

BEN PATTERSON

American, born 1934, Pittsburgh, PA

Lives and works in Weisbaden, Germany

"It is possible that my interest in rivers could be traced back to my birthplace—Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the 'Three Rivers City,' and that I have always lived near a major river: the Hudson in New York, the Seine in Paris, and the Rhine in Cologne, and now Wiesbaden."

— Ben Patterson in *Notes to the Los Angeles River Concrete Poems*, exhibition at the Solway Jones Gallery, Los Angeles, California, 2006

Ben Patterson has produced a number of works about rivers throughout his career including the Hudson River: *Tackle Box* (1981), Rhine River: *Rheinpost* (2000), Elbe/Moldau River: *Where does all this water come from?* (2001), La Lou River (France): *370 Flies* (2005), and the Los Angeles River: *Dividing/Bridging: The Los Angeles River Concrete Poems* (2006). Concrete, or shape poetry, is a form of poetry in which the typographical arrangement of words is as important in conveying the intended effect as the conventional elements of the poem, such as meaning of words, rhythm, rhyme, and so on. In *Dividing/Bridging: The Los Angeles River Concrete Poems*, he literally inscribed his poems in concrete, with streams of water perforating the sculptures, creating opposing banks of written words.

Ben Patterson is an American musician, artist, and a founder of the Fluxus international art movement. In 1960, Patterson moved to Cologne, Germany, where he became active in the radical contemporary music scene, performing in festivals in Cologne, Paris, Venice, and elsewhere during this pre-Fluxus period when he created and performed some of his early seminal works: *Paper Piece* (1960), *Lemons* (1961), and *Variations for Double Bass* (1961). Late in 1961, Patterson moved to Paris, where he collaborated with Robert Filliou (*Puzzle-Poems*), and published his *Method and Processes*, an artist's book comprising loose-leaf pages bound in a folder. Patterson joined George Maciunas in Wiesbaden to organize the historic 1962 Fluxus International Festival, and continued to be a major presence at Fluxus events until the early 1970s, when he retired to pursue ordinary life in New York City.

Although he remained outside the art world for more than 17 years, Patterson resurfaced for such events as the 20th Anniversary Fluxus Festival in Wiesbaden in 1982. In 1988, Patterson came out of retirement with his exhibition titled *Ordinary Life*, at the Emily Harvey Gallery, New York. In 1992, he returned to Germany to establish a headquarters from where he works and travels. Ben Patterson's work has been featured in many recent Fluxus exhibitions and performances throughout Europe, Russia, Asia, and the Americas. In 1996, he inaugurated the Public Entrance to his Museum of the Subconscious at Mt. 13th Month in Namibia, Africa. The traveling retrospective exhibition *Benjamin Patterson: Born in the State of FLUX/us* was organized in 2012 by the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.