



The Sight of Silence: John Cage's Complete Watercolors

Ray Kass

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Best known as an experimental composer and performer, John Cage (1912–1992) was also an active visual artist who created an extensive body of prints, drawings, and watercolors over the last twenty years of his life. *The Sight of Silence: John Cage's Complete Watercolors* provides the first opportunity to see all 125 signed watercolors that Cage created during four week-long sessions at the Mountain Lake Workshop, Virginia, between 1983 and 1990.

In all of his work, regardless of medium, Cage consistently dismissed conventional aesthetics by limiting or eliminating the artist's choice in the creative process. In composing his watercolors, he relied on his signature method of "chance operations," guided by a system of random numbers derived from the ancient Chinese *Book of Changes*, or *I Ching*.

This book's critical essay and accompanying workshop diaries relate the methods at play in Cage's visual art to those of his musical compositions and theater pieces. The accompanying DVD offers a "live" view of John Cage at work, featuring a public reading with audience discussion, as well as an interview with him about his watercolor paintings. As visual evidence of the methods of chance that Cage employed for decades, the watercolors in this book and the video footage on the accompanying DVD offer an entrée into Cage's music and writings and present a greatly enhanced understanding of one of the twentieth century's most mystifying artists and most creative thinkers.

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