

WILLIAM ANASTASI

SOUND OBJECTS

**GALENE
JOEELYN
WOLFF**

Exhibition from 10 April to 25 June 2022
Opening on Sunday 10 April, 2022 - 2pm - 6pm
Open from Tuesday to Saturday, 10am - 6pm

“a rose is a rose is a rose.”
Dove Bradshaw

William Anastasi's Sound Objects premiered in 1966 at the Dwan Gallery in New York. It was the first of his four ground breaking exhibitions at the gallery from 1966-1970 that defined Conceptual Art and helped to launch the movement. A year later the second exhibition was titled Six Sites, 1967, consisting of six photo-silkscreens on canvas images of the walls at a ten-percent reduction that hung upon each wall that had been its subject. Anastasi had introduced the “site,” the space itself that he had referred to as, “the sacred burial ground of art.” The third of the Dwan exhibitions titled Continuum, 1968, a series of large-scale in-situ photographs of what a “mirror would see” was again about the presentation space itself. Galerie Wolff had uniquely revisited it in 2015, by incorporating life outside the gallery in a ground floor space that had an exterior glass wall. Thus the images on display included the cars and the buildings across the street.

Three Conic Sections Dwan's exhibition of 1970 also shown at Galerie Wolff in 2018, consisted of rebars that form a section of a Mobius strip. With a series of steel reinforcement rods each the height of the ceiling, the first of which is set on the floor perpendicular to and touching a wall, sequentially rise to vertical for the length of any given wall until they last touches the ceiling. Again this work is contingent upon the space in which it is executed, for instance, a long sweeping curve occurs on a long wall, a short “sail” furls along a short wall.

Sound Objects, is the third of the Dwan exhibitions that Galerie Wolff now revisits in Paris. It is the first time that fifteen of the seventeen original works are shown together since their premiere fifty-seven years ago, demonstrating their relevance to art history.

With Sound Objects, from 1963-1966, Anastasi had introduced the concept of tautology, a strategy of Conceptual Art that a year later would also be exemplified with Six Sites. The term “Sound Objects” was the artist's coinage. They consist of sounds made by ordinary things such as an electric fan, an inner tube, a radiator, shovel, pick, pneumatic drill, power saw, among them, that were recorded while in use and presented as sculptures with speakers that remember their sounds. For instance, Anastasi recorded the sound of an inner tube inflated and then deflated, each presented with its opposing sound. Similarly the tools, the shovel, pick, pneumatic drill, power saw, and so on, each was recorded and presented along with their various attacked debris with the sound of the various actions either shoveling up sand, picking rocks, drilling macadam, or sawing wood. The first and the most reductive of them, Microphone, 1963, a Tanberg tape recorder that had recorded itself in action was presented playing back that recording.

Anastasi would readily agree that Sound Objects owe everything to Duchamp. His introduction came at age fourteen when he and his younger brother had hitchhiked from their Italian enclave of South Philadelphia to visit the Philadelphia Museum of Art. They had never been in a museum before. Seeing Duchamp's work, that he himself had carefully installed there, was a revelation to the young viewers, who though not understanding it, as Anastasi said years later "was like drinking a pure glass of water" compared to the otherwise representative masterworks.

Anastasi had met Duchamp when the elder artist had visited during Six Sites at Dwan Gallery because *In Advance of a Broken Arm* was on display in her back room. When Virginia had offered him to sign the guest book, he turned to the next blank page, then another and on the third page he wrote, "Yes" adding his name. Later Virginia put the book in a drawer and set out another. No better endorsement could be had than from the man who had ushered in 20th Century art.

In January 1966 Kienholz' *Beanery*, Dwan's first exhibition in New York, surprised Anastasi since he had no idea other artists were working with sound. Seven months earlier at Castelli Gallery, Rauschenberg's *Oracle*, 1962-1965 had opened, though Anastasi had not seen it. Neither of these works were Conceptual Art or tautological in nature. The *Beanery* was a recreation, including sound, of a seedy California bar with Surrealist touches of clock faced patrons each set at ten after ten, while Rauschenberg called his a musical sculpture "all of [which] material with the exception of the technology were gifts from the street. The attempt was to make all instrument[s] that could be performed on with or without sophistication."

Equally unaware at that time and intrigued that an artist was using sound in a work, in 1965 for the first time John Cage visited Anastasi at his Soho loft while he was preparing Sound Objects. Cage had suggested that all the sounds should occur together randomly, however Dwan had wanted to underscore that each was a unique work. In 2013 at Hunter College's William Anastasi: Sound Retrospective 1963-2013, all of them sounded together, including two in windows that had outdoor speakers arresting passersby to the ubiquitous assault of a pneumatic drill, this time surprisingly presented in a gallery as art.

Anastasi wrote at the time that as a policy about making art, «One, just one. And simple. As simple as simple. Even dumb.» Being self-referential the Sound Objects are simply about themselves, not representing something else, as much art before and after has been and still is. They are as much about the present moment, the here and the now, another Conceptual strategy, along with the erasure of boundaries, yet another, as they are about tautology. As Gertrude Stein said long ago no adjective can stand in, no metaphor can explain other than that things are what they are—"a rose is a rose is a rose."

Dove Bradshaw is an American artist living in New York and life partner of William Anastasi since 1974.

UPCOMING RELEASE OF THE MONOGRAPH ON THE ARTIST

Galerie Jocelyn Wolff is also delighted to announce the upcoming release of the monograph on William Anastasi published by Mousse Publishing in 2023. Editorial Director: Erik Verhagen. With texts by: Dove Bradshaw, Béatrice Gross, Valérie Mavridorakis, Sébastien Pluot, Julia Robinson, Robert Storr and Erik Verhagen.

On Sunday 22 April 2022, meet **Sébastien Pluot**, art historian, who will talk about the monograph at the gallery.