

Allan Kaprow

How To Make A Happening

Primary Information CD

Originally released as an LP in 1966 on Mass Art – a small independent art label also responsible for releasing Terry Riley’s debut album *Reed Streams* – this release of former action painter Allan Kaprow’s lost instruction guide to making a successful Happening rescues an important art document from obscurity.

The origins of Kaprow’s Happenings movement can be found in the late 50s, when he decided a gallery space was too small for the more sprawling, socially involved art projects he had in mind. Instead he suggested that art should spill out into the real world, involving people, actions, nature and coincidence as its basic materials. *How To Make A Happening* has Kaprow laying out 11 ground rules of how to create such an event. “Forget all standard art forms,” he draws on rule number one. “Don’t paint pictures, don’t make poetry, don’t build architecture, don’t arrange dances, don’t write plays, don’t compose music, don’t make movies, and above all don’t think you’ll get a Happening by putting these all together.” Throughout this list of preparatory instructions, Kaprow sounds well aware that making a recorded guide to making a Happening is a Happening in itself.

This is even more evident on the second track where he describes in detail the programme and notes to his *Soap*, *Calling* and *Raining* Happenings, all of which involve a combination of improvisation and environmental forces. In the same questing spirit of the dada poets or Burroughs’s experiments with tape recorders, Kaprow’s intentionally unsentimental delivery – concerning a movement that would send reverberations throughout post-war art – gives his *How To Make A Happening* the status of a revolutionary action.

Edwin Pouncey