

ANASTASI BRADSHAW CAGE CUNNINGHAM

The University Art Gallery
The University of California at San Diego
October 6th – December 10th, 2005

The exhibit *Anastasi Bradshaw Cage* originated in Copenhagen at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Roskilde in 2001. Marianne Bech, the museum's Director, and Dove Bradshaw were the curators. The exhibition brought about an unprecedented response from the press and public. It has been expanded in the States to include Merce Cunningham with drawings, choreographic notations and videos of the dances. Opening in this country at the University of Virginia Art Museum, Charlottesville, January 2005, its third venue until December 10th is at the University Art Gallery, The University of California at San Diego.

The exhibition centers on the cross-pollination of ideas among Anastasi, Bradshaw, Cage and Cunningham during their years of friendship and professional collaboration. John Cage was the founding Musical Advisor to the Cunningham Dance Company from 1952 until his death in 1992. Anastasi and Bradshaw were invited into the company as Artistic Advisors in 1984. The common denominator amongst them was their long-term involvement with chance. This particularly American development can be distinguished from related European Dadaist forays by its attention to Eastern thought.

Cage's early use of *chance operations* has proven to be seminally significant for all the arts in the second half of the twentieth century and into the present. His aesthetic energies were aimed at the formulation of his questions – the answers being left principally to chance. Cage said that he did not sit in meditation but rather that *chance* was his discipline. He strove to follow this path whether composing or creating visual works. Included in the exhibition are a mix of Cage's compositions and a wide range of his paintings and prints from the private collection of Anastasi and Bradshaw.

Cunningham likewise embraced chance to assist in his choreography, revolutionizing the medium by his use of dice, the *I Ching* and *Life Forms*, a computer program for dance notation. Consulting chance regarding the total theatrical experience Cage adopted Artaud's never fully realized vision of theater in which each element is wholly independent from the others. This led to historically important collaborations with artists freed to be conquered alone the duration of a work. About twenty-five years ago Cunningham began a series of drawings of insects and animals in motion in order to pass time while on tour, a practice that continues in his daily journal.

Anastasi is one of the founders of Conceptual Art as well as Minimal Art; in both cases relevant works were done before the movements were named. His 1966/67 *Six Sites* broke the ground for an entire genre of exhibitions under the rubric *Site Specific*. Anastasi's works between 1963 and 1966, including *Sink* and "wall removals", were important forerunners to an entire class of works involving entropy and deconstruction. Holding that after Duchamp there was no earthly reason why a blind man could not be an artist, his *unsighted drawings* were also started in 1963. Underlying his practice is his sense that the only thing that interests him about taste is that it is always changing.

Bradshaw, championing indeterminacy by persistently relinquishing control over what her processes produced, directed Conceptual Art towards a fusion with nature. This led to her prescient series of Contingency paintings that change with the atmosphere and her sculptures of salt, stone and copper that change indoors by the aid of erosion and outdoors by weather. Decades before their classification, these impulses have come to be broadly embraced in the Science/Art Movement, Weathering Works and a new genre termed Museum Interventions. She has said, "Since poetry is evident everywhere, one only need present materials".

In a wide variety of mediums, the works in this exhibition share visual and conceptual connections. There are seventy-five works made between 1950 and the present. They enlist video, "sound objects," sculpture, *in situ* work, drawing, painting, prints, artist's books and photography. Each work has a wall text with remarks by the artist himself or by John Cage. In a study room twelve Cage recordings are played continuously and are supplemented by a sizeable number of books on or by the four artists. Five of Cunningham's Dance Videos featuring the artist's collaborations are played on a loop.

The Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde published a catalogue for the original exhibition *Anastasi Bradshaw Cage*. Along with reproductions of each of the artists' works it includes interviews with the two living artists – Anastasi and Bradshaw – by critic Jacob Lillemous that give a vivid sense of the dynamic amongst them. This American tour, with the addition of Cunningham, brings together a vibrant mix of the disciplines of dance, music and the visual arts.