*Franz Erhard Walther

First Work Set (1963–69)

First Work Set is a group of fifty-eight fabric elements that can only be fully activated through participation. The work debuted at MoMA in 1969, where Walther directed participants to perform actions such as climbing into the objects or working with each other. As Walther explains, “With my Work pieces, I don’t tell stories. In acting with them, you, as an actor or actress with it, develop a story. The content, the meaning, you develop in action [with the piece].”
Yoko Ono

*Shadow Piece (1963)*

*Shadow Piece* is one of the scores Yoko Ono published in her 1964 artist’s book *Grapefruit*, which outlines instructions for the reader to enact. By asking individuals to “put your shadows together until they become one,” *Shadow Piece* requires an exchange between at least two people in order to be completed. Ono is associated with Fluxus, a network of international avant-garde artists who were primarily active in the 1960s and 1970s. Fluxus artists worked in a wide range of media, exploring politics, culture, and everyday experiences through performance, writings, and instruction-based works.

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**SHADOW PIECE**

*Put your shadows together until they become one.*

1963
Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica
*Diálogo de Manos* (1964)

In the piece *Diálogo de Manos*, Brazilian artists Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica placed a Möbius strip around their wrists, connecting themselves together. Clark and Oiticica created works like this to be worn, used, and understood in action, facilitating encounters between two people and providing the potential for an ongoing, reciprocal relationship between them. Clark wrote in 1968: “We propose the act in itself as a field of experience. In a world where man became a stranger to his own work, we provoke him via the experience [in our work] to be conscious of the alienation in which he lives. . . . We refuse the artist who intends to transmit through his object a complete message without the participation of the spectator.”
Andrea Blum
*Lure* (1994)

In *Lure*, Blum invites individuals to sit in adjacent booths and rest their arms in an opening between them, resulting in anonymous hand-to-hand contact with strangers. Blum is interested in creating moments of intimacy between two people. The artist has said that her work asks people to choose “between thorough privacy or forced interaction . . . to start going through the decision-making process of ‘What do I want to do today? How do I want to be? Alone or with friends, even strangers?’”
Julianne Swartz  

*Can You Hear Me?* was a telephone-like sculpture installed on the exterior of the Sunshine Hotel, one of New York City’s last remaining flophouses, or residences that offer cheap housing by providing minimal services. Passersby on the street could call through the tube and be heard in the Sunshine Hotel’s lobby. This exchange project provokes participants who may never visit the hotel to consider the intimate distance of a phone call with a stranger. As Swartz has written, she selected this site “to explore the complicated social dynamics of the location and to create an opportunity for a person-to-person exchange or connection.” The title refers to the one of the first messages transmitted during Alexander Graham Bell’s invention of, and early experiments with, the telephone.
In 1971 Ray Tomlinson invented the world’s first e-mail system for the United States government’s Advanced Research Projects Agency Networks (ARPAnet). The computer programmer appropriated the @ symbol—a character that has existed since at least the sixteenth century as an accounting symbol—as a stand-in for the long and convoluted code indicating a message’s destination. Today, more than a billion people around the world type the @ sign every day, transforming the character into a symbol of communication. The sign’s function in computer language, as in financial transactions, designates a relationship between two entities, establishing a link between them.
Tor Network
2002, ongoing

Tor is a network of virtual tunnels that allows individuals and groups—artists, programmers, scientists, and others—to improve their privacy and security on the Internet for free. The software maintains users’ anonymity by directing Internet traffic through servers that conceal a user’s location or usage from anyone conducting network surveillance or traffic analysis. The more populous and diverse the user base, the more secure the system becomes. Because users balance the quantity of files uploaded and downloaded, the system becomes more secure when the user base is more populous and diverse.
OurGoods.org
2009, ongoing

OurGoods.org is an online network that Caroline Woolard co-founded with Jen Abrams, Louise Ma, Carl Tashian, and Rich Watts. OurGoods.org connects artists, designers, farmers, and activists who want to barter to get independent projects done. The website provides a platform for users to communicate their “needs” and “haves,” facilitating the non-monetary exchange of skills, spaces, and objects. At the heart of OurGoods’ mission is the belief that “better work can be accomplished through relationships of mutual respect and shared resources. Members of OurGoods build lasting ties in a community of enormous potential by creating a community of resources and trust.”
Carolina Caycedo
Day to Day (2002–09)

For her project Day to Day, Caroline Caycedo created a seven-year barter practice to meet her needs. This project had two platforms for exchange. Online, she posted her needs on a website, inviting visitors to offer a trade. She also drove a delivery truck, setting up temporary mobile markets in public spaces around the world, allowing her to barter her goods and services. For example, Caycedo traded Spanish lessons for a hot shower. Caycedo says that "art consists in the creation not of objects for passive aesthetic contemplation but of opportunities for cooperation and conversation among a broad array of individuals and communities."
Billy Apple

$100,000 Credit Held (2005)

Billy Apple's work emphasizes the corporate potential of barter. Turning barter receipts into commodities for sale on the art market, and barter exchanges into advertisements, Billy Apple is a corporation and an artist who "draws attention to the art system and highlights the network of relations that operate between artist, dealer, and collector." For $100,000 Credit Held, Billy Apple created a large wall work in the foyer of the legal firm, Minter Ellison when they moved into a new high rise. The artist explains, "Our transactional works paid for the bond of becoming a registered brand... It's an artwork very much about intellectual property law."
Ben Kinmont
*I Need You* (1992)

For this project, Kinmont approached fifty-eight strangers on the street in New York, opening conversations with each using the statement, “I need you to help me make a sculpture.” Kinmont explained the potential exchange as follows: “In between people there exists a space where communication occurs between the self and another. For many, this space goes undetected even though it forms the basis of cultural differences, personal relationships, and understanding. . . . If you share your ideas with me and provide me with your signature and a means of contacting you, you will be a partial owner of this sculpture in its final form, be notified upon it exhibition, and, if it is sold, receive a portion of the money earned.” Sixteen people gave signatures and addresses and were mailed checks one year later.
Tehching Hsieh and Linda Mary Montano
Art/Life (Rope Piece) (1983–84)

Tehching Hsieh and Linda Mary Montano are dedicated to blurring art and life by engaging in year-long practices that are understood as artworks. In Art/Life (Rope Piece), Hsieh and Montano spent a year within eight feet of one another, never touching. As they wrote in a 1983 statement, “We will stay together for one year and never be alone. We will be in the same room at the same time, when we are inside. We will be tied together at waist with an eight-foot rope. We will never touch each other during the year.”
Huong Ngo, George Monteleone and Or Zubalsky
*Dream Machine* (2005, ongoing)

As the artists explain, *Dream Machine* “will operate forever, archiving our dreams long after we have forgotten them.” They ask you to “call the dream machine and leave a voice recording of your dream. It calls you back in about fifteen minutes and plays a random dream from its memory.” Impossible to experience without a contribution, this project represents a network of anonymous reciprocity.
Audra Wolowiec  
*Freckle Exchange* (2008)

For the *Freckle Exchange*, Wolowiec created the following instructions: “Choose a freckle on someone who you love/(Don’t let any blemish go unnoticed)/Ask your partner to choose one from your body/Find a willing tattoo artist/Tell your story/Exchange.” She intended for these instructions to be followed by any two people. Wolowiec explained, “I wanted to create a simple reminder, through a sentimental gesture, of how we carry each other with us, like imprints. My friend Niels and I each chose a freckle from each other: I chose one on his finger, he chose one on my arm.”
Allan Kaprow  
*Trading Dirt* (1982)

*Trading Dirt* is one of Allan Kaprow’s Happenings, a term he coined in 1957 to describe events “performed according to plan but without rehearsal, audience, or repetition.” Beginning in 1982 Kaprow dug up dirt from his garden and traded it for other people’s dirt. In one instance, he traded his soil for what he called “heavy-duty Buddhist dirt” from the Zen Center of San Diego, where he was studying. Kaprow believed that “ordinary life performed as art/not art can charge the everyday with metaphoric power.”
Max Liboiron
*Object Ethnography Project (2011)*

Each of the objects in this collaborative project was donated with a personal story. The objects were available for exchange on the condition that the new owner submits a narrative about the object, resulting in an online document of an original story, a photograph of the object, and an exchange story. “The Object Ethnography Project aims to show how stories influence the value, meaning and circulation of objects,” Liboiron explains. “It is a creative laboratory where participants . . . determine the outcome of the cultural experiment.”
Adrian Piper
*My Calling Card #*
*(For Dinners and Cocktail Parties)*
*(1986–90)*

*My Calling Card #1* is what Piper considers a “reactive guerilla performance.” She would find herself “in otherwise exclusively white company at a dinner or cocktail party, in which those present do not realize I am black. Thinking themselves in sympathetic company, they proceed to make racist remarks.” In response, she would provide the individual who made the remarks with the card pictured here. As a result, she explained, “it established the possibility of dialogue between me and this individual without disrupting the group as a whole. . . . It allows me to express my anger in a semiprivate context that has already been established by the person who made the remark.”

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Dear Friend,
I am black.
I am sure you did not realize this when you made/laughed at/agreed with that racist remark. In the past, I have attempted to alert white people to my racial identity in advance. Unfortunately, this invariably causes them to react to me as pushy, manipulative, or socially inappropriate. Therefore, my policy is to assume that white people do not make these remarks, even when they believe there are no black people present, and to distribute this card when they do.
I regret any discomfort my presence is causing you, just as I am sure you regret the discomfort your racism is causing me.
We Make Change repurposes legal tender to communicate alternative political messages. The visitor inserts a penny into a penny press machine and turns a crank on the machine. While the image of Abraham Lincoln, the memorial commemorating him, and various inscriptions are erased during the process, the phrases “WE TRUST” or “TRUST ME” are imprinted onto the coin. Jonas wrote, “This coin that has value in one economy, is converted into an artwork that has value in a different economy. . . . This new currency renews a social contract.”
Wanting to work with inmates in Mexico City, José Antonio Vega Macotela created reciprocal agreements, exchanging labor with incarcerated individuals. “What they usually want me to do is to literally take their place in the outside world,” he explained. “I’ve asked their fathers for forgiveness. I’ve gone dancing with their mothers. I’ve met their sons and acted as their father for a day. . . . Since the body is our only real, subjective way of measuring time, usually what I ask for in exchange is measurements of time using their body. So . . . ‘You want me to go cook for your family? . . . Then you will hold your hand to your neck for three hours and make a scribble on a piece of paper for each heartbeat that you feel. . . . They become me and I become them, for a little while.’"
Mierle Laderman Ukeles describes herself as “madly in love with the public domain.” For the year-long performance *Touch Sanitation*, Ukeles traveled to various locations across New York City to shake the hands of sanitation workers. In her Sanitation Manifesto! she writes, “We are, all of us, whether we desire it or not, in relation to Sanitation, implicated, dependent. . . . I—we are all co-owners—we have a right to a say in all this.” Since 1977, Ukeles has been an unsalaried artist-in-residence at the New York City Department of Sanitation, demonstrating a long-term commitment to the exchange of ideas about maintenance between artists and sanitation workers.
*Marina Abramovic
Role Exchange (1975)

In Role Exchange, Abramovic traded roles with an Amsterdam prostitute for a four-hour period. Abramovic sat in the prostitute’s window assuming her trade while the prostitute assumed the role of the artist at her exhibition opening. Both artist and prostitute had been working professionally for ten years, but the prostitute agreed to the exchange only under the condition that she would remain anonymous. Abramovic writes, “There was no direct audience participation in the gallery, although the brothel had three male visitors who came in off the street. One was drunk and left immediately, one didn’t want to pay the going rate, and the third man only wanted the woman who usually worked that window.”
Janine Antoni
*Mom and Dad (1994)*

Antoni used her parents as material in this photographic triptych *Mom and Dad*. Working with prosthetic makeup, wigs, and clothing, she transformed her father into her mother and vice versa. She photographed them together—mother/mother, father/father, and mother/father—in the poses of classical portraiture. The artist explains: “What became fascinating during the process was the resistance or the impossibility of turning my parents into each other. What I was arriving at was a half-mom, half-dad creature, but to create this composite I had to reverse our roles in the sense that my parents made me, and now I was remaking them.”
Carey Young  
*Mutual Release (2008)*

Working closely with a team of lawyers specializing in media and intellectual property law, Carey Young created a series of works that invite the viewer to enter into, or be privy to, contractual relationships based on viewing, owning, and collecting art. Carey describes *Mutual Release*: “The artist and the gallery enter into a contract which liberates each party from any connection to each other while also suggesting the double entendre of an erotic component to the exhibition-staging process.” By treating the law as an artistic medium, the artist invites the viewer to experience the otherwise abstract space of the contract.
Nina Katchadourian and Ahmet Ögüt
*AH-HA* (2010, ongoing)

In *AH-HA*, Katchadourian and Ögüt exchange the letters that their names each have in common. Through a legal name change, the artists have swapped the a in their first names in 2010 and plan to trade the h in names in the future. “The reciprocal nature of the exchange creates a different dynamic: one of barter, trade, or rebalancing, rather than of donating or salvaging,” they explained. “The fact that one letter is exchanged . . . binds us into a contract with each other in the present. . . . We become guardians of one of each other’s letters now but also promise to step up to this task in the future.”
Dave McKenzie
*Proposal (2007)*

This painting proposes an exchange between two individuals. The work states simply that a meeting can only take place by mutual agreement. McKenzie said about his work: “When are we essentially in the world? What does it mean to think of yourself as a creature that can understand its own being? The pieces that have an idea about meeting or interacting are historical. They are about being present, and about being forgotten. About being able to be remembered.” McKenzie’s work holds an exchange in tension, a visible reminder of commitment over time.
In 1992, the artist collective REPOhistory initiated The Lower Manhattan Sign Project, an endeavor to install street signs uncovering the forgotten history of downtown Manhattan. Alan Michelson's silkscreened aluminum sign marks the Pine Street location of the original headquarters of John Jacob Astor's fur-trading empire, addressing his violent trading practices with Native Americans. The sign unearths a history of trade that reveals the social and political injustices that can emerge in exchange practices.
*Marcel Broodthaers
*Museum-Museum* (1972)

*Museum-Museum* consists of two prints that depict identical bars of gold stamped with an eagle emblem. The bars on the left print are labeled with artist’s names and the bars on the right bear the names of commodities such as sugar, tobacco, and chocolate. By integrating issues of art and commerce, Broodthaers raises questions concerning the reduction of art objects to basic exchange commodities.
*George Maciunas

Duet for Full Bottle and Wine Glass (1978)

This score directs performers to open a bottle of wine, taste it, and drop the bottle on the floor. As the title suggests, this piece is a duet, meant for a person and a wine bottle. A writer, performance artist, and composer, Maciunas was an influential member of Fluxus, a network of international avant-garde artists who were primarily active in the 1960s and '70s. Fluxus artists worked in a wide range of media, exploring politics, culture, and everyday experiences through performance, writings, and instruction-based works.
Ed Kienholz's Watercolor Show opened at the Eugenia Butler Gallery in 1969. Sometimes referred to as “The Barter Show,” this exhibition was said to have caused a buying frenzy on opening night. Each hand-printed piece stated what the artist wanted in exchange for his work, and each was decorated with a wash of watercolor and signed in pencil next to his thumbprint—an early acknowledgement of the cult of celebrity and the commodification of art.