

ARTFORUM

Emmett Williams

BARBARA WIEN

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When one thinks of Emmett Williams, one might think of Fluxus and his autobiography *My Life in Flux—and Vice Versa* (1992), or of his many years as an editor at Dick Higgins's Something Else Press. Or there are always his numerous volumes of concrete poetry, such as *Sweethearts* (1966) and *The Boy and the Bird* (1979), as well as the influential *An Anthology of Concrete Poetry* (1967), which he edited.

This exhibition, though, is dedicated to Williams's friendship and artistic collaboration with two contemporaries: Japanese artist Ay-O and Chinese American cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Williams's ten-part *Incidental Music for Yo-Yo Ma*, 1979, consists of increasingly detailed photocopy enlargements of blank sheet music that eventually turn the paper's grain into abstract patterns. Ma performed an adaptation of Bach's *Suites for Cello* (ca. 1717–23) with Williams's score at Harvard in 1980 together with the composer Ivan Tcherepnin on synthesizer. For the first time in Berlin—where Williams lived from 1980 until his death in 2007—his score and photo and audio documentation of the performance are presented together. Among Williams's collaborative works with Ay-O is an untitled and undated series of stamps that, when joined, form Gertrude Stein's line "When this you see remember me" in English and Japanese. In the second gallery space, alongside various prints by Williams, some from his *The Book of O* (1958), one can also see Ay-O's artists' book *Ouzel*, 1972. With essential works provided by Williams's widow, artist Ann Noël, the show's obliquely personal approach makes Williams's belief in a universal humor especially clear.

Translated from German by Diana Reese.



View of "Emmett Williams: Projects with Ay-O and Yo-Yo Ma," 2016.

— Fiona McGovern

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