art.”

Marioni’s “social works,” like his images and objects, find their effect and form in an accretion of times, and so as an articulation of different perspectives and vantages. Yet for these performances, in particular, it is in the persistence of their identity as social events, even as they acquire a pivotal role within Marioni’s network of art activities,



that they assert their particularity and their aesthetic to produce an expanded sculptural field. It is in relation to this social aspect, too, that the viewer-participant finds and maintains their agency in Marioni's work. Indeed, it is here that the conceptual aspect of Marioni's performance comes explicitly to the fore: in the participant's capacity to perform and perceive the shifting nature of their position and role in these events. In this social dimension, Marioni's work most directly challenges the particular autonomy of the modernist work claimed by Greenberg and later reiterated by Michael Fried: that the modernist work realizes itself outside of the time of the viewer. By contrast, these works operate inside and outside the time of encounter: as the scene of performance, as debris, as the retrospective recognition of purpose, structure, and history. In this sense, while Marioni's strategies are, as Roth suggests of early California performance art more widely, allied "very closely with life," it is in occupying acts of sociality that this work announces its difference and interrogates the performativity of concept, place, object, and image.

## NOTES

1. Tom Marioni, *Writings on Art 1969–1999* (San Francisco: Crown Point Press, 2000), 10.
2. *View 1*, no. 5 (October 1978, reprinted and updated January 1981).
3. Allan Kaprow, "Art Which Can't Be Art," in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff McMahan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 219–28.
4. John Cage, *A Year From Monday: Lectures and Writings* (London: Marion Boyars, 1976), 31.
5. Tom Marioni, *Beer, Art and Philosophy: A Memoir* (San Francisco: Crown Point Press, 2003).
6. Tom Marioni, *Sculpture and Installations 1969–1997* (San Francisco: Crown Point Press, 2001).
7. Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2001), 95–96.
8. Pearson and Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*, 99.
9. Tom Marioni, *The Sound of Flight* (San Francisco: private printing, 1977).

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