# HENRY FLYNT

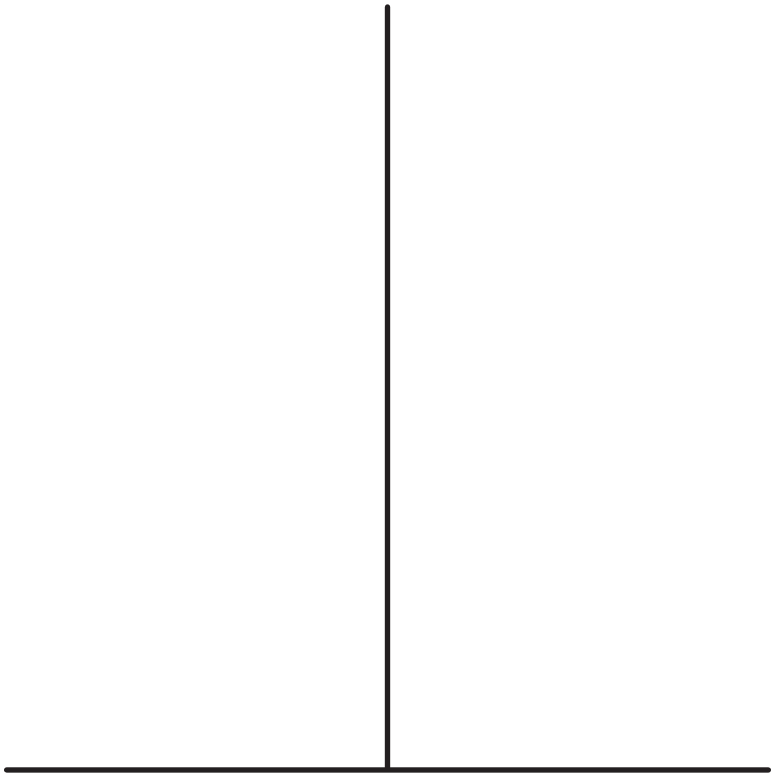
# 2011

# Concept Art

# 50 Years

**GRIMMUSEUM, BERLIN**

*15.07.11 - 14.08.11*



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AN INTERVIEW
WITH HENRY FLYNT
BY CHRISTER HENNIX
NEW YORK
DEC. 6, 1987

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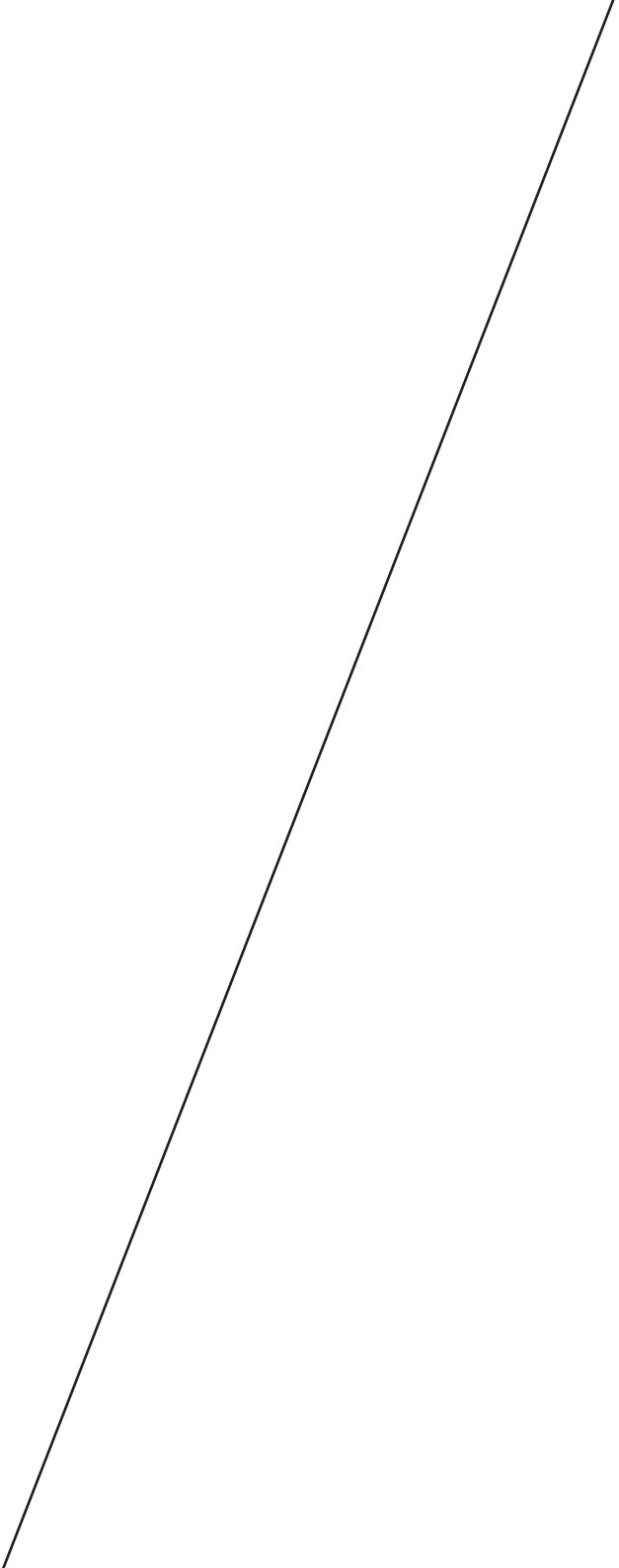

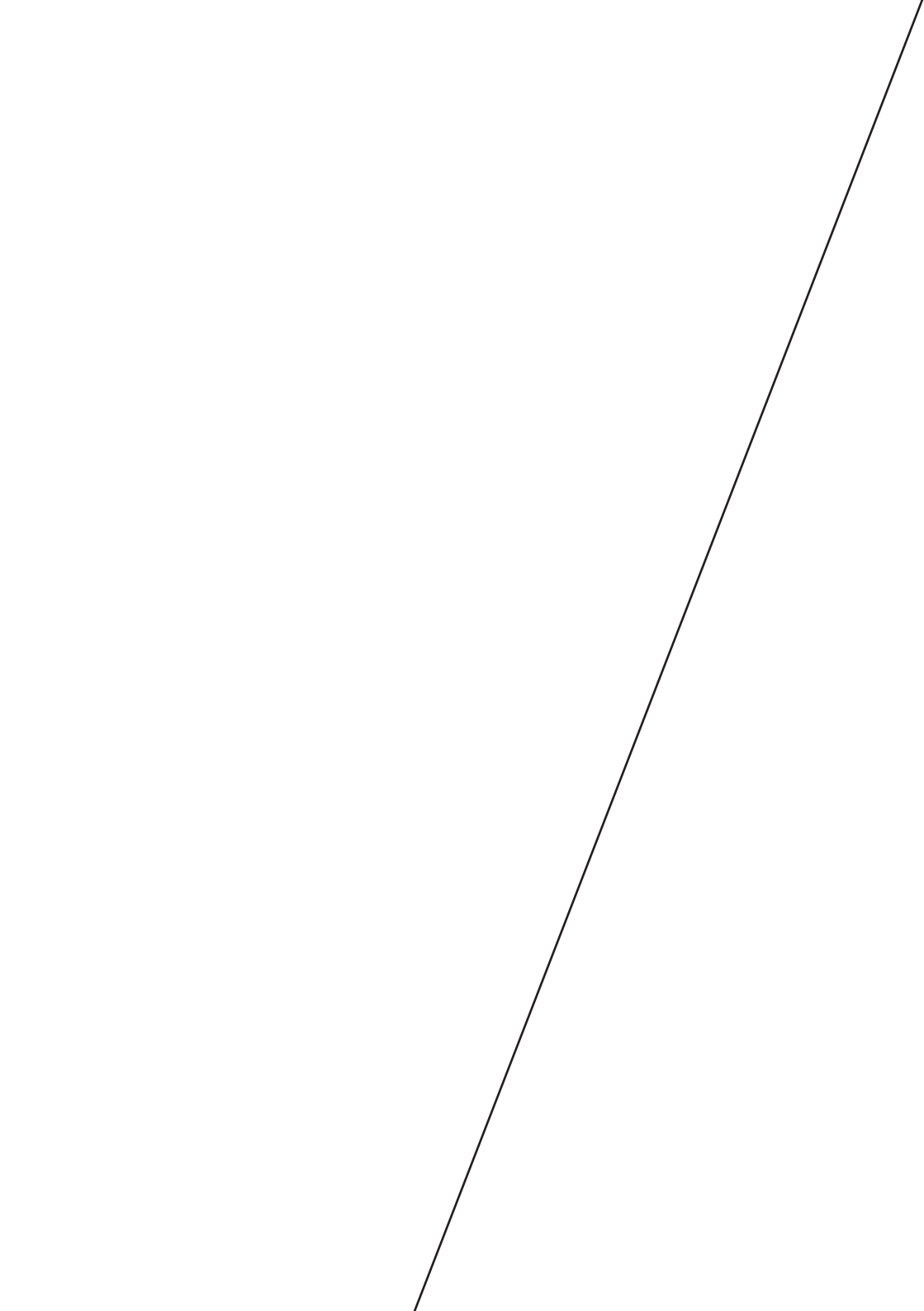

# FORWARD

# CONCEPT ART TIMELINE

BY
HENRY FLYNT

JULY 2011

I have prepared these texts, on the 50th anniversary of concept art, at the generous invitation of Catherine Christer Hennix and Grimmuseum.

As the 1961 essay says, concept art is **"first of all"** an art of which the material is concepts, and thereby, language. Quite so, but I was writing telegraphically. I was not writing defensively; I was not striking pre-emptively against all possible misunderstandings. By the time my label gained general currency in 1963, people wanted it to be a synonym for word pieces. (They wanted to give word pieces a promotion.) The problem was, for example, that they did not study what I offered. What they supposed or imagined was altogether at odds with what I offered.

La Monte Young left two of my 1961 pieces out of my section in **An Anthology**. Only now have I seriously tried to recall what one of them was about; I call it Teseqs. I had submitted Teseqs directly to Young, with supplementary additions; perhaps he left it out because of its requirement of a specially cut removable page. In any case, you couldn't possibly know about this missing piece unless I told you.

**CONCEPT ART IS ABOUT SEEING**

One who becomes informed about the 1961 pieces, including the missing Teseqs, realizes that if concept art is about language, it is also about seeing, and even about intangible visible displays.

At the Venice Biennale in 1990, I showed a concept art room (left unfinished by my patron) which was entirely visual, without text.

If concept art had to be placed on an existing shelf in a traditional art storeroom, **it would belong on the visual art shelf**.

Innperseqs utilizes a rainbow halo. I assume a viewer who wears spectacles with glass lenses, and there is no way to discuss the halo unless you have seen it. We could say that it shrinks, but more accurately, it attenuates. The annuli, from outside in, are white, yellow, orange, and blue, for example. (Perhaps an innermost annulus is yellow.) My piece refers to the white annulus which moves inward because of attenuation. In 1961, I made a diagram as a heuristic aid in which I showed successive locations of the white annulus by different colors. In 1970, George Maciunas would show the successive locations by cross-hatching.

It would be possible and even appropriate to replace the diagram with a film. In that case, the position of the outer annulus could be shown by a simple gray. All the other information would be conveyed by having the halpoints wink in and out. There would be no need for color or a radial line.

As to Teseqs, I discover from the fragment that survived that the

template for the piece is a piece of stationary with a one-inch square hole in the center. You look at the paper as a gestalt: that means that your focus is on the plane of the paper. What is at (beyond) the hole will usually be out of focus. It will change or not, depending on circumstances. It is an oddity as a visual work even before I make it syntactical by stipulation.

The graphic for Concept Art 6/19/1961 is a simple but remarkable optical illusion. It was the first of the concept art works where what you see is essentially subjective.

As for Transformations, it unfolds as a series of visual works, all to fit into a pre-specified rectangular area, each made from the preceding one by a sculptural treatment of film photography.

And word pieces? I was working in a milieu in which some of my elders were pioneers of text scores or word pieces, and word pieces were one of the threads which I wove into concept art. But only one of the 1961 pieces was a word piece pure and simple, namely Work Such That No One Knows What's Going On.

The outlines of what I have just said were already on the pages of *An Anthology*. That concept art in its practice belonged to visual art would have been obvious if anybody had wanted to know. But nobody pursued it.

**THE MISTAKE IN INNPERSEQS**

Years ago, I discovered that innperseqs has a mistake right at the surface. I am announcing it now for the first time. I overlooked that it is ***impossible*** for the first member of the next-to-last sequence (f, in the Diagram) to appear as a non-first member. The fix is easy:

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**TIMELINE**

**1960**

June. Philosophy Proper Version 1. [Letter to parents. Copy of the monograph, my archive.] Indispensable philosophical perspective for concept art.

November. "Electronic score." two sheets:

- Instructions
- the "score" (drawing, colored pencil)

The image-sound translation that prefigures the optical audioplayer. In other words, this "score" was the first "plate." [Young archive] See below.

December. The group of lengthy word pieces called "Circus." [surviving pages, Young archive] What are lost are "The Impossible" and "Choices." Very unfortunate because from the titles, they could have supplied leads for concept art.

c. December 18. I traveled to New York to meet La Monte Young for the first time and to attend the first loft concert (Terry Jennings). Young read me his *Compositions 1960*.

**1961**

January. My first "mathematics system." Tree-structure of proofs; syntactical objects that are not lines of type. (I will have to research to see if any documentation confirms this date. I destroyed this piece, and that was an enormous mistake, because it did not fall under my ban on art.)

But that leaves the derivation with an unused lemma (f) or a disconnected conclusion (g).
The discovery is of interest for a number of reasons. I no longer cared if my derivations or networks were correlative to proofs of natural mathematics. At the same time, one might think that as corrected, the network suffers in elegance. Beyond that, it matters that it is possible to make a correctible mistake in concept art. Concept art does not bash about at random. Whether the endeavor is cognitive or not is not open and shut; it seems to need my much later notion of a descent through increasing compromises.
In any case, it also tells you something that in fifty years nobody bothered to check and thereby discover my mistake.

## CONCEPT ART'S RECEPTION

Because of circumstances far beyond my control, concept art cannot be discussed without mentioning that it was misunderstood from the beginning. Hardly anybody informed themself about it beyond the label I coined. Once they saw the label, they assumed that the genre was the label – and that it was a favor I had done them. Many, many years later, Grove's Dictionary said it explicitly. In Vol. 27, on page 673, we read that I am a writer who coined the label concept art for La Monte Young's **Compositions 1960.**
Later in 1964, the Times Literary Supplement published two issues on the avant-garde. (One cannot imagine a comparable American

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As I remember it, this was my first piece of the new year, and may have been dated Jan. 1 or 2.
The axiom system (premise system) was a colored pencil "action drawing" in the style of my electronic music score of November 1960. The proof (derivation) came about via the application of overlays à la Cage.

February 25 and 26. My loft concerts. My exchange with Simone Forti on February 25, after I asked the audience to propose a contest, has concept art relevance. The "Let the contest be who can think up a good contest the quickest" anecdote. In fact, I made it into a piece c. 1990.

c. February 27. I went to Maxfield's apartment, probably to pick up the recordings he had made of my February 25 evening, and we had a conversation about his composition technique which would be highly significant for concept art.

March 14. Must have been a busy day!
Colored Sheet Music No. 1. See October 11, below. See 1970, below. Known because of publication. Since it is No. 1, that means that I did not think of "Electronic score" of November 1960 as the first optical audioplayer piece, even though it established the image-sound translation.
Mathematics System 4. [Known from October 1961 postcard.] See October, below.
Have the previous three Mathematics Systems been accounted for?—No, only one of them, the system from the beginning of January.

March 26. Mathematics System of this date, used the perpendicular

publication giving space to anything so un-middlebrow.) Both issues mentioned me. The review of ***An Anthology*** in the 6 August 1964 issue said:

> ***Some of it consists of elaborate prescriptions which would lose their point if carried out; these fall under the heading of what Henry Flynt in an interesting essay calls "Concept Art," a kind of theoretical speculation arising out of real art, "an independent, new activity, irrelevant to art (and knowledge)."***

The 3 September 1964 issue alluded to

> ***… Mr. Henry Flynt's picture of a purely intellectualized art where the elegance and excitement of the initial pattern pushes the final merit or demerits of the work itself into a subsidiary place.***

I mentioned Grove's Dictionary earlier because it corresponds more nearly to what I remember as having happened in the milieu. The TLS is not so bad – but it is already clear that people were assuming that I had not done something, but had only labeled something done by others.

When artists of the neo-Dada persuasion realized that I didn't want my label to be applied to miscellaneous word pieces, they concluded that I was selfishly reserving the label for word pieces authored by me. For them, it had to be about word pieces.

Given that 'concept art' came to be a synonym for word pieces,

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figure. By count that would be the fifth Mathematics System.

March 31. *The Harvard concert. The label concept art didn't yet exist. A great day for constitutive dissociation. Young's Compositions 1961. Flynt: "possibly Henry Flynt."*

May. I started Innperseqs. [publication in my 1961 anthology]

June 3. *I am in New York to give my lecture on newness at Young's apartment, to see Morris' Passageway, and to meet Maciunas at AG Gallery. No concept art significance, but shows my associations.*

June 3. *Conrad returns to Boston/Cambridge. He and I will not see each other until a few days later, because I am in New York on this day!*

June 11. *I have returned to Cambridge and have seen Conrad. Conrad proceeds from Cambridge to New York. [his attestation] The mystery is where he stayed in Cambridge for a week.*

June 16. *Conrad is in Baltimore (Baldwin) by this date. [he attended a concert on this date in Baltimore for which he has the flier]*

June 19. Mathematics System 3/26/61 reframed as concept art. My first use of the label in a surviving text.

June. Earliest date of completion of Philosophy Proper Version 3. [My postcard to Young, 5/2/61. Somewhere my records also indicate July 1961 as a possible date of completion. Note that I read the monograph publicly on July 16.]

we have a context for Yoko Ono's claim to have invented concept art in the pages of **Look** magazine in March 1969. Of course, to me, this world superstar power play was outrageous to the point of being incomprehensible. How could she claim to have invented something when she had absolutely no idea what it was?

In 2005, the art historian Branden Joseph accredited Tony Conrad as a concept artist in the pages of **Texte zur Kunst**. What was that about? As we peruse it, we discover that it is largely about word pieces that have a constitutive dissociation aspect. And this is a point at which I have to make myself clear. I started doing constitutive dissociation word pieces almost immediately after La Monte Young read me his **Compositions 1960**. (It would not be until 1997 that I would announce constitutive dissociation as a principle, in **Sound and Light**.)

As of June 1961, I began to relabel various pieces concept art, and that is how the received concept art pieces came about. But I didn't relabel my ***word pieces*** concept art. I simply wanted a higher threshold than that. Of course, if you don't care what I did, then you can call anything concept art – and people do.

I must say that La Monte Young distinguished himself in a way that nobody else did at the time. He wrote an answer piece to WSTNOKWGO (see below), and programmed the pair of pieces on a concert in February 1962. He was the only one besides me to enter the concept art arena at that time.

## AND ART?

The works I called concept art collect around a new perspective. If I had been the only player in 1961, it would only have been from

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July. Innperseqs must have been completed before July 16. [There is a colored-pencil Innperseqs diagram in the Young archive. This could be 1961 but it is possible that it is 1970 and that I gave it to Young for the second edition of *An Anthology*.]

July 15. I explain Innperseqs at Maciunas' AG Gallery, using a poster-size version of the color Innperseqs diagram. Young would have to have attended, since he curated the event. Conrad came up from Baldwin, Maryland.

July 16. I read the entirely of Philosophy Proper Version 3 at AG Gallery to an audience of three, Maciunas and two I didn't recognize.

July 1961. Work Such That No One Knows What's Going On. The one concept art work that is not a proof-tree or derivation. Saturated constitutive dissociation. [Publication in my anthology.]

Summer. I send a holograph of my "Anthology" to Conrad in Baldwin. He duplicates it at the school where his mother teaches. As I remember it, I knew that Young was compiling a big anthology. After all, I was working continuously with Young at the time. I decided to make an anthology for myself, which, as it turned out, was ready for distribution almost two years before the big anthology was. Includes WSTNOKWGO and Innperseqs.

August 23. *Conrad is in Baldwin. [Documentary proof in his possession.]*

September. Conrad returns to Cambridge and instead of return-

circumstance. As I have said, Young did enter this arena once (it was his last word piece), and his move has to be noted.

If concept art was not a label for word pieces, neither was it a label for all art that was imaginative or thinky. Concept art was much more specific – and in an ironic sense academic – than that. You had to know David Hilbert and Rudolf Carnap as philosophers of logic and mathematics to understand my springboard. You had to engage with logic as an intellectual activity. (The logic of the creation of abstract entities by stipulation – as with Gottlob Frege's creation of the integers 0 and 1 as abstract entities in **Foundations of Arithmetic**.)

What did Hilbert and Carnap do? Implicitly, they cut the content out of mathematics, leaving only a formal shell. Cage, anyone?

But, as is so typical of radicals, they didn't mean a word of it. Mathematicians remain incorrigible Romantics – and Hilbert and Carnap expected them to. Concept art was aimed directly against that Romanticism. (The idea of "pulling a Cage" on Hilbert and Carnap was unique to me. It was abhorrent to the mathematicians, as I would learn a few years later from Professor Peter Ungar at the Courant Institute.)

Suppose that, for purposes of argument, I confess that a concept art piece does not deliver a "truth." So:

– it is about notation as **seeing**.
– it does not deliver a "truth."

Then why wouldn't it belong on the art side of the cultural divide? But that requires a postscript. Concept art did not deliver what

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ing to Adams House, opts to live off-campus on Dana St.

Conrad brings me the copies of my "Anthology" which he duplicated for me. [Earliest date the document can be *proved* to have existed, Sept. 26]

September 1961. The earliest date on which I could have finished the published concept art essay. [from internal evidence]

October 11. Colored sheet music No. 1 reframed as concept art with the title Transformations.

between Oct. 11 and Oct. 25. Proposed concept art section for *An Anthology* mailed to La Monte Young. It is important that the submission was that late; proof is the October date appearing in the text. I submitted the piece Teseqs to Young (see below); he did not publish it. (Because I wanted a blank page with a square hole in the center to accompany it?) As noted, WSTNOKWGO was available. I may not have bundled it with the section I submitted to Young. But Young had it, because he had a copy of my anthology. He got WSTNOKWGO published in 1963 (see below).

October 25. Mathematical system 4 has been reframed as concept art and sent to Young before this date. On this date, I send Young an emendation—*so the complete piece has not been submitted until this date.* Possible title, "Teseqs." [October 25 postcard to Young, his archive]

December 8. Young writes an answer to WSTNOKWGO as a separate piece. [Typescript, one page, his archive.] To cover myself, I have to say that he saw my piece's weakness, but not its strength. ("It's only a title," he

Frege would have regarded as a mathematical truth. But within a few years, I decided that concept art opened the door on all sorts of intellectual initiatives. (And from the outset, it conjured with definitions that needed to be sound – or it conjured with definitions that created black boxes.) But to unfold the intellectual initiatives required decades. In 1987, in consultation with Hennix, I revived concept art, and, with Stroke-Numeral, Tritone Monochord, Self-Validating Falsehood, Which Way Is Up?, the Counting Stands, and other works, I was able to fulfill the 1961 promise, which the 1961 works did not do, frankly. But that is not what occupies us here: what occupies us here is how it started.



## CONCEPT ART TIMELINE

I developed the first works of concept art between January 1961 and October 1961: as this timeline explains.
It is well worth it to make this timeline, because it shows where concept art came from and what it originally meant. It shows what paths merged into concept art, beginning as early as May 1961 and lasting into December (with La Monte Young's answer piece—see below).
In the timeline, items which are included because they are needed for chronological correlation are shown in italics.

would tell the February 9 audience.)

**1962**

February 9. Young includes WSTNOKWGO and his answer on a concert program.

**1963**

Two of my compositions, including WSTNOKWGO, are published in *dimension 14* (Ann Arbor, U. Michigan College of Architecture and Design, 1963) [No month is available.] Young curated a selection of pieces for this publication that, like *An Anthology*, represented his post-Cage sensibility. The Fluxus sensibility had been proclaimed, but Young was curating independently of it—even as Maciunas was trying to recruit him as Fluxus' music director.

**1964**

August. "The Changing Guard," the August 6 issue of the *Times Literary Supplement*, one of two issues the TLS will publish to survey the avant-garde. Concept art is mentioned in the review of *An Anthology*. TLS makes it very clear what all this is about.

*... a particular American-German avant-garde movement whose outstanding older statesman seems to be the composer John Cage.*

September. The September 3 issue of TLS. Alludes to concept art without naming it, mentioning me.
The significance of *dimension 14* in 1963, and of these issues of TLS, is that there was still a broad discourse on the theme of "post-Cage" that did not attach everything to Fluxus. (Somebody other than me will have to ascertain whether these issues mention Fluxus at all.)

## RECONSTRUCTING WHAT HAPPENED

In my reminiscences on concept art over the years, I have relied considerably on my episodic memory. I have placed little mistakes on the record, and I have left out junctures for which evidence exists. People are not born with a forensic sensibility. It is a learned ability, and my standards of historical fidelity have been rising steadily.

As late as the spring of this year, I circulated documents that fell short – because I was not insisting on verification of the obvious and was not extracting every scrap of information from the surviving evidence. What I have learned is that analysis of the vintage documents is the premier way to ascertain what happened. The role of my memory is to interpret what the documents prove to have happened.

Thus, in what follows, I will indicate in brackets what documentary evidence there is for the stated dates.

Only recently have I realized that on the day Conrad returned to Boston from Europe, I was in New York. Only recently have I realized that I met Maciunas for the first time not just in June but at the **beginning** of June. Only recently have I realized that Conrad was only a transient in Cambridge in June 1961, residing there for about a week. Only recently did I realize that I could not have completed the published draft of the concept art essay until September 1961. I could only have submitted my concept art section to Young in October 1961.

My first provable use of the concept art designation was June 1961. The piece Innperseqs, completed in July and appearing in no other guise than concept art, was started in May. In the absence of re-

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**1970**

An Anthology, second edition. I prevailed on Maciunas to make changes and additions, and the reader who does not know this is poorly served.

The perpendicular figure no longer had a page to itself.

Maciunas added an Innperseqs diagram in which he substituted cross-hatching for the bands of color.

Transformations got retitled Implications. Then I added a paragraph of explanation. I got the phrase optical audiorecorder on record; actually, it should be *optical audioplayer.* See below for the 1970 explanation.

**CONCEPT ART SECTION, AN ANTHOLOGY EXACT TITLES IN ORDER**

**1963**

- Transformations – Concept Art version of Colored Sheet Music No. 1 3/14/61 (10/11/61)
- Concept Art Version of Mathematics System 3/26/61 (6/19/61)
- Concept Art: Innperseqs (May – July 1961)

[Indeterminacy. what I do here is to back off on how thoroughly you have to discern syntactical objects]

cords I don't know whether I thought of Innperseqs as concept art in May. I **could** have: because I did not note in the title that it was re-framed as concept art. When a concept art piece came about by reframing a pre-existing piece, the title says so.

**THE NUISANCE OF BACKDATING**

If the announced date of a piece is in the same time-frame as its **publication**, that date can be trusted. E.g. that I started Innperseqs in May 1961. There is no need to suspect backdating: because by September somebody other than me had "published" this (and other works) on a duplicating machine.

The point is that in 1961, there was no prospective increase in rank consequent on being a concept art pioneer. More bluntly: in 1961 nobody knew that you had to place the claim to be the inventor of concept art on your resume if you wanted to be out in front.

Where we have to worry about backdating is if a piece is pulled out of hat like a rabbit: if, upon producing it fifty years after the claimed date, the composer says that this is the first time he or she has shown it. If a composer really did a "radical" piece and really did conceal it for decades, waiting until it was an honor to have been "radical," it would mean that the composer wanted to skim the cream of glory without having suffered any of the ridicule and dismissal and without having done any of the campaigning. (Gauss and non-Euclidian geometry!)

But concept art is not really analogous to non-Euclidian geometry: the people who later wanted to claim concept art typically did not have the faintest idea what it was.



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*the pieces that didn't make it in "An Anthology"*

• Concept Art Version of Mathematics System 4 3/14/61 (10/25/61)
• Work Such That No One Knows What's Going On (July 1961)

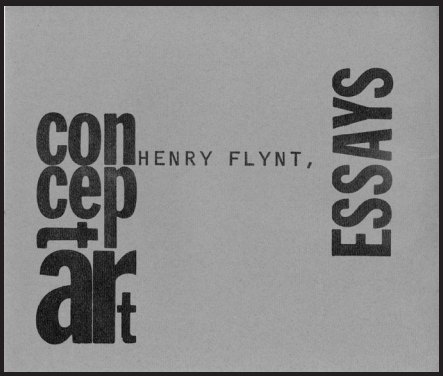
**1970**

• Concept Art Version of Mathematics System 3/26/61 (6/19/61)
• Implications — Concept Art version of Colored Sheet Music No. 1 3/14/61 (10/11/61)
*This is a mathematical system without general concepts of statement, implication, axiom, and proof. Instead, you make the object, and stipulate by ostension that it is an axiom, theorem, or whatever. My thesis is that since there is no objective relation between name and intension, all mathematics is this arbitrary. Originally, the successive statements, or sheets, were to be played on an optical audiorecorder.*

• Concept Art: Innperseqs (May – July 1961)

# ESSAY:
# CONCEPT
# ART

BY
HENRY FLYNT
1963



"Concept art" is first of all an art of which the material is "concepts", as the material of for ex. music is sound. Since "concepts" are closely bound up with language, concept art is a kind of art of which the material is language. That is, unlike for ex. a work of music, in which the music proper ( as opposed to notation, analysis, a.s.f.) is just sound, concept art proper will involve language. From the philosophy of language, we learn that a "concept" may as well be thought of as the intesion of a name; this is the relation between concepts and language. The notion of a concept is a vestige of the notion of a platonic form (the thing for which for ex. all tables have in common: tableness), which notion is replaced by the notion of a name objectively, metaphysically related to its intension (so that all tables now have in common their objective relation to 'table'). Now the claim that there can be an objective relation between a name and its intension is wrong, and (the word) 'concept', as commonly used now, can be discredited (see my book, Philosophy Proper). If, however, it is enough for one that there be a subjective relation between a name and its intension, namely the unhesitant decision as to the way one wants to use the name, the unhesitant decisions to affirm the names of some things but not others, then 'concept' is valid language, and concept art has a philosophically valid basis.

Now what is artistic, aesthetic, about a work which is a body of concepts? This question can best be answered by telling where concept art came from; I developed it in an attempt to straighten out certain traditional activities generally regarded as aesthetic. The first of these is "structure art", music, visual art, a.s.f., in which the important thing is "structure". My definitive discussion of structure art can be found in "General Aesthetics"; here I will just summarize that discussion. Much structure art is a vestige of the time when for ex. music was believed to be knowledge, a science, which had important things to say in astronomy a.s.f.. Contemporary structure artists, on the other hand, tend to claim the kind of cognitive value for their art that conventional contemporary mathematicians claim for mathematics. Modern examples of structure art are the fugue and total serial music. These examples illustrate the important division of structure art into two kinds according to how the structure is appreciated. In the case of a fugue, one is aware of its structure in listening to it; one imposes "relationships", a categorization (hopefully that intended by the composer) on the sounds while listening to them, that is, has an "(associated) artistic structure experience". In the case

of total serial music, the structure is such that this cannot be done; one just has to read an "analysis" of the music, definition of the relationships. Now there are two things wrong with structure art. First, its cognitive pretensions are utterly wrong. Secondly, by trying to be music or whatever (which have nothing to do with knowledge), and knowledge represented by structure, structure art both fails, is completely boring, as music, and doesn't begin to explore the aesthetic possibilities structure can have when freed from trying to be music or what ever. The first step in straightening out for ex. structure music is to stop calling it "music", and start saying that the sound is used only to carry the structure and that the real point is the structure--and then you will see how limited, impoverished, the structure is. Incidentally, anyone who says that works of structure music do occasionally have musical value just doesn't know how good real music (the Goli Dance of the Baoule; "Cans on Windows" by L.Young; the contemporary American hit song "Sweets for My Sweets", by the Drifters) can get. When you make the change, then since structures are concepts, you have concept art. Incidentally, there is another, less important kind of art which when straightened out becomes concept art: art involving play with the concepts of the art such as, in music, "the score", "performer vs. listener", "playing a work". The second criticism of structure art applies, with the necessary changes, to this art.

The second main antecedent of structure art is mathematics. This is the result of my revolution in mathematics, which is written up definitively in the appendix; here I will only summarize. The revolution occured first because for reasons of taste I wanted to de-emphasize discovery in mathematics, mathematics as discovering theorems and proofs. I wasn't good at such discovery, and it bored me. The first way I thought of to de-emphasize discovery came not later than Summer, 1960; it was that since the value of pure mathematics is now regarded as aesthetic rather than cognitive, why not try to make up aesthetic theorems, without considering whether they are true. The second way, which came at about the same time, was to find, as a philosopher, that the conventional claim that theorems and proofs are discovered is wrong, for the same reason I have all ready given that 'concept' can be discredited. The third way, which came in the fall-winter of 1960, was to work in unexplored regions of formalist mathematics. The resulting mathematics still had statements, theorems, proofs, but the latter weren't discovered in the way they traditionally were. Now exploration of the wider possibilities of mathematics as revolutionized by me tends to lead beyond what it makes sense to call "mathematics"; the category of "mathematics", a vestige of Platonism, is an "un-

natural", bad one. My work in mathematics leads to the new category of "concept art", of which straightened out traditional mathematics (mathematics as discovery) is an untypical, small but intensively developed part.

I can now return to the question of why concept art is "art." Why isn't it an absolutely new, or at least a non-artistic, non-aesthetic activity? The answer is that the antecedents of concept art are commonly regarded as artistic, aesthetic activities; on a deeper level, interesting concepts, concepts enjoyable in themselves, especially as they occur in mathematics, are commonly said to "have beauty". By calling my activity "art", therefore, I am simply recognizing this common usage, and the origin of the activity in structure art and mathematics. However: it is confusing to call things as irrelevant as the emotional enjoyment of (real) music, and the intellectual enjoyment of concepts, the same kind of enjoyment. Since concept art includes almost everything ever said to be "music", at least, which is not music for the emotions, perhaps it would be better to restrict 'art' to apply to art for the emotions, and recognize my activity as an independent, new activity, irrelevant to art (and knowledge).

Transformations - Concept Art Version of Colored Sheet Music No.1 3/14/61 (10/11/61)

The initial object: a sheet of cheap, thin white typewriter paper

Transformation of the initial obj. (obj.1) into obj. 2: soak the initial obj. in inflammable liquid which does not leave solid residue when burned; then burn it on horizontal rectangular white fireproof surface - obj. 2 is ashes (on surface)

Transformation of object 2 into obj. 3: make black and white photograph of obj. 2 in white light (image of ashes' "rectangle" with respect to white surface (that is, of the region (of surface, with the ashes on it) with bounding edges parallel to the edges of the surface and intersecting the four points in the ashes nearest the four edges of the surface) must exactly cover the film); develop film - obj. 3 is the negative

Transformation of obj. 2 and obj. 3 into obj.4: melt obj. 3 and cool in mold to form plastic doubly convex lens with small curvature; take color photograph of ashes' rectangle in yellow light using this lens; develop film - obj.4 is color negative

Transformation of obj.2 and obj.4 into obj.5: repeat last transformation with obj.4 (instead of 3), using red light - obj. 5 is second color negative

Transformation of obj. 2 and obj. 5 into obj.6: repeat last transformation with obj. 5, using blue light - obj. 6 is third color negative

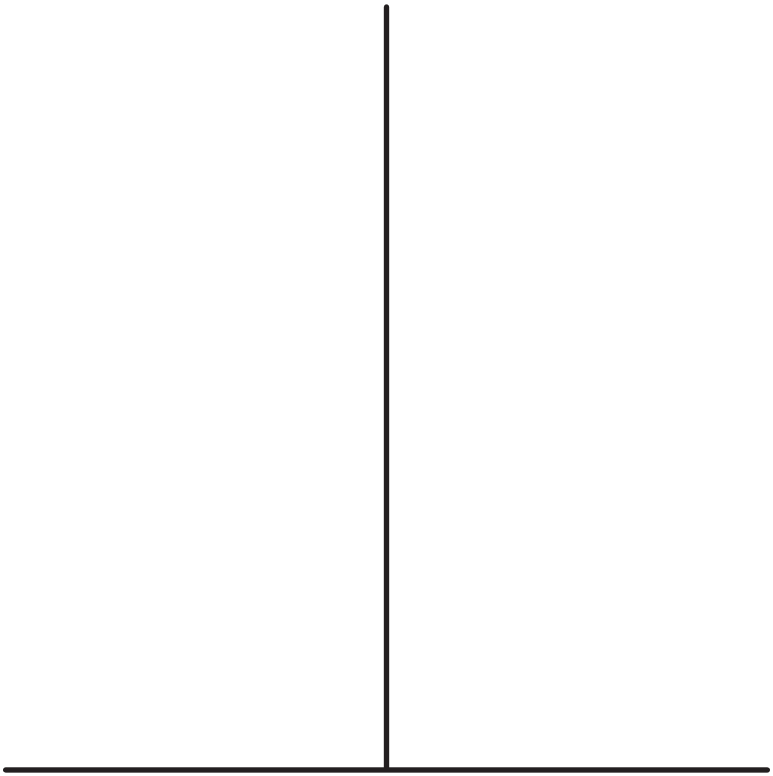
Transformation of obj.2 and obj.6 into obj.7: make lens from obj. 6 mixed with the ashes which have been being photographed; make black and white photograph, in white light, of that part of the white surface where the ashes' rectangle was; develop film - obj.7 is second black and white negative

Transformation of obj. 2, obj. 6, and obj. 7 into the final obj. (obj. 8): melt, mold, and cool lens used in last transformation to form negative, and make lens from obj.7; using negative and lens in an enlarger, make two prints, an enlargement and a reduction - enlargement and reduction together constitute the final object

Concept Art Version of Mathematics System 3/26/61(6/19/61)

An "element" is the facing page (with the figure on it) so long as the apparent, perceived, ratio of the length of the vertical line to that of the horizontal line (the element's "associated ratio") does not change.

A "selection sequence" is a sequence of elements of which the first is the one having the greatest associated ratio, and each of the others has the associated ratio next smaller than that of the preceding one. (To decrease the ratio, come to see the vertical line as shorter, relative to the horizontal line, one might try measuring the lines with a ruler to convince oneself that the vertical one is not longer than the other, and then trying to see the lines as equal in length; constructing similar figures with a variety of real (measured) ratios and practicing judging these ratios; and so forth.) [Observe that the order of elements in a selection sequence may not be the order in which one sees them.]



A "hăl̆point" iff whatever is at any point in space, in the fading rainbow halo which appears to surround a small bright light when one looks at it through glasses fogged by having been breathed on, for as long as the point is in the halo.

An "init´point" iff a halpoint in the initial vague outer ring of its halo.

An "inn´perse̊q" iff a sequence of sequences of halpoints such that all the halpoints are on one (initial) radius of a halo; the members of the first sequence are initpoints; for each of the other sequences, the first member (a "consequent") is got from the non-first members of the preceding sequence (the "antecedents") by being the inner endpoint of the radial segment in the vague outer ring when they are on the segment, and the other members (if any) are initpoints or first members of preceding sequences; all first members of sequences other than the last appear as non-first members, and halpoints appear only once as non-first members; and the last sequence has one member.

Indeterminacy

A ⌜totally determinate innperseq⌝ iff an innperseq in which one is aware of (specifies) all halpoints.

An ⌜antecedentally indeterminate innperseq⌝ iff an innperseq in which one is aware of (specifies) only each consequent and the radial segment beyond it.

A ⌜halpointally indeterminate innperseq⌝ iff an innperseq in which one is aware of (specifies) only the radial segment in the vague outer ring, and its inner endpoint, as it progresses inward.

# PHILOSOPHY OF CONCEPT ART

AN INTERVIEW
WITH HENRY FLYNT
BY CHRISTER HENNIX
NEW YORK
DEC. 6, 1987

FLYNT: I'm going to give a summary of how I originated Concept Art in order to bring it up to the point where it's understandable why I speak of you (Christer Hennix) as my only successor in the genre. Summarizing briefly, I see two things coming together. One of them was my involvement with the modern music community of the time—Stockhausen, Cage, LaMonte Young—and the other aspect was that I had been a mathematics major at Harvard and already knew that I thought of myself primarily as a philosopher—that my intention had been when I was very young, when I didn't understand the situation that I was in—my intention had been to become a philosopher with nevertheless a specialization in mathematics. Of course, many people actually did that.

So, having said that, one of the things that I began to notice about the modern music of that time was this extremely strong pseudo-intellectual dimension in Stockhausen—Stockhausen's theoretical journal *die Reihe*—the impression that they were doing science actually—for example Stockhausen had a long essay on how the duration of the notes had to correspond to the twelve pitches of the chromatic scale . . .

HENNIX: ". . .how time passes. . ." [*die Reihe* 3]

FLYNT: Yes, and what is more, the other rhythms had to correspond to the overtone structure above those frequencies as fundamentals.

HENNIX: Yes, I'm quite familiar with that.

FLYNT: Yes, I would expect you would be. I remember Bo Nilson—you will like this—in 1958 at the same time I saw Stockhausen's score—he went even one step further than Stockhausen because he used fractional amplitude specifications—so this is even more than Stockhausen, and so forth and so on.

Cage took a considerable step further in the sense that in Cage this kind of play with structure is carried to the point where there is an extreme dissociation between what the composer sees and what the performer sees in terms of the structure of the piece and what the audience knows. They are completely divorced from one another. Cage would compose a piece on a graph in which the time that a note begins is on one axis and the length of the note is on another axis. What he would do was to superimpose that on some picture like from a star catalogue—

HENNIX: *Atlas Eclipticalis*—

FLYNT: Yeah, well, that's the particular piece. I'm making up a composite of his compositional techniques but the result is that when you break up a sequential event in that way, it's not like a pitch-time graph where there's an intuitive recognition of the way the process unfolds. He would have one structure for beginnings and another structure for durations. Well at any rate, already in Cage's music there was a kind of ritual aspect to performing classical music. I mean in Cage's piece, which is actually all silence—the only thing the pianist does is open and close the lid of the piano or something like that.

Then LaMonte Young comes along. His word pieces were the first that I ever saw, composed in mid-1960. I saw them in December 1960.* It was a very different kind of structural game. It was no longer like twelve-tone organization and so forth but rather it was like playing with paradoxes—it was nearer to making a paradox than making some kind of complicated network.

And I felt that matters had reached the point where there was some kind of inauthenticity here because the point of the work of art had become some kind of structural or conceptual play, and yet it was being realized under the guise of music so that the audience had no chance of really seeing what was supposed to be the point of the

*Other composers have earlier dates, but for me, Young crystallized the genre. [H.F., note added]

piece—the audience was actually prevented from seeing. Certainly Cage's methods had exactly that effect. The audience receives an experience which simply sounds like chaos but in fact what they are hearing is not chaos but a hidden structure which is so hidden that it cannot be reconstructed from the performed sound. It's so hidden that it can't be reconstructed but nevertheless Cage knows what it is. So I felt that the confusion between whether they were doing music or whether they were doing something else had reached a point where I found that disturbing or unacceptable.

At the same time at that period there was a great fascination in sort of taking the Stockhausen attitude and looking back at the history of music from that point of view. Stockhausen's analysis in *die Reihe* 2 of Webern's String Quartet [Op. 28] tried to show that Webern was composing total serial music and not just twelve tone music. That was the attitude, they were rewriting the history of music, trying to show that all previous important figures were essentially preoccupied with structure, that they had been complete structuralists.

HENNIX: Really? I thought it was only Webern that was given that treatment.

FLYNT: Well, they were digging up all these composers from the Middle Ages, the isorhythmic motet and everything like that—they were sort of dredging that up because that was the previous period—the medieval scores in the form of a circle and the use of insertion syncopation,* it appears with the red notes in a medieval score and then it reappears in Stockhausen's *Klavierstück* XI. They were just jumping, they were dismissing what we would call the baroque, classical and romantic periods periods as completely worthless. In other words, the last music before Stockhausen was in the 14th century, this is the way the history of music was being rewritten. And LaMonte was getting into Leonin and Perotin and all that kind of stuff. Well, anyway, that's quite an excursion.

At any rate there is in music, there is this preoccupation with—it may be a kind of quasi-Pythagoreanism, I don't know ...

HENNIX: The way I looked at it was that they saw in Webern, first of all the harmony was going away. And they saw in Webern a way of

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*My term for the rhythmic feature common to Magister Zacharias' *Sumite Karissimi* and *Klavierstück* XI. See Willi Apel, *The Notation of Polyphonic Music* (4th ed.), p. 432 for *Sumite Karissimi.* [H.F., note added]

determining the note more and more precisely, in terms of all of its parameters, pitch, duration, timbre and all that. What was left was that timbre was not serialized yet. And that, as far I see it, was what the Darmstadt school did—they added—

FLYNT: Stockhausen's *Kontra-Punkte*—

HENNIX: Yeah. And they all considered Webern the god of the new music—

FLYNT: Yes—

HENNIX: —and also a little bit Messiaen—

FLYNT: Yes.

HENNIX: It was Webern and Messaien that determined the entire fifties in Darmstadt. In other words, they were saying that Cage was no good. He was just looking in *I Ching*—it was a random thing. And you cannot recover the structure, it's hidden, as you said. The problem was that Stockhausen, when he played his *Klavierstück XI,* you couldn't recover the structure either. It was so complex now. So the complexity of the serialist music became exactly the complexity of Cage. Cage looked his numbers up in random number tables; the others were sitting calculating rows of numbers. But in addition to that they also had to fake it. Because—you find that yourself when you do serial music—the music moves too slowly. So you change the numbers to get the music up a little bit.

FLYNT: Yes. We're taking longer on this than I meant to . . .

HENNIX: But I wanted to say this. The completely deterministic composition technique and the completely random, aleatoric technique, gave exactly the same results. And that was the complete breakdown of the Darmstadt school. That's when they started to improvise in Darmstadt. Not before that was there improvisation in Darmstadt.

FLYNT: When they first tried to serialize duration, they tried to pick a fundamental unit and use multiples of it; in other words, that's not the way you serialize pitch. You don't take one cycle per second and then use two cycles per second, up to twelve. That's not what you do. But that's what they did with duration. And that's what produced the Boulez pieces that move so slowly. In other words if you treat rhythm as multiples of like a whole note then it was moving too slowly for them.

But Cage was for them what was wrong with America or some-

thing. I mean, the center of what Stockhausen was doing was the concept of scientificity. In other words at that time I fantasized the composer appearing as performer, on the stage in a lab coat carrying a slide rule—there were no electronic calculators at that time, it would have to have been a slide rule—but that seemed completely appropriate. In other words, a composition was a laboratory experiment. I mean they viewed Cage as a typical American—coming in a vacuum—American superficiality—a vacuum with no scientificity. But Cage was actually not using a random number table, he was flipping coins, he was using the *I Ching*. Yet it was not even that—what Cage was doing was much more whimsical than using a random number book. He would just copy a leaf—in the *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* he just put the staff over a leaf and then the main points defining the shape of the leaf he just copied them on and he ended up with a circle or not a circle, but a group of notes in cyclic shape, and so the pianist was supposed to play around the circle. This was completely whimsical actually and yes, I remember very well these debates that they had, the one and the other*—I didn't have any idea that I was going to spend this much time competing with the music critic of the *New York Times* about who remembers the 1950s the best.

At any rate . . . There is of course a larger tradition in art which has a kind of quasi-scientific involvement in structure that does go very much to the Renaissance, for example. Althought I was not so conscious of that—I looked that up much later. But it was certainly there.

So, on the one hand concept art came from the idea of lifting structure off and making a separate art form out of it. The structure or conceptual aspect, and making a separate art form out of it. The other thing that was coming—the development of my philosophical thinking—I have to explain first that the version of mathematics that I received at Harvard in the 1950s in which Quine was the head of the department and editor of the *Journal of Symbolic Logic* and so forth and the hottest thing in philosophy was considered to be Quine's debate with Carnap. And I was a schoolmate of Kripke, Solovay, Goodman etc. etc., etc. I'm just mentioning that to locate the period of time. Actually my conversations with them were insignificant as far as the philosophy of mathematics was concerned, there was no discussion between me and them on any of that but it will locate the time frame that I'm talking

*Serial vs. chance.

about.*

But observing what was going on at that time, I picked up the idea that the most plausible explanation of what mathematics is, is that it is an activity analogous to chess, or in other words that chess captures the characteristic features of mathematics, even though, as I have told you privately many times, everybody knew who Brouwer was and what the intutionist school was, but nobody studied it, and from my point of view looking at it and knowing what it was, I felt no inclination to pursue it further.

The reason why this chess game explanation of mathematics seemed so plausible—you know, at the end of the nineteenth century they found themselves with three geometries—this is not Henry Flynt saying this, this is the canard, the story in the text books. There were three geometries; one of them fit the real world. They thought it was Euclidean, but it might not be. It might be one of the others like elliptic, for example; nevertheless, all three were consistent. Now what was the epistemological status of the two out of the three geometries that were true without having any correspondence to the real world, while one of them did have a correspondence to the real world and was also true? But what of the other two—the ones that were called true even thought they had nothing to with the world? You know presumably Hilbert wrote *Foundations of Geometry* as the original answer to that question.

Although—I can't pursue this here, it is much too technical—this is now an open question for me. It has never been an open question in the past. I just accepted what I was told—that Hilbert solved this by seeing that a system of mathematics that has no relation to the real world—in what does its truth consist? Its consistency as an uninterpreted calculus as they would say—axioms, proofs, formation rules, transformation rules. Certainly it was clear in the early twentieth century that the concept of an abstract space was established. This was what geometry was about. Geometry did not attempt—in Kant's time it was assumed that when you were talking about geometry you were talking about the geometry of the real world. That's the only geometry that there was. The idea that there was a different agenda for geometry other than the real world—how Kant could have moved geometry into the constitutive subject and said that it was congenital to the mind—

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*I'm being too diffident. I had quite significant discussions with Kripke and Goodman in 1961. [H.F., note added]

Euclidean geometry. In hindsight that seems to be one of the biggest mistakes he made, tremendously embarrassing, because by the mid-twentieth century it was completely taken for granted that the job of the mathematician was to study structures which do not have any reality. And that from time to time you will give an interpretation to one or the other of these structures, like a physical interpretation, and then it may be found to be true or false in reality or not. Meanwhile, you have another sense of the word "interpretation" which has to do with relative consistency proofs by something having a model.

This is now a completely open question for me, what they thought they were doing. In other words what Hilbert thought that he was doing—he interpreted one or another non-Euclidean geometry—what was the interpretation that he used? it was a denumerable domain of algebraic numbers [*Foundations of Geometry*, pp.27-30].

HENNIX: I think his ideas go back to Klein's models—which are Euclidean in the center of the circle and then at the periphery they have turned non-Euclidean (in the complex plane).

FLYNT: You had to have an explanation of how mathematics could be true in any sense whatsoever even though any claim of a connection with the real world had been completely severed, and it was being pursued in some kind of vacuum. What does mathematics mean in that case? And the answer that Hilbert gave was that it does not have to mean anything.

That's the answer. So it's a chess game. And the only difference between mathematics and a chess game is that there are additional complications created in mathematics by the fact that it deals with infinitary games. By the way, I completely overlooked that aspect at that time. You know, I can only see it now, kind of like two superimposed pictures, because I see what I know now and compare it with what I knew then.

HENNIX: Yeah, the same for myself. I didn't know that this idea of Hilbert's was forced by Frege until later. Frege was the one who said that either the parallel axiom is true, or it's not. Which way do you want it? And so he caused the big stir in the foundations of geometry in the end of the nineteenth century and that's why he became enemies with Hilbert. They were life enemies.

FLYNT: The reason I see it like two superimposed transparencies—

HENNIX: But even today this debate with Frege—you have to go to a single volume in Frege's posthumous writings—it is not mentioned in any textbook—no lecture mentions it, and, so far, nobody has explained it properly.*

FLYNT: Yes, yes, yes. You're talking about an obscure origin of something and what I'm talking about is a kind of consensus that had grown up, since everybody agreed that mathematics should study unreal structures.

HENNIX: But that consensus was *forced* on us, that that was what we were supposed to do.

FLYNT: The problem then—I thought mathematics was like chess. What I understand now is that even a good formalist would not agree with that. A good formalist would say that when you have a finite game like chess, the problems of validity and soundness become transparent or intuitively ascertainable, therefore a finite game is too trivial to be a proxy for mathematics. At that time I did not understand that distinction. I've read in many books since then that mathematics is the science of infinity—that is the way mathematics is defined now in half of the books that I look at. But at that point I did not understand. I thought the finite game was already, I mistakenly thought, a complex enough problem to stand for mathematics. Or that the reliability of a finite game was sufficiently complicated to stand for mathematics so I basically focused just on a finite game.

HENNIX: By the way, this was exactly the late Wittgenstein's view of the philosophy of mathematics—it's not a complete misunderstanding, that is to say, other people thought of it that way too.

FLYNT: The question then arose of even the soundness, the reliability, the consistency of a finite game—this then is the problem for example whether it is possible to follow a very simple rule correctly or not. The other thing that was feeding into everything that was going on was that Wittgenstein's *Remarks on The Foundations of Mathematics* was in the Harvard Bookstore when I walked in as a freshman my very first

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**Nachgelassene Schriften und Wissenschaftlicher Briefwechsel,* vol. 2, Felix Meiner, Hamburg: 1976. (Gottlob Frege, The Philosophical and Mathematical Correspondence, University of Chicago Press: 1980)

day there—so in other words I was looking at Wittgenstein's *Remarks on The Foundations of Mathematics* from 1957—

HENNIX: Ten years before me—

FLYNT: —but very cursorily. Because I had a philosophical agenda—I passed over this material in a very cursory way because I had a philosophical agenda. I was not involved in the distinction between a finite and an infinite structure. I was not involved in that.

HENNIX: You thought there was no such distinction?

FLYNT: Well no, I thought that—it didn't seem that there was very much point in worrying about that when there were much more extreme problems to be worried about. But Wittgenstein wrote a lot about the possibility of following very simple rules. And I assumed that if there were epistemological questions for mathematics that this game interpretation—this chess interpretation—had displaced the question of the soundness and reliability of the mathematics to the possibility of understanding a very simple rule like writing the series "plus 2".

And having gathered that this was the way that I should picture mathematics—I mean we understood very well that there were other pictures of mathematics, but we thought they were philosophically obsolete. In other words the person who believed that mathematics was a description of a real supra-terrestrial structure, and certainly there were people like that—

HENNIX: Still today.

FLYNT: —we thought that this was a philosophy that had been exposed as superstitious by Positivism and possibly even by Ockham several centuries earlier. So it was not that we didn't know about that. I drew a personal conclusion that that position could not be defended by any arguments that are acceptable by modern standards. What I really meant was by Carnap's standards. That's what modern standards meant to me.

In my philosophy I was not concerned with the specifics of mathematics; I was concerned with the problem of how I know a world beyond my immediate sensations. That was actually the question that I began with—the question of propositions of material fact, like "it is raining" or "the Empire State Building is at Fifth Avenue and 34th Street."

I had read a very simplified exposition—it was actually some

lectures that Carnap gave in England in the 1930s on what Positivism was.* They were very simple lectures and very different from his actual published books with all this supposed apparatus and symbols and so forth but a very simple exposition of what it is for a proposition to be meaningful—that it must be empirically testable and so forth and so on and the solution of questions of metaphysics that make assertions that are not testable are therefore meaningless—the possibility of solving questions of what is real by declaring if there is no way of deciding them they are therefore meaningless. That seemed to me to be, at the time, a stunning contribution. Because I come out of a background—I was in high school reading Kant and so forth and so on. And Carnap's solution was much more attractive to me than trying to participate with Kant, to experience his question and try to take one side or the other when he already said it's not really answerable; I solve it by simply having faith or something like that, which is what he said about the famous God freedom and immortality—I found it immensely attractive when Carnap came along and said that there is no way of answering these questions; therefore, words are being used nonsensically.

I went through a process of thinking about that without ever having seen Carnap's *The Logical Structural of The World.* When I was in Israel Scheffler's philosophy of science class, I tried to write a text which in effect gave my own empiricist constructions of what it means to say that A causes B and so forth, to give empiricist constructive definitions of those—which is, I suppose, in the spirit of Carnap's program, even though I hadn't actually seen what he had written, and if I had it would have confused me—no, I wouldn't say "confused"; I would say it would have discredited him completely. I wouldn't say "confused" because that's too modest.

HENNIX: No, I wouldn't think "confused," I would think it would have upset you . . .

FLYNT: No, I wouldn't say "confused." I would say he had been discredited.

I very quickly passed to the position that the propositions of *natural science* were meaningless metaphysics.

HENNIX: On what basis? Can you pin that down? A little bit, only.

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*R. Carnap, *Philosophy and Logical Syntax* (1935).

FLYNT: This is something I want to compress—it says a little bit about this in *Blueprint for a Higher Civilization**—like the proposition, "this key is made of iron" or something like that, I comment on that in the essay "Philosophical Aspects of Walking Through Walls."

HENNIX: I didn't recall the example actually.

FLYNT (reading): "The natural sciences must certainly be dismantled. In this connection it is appropriate to make a criticism about the logic of science as Carnap rationalized it. Carnap considered a proposition meaningful if it had any empirically verifiable proposition as an implication. But consider an appropriate ensemble of scientific propositions in good standing, and conceive of it as a conjunction of an infinite number of propositions about single events (what Carnap called protocol-sentences). Only a very small number of the latter propositions are indeed subject to verification. If we sever them from the entire conjunction, what remains is as effectively blocked from verification as the propositions which Carnap rejected as meaningless. This criticism of science is not a mere technical exercise. A scientific proposition is a fabrication which amalgamates a few trivially-testable meanings with an infinite number of untestable meanings and inveigles us to accept the whole conglomeration at once. It is apparent at the very beginning of *Philosophy and Logical Syntax* that Carnap recognized this quite clearly; but it did not occur to him to do anything about it."

The only point that I'm trying to make here is that I began to move very quickly when I was still very young towards a position of extreme disillusionment and cognitive extremism. I moved very quickly. This was not a slow process. I just immediately took Carnap's critique of metaphysics, decided that it applied directly to natural science—you dismiss natural science as meaningless. The problem: is there an object that is beyond my experience, is there a glass which is beyond what they would call the "scopic" glass, the "tactile" glass [gestures toward the glass from which he has been drinking]—is there a glass other than those glasses—when you first think about it, that question seems to have exactly the status of the propositions about God, freedom, and immortality that Kant said are unanswerable and that Carnap said are meaningless. However, there is one additional step for people who are interested in the history of philosophy. Kant, in the second edition of

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* H. Flynt, *Blueprint for a Higher Civilization* (Milan, 1975).

*Critique of Pure Reason*, added this notorious refutation of idealism to prove the existence of the real world independent of my sense impressions—you may not know about this—this was the basis of Husserl's phenomenology—Husserl's phenomenology was invented in this passage and it also tremendously preoccupied Heidigger. It was one of the sources which causes Heidigger to say that the essence of Being is Time. Kant said that essentially it is the passage of time which proves that there must be an external world. This is notorious in the history of philosophy. Because on the one hand it is so deeply influential for later thinkers; and on the other hand, for example, Schopenhauer said it was a complete disgrace—it was such an obvious sophistry that it was just disgusting—that it had the effect of ruining the *Critique of Pure Reason.*

Actually this refutation of idealism is distributed throughout the *Critique of Pure Reason,* it's not in any one place—a foot note here, a preface there, another passage somewhere else. In one of the footnotes Kant makes the same point. In order to ask the question whether there is a glass beyond my sense impression of it—I cannot ask that question . . .

HENNIX: Oh you mean the *ding an sich* question.

FLYNT: Well that's what Kant would have been talking about but I don't want to fit that narrowly into Kant's controlling the terms of the discussion. I'm trying to ask it as someone who has embraced Logical Positivism and is now turning around to question Logical Positivism—you see the point that I was just making there—when you say that this key is made of iron, which is Carnap's favorite example —and then a protocol sentence, for example "if I hold a magnet near this key, the key will be attracted to the magnet"—it is not clear where Carnap stands on the question whether only my sense impressions are real —just talking about this situation—only my sense impressions are real—or is there supposed to be a *substantial* key?

By the way, I don't know Carnap's work that well. I passed over these people in a very offhand way, so much so that many times I've talked to people and they've concluded in their own mind that I don't really know philosophy because I seem to have just glanced at these people—picked up one or two points—the reason for that is that I was moving so quickly to my own terminus—I only needed to see the slightest symptom from these people to know that they were spending all their time worrying about something that it was a waste of time to

worry about since it could only be a secondary issue. Here is Carnap with this key made of iron—while I'm trying to ask is there a key other than the scopic key, the tactile key *now*—since the past and the future are beyond immediate experience. I mean they cannot be cited as evidence—or whether they are evidence or not, is the same problem. Should I believe in the past and the future even though they are not immediates? Should I believe in the glass, even though what I presumably have is a scopic glass—at this very moment, a visual glass apparition, from that should I conclude a glass?

The first reaction to that question for somebody who is coming from Kant and Carnap and who does not mind how extreme his answer is—that's the key thing. In other words, if I came to a conclusion that was completely untenable as far as social circumstances—that didn't bother me at all. At first the question whether there is a real glass beyond the apparition would seem to be an unanswerable question—one of Kant's metaphysical questions—but then you think—that if you know what the question means, then there must be a realm beyond experience, because otherwise it is unclear how the question could be understandable.

From my point of view—if you want to make an issue out of semantics—this is the profound issue. What the mathematical philosophers and philosophers of mathematics were doing, talking about semantics, interpreting geometry as an algebra and algebra as a geometry—really for the purposes of relative-consistency proofs or because they found they could solve problems by using a machinery developed in another branch of mathematics by seeing these structural similarities—but to confuse that with what I thought the bona fide semantic question is: how would I understand the question whether there is a substantial glass other than the scopic glass—you know the conclusion—I can't tell you the exact breakdown—but I am talking now about the 1961 manuscript, *Philosophy Proper**—I may have already come to the conclusion at that time—that the question itself forces a yes answer. This does not mean that a proof of the existence of the external world has been given. It meant that the proposition of the existence of the external world would verify itself even if it were false!

HENNIX: I find this extremely interesting and rewarding, what you are saying now, because I never heard you say it this way before. I just want

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*Published in *Blueprint for a Higher Civilization.*

to ask you one question before you go on: namely, I see something for the first time which I hadn't seen before—but before you go on I just want to ask you one leading question: the simple existential statement, "there is a glass on the table." You include that also in what will be doubtable here. In other words not just "there is a glass on the table" but "there exists a glass," the existential statement. I guess I wasn't very clear now.

FLYNT: No, the thing is, the approach that I'm taking doesn't break it down the way that you're talking about. Let me tell you. You may not be *sympatico* with empiricism. When you are trying to deal with philosophy at all—you have to make some allowance for the fact—you have to understand that the philosopher may be carving up problems in a way that is temperamentally alien to you.

HENNIX: Yeah . . .

FLYNT: You have to understand that. This is why somebody like Carnap would read Hegel and say it's not saying anything. Actually, Hegel *is* saying something. In fact, you might go so far as to make a case that Hegel is actually rebutting Carnap, becaue if you understand what Hegel is doing you realize even more than one would realize anyway that Carnap has an untenable position—that he's sort of—that he wants what he cannot have. He has made a set of rules that does not allow him to have the thing that he demands to have. Hegel would have seen that immediately. Carnap thinks that the problem of a logic of consistency is an easy problem and a solved problem. In effect, Hegel was saying there is something very misleading in thinking that that is a solved problem. I'm trying to give you a sense of misunderstandings between philosophers that are the results of temperamental incompatibilities.

HENNIX: What you are giving me is a two-step way to skepticism. You ask a certain question—is there something beyond this perception of the glass? And you say the answer "yes" is forced on me, but then you realize this was a meaningless question.

FLYNT: No, it's the other way around.

HENNIX: Oh, okay, but here's where you have to explain in detail because here's where I miss you.

FLYNT: Let me go through the series of steps again. The series of steps was . . . I'll have to do it all at the same time. You have to understand—I

don't think that you even understand what an empiricist is. It's a peculiar attitude. And one of the reasons why you have very little training in this attitude is because people who claim to be empiricists—it's always a fraud. All people who appear in public and say they are empiricists, they are all lying all of the time. The reason that they're lying is that they have this doctrine of the construction of the world from sense impressions. That is their doctrine. But they do not stay with that doctrine. And the reason why they do not stay with that doctrine is because in addition to having the doctrine of the construction of the world from sense impressions, they also want to have things like science—

HENNIX: Ethics . . .

FLYNT: No, not ethics—one of the characteristics of the twentieth-century philosopher was the appearance of the tough-guy philosopher who rejects all of ethics as meaningless, which Carnap certainly did and people who are close to him like A.J. Ayer—no, they did not want ethics. But they wanted science. And the problem with wanting the construction of the world from sense impressions on the one hand and wanting science on the other is that the two finally have nothing to do with each other at all—and when they said that the two were the same thing as Carnap did—he was lying—I made a hero out of Carnap—I derived some kind of positive impulse from him or something like that without—I never actually read—my serious reading of Carnap was like three or four pages of excerpts in a paperback popularization. I owned, I had in my library Carnap's so-called real books, like *Logical Foundations of Probability* and *Meaning and Necessity* and all the rest of them and I never read them.* And in hindsight that was good, because I took his slogan seriously and assumed that he meant what he said and drew the necessary consequences of it. If I had actually read his books I would have been thrust into this massive hypocrisy, and I must say stupidity, because the man did not realize that his answers were not adequate, did not realize how preposterous his constructions of the world were —

HENNIX: I would say vulgar.

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*Again I'm being too diffident. I thoroughly studied portions of the Carnap books I owned—beginning with *The Logical Structure of Language*, which I bought while in high school [H.F., note added].

FLYNT: Yes, yes. And. . .what is even worse about empiricism is, in the case of somebody like Mach, not only does he want to have his sense impressions and does he want to have his science, but he wants to have science explain sense impressions! And nevertheless it was supposed to be the sense impressions that were primary, not the science. Mach is seriously telling you, I will tell you why you see a blue book—because the frequency of blue light is—and then he gives some uncountable number, I mean some number that is pragmatically infinite, or something like that. And how do you know that blue light is exactly 3.2794835 times 10 to the 15th and not one more or less—? Well, certainly not by just looking, I'll guarantee you that! You have to go into a laboratory with a few million dollars' worth of equipment or something. But that's what it is to see that the book is blue.

I'm trying to give you the sense of what it would be to be an authentic empiricist. You ask does a glass exist; an authentic empiricist would have to say that he already has a problem with that—that he has to regard that as an undefined question or statement. It's undefined, because if you are asking me if at this moment I quote unquote *have*—interesting word there, "have"—that is what our ordinary language gives us as the idiom for this.

HENNIX: Or "suffer!"

FLYNT: Yes, "have" or "suffer," that's right. I have or I suffer a scopic glass or visual glass apparition—then that is identically true. That is identically true. If you express any surprise at that, we have a problem here. I have a scopic glass. If I say I have an apparitional glass, would that be okay?—I mean from this point of view the sense impression is not open to dispute. It's meaningless to dispute it. It's an impression, an apparition—the sense impression is that for which seeming and being are identical. For the empiricist the phase of the world or range of the world for which seeming and being are identical is the sense impression. If that seems strange to you then maybe I can make it less strange by pointing out to you to make this as clear as possible—for the empiricist to say that I have an apparitional glass is to say nothing about Reality with a capital R at all! This is the so-called subjective psychological moment—although an empiricist would never say that—the reason an empiricist would never say that is that even to call it subjective is already much too strong because that implies that you can guarantee an objectivity to compare it to. And a bona fide empiricist would not agree that my sense impression is subjective—subjective in comparison to *what?*

HENNIX: So an empiricist would be a person who would not doubt whether he had a toothache or not. In other words, if he had a toothache...

FLYNT: You would regard it as being a mistake to do what? I'm not sure about the word "toothache"—if you mean that he would not doubt whether he had a toothache sensation. Whether there is an organic—in the language of medicine—whether there is an organic substrate for the toothache impression—this in a medical sense is a question of what is called hysteria or something like that

HENNIX: Suppose I have a toothache. But now I'm an empiricist so I say I'm doubting this impression. I probably don't have a toothache.

FLYNT: No, no ...

HENNIX: I have to accept the toothache?

FLYNT: No, you don't have —

HENNIX: The glass you said was—I couldn't doubt the perception of the glass. You said that was beyond doubt, in some sense, for the empiricist.

FLYNT: It would be some kind of logical mistake to think that there was anything there to be doubted.

HENNIX: Okay. And the same with the toothache.

FLYNT: Yes, yes. I mean the point is not so much that we have come into an area in which the empiricist is prepared to have faith—that would be completely missing the point. No faith is required—that's the point. The point is that it would be some kind of logical error. Once you understand what a sense impression is, the terminology of doubt does not apply to that level.

HENNIX: I see. Just that was my question.

FLYNT: The terminology of doubt does not apply to apparitions. It doesn't make sense to doubt subjective apparitions. The empiricist is already nervous when you ask does a glass exist. If you are asking whether I have a "scopic" glass, it's identically true. Wait, wait. There are already problems there. I'll come back to them. But when you say—it sounds like what you're asking me is whether the fact that I see a glass is sufficient to prove an objective glass—that sounds like ...

HENNIX: No, no, that's not what—

FLYNT: Well, ok. Most people when they say: "do you concede that there is a glass on the table—I'm sitting here looking at it," what they mean is: "do you concede that from your visual glass apparition you should conclude an objective glass, a substantial glass?" I'm taking it for granted that you know enough about philosophy to have a sense of the full weight those two words "substantial" and "objective" have in philosophy.

HENNIX: Yes.

FLYNT: That at great length is my reaction to your question about doubting "there is a glass on the table" versus doubting "there exists a glass." A bona fide empiricist would say, "Why are you asking me this?" The scopic glass is simply here for me. As far as concluding that an objective glass exists from the existence of that apparition—the traditional problem of concluding whether the apparition is a symptom of some transcendent world—I think the word "transcendent" is sometimes used in that sense in philosophy—the world beyond any sense impression—

HENNIX: This is why I used the example of the pain—because it would be senseless for me to claim that *I* can have *your* toothache!

FLYNT: Now just a minute. An empiricist—what you're really getting at— what you're sort of squeezing out of me here—I'm glad to have it squeezed out of me—I have no embarrassment about this—is that with empiricism either you must be prepared immediately to depart absolutely from the conventional world view, or else you will just plunge yourself into a quicksand of hypocrisy. When you're asking me, can I have your toothache ... A good empiricist would say, "I have not established so-called other people except the other-people apparitions that occur for me from time to time in waking life *as they do in my dreams!* And are you now going to ask me can I have the toothache of a person who appears to me in a dream?" Then the spotlight would be turned on *you*—what kind of an issue are you trying to make there? What do you believe is the reality status of the furniture in my dreams? For the empiricist, nothing remotely like that question has arisen yet, because I haven't got outside of my own quote unquote head yet.

Maybe you're just squeezing more and more. Either the empiricist must be a "madman" or else he must be insincere. I took the alternative of the madman. This is important not for me but for the general public to be told—something which the general public has never been told—

and I know why they have never been told—maybe it is necessary to complete this point. The point is that empiricism was contrived to paper over a kind of—I mean there was sort of this epistemological—Science epistemologically was resting on some sort of very shaky foundation—they saw that. They brought in this empiricism in the hope that it would solve a problem, that it would substantiate science while at the same time it would cut away the common-sense notion of causality as being unnecessary to science. Empiricism was going to give you a more sophisticated science that did not need the traditional metaphysical or common-sense notion of causality. It told you how to get along without that, but at the same time it validated everything that the scientist needed. And, at the same time, empiricism was supposed to be—in the case of Neurath—he wanted to make some kind of unification of empiricism with Marxism and make it like a complete demythified view of society.

HENNIX: There was even an attempt to bring ethics into it.

FLYNT: Well, in Neurath's case, yes.

HENNIX: Schlick too, I think—Schlick, I recall, did something in ethics.*

FLYNT: I was talking about why empiricism is not portrayed honestly in the general picture that exists of philosophy—the public picture of philosophy—it was brought in to solve the problem of what is a base for science—namely, sense impressions are going to be taken as elemental. Science is going to arise from sense impressions by construction. Nevertheless it is required that both scientific knowledge and the common-sense social world be produced by this approach—

HENNIX: Neurath, you mean.

FLYNT: No, no. Well, Carnap did not deny the existence of other people. All of the positivists . . .

HENNIX: Rather, he had nothing to say about it.

FLYNT: I didn't say ethics—I said the common-sense social world. I wasn't talking about anything ethical . . .

HENNIX: The existence of tables and cars and—

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**Fragen der Ethik*, Vienna, 1930.

FLYNT: Well, what I'm saying is that the existence of other people is on the same level as the existence of tables and automobiles. And what is even worse than that is that the ones who were scientists in fact wanted to see perception itself as the product of the abstract and quantified sequence that the biophysicist or the psychophysicist sees—the light, the lens, the retina, the optic nerve, the visual cortex, and so forth and so on—they wanted to have that as prior to the sense impression but at the same time they wanted to have all that constructed up from the sense impressions. Why would this remain in place? Because it was a more palatable—it's just like why would formalism remain in place? Everybody learns that formalism died with Gödel's incompleteness theorems—it certainly didn't die for me; it isn't even clear what the incompleteness theorems are supposed to have done or not to have done—the fact remains that if you don't explain mathematics as an uninterpreted calculus, then for us there was nothing left but superstition. Those are the choices that you are given. If you don't explain that science is constructed up from a ground of sense impressions, then how do you want it to be constructed, down from God? You see, we don't take that *seriously* anymore.

As a matter of fact Hume wrote two philosophical works and in the first work* there is the notorious passage in which he himself understands what it means to be a genuine empiricist.** He says, "I feel that I am an outcast from the human race," and so forth in this famous passage—he says, "I do not know if the glass continues to exist after I've looked away from it." That line in Hume should have told you whatever you wanted to know about the existence of the glass. You should be able to ascertain the appropriate answer to your question. Hume says: "I do not know if the glass exists when I look away from it."

Hume's second book***, when he was trying to vindicate himself, when he had dropped the whole business of being a madman, it was much nearer to what empiricism means today: an attempt to construct science from a more meager inventory of elements, namely sense impressions. And that is where Hume presents his doctrine that science does not need and should not invoke metaphysical causation, that it should replace the old-fashioned causation with some sort of construc-

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**A Treatise on Human Nature*

***Book I, Part IV, VII "Conclusion"*

****An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

tion which is more flat or more network-like.

Well, at any rate, I'm going into this long thing—this is why it's never dealt with in public in a sincere way—the only time it was was by the guy who invented it, Hume, in the book that he wrote when he was twenty-three years old. That's the only honest version of it and everything after that is a fraud.

The way it goes is this: I ask the question whether there is a substantial glass, an objective glass, a material glass, something that is over and above the visual glass of the moment. When first considered this seems to be a question which I have no method of answering. That would seem to place it like a Kantian metaphysical question which doesn't have a provable solution, though interestingly enough Kant thought that the existence of the external world in general could be proved but only in the second edition. And in that second edition in those little passages, Kant did really get into the existence of this individual thing like a unicorn and how that would or would not fit into the general proof of the existence of the world and also the question of how dreams would affect the validity of the proof. He touches on all of those in a way which is just awful. It's a disgraceful performance. But he had the issue there, actually.

Well, your first reaction is, "I have no way of answering this." Your second reaction is, that *if I understand the question,* then there must be an external world. So it would seem that I have actually proved the external world—that's what Kant actually said. Or he came very near to saying something like that. The third step is the realization that the statement would validate itself not only if it's true—but if it's false it validates itself equally well!

HENNIX: Given *this* method of understanding the question. And the method remained unspecified so far—as far as I know nobody has been able to do very well at specifying it.

FLYNT: What? Do you mean if somebody asks whether there is an external world—my last remark is a comment about semantics—the genuine semantic issue, as I said, and it's very different from the sort of thing that Tarski is going on about which I think is just ridiculous.

Maybe I'd better stop and tell you why I think it's ridiculous. It's because I'm now talking about things which are exactly the fundamental issues. If Tarski thinks that he can talk about the theory of chess before the question of whether the universe exists or not has been answered—they are deliberately creating specialized problems which in

their minds do have answers and then they are proceeding to answer them. The larger question of whether the work has any meaning at all—it's like somebody spending his whole life working on the King's Indian defense in chess or something like that, and thinking that somehow that makes it unnecessary to answer such questions as does the chess board exist or is it only apparitional? If it's only apparitional then there is no guarantee of the continuity of the position of the pieces in the *absence* of *moves.* What happens is that people treat those basic questions as if they are so basic that it's sort of preposterous to make an issue of them. Kripke said very clearly in his book on Wittgenstein that once the question, "Does language exist?" has been asked, not to give an affirmative answer is "insane and intolerable."* It's the same reaction as there is to solipsism—that solipsism is the philosophy of the man in the lunatic assylum.

The thing that may come before all the discussion so far is the question of *what is my position on being classified as insane.* is the beginning This of philosophy for me.

HENNIX: Well, this is the classical beginning of philosophy.

FLYNT: Because if you're not willing to face up to being classified as insane—if you want to avoid that confrontation—you can't be a philosopher. That confrontation is at the center of bona fide philosophy.

HENNIX: Or was ...

FLYNT: Yes. At any rate, I had reached this point in something like 1961. I had not yet done the "Is there language?" trap. But I had reached the point of saying that to claim the existence of a world beyond experience is untenable. However I understood very well that it begins to create problems for me to say, I have a visual glass apparition, because there is a lot of structure in that sentence. And it's not clear what is supporting that structure after the world has been cut away. Even the use of the idioms like "have" and "suffer." The use of the word "I"—after the objective world has been cut away it's unclear what is the basis for all of that. And this is the point I had reached in 1961 and this is the point when I did Concept Art.

On the one hand you have an art which is about structure and

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*S. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language,* p.60

conceptual things. On the other hand this art is not going to *affirm* traditional doctrines of structuredness and conceptualization. It is deliberately in every case going to violate them. It is going to express the fact that there has been a philosophical discovery made. I would have said chess is not a sound game. It's not well founded. It can't be. The whole problem of Wittgenstein's famous question—what is the meaning of a rule? My answer would be it doesn't have one. When you look at it from the standpoint of Hume when he says I have become a monster, I am outside the human race—the standpoint of the person who chooses insanity as opposed to intellectual dishonesty!

The person who chooses being a madman—even chess doesn't work. The whole question of its consistency. The point of Concept Art is on the one hand to transmit the tradition from the isorhythmic motet and the five Platonic solids, in Leonardo—and on the other it's to blow it up because each work of concept art must be a counter-example to that tradition. And at the same time to say that it is art means—when I passed to Concept Art I left behind many things that traditionally would have been considered crucial features of art, like sentiment, for example. Let me just leave it at that.

When the Renaissance people did study geometry and art, they developed perspective to paint people, not to paint abstractions. And you know I have to admit quite bluntly, my Concept Art was already the product of the acceptance of an abstract art. And now, many years later I can see that that was an historical juncture, to consider it tolerable that art should break with sentiment and with the representation of people. It's like moving toward an Islamic view of art. And then saying, now however, in the future, instead of Mosque decoration we will do a piece that has the visual, sensuous delectation, but it's completely abstract. But whereas Islamic art was trying to express the *truth* of a certain theorem in group theory, Concept Art must express that you can't have that—that that theorem fails. Now I'm formulating an unsolved problem—I never did a concept piece the purpose of which was to rebut the symmetry involved in a visual pattern, with that as the opponent to be hit. I mean I very well could and perhaps should.

All of my pieces were uninterpreted calculi. Because I accepted that that was the only way of explaining what mathematics is: that it consists of a body of truth about a world that does *not* exist, and explicitly so. And that all of the traditional explanations of mathematical content are now seen to be anachronistic superstitions. They are just indefensible in the modern world. Put those two things together and

mathematics becomes a chess game, an uninterpreted calculus.

All of my Concept pieces are using the terminology of Carnap's *Logical Syntax of Language*—the formation rule, the transformation rule—but in each case they wish to express the violation, the failure of some traditional organizing principle of these uninterpreted calculi. For instance there is one where, among other things, the very notation itself has an undisplaced active interaction with the subjectivity of the quote unquote reader.* And that determines the structure of the derivation, the proof. It was pointed out to me many years later that it's not just that you don't get this in schoolbook mathematics—this is what they are *most concerned to exclude.*

I had another one, in which there was no general transformation rule.** There were only completely nominalistic transformation rules. In other words, for each step you are told, for that step only and for this moment only, what the transformation rule is. And by the time you are ready to take the next step, that rule is forgotten and inoperative.

HENNIX: This is the Energy Cube Organism?

FLYNT: No, no . The Energy Cube Organism was not Concept Art at all. No, no. It was a different genre. That one was the piece called "Transformations."

The Energy Cube Organism and the Perception-Dissociator in my own classification are not Concept Art. Only the pieces labeled "Concept Art" are Concept Art. And I only did four of them until 1987. Three of them are in *An Anthology*, and the fourth was published in *dimension* 14 (1963). The Energy Cube Organism and the Perception-Dissociator were in other genres. I drew these distinctions of genre rather narrowly, actually.

This is the one [pointing to 6/19/61 in *An Anthology*] where there is, in an uninterpreted calculus, interaction between notation and the subjectivity of the quote unquote reader.

This is "Transformations." You are just taking these objects, you are burning them, melting them, doing all sorts of things to them. The point of this is that each step in the proof—you have to think of it as a proof—you see it has the tree structure of a proof. This is my nominalistic transformation rules, because each rule is stipulated only at that step, and then it is thrown away. The point that I was trying to express

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*dated 6/19/61—later titled "Illusions."

** "Transformations," retitled "Implications" in the second edition.

was that's what they do in all of it—even in chess, when you move the pawn to King's Bishop 3, you think that you are conforming to a general rule written in Heaven. But in fact there isn't any general rule, and when you move the pawn to Bishop 3, you're just making up what you are doing right at that moment, and there isn't any general rule.

HENNIX: You would label this ad hoc?

FLYNT: That's right. That would be perhaps a better word for it. All transformation rules and probably even all formation rules are ad hoc, yes, yes.

I said "nominalistic" because they are only there individually. They do not add up to any general—

HENNIX: System of rules?

FLYNT: No—not that—they do not add up to any generality, to a general rule that covers all cases of a certain class.

**What is inadequate about this—and I realized very quickly that it's inadequate—is that this does not actually give some profound reason in concrete practice for questioning chess. That's what the inadequacy of the original Concept Art pieces is. That they don't really give you some kind of operative situation where you can see that following the chess rules is failing. I don't provide that. I only provide something that's ritualistic. Saying this is how you would behave if you realized that following any rule is ad hoc.**

**A conventional mathematician would say, you have not proved that the world that this is designed for is the world that I have to live in. THAT's the inadequacy. He would say that I am only ritualizing the world of impoverishment or disorganization. I'm not showing that that's the world that people in general have to live in because it's in force. That's the difference between then and now. The reason that I want meta-technology would be to give a situation where somebody can actually see that you CAN'T play a game of chess—or that you want to play one and that I, by putting it in the appropriate context, make it clear that the general rules on which playing it depends are not in fact available.**

**But to show that in a serious way. From the prevailing point of view I would be talking about contriving a miracle. In other words, to actually substantiate any of these—what is interesting is not so much "Transformations"—but it would be some situation that would substantiate that the conventional view is actually unavailable. And to do**

**that you have to violate what are considered today to be the soundest laws of science. I'd need a miracle to manifest that I'm right, so to speak. So by the time I get to meta-technology I'm in the job of constructing miracles, I mean constructing situations that are absolutely physically impossible (or in some cases logically impossible) by currently accepted scientific and commonsense views of what is the real world.**

"Innperseqs" is the one that is visually sensuously the best. You are making a rainbow halo that you can get by breathing on your glasses and looking at a point light—you get a rainbow halo around the light. Eventually I will set it up so that you don't need glasses or anything so that the whole business of seeing the rainbow halo is moved out and does not require any special preparation by the spectator. The rainbow halo is the sensuous delectation. The derivation, the proof, the specification of propositions, is something that you do as the halo is fading. You have to quickly specify—I never analyzed exactly what was going on there but it was as if—you have a notation which is externally changing, and therefore the quote unquote reading of a mathematical system has to be a process that is taking place in experienced time.

By acts of attention you have to choose sentences, to choose implications—it's a display. You are given an external display which is changing out there, not in your head. And you have to place a structure on it by specified rules.

You know another point that can be made is, that "Innperseqs" is philosophically inconsistent with "Transformations"—that these pieces are mocking each other.

At the time that I did this, I did not have the kind of maturity that I would have today to put it together in a strong way. These were gestures. And they are not even uniform on a question like whether a rule exists or not. Well actually, frequently I'm too hard on myself. I think that in the essay "Concept Art" I do say something like, objective language doesn't exist, but I'm still free to work with what you think the text says—I can use that in *art:* this is *art!*

There are three ways that the art part comes in. One is the visual display, the delectation. The second way the art part comes in is—well, if LaMonte Young's Word Pieces are art, then this is art too. But the third thing is that this does not claim to have objective truth. It is a construction for the world-hallucination or the world-apparition or even a construction for the private world-apparition.

HENNIX: You are actually extending the world by new constructions.

FLYNT: But it's the world-apparition. In a sense if I believed that these rules were objectively established, then it would almost indicate that I had not learned the lesson of the very piece which sits beside it on the page!* And what am I doing talking about a page and a text? So the answer is that I have abandoned the provision of truth as the purpose of this activity and I have moved to the provision of experiences where the possibility of these experiences is a surprise.

HENNIX: And you don't have to be an empiricist to be surprised.

FLYNT: Yes. Yes. But the truth claim that you would have from a Kripke or a Goodman has been dropped. The meaning of the text is the meaning that the reader associates to it. And the thing is, that in conventional intellectual work that's an unacceptable answer, because usually you are trying to get independent of the reader's distortion—that's the whole hope—that you can make something that is independent of the reader's distortion of it. This is a different game. This is not classical mathematics; it's not classical science. It's like giving a Rorschach blot. Then I don't mind if you have a unique subjective reaction. If my purpose is to make Rorschach blots, then I do not object, I have not failed, if you have a unique personal reaction.

These pieces are designed for the individual reaction rather than in spite of it.

The only other Concept Art piece—in *dimension* 14—"one just has to guess whether this piece exists and if it does what its definition is." That was the piece. And that was a response to Cage's dissociation of what the composer sees, the performer sees, the audience sees. Starting from that, going through all the games that LaMonte had played with the idea of performance, where we were performing pieces first and composing them second, maybe many months later. So finally with the Concept Art piece, even whether the piece exists is completely indeterminate, but I meant for people to try to take that seriously. I was having a joke with the person who thinks that concepts form an objective world, which the individual who cognizes only discovers bit by bit. In effect, I am giving him this: thank you for believing that there is a piece here—I'm leaving it to you to find it. I wash my hands of that problem—*you* find it!

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*"Innperseqs" versus "Transformations," second edition.

Well, there's a natural pause that comes here because I think that I've summarized perhaps fairly thoroughly where I was when I did the work published in 1963. The entire subsequent career of the label Concept Art, its misapplication to Word Pieces and all the rest of it, we have not begun with. After that, we can go on to the discussion of your visual pieces of the 70s and how they resume the genre of Concept Art.

(End of Part I)

[first published in Io # 41 (1989)]

ERRATA

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **p. 34 / line 20** | **read** | The Logical Structure of the World |
| | **for** | "The Logical Structural of the World" |
| **p. 37 / line 24** | **read** | relative consistency proofs |
| | **for** | "relative consistency proofs" |
| **p. 39 / footnote** | **read** | The Logical Syntax of Language |
| | **for** | "The Logical Structure of Language" |
| **p. 46 / line 16** | **read** | This is the beginning of philosophy for me. |
| | **for** | "is the beginning This of philosophy for me". |
| **p. 47 / line 35** | **read** | All of my pieces except one were uninterpreted calculi. |
| | **for** | "All of my pieces were uninterpreted calculi." |
| **p. 48 / line 23** | **read** | I only did five of them. |
| | **for** | "I only did four of them." |

# HENRY FLYNT

Henry Flynt is a philosopher, composer, and artist born in Greensboro, NC in 1940. In 1960 and 1961 he announced some of the ideas that have occupied him ever since, including concept art. Most of his concept art documents were published in 'An Anthology', ed. La Monte Young (1963).

In 1975, he led a country rock band called Nova'billy. (Examples of their performances of Flynt's music are available on three published recordings.)
In the same year, his book 'Blueprint for a Higher Civilization' was published by Multhipla Edizioni, Milan. Flynt was in the Ph.D. program in Economics at the New School from 1970 to 1978, writing his dissertation on socialist economic administration.
Flynt resumed making concept art in 1987. He was represented by Emily Harvey Gallery and has shown at the Venice and Lyon Biennales.

In 2008, Flynt returned to live music, performing an improvised rock instrumental with his niece Libby Flynt in several cities in Europe and the U.S. Numerous recordings of his music have been released, including the just-released 'Glissando No. 1'.

# C. C. HENNIX

is a long-time friend, assistant and collaborater of Henry Flynt's.
Catherine Christer Hennix (born 1948 in Stockholm) is a Swedish composer, philosopher, scientist and visual artist associated with compositions of sustained tones in just intonation.

Hennix was affiliated with MIT's AI Lab in the 1980s at the invitation of Marvin Minsky and as research professor of mathematics and computer science at State University of New York.

In 2000 she was a Clay Institute prize fellow, Cambridge, Mass., awarded for her work since the 1980s with the Russian-American mathematician Alexander S. Yesseninn-Volpin. Between 2004 to 2007 she was a research associate at the Institute for Logic, Language and Computations, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Recently she has returned to public performances of her music which also feature her computer animation work.

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# EDITORS

Henry Flynt
Catherine Christer Hennix

**TEXT FROM PAGE 25 TO 52 FROM**
Being = Space x Action.
Searchers for Freedom
of Mind through
Mathematics, Art,
and Mysticism,
North Atlantic Books,
Berkeley (California), 1989
Stein, Charles (ed.)

# COVER

**FRONT COVER DESIGN**
Henry Flynt

**FRONT**
Rainbow Column,
Innperseqs (2011)

**BACK**
Innperseqs Diagram,
remade 2011
from the vintage copy
in the Young archive

# THANKS TO

Catherine Christer Hennix
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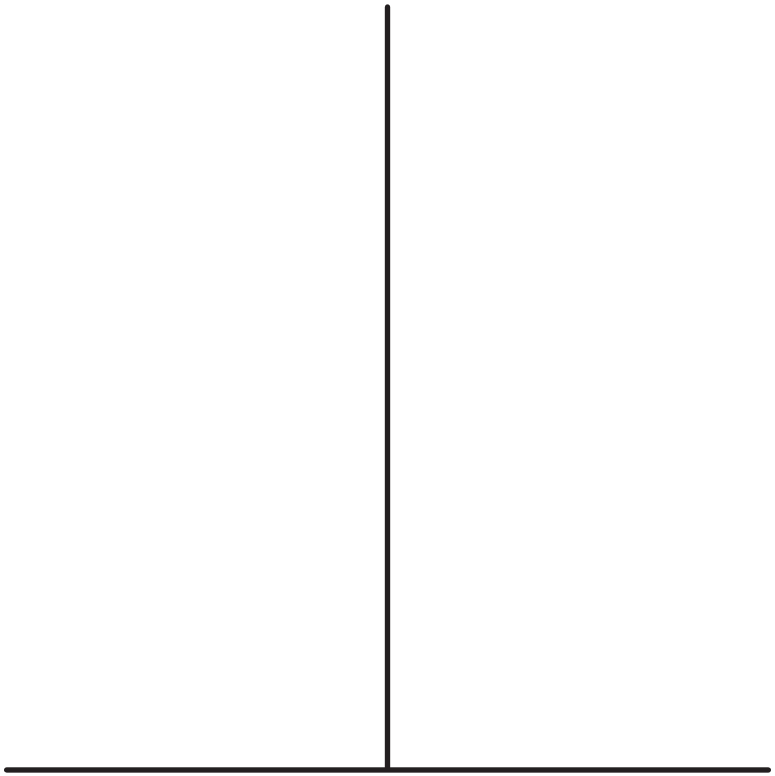
(Mario, Barbara
Weronika, Andrés
Felisa, Fabio)
and The Chora(s)san
Time-Court Mirage



Innperseqs - Diagram

"Axioms"
$a_1\ a_2\ a_3\ a_4\ a_5\ a_6\ a_7$

"Sentences" of
$me_1 : a_1\ a_2\ a_3\ a_4\ a_5\ a_6\ a_7 b$

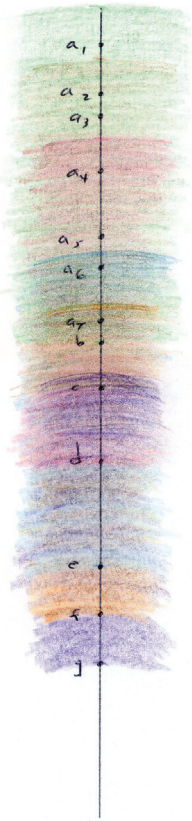
$me_2 : a_2\ a_3\ a_4\ a_5\ a_6\ a_7 b c$

$me_3 : a_4\ a_5\ a_6\ a_7 b c d$

$me_4 : a_6\ a_7 b c d e$

$me_5 : a_7 b c d e f$

$me_6 : c d e f g$




"Innperseq"
$(a_3, a_2, a_1)$
$(b, a_3)$
$(c, a_5, a_4)$
$(d, b, a_6)$
$(e, c, a_7)$
$(f, e, d)$
$(g)$

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