

Wadsworth Atheneum
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Stan Douglas / MATRIX 123
January 23 - May 1, 1994



Hors-champs, 1992 Video Still: David Zwimer
Performer: George Lewis, trombone

This MATRIX exhibition is supported
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and the LEF Foundation.

Stan Douglas/MATRIX 123

...Negro Music is essentially the expression of an attitude, or a collection of attitudes about the world, and only secondarily an attitude about how music is made.

LeRoi Jones, 1963¹

I try to layer things on top of each other as much as possible, so there'll be, say, an immediate tactile access to the piece, onto which historical, textural references have been built.

Stan Douglas, 1993²

In **Hors-champs**, a two-sided, large-scale, 13-minute video installation and sound track, artist Stan Douglas delivers a museum viewing experience that draws the visitor into a dialogue rich with aesthetic, philosophical, and historical issues manifested in art, music, cinema, television, and politics.

Douglas, working on this project in Paris as a guest of the Musée national d'art moderne, structured and filmed a television studio session in which four musicians played **Spirits Rejoice** (1964), a composition by African-American jazz innovator Albert Ayler (1936-1970).

The title of this installation, **Hors-champs**, might be translated from the French as "outside the field" or "beyond the bounds." Douglas emphasizes the word "outside." The presence of these musicians, and of the particular music they play, signifies many different things, one of which is the long history of expatriate jazz musicians who have had to go outside of their own country to find large, receptive audiences. It is ironic that, although jazz is often considered to be the most significant contribution the United States has made to the history of music, few jazz musicians have been able to support themselves solely through performance in this country. Since the 1920s, jazz musicians have found more appreciative response in many European cities, especially Paris. Even today U.S. jazz artists frequently find a warmer, more knowledgeable and more generous welcome in Europe, (and, also, more recently in Japan), than at home. This dilemma, of course, makes them "outsiders" both at home and abroad.

Douglas suggests that **Hors-champs** is "always referring to an elsewhere."³ The musical reference is to a politically charged, highly controversial musical development called *free jazz*, which reached a pinnacle of public approval in Paris decades ago in the late 1960s. The intended audiences for **Hors-champs** are also located elsewhere: in times and places other than May, 1992 in Paris where **Hors-champs** was recorded.

Stan Douglas' **Hors-champs** offers a window on the 1960s. The free jazz movement in Paris was an expression of troubles across the Atlantic. Twenty-five years later, **Hors-champs** speaks to some of the same issues.

In **Spirits Rejoice**, as in many other free jazz compositions, the musicians are playing both inside and outside of established jazz traditions. While Ayler's composition features themes from the "elsewhere" of church hymns, field hollers, folk songs, and even **La Marseillaise**, in appealing melodic lines, the four musicians' innovative and improvisational forays outside tradition speak of liberation, personal expression, and the need to break with the past, as well as with the remnants of slavery and the complex network of oppression that still impose themselves on contemporary circumstances.

"Free jazz" takes its name from Ornette Coleman's 1960 breakthrough album, **Free Jazz**, which featured a painting by Jackson Pollock (**White Light**, 1954) on its cover. Coleman identified his musical ideas with the abstract expressionist painters who broke existing rules in Western art, celebrated the expression of personal feelings in their work, and welcomed improvisation into their creative process and chance into their finished paintings. For Coleman, and for other free jazz artists, all traditional musical rules were open to question.

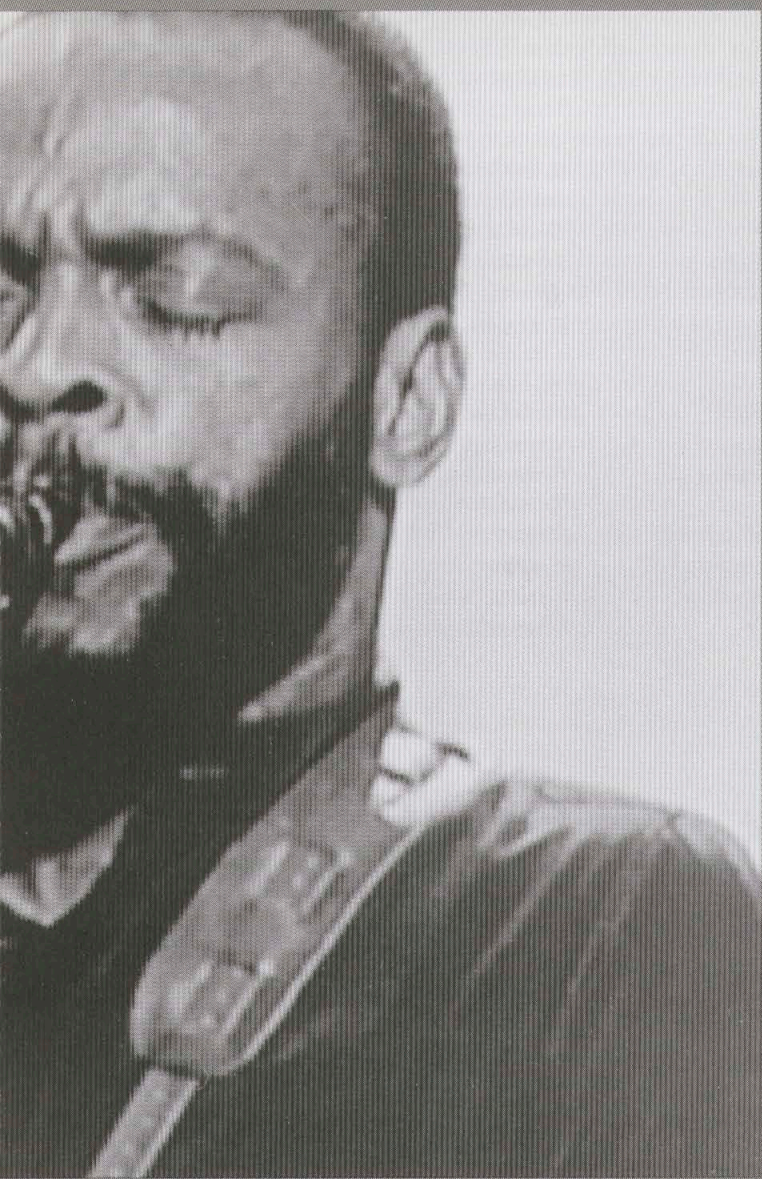
Free jazz broke with the harmonic laws of European music and eagerly explored alternative musical ideas from Africa, India, Arabia, and Japan. This break from tradition in the use of predetermined harmonic sequences, along with less emphasis on meter, beat, and symmetry, delivered free jazz musicians to an uncharted, open space of free tonality, a place that the legendary alto saxophonist Jackie McLean has called, in words of caution, "The Big Room."⁴

Free jazz also encouraged collective improvisation and emphasized the equality of all players. Non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian, free jazz performances encouraged solos not by just a chosen few but by each of the players. This notion of collective musical experiences was retrieved from African practices. Fiercely intense passages speed headlong into new sounds and new uses of familiar instruments. Free jazz (also known in the United States as "the New Thing") was a call for a radical shift — not only in music but also in social issues — from an old order to a new order. The roots of the intensity that is characteristic of free jazz performances can be traced to transcendental spiritual experiences in African dance and drumming rituals and Black-American churches. LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), author of **Blues People** (1963) and **Black Music** (1967), has noted how black music got "blacker"⁵ at this time.

To be sure, free jazz had a strong political edge. Its music expressed the tumult and paradox of the 1960s: breaking laws while searching for a higher social order, and celebrating



Hors-champs, 1992 Video Still: David Zwimer Performer: Douglas Ewart, saxophone



individualism and self-expression while promoting a commitment to communal effort. Free jazz was a bold, musical critique of a society embedded with racism and economic inequities. In short, free jazz presented itself as a metaphor for social revolution.

During the past decade, Stan Douglas has created a number of cinematic presentations, often drawing on voices of the past. Douglas' choice of free jazz as a subject is consistent with his earlier installations such as **Panoramic Rotunda** (1985), **Onomatopoeia** (1985-86), **Overture** (1986), and **Pursuit, Fear, Catastrophe: Ruskin B.C.** (1993). Each of these works engages the artist's interest in what he has called "failed utopias and obsolete technologies."⁶ In each he has presented an elegiac perspective that challenges the notion of progress in the industrial age.

Overture, for instance, included six minutes of early twentieth-century film tracing a train's journey through the Canadian Rockies. This archival film is accompanied by a soundtrack featuring the opening text of Marcel Proust's **Remembrance of Things Past**. In **Onomatopoeia** a player piano (delivering excerpts from Beethoven's Opus 111) is placed in front of a backdrop of slide-dissolve images of nineteenth-century mechanical looms (which were also run by punched paper scrolls) in an abandoned factory.

Douglas has suggested that his intention is "not to redeem but to reconsider"⁷ such times of optimistic but ill-fated expectations. Douglas believes such utopian moments "can't mean what they [once] meant, again,"⁸ but, rather, that they should be seen as valuable repositories of information on how our culture transmits ideology. "Instead of simply producing a film," says Barbara Fischer, "Stan Douglas makes use of the multi-faceted aspects of the cinematic 'machine' – photography, film, sound recordings, and even, most recently, television – in order to examine the way in which technology affects culture and functions in it. His projections and installations open onto the site of cinema as that theatre in which technology and, in particular, the simultaneous reproduction of image, sound, and text not only comes to represent but also produce culture. Cinema, here, is realized as the site of an on-going dialectic between culture and industry, technology and the imagination, and most of all, between the spectator's desire and entertainment."⁹

Douglas used two cameras to film **Hors-champs**. He then edited one version in the style of 1960s French television music presentations. This is version A, which is projected on the south side of the hanging screen. All of the outtakes from the two cameras – that is, all of those images not used in version A – were then spliced together in chronological sequence to make version B, which is simultaneously projected on the north side of the screen. Thus, version A is determined by carefully considered aesthetic choices, intending to simulate an earlier historical style.

Version B, however, is composed wholly by default, a highly conceptual strategy. Version B informs us of alternative viewpoints; it also tells us of "an elsewhere."

Hors-champs, says Douglas, is "a demonstration of how multi-camera television shooting works and of the sorts of things that are excluded in its supposedly seamless presentation."¹⁰ Television is monological, giving us only a singular point of view at any given moment. **Hors-champs'** intriguing two-sided image makes us acknowledge the frustration and sense of loss we feel at our inability to see both sides of the screen at once.

Hors-champs poses questions about the nature of representation. Such issues have interested artists and critics throughout the twentieth century. Consider René Magritte's painting **Ceci n'est pas une pipe** (1928-29), for example, in which the artist questions our own culture-bound convention of referring to a two-dimensional representation of a pipe as "a pipe." What Douglas offers in **Hors-champs** is not broadcast television itself, but rather a video installation (in a museum gallery), which engages both the aesthetics and the form of French 1960s television.

Hors-champs also gives us a keen sense of how television (and Western art) privileges soloist performance over ensemble work. Version B (the footage *réfusé*) illuminates the musicians' responses to each other's efforts and shares with us the warp and woof of collective improvisation. For instance, in one meaningful sequence in version B, trombonist George Lewis inclines to re-enter at the end of Oliver Johnson's drum solo: four times he begins to bring his horn to his lips; four times he changes his mind, a model of good citizenship. Another high point comes near the end of **Spirits Rejoice** when Lewis appears to be spiritually transported by Doug Ewart's fervent saxophone solo. In this closing segment, Ewart makes a poignant segue from the melodic and engaging to an elegantly sparse and quietly contentious ending.

Stan Douglas was born in Vancouver, British Columbia in 1960 and graduated from the Emily Carr College of Art, Vancouver in 1982. His gallery installations have been exhibited in Canada and in Europe. In 1988, he curated an exhibition of **Samuel Beckett: Teleplays**. An exhibition of his work, **Stan Douglas**, is currently on view at the Musée national d'art moderne (Centre Georges Pompidou) in Paris. This year he is an artist-in-residence with DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) in Berlin. Stan Douglas lives and works in Vancouver and is represented by the David Zwirner Gallery, New York City.

Andrea Miller-Keller

Emily Hall Tremain Curator of Contemporary Art

- ¹ LeRoi Jones, "Jazz and the Whole Critic," *Black Music Quill* (New York, 1967), p. 13.
- ² In "Broadcast Views: Stan Douglas interviewed by Lynne Cooke," *Frieze* issue 12 (September '93), p. 43.
- ³ In conversation with Andrea Miller-Keller, January 4, 1994.
- ⁴ In conversation with AMK, January 2, 1994.
- ⁵ LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) in *The Jazz Book: From Ragtime to Fusion and Beyond* by Joachim E. Berendt. Translated by H. B. Bredigkeit, Dan Morgenstern, and Tim Nevill (Brooklyn: Lawrence Hill Books, 1992), p. 25.
- ⁶ In "Broadcast Views...", p. 41.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ In conversation with AMK, January 4, 1994.
- ⁹ Barbara Fischer. "Stan Douglas," *Made in Camera* (exhibition catalogue), Galeri Sten Eriksson and Lido, organized by VAVD Editions (Stockholm, Sweden), 1988, p. 32.
- ¹⁰ In "Broadcast Views...", p. 44.

Work in MATRIX:

Hors-champs, 1992, room-sized video installation, courtesy David Zwirner Gallery, New York City. Projection system: 2 laser disc players, 2 video projectors, stereo amplifier, 4 stereo loudspeakers, digital hardware, suspended 6' x 8' painted Plexiglass screen. **Hors-champs** was produced at Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, 1992. Music: **Spirits Rejoice** by Albert Ayler, 1965. Performers: George Lewis, trombone; Douglas Ewart, saxophone; Kent Carter, bass; Oliver Johnson, drums.

Hors-champs is dedicated to the people of South Central Los Angeles.

Hors-champs Notes by Stan Douglas

What is typically known as "the New Thing" in the United States and as "Free Jazz" in Europe was an idiom of Afro-American music characterized by simultaneous group improvisation and relative harmonic freedom. Because of the metaphor clearly embodied in its formal premise and (to be exact) the political commitments of many "Free" players, the music was generally associated with black nationalism in the U.S. — but in France, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the music acquired other connotations. It was, for example, so popular among the Mai

1968 generation that audiences for Free Jazz concerts could number in the thousands, and there were even festivals organized by the French communist party, which regarded the music as an ideal of social organization. By the end of the 1970s, the music's popularity had begun to wane: perhaps because of these extrinsic associations; and though musical ideas from the period remain important today, the legacy of Free Jazz is partially obscured by the revisionism and revivalism that had been so overwhelmingly prominent throughout the 1980s.

Hors-champs presents the performance of four American musicians who either lived in France during the Free Jazz movement, or who still reside there today: George Lewis (trombone), Douglas Ewart (saxophone), Kent Carter (bass) and Oliver Johnson (drums). Their presence in that country may be considered continuous with the history of black American musicians emigrating to France, which extends back at least as far as the arrival of Josephine Baker and Sydney Bechet on European soil. The music they play is based on Albert Ayler's 1965 composition, **Spirits Rejoice**, and composed of four basic musical materials: a gospel melody, an attenuated call and response, a heraldic fanfare and **La Marseillaise**. Its proximity to the fanfare underlines the origin of the latter in military music, and, like many other national anthems such as the **Star Spangled Banner** (which also makes a brief appearance), the recollection of its bloodthirsty lyric will remind one of the tacit content of myths of national identity.

Hors-champs was shot *en direct* in the style of a ORTF musical television production from the same era as Ayler's composition -- notably those of Jean-Christophe Averty. This accounts for the rough *chiaroscuro* and abstract placelessness of its *mise en scène*. However, while those French television productions typically used four or five cameras, we used only two: one operated by Serge Godet and the other by myself. Two video projections are simultaneously presented on recto and verso sides of a suspended wall measuring 3 by 2.5 meters. While one side of the screen shows a "program" montage of the two cameras, the other presents a simultaneous counter-narrative of everything that had been edited out.

This project was produced at Centre Georges Pompidou by Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, 1992. Rehearsals began during the week of 29 April 1992. **Hors-champs** is dedicated to the people of South Central Los Angeles.

Stan Douglas, 1992

PLEASE NOTE:

Stan Douglas will deliver a **MATRIX** Lecture about his work on Tuesday, April 12, 1994 at 7:00 p.m. in the Hartford Courant Room. A reception in his honor will follow the talk. This event is made possible by the Vernon K. Kriebel Foundation, in cooperation with the Hartford Art School, University of Hartford.

The Atheneum also plans to show two films about jazz on Saturday, April 23 at 8:00 p.m. and again on Sunday, April 24 at 2:00 p.m. in the Aetna Theater. The films are Shirley Clarke's **The Connection** 1961 (starring Jackie McLean, 103 minutes) and Bertrand Tavernier's **Round Midnight** 1986 (starring Dexter Gordon, 130 minutes).

Gallery Talks on Tuesdays at 12:00 p.m.:

- January 25: Andrea Miller-Keller, Emily Hall
 Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art
- March 22: Owen McNally, jazz critic, The
 Hartford Courant;
- April 26: Christy Fisher, Curatorial Assistant,
 Contemporary Art



Hors-champs, 1992 Video Still: David Zwirner
Performers: George Lewis, Douglas Ewart, Kent Carter

Selected One-Person Exhibitions:

Ridge Theatre, Vancouver, Canada *Slideworks* '83; Or Gallery, Vancouver, Canada *Panoramic Rotunda* '85; Front Gallery, Vancouver, Canada *Onomatopoeia* '86; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada *Stan Douglas: Perspective* '87 (with broadcast); Artspeak Gallery, Vancouver, Canada *Television Spots (first six)* '88; Galerie Optica, Montreal, Canada *Television Spots (first six)/Overture* '88; Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada *Television Spots/Studies for Subject to a Film: Marnie* '88; Galerie nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris, France *Monodramas* '91; Art Metropole, Toronto, Canada *Monodramas* '92 (with broadcast); Galerie Christian Nagel, Cologne, Germany *Monodramas* '93; University of British Columbia Fine Arts Gallery, Vancouver, Canada *Monodramas and Loops* '92 (with broadcast); David Zwirner, NYC *Hors-champs* '93; World Wide Video Centre, Den Haag, Holland *Hors-champs* '93; Transmission Gallery, Glasgow, Scotland *Hors-champs* '93; Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, France *Stan Douglas* '94.

Selected Group Exhibitions:

Vancouver Art Gallery, Canada *Vancouver: Art and Artists 1931-1983* '83, *Broken Muse* '86, *Out of Place* '93; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada *Songs of Experience* '86; Or Gallery, Vancouver, Canada *Camera Works* '86; Artspeak Gallery, Vancouver, Canada *Behind the Sign* '88; Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Germany *Foto Kunst* '89; The Power Plant, Toronto, Canada *Reenactments* '90, *The Creation . . . of the African-Canadian Odyssey* '92; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia *Sydney Biennale* '90; Mendel Art Gallery and Civic Conservatory, Saskatoon, Canada *Issues in Contemporary Video* '90 (with broadcast); Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy *Aperto* '90; Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, France *Passage de l'image* '90; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA *The Projected Image* '91; Winnipeg Art Gallery, Canada *Art and Public Discourse* '91 (with broadcast); Kassel, Germany *Documenta IX* '92; FRAC des Pays de la Loire, Gétigné-Clisson, France *Canada — une nouvelle génération* '93 (traveled also to Musée de L'Abbaye Sainte-Croix, Les Sables d'Olonne, France '93; Musée des Beaux Arts, Dole, France '93 and FRAC Franche-Comté, Dole, France '93); Procter Art Center, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY *Tele-Aesthetics* '93; Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Gent, Belgium *Gent le Gast* '93.



Hors-champs, 1992 Video Still: David Zwirner
Performer: Kent Carter, bass

Selected Bibliography about Stan Douglas:

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Young, Jane. "Broken Muse," *C Magazine* no. 13 (Spring '87), p. 75+.

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Henry, Karen. "Stan Douglas," *Parachute* vol. 51 (June-August '88), p. 35+.

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Reveaux, Tony. "Fleeting Phantoms: The Projected Image at SFMOMA," *Artweek* March 28, 1991, p. 1+.

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Fetherling, Douglas. "Vancouver Anthology," *Canadian Art* vol. 9 no. 3 (Fall '92), p. 104.

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Coauthored with Deanna Ferguson. *Link Fantasy Artspeak* Gallery (Vancouver, Canada), 1988.

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