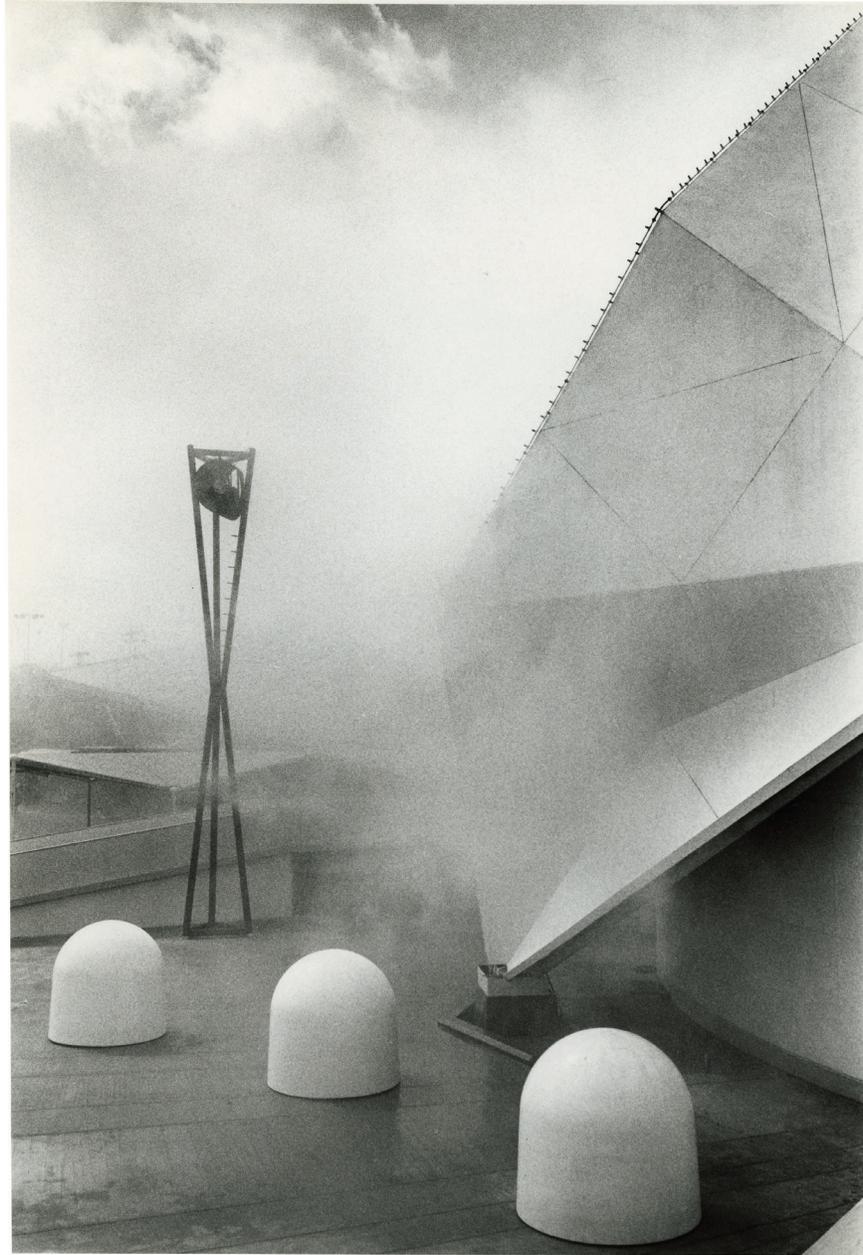


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Educator Notes



Robert Breer, *Floats*, 1970. Installation view: American Pavilion, World Fair Exhibition, Osaka, Japan. Courtesy gb agency, Paris

A Fragile But Marvelous Life

November 20, 2015–February 7, 2016

About the exhibition

Taking its inspiration from artist Allan Kaprow's Happenings, which he described as "something spontaneous, something that just happens to happen," *A Fragile But Marvelous Life* presents a series of works that investigate the relationship between everyday movement and performance. Rather than a historical approach outlining the development of performance within the contemporary art context, the exhibition examines the notion of performance as not only the execution of an action, but also as a mode of behavior. From a choreographed composition to a chance movement or repetitive action, the works in *A Fragile But Marvelous Life* remind us that paying attention is a collaborative act, one that has the ability to make the ordinary extraordinary.



Roman Ondák, *Clockwork*, 2014. Courtesy the artist and gb agency, Paris

About the artists

Robert Breer (b. 1926, Detroit, MI; d. 2011, Tucson, AZ) was an artist who explored how human interaction is a form of animation through various media. In 1965, Breer began making kinetic sculptures that he referred to as “floats.” Works such as *Slice* (2008), *Float* (1970), and *Rug* (1968) are simple, minimal forms that glide through the exhibition at their own speed, constantly changing paths and creating the opportunity for constant discovery.

Roelof Louw (b. 1935, Cape Town, South Africa; lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa) is a sculptor whose work explores site-specificity, ephemerality, and time. *Soul City (Pyramid of Oranges)* (1967) consists of 5,800 oranges arranged into the shape of a pyramid. Visitors are invited to take an orange as they pass through the exhibition. As a result, the pyramid’s shape continues to change until it eventually disappears.

Roman Ondák (b. 1966, Žilina, Slovakia; lives and works in Bratislava, Slovakia) creates work that invites viewers to break down the traditional barriers between themselves and art objects. In *Clockwork* (2014), a museum attendant asks visitors who walk into the room two questions: “What time is it?” and “What is your name?” The attendant then records the answers on the gallery walls, creating a drawing in collaboration with the audience as well as a record of every visitor to the exhibition.

Mika Rottenberg (b. 1976, Buenos Aires, Argentina; lives and works in New York, NY) creates video installations, photographs, and drawings that explore the limitations and expansiveness of the body. *Ponytails* (2014) appears as three ponytails coming through the gallery wall, occasionally bouncing, jumping, and flipping.

Emily Roysdon (b. 1977, Easton, MD; lives and works in Stockholm, Sweden, and New York, NY) is an artist, writer, and cofounder of the queer feminist journal and artist collective LTTR. *Uncounted* (2015) is a free takeaway poster stacked on a blue powder-coated aluminum wave. Comprised of writing on one side and a drawing on the other, the poster is a gift to the exhibition’s audience. The poster stack will slowly shrink over time through visitor participation.

Cally Spooner (b. 1983, Ascot, UK; lives and works in London, UK) is an artist, writer, and playwright. Her piece *Tough Kid, Full Out. True Pro. Get Better, Rest Up, Strange Night but... Proud* (2014–15) presents a chorus line of six voices that appear unannounced in the exhibition. A musical melody that begins comfortably reminiscent of pop music, *Tough Kid* interjects itself into the exhibition space and gets progressively faster and louder until it becomes clear that the work has its own agenda.

Sergei Tcherepnin (b. 1981, Boston, MA; lives and works in New York, NY) was originally trained as a composer, and his work explores how material can receive and transmit sound. *Motor-Matter Bench* (2013) is a New York City subway bench outfitted with surface transducers—devices that convert signals into vibrations, allowing anything to become a speaker. By playing sound through people sitting on the bench, Tcherepnin creates an intimacy between audience and object, and enables a new appreciation for how we listen to the world.

Ian Wilson (b. 1940, South Africa; lives and works in Hudson, NY) is an artist who, in 1968, made his last ever sculpture. His work since then only uses spoken language. *Time (Spoken)* (1982) is an artwork that makes its presence known whenever visitors inquire about the piece, asking: “Where or what is Ian Wilson’s piece *Time (Spoken)*?” What they hear in return is an echo of their own question—the work is the word “time” being spoken out loud.

Questions for discussion

- | Does an artwork need to physically exist to be an artwork? Why or why not?
- | How do you experience chance and spontaneity in your everyday life?
- | Why do you think this exhibition is called *A Fragile But Marvelous Life*?

Suggested activities

Takeaway Art

Invite students to observe the components of Emily Roysdon's artwork *Uncounted*, a free takeaway poster with writing on one side and a drawing on the other, stacked on a blue powder-coated aluminum wave.

Ask students what message they would want to share with the world. How can this message take form as both words and images?

Give students pens and one piece of letter-sized drawing paper. On the front, have students create a message using only text, which could include questions, words from their favorite books, or original ideas. On the backside, have students create a drawing that relates to the words they wrote.

After the posters are completed, create ten or more double-sided copies of each student's piece using a copier and return them to students. Encourage them to decide whether they would like to pass out the copies or find an acceptable place that they could leave the stack for anyone to pick up.

Altered Organic Objects

Roelof Louw's work *Soul City (Pyramid of Oranges)* invites museum visitors to consume and physically alter the artwork over time. In this take-home activity, students

will have the chance to observe sculptural changes with their own organic materials.

Instruct students to gather and collect fourteen organic, round objects (i.e., apples, tomatoes, potatoes, etc.) and create a pyramid in a location of their choice outside their homes (nine on the bottom level, four in the middle level, topped with one object). Over the course of seven days, have students take observational notes or photographs of how their sculpture is changing. Encourage questions such as:

- | How has the outdoor environment altered your sculpture?
- | How different would it look if we had placed it indoors?
- | Has any wildlife come and eaten parts of your sculpture?
- | How would Roelof Louw's artwork look if it had been placed outdoors?

For more information, please contact the Education Department at 970.925.8050 ext. 133 or email education@aspenartmuseum.org

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