

After Ken Friedman

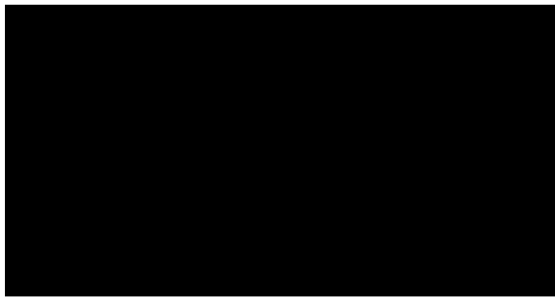
Jeff Malpas

After Ad Reinhart

Choose a work by Ken Friedman.

Paint it black.

Ken Friedman 1990



“Paint it Black” is a line in a Ken Friedman score from 1990. It is also the title of a song by the Rolling Stones from 1966.

While the song is about the obliteration of things (“I see a red door and I want it painted black/No colours anymore, I want them to turn black”), the score is about making things visible. How this happens, and what this might mean, is part of what will be explored here.

The exploration will aim at making things visible, but to do so will also involve uncovering obscurities and complexities. As a result, it

may well appear that what follows is also a painting black, a painting over, that comes about through the accumulation and multiplication of detail and complication that, while it darkens, also illuminates.

The song, of which "Paint it Black" is the title, can itself take the form of a score – the musical score that is to be played. But the Jagger/Richards song is not a score in the same sense as the score by Friedman in which the line "Paint it black" appears.

What are Ken Friedman's scores?

They are scores for *events*. As such, they set out things *to be done*, things *to be performed*. The performance is the event.

The Jagger-Richards song can also be performed. But its performance is not a realisation of an event that is given *in* the song. The song makes no reference to a performance or an event. The song is thus not the score *for* an event. Instead, the song as it appears on the page is something that can be performed, or that can provide material for performance, but the song does not stand in any necessary relation to performance.

A score by Ken Friedman, on the other hand, say the score 'After Ad Reinhardt', already calls up its own performance, already stands in a relation to the event that would be its realisation.

What then, is the performance that it can stand in relation to the score in this way? What are Ken Friedman's scores that they can stand in this relation to performance? What are those scores that they can appear as scores?

The score is what is performed or realised in the event. But what is

performed in the performance of the score?

Each of Friedman's scores appears as a neat assemblage of words and sentences, written crisply, black on white. The scores *are* those words and sentences. Is the performance of the score, then, the performance of the words and sentences that make it up?

Already a fallacy seems to threaten – a fallacy of composition or decomposition: what can be said of the whole cannot necessarily be said of the parts that compose it. So to speak of the performance of a score need not imply that one can speak of the performance of the words and sentences that make up the score.

Yet Friedman's score present themselves on the page in a way that draws attention to the words and sentences that make them up. Here we are, they seem to say, look at us, what are we here for? What do we do? What do we mean? The scores also appear in a way that both invokes performance – for these scores present things to be done, to be performed, to be realised, things that have been done, performed, realised – and yet also stands apart from performance. The scores appear as things written, things to be read, things to be understood (or not).

Leaving the threat of fallacy to one side, allowing some indulgence, allowing that the performance of a score might take the form of a performance of the words and sentences that make up the score, and that the performance of words and sentences might itself take the form of their being written, read, or understood, then could we allow that one way in which a score could be performed, in which the score could be realised as an event, is through the *very reading* of the score? Could *any* such reading of any score be a performance, a realisation, an event? And if something is performed by being read, then does that mean that what is performed in that

way becomes a score?

When the Rolling Stones perform 'Paint it Black', at least part of the performance is identical with the singing of the words. Does this mean that the Jagger-Richards song and a Friedman score can both be performed in the same way? By being read – or even being *sung*?

Event score: Read this line. Understand it. Sing it.

What of the *writing* of a score? If the reading (or singing) of a score can be a performance of the score, then why not its writing? In that case, might the original writing of the score be its first performance? And if so would it constitute its first realisation as an event? Or would that come only with the first reading (and when is that?)

If what characterises a score is the way in which it already calls up its own performance, already stands in a relation to the event that is its realisation, then how could this be true merely of words or sentences as they stand in relation to their being read or written?

One way of capturing the way a score stands in relation to its performance is to say that the score provides *instructions* that if followed result in a performance of the score. In that case, the words and sentence of a score must constitute instructions for their own performance, their own reading, their own writing.

Event instruction: Read these instructions. Follow them. Compare what happens with the instructions. Note any discrepancy.

Where are the instructions that guide our reading or writing of a sentence like "paint it black"? Words and sentences are surely not

like the food and drink that Alice encounters in Wonderland – each labelled with the instructions “read me”, “write me”, “understand me” (just as ‘Paint it Black’ does not carry the instruction “sing me”).

Could words and sentence be understood as instructions for their own performance, not because they carry instructions for their performance on their faces, but because recognising words and sentences as words and sentences is already to see them as standing in a relation to being read, written, spoken – already to recognise them as carrying an *implicit* instruction?

But one *follows* instructions. One does not follow words or sentences in the same way. When one follows instructions one does something that can be assessed as adequate or not according to the instructions. But when one reads or writes words or sentences, one cannot assess what one does as adequate to some set of instructions given, implicitly or not, in the words or sentences. One just reads, one writes, one understands (and when one gets the reading, writing or understanding goes awry – I read the sentence as something else, I write the wrong thing, I misunderstand –this is not because of a failure *in the following of instructions*).

Something might still be learnt from consideration of the way instructions stand in relation to performance. Surely the performance is the *realisation* of the instructions. In that case, might we not also say that the reading, the writing, the understanding of a sentence – and then, perhaps, its being believed or disbelieved, its being affirmed or denied, its being acted upon or disregarded – is its realisation, and that such a realisation is also the *performance* of the sentence?

After Mandatory Happening I: Read these words. Decide

whether or not they are to be meaningful. Once you have made your decision the happening is over

In that case, we do not need to think of words and sentences as instructions for their own performance. But we can take the score as constituting a performance, and so an event, simply through its being read, its being written, through its being grasped (or its being to be grasped) in its presence as a score.

We might say that the performance is not merely the performance *of* the score, but that the performance is given *in* the score. The score is thus what is made visible here, although it is not the only thing made visible, and its being made visible is part of what it means for it to function as a score.

It may still be objected that there is a difference between a score and its performance. To repeat: scores set out things *to be done*, things *to be performed*. The doing of those things is the performance or realisation of the score. The performance or realisation of the score is an event. The score, the performance of the score, and the event, thus cannot be identical.

If the difference between score and performance is made obscure by the idea that the reading or writing of the score might itself constitute a performance of the score, then may be it can be made clearer by pointing to the following: in most of those cases in which a score involves the reading or writing of what is given in the score as part of the realisation of the score, what is to be read or written is usually only a *part* of the score, not the *whole* of it (this may be a reformulation of the idea that the score contains instructions, and that the instructions set out what is to constitute the performance, but are not themselves part of the performance).

The performance of the original 1966 score, *Mandatory Happening*, includes the reading, or not reading, of a text, to be printed on a card, that is a part of the score – “You will decide to read this score or not to read it” – but the score is not identical with that text alone (since the score also includes, in addition to the text quoted above, the words “A card printed When you have made your decision the happening is over”).

One could have a score in which the event as set out in the score itself is just the same the writing or reading of the score (the notes to *Mandatory Happening* tell us that “this event was first scored at midnight on May 1, 1966 in Mt Carroll, Illinois. It was first performed at the same time” – can this be true? Or is the score other than it appears?) If one could have a performance that consisted just in the reading or writing of the score (with the ‘performance’ of its words and sentences), then would not the score, the performance, and the event be the same?

After *Mandatory Happening II*: Decide whether to read this score or not to read it. When you have made your decision the happening is over.

If it remains the case that the performance of a score, the event, is always something additional to the score, then when the score *is* the performance, and so, presumably, when the score *is* also the event, then what is additional in the event, and in the performance, is a doubling or a tripling that occurs *in the score itself* – in the score understood as both a work (an event) and instructions for a work (in the same way that the words and sentences are both that which is language and yet also that by means of which language is realised). So the score itself *becomes* the performance, itself *becomes* the event, but in the process the score *becomes*

something additional to what it is.

What of the score that is never 'performed' or 'realised' other than through remaining on the page? Some of Freidman's scores are never (or not completely) realized other than in their printed appearance (*Execution Kit* 1966 is an example) and some seem to be unrealizable or else the conditions that would constitute their realization remain obscure (*First Time Around* 1965 and *Unfinished Symphony* 1967 seems to be scores of this kind). Perhaps they are like pieces of music that remain unplayed (or are unplayable?). Or perhaps they remain event scores that are events *only* in being scores – and so in simply remaining on the page, in being written, being read, being *thought*.

The words and sentences of a score are thus not *merely* instructions for performance, formulae by which events are realised – as if the score only becomes a score *after* the event; as if the words and sentences are important only because of what, in the right hands, the right eyes, the right minds, they can *bring about*; as if what matters is *only* what happens, what is performed, and not the score at all.

The score does not need the event – as something definitively apart from it – in order to be a score. But does that mean that any and every score – including any and every reading of a score, any and every writing of a score, any and every thinking of a score – is also *itself* an event?

What of the *publication* of a score – not merely its being read or *written*, but its first crisp appearance on the printed page? Is the publication a performance, is it an event?

If there are 99 events in the book *99 events* then where and what are those events? Are they given in the publication of the book or in

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what happens afterwards – or before? Are they given in performance, in reading, in writing, in thinking? Could the book itself constitute a performance or an event? If it could, then does that mean that the book is also an event *score*? If so, is its title misleading? Is it misleading anyway? Are there really 99 events in the book *99 Events*?

Is *99 Events* a biography of performance, a history of events, even if some are differently realised from others? And what then is the relation between such a book, such a biography, such a history, and the performer, the writer, the reader?

Does *99 Events* record a life or a part of a life? Is it the record of a life imagined, lived, *performed*? (“Imagine a life. Live it.”) And whose life? Whose imagination? Whose performance?

Suppose we realise the score *After Ad Reinhart*, and we realise it by painting black ink over one of Friedman’s scores – by blacking out the score for *After Ad Reinhart*. Have we then realised the score by using one of Friedman’s *works*?

When we obliterate the score by painting it black, part of what is thereby made visible is the character of the score *as a work* – but we also make visible the score of *After Ad Reinhart as a score*.

The title of *99 Events* as ‘99 Events’ seems to draw our attention to the events that *99 Events* apparently catalogues. But *99 Events* contains no events within its covers other than the events that are also the scores. The events that are the realisation or performance of the scores may seem to take the place of the scores, perhaps even cover them over, paint them out, paint them black, but what *99 Events* presents to us are the scores.

Inasmuch as the scores are brought to light in *99 Events*, and are brought to light in a way that does not depend on the events that may occur outside of the pages of the book, and in relation to which the scores stand as both recipe and record, so the book draws our attention to the scores. This prompts again the question: what are the scores?

Taken on their own, Friedman's scores have the patina of the familiar and homely. Simple and straightforward, they appear like the lists of things to be done and procedures to be followed that one might find in an operating manual for a piece of electrical equipment, in a book of children's play activities, on the back of a can of soup.

Cream of Asparagus: Open can. Place contents in a saucepan or microwaveable dish. Heat. Do not boil. Serve. Eat.

The scores, and so the words and sentences that make them up, are familiar and ordinary. But they are also unfamiliar and strange. They draw attention to themselves, signal their presence on the page, ask for our attention, put themselves in question.

Maybe the scores are just mechanisms for making visible both their strangeness *and* their ordinariness, for making visible the possibility of the score *as an event*, for making visible the very possibility of the event *as given in the score*.

Making visible can also be a darkening, a painting black. In seeing the score as a score we begin to see that its being a score is not a matter of something simple and transparent – as if it were a set of familiar instructions – but something that remains obscure, remains mysterious.

The strangeness made visible in the score is a strangeness that is not restricted to the score. What the score makes visible is also the words and sentences that make it up; what it makes visible is also the performance and the event. It shows us the intimacy that exists between score, performance and event – all three are bound together even though they are also distinct. The intimacy between them is itself familiar, inasmuch as the score is taken as *the basis for* the event, and also unfamiliar, inasmuch as the score may itself *become* the event.

When we really do paint one of Ken Friedman's works black, as in *After Ad Reinhart*, we paint over a work. We need both a work and we need paint (or ink) to be able to do this. The score of *After Ad Reinhart* refers us, not merely to its own character as a score or to the performance or event that the score invokes, but also to the objects and the materials that are part of that event. Words and sentences may function as such objects and materials, but they are not the only objects and materials at issue here – even together with the performance and the event, they are not the only things made visible

What are these *other* things that figure in Friedman's scores? What other things appear as the elements and materials for Friedman's events? Lined up on the page (as along a gallery wall, in a catalogue or perhaps in an encyclopaedia), the things in *99 Events* include:

A public monument, the first day of spring, a radio or TV programme, a sponsor, characters, tables (stacked), postcards, words and messages, cards, a sequence of activities, a Japanese folding scroll, the performer, the death of the performer, fruit, baseball, domestic objects, poles, a battle, a card, text, a friend, an

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all-night restaurant, two cups of coffee, a Christmas tree, a fast food restaurant, every item of the menu, no mess, three images, three shelves or platforms, a golden apple, judges, a sheet of paper, text, surplus clothes, an elegant restaurant, a maître d'hôte, waiters, busboy, staff, a fine table, a glass of water, a simple room, clear liquor, a bowl of limes, a wooden table, a bar (or tavern), a sneeze, a large crowd of people, the house of a stranger, a door, a knock, applause, a model of the solar system, a passage, candles, mirrors, an identification, a box, words, a dance, glottal stops, definitions, sidewalks, walls, public places, a white well-lit room, black enamel paint, a floor, a deck of cards, a page or object, more candles, a large box, a plastic squirt gun, a blindfold, cigarettes, a cancellation mark, scores for events, a conductor, an audience, a sign, a doorway, a street corner, old television sets, more fruit (peach, watermelon, pear), a hat (mailed), a rubber stamp, a pencil, species and genera, a card, melons, a mallet, a booklet, a radio broadcast, time, an announcement, melons, a great height, the sounds of melons, a naked body, paint, a stage, objects, a street, passers-by, a box, a plastic ear, a wooden box, small liquor bottles, plaster of Paris, a large sheet of paper, a large circle, a phonograph record, no sound, one shoe, tapping, more objects (painted white), collages, the homes of friends, a city, found material, a monument, a modest object, wrapping, plywood, foam, gravel, an item, a trip, performers, phonographs, large rocks, an area, geography boxes, narratives, locations and events, an audience, hands (shaken), a telephone, the time, something, a logical conclusion, a cement form, a long, low, horizontal column, several rooms, a designated space, boxes, the immediate environment, a distance, phonograph records, boxes (empty), words, large sheets of paper, walls, a table, salt, a stairway, a ceiling, a floor, containers, an old table, powdered milk, sugar, salt, actions, a vacant lot, bottles, flasks, labels, salt, white paint, a small airplane, bags and bottles, clouds, an empty, white room, a

glass-topped box, a piece of paper, sunlight, the sun, an extremely long period of time, an object, its shadow, a studio, three glasses, ice water, boiling tea, things, a floor, Christmas Eve, a lantern, a residential neighbourhood, the artist, 50 signed containers, certificates, a book, pages, words, a parcel of land, a plot of land, a small marker, a friend's doorstep, a pair of shoes, a table service for four (of clear glass or white porcelain), water, an exhibition, a chess set, a shrine, a site, an unexplained silence, 720 clocks, a room, a desk (or table), a calendar (or time-planner), objects, white paint, the score of a symphony, a symphony, an orchestra, a work by Ken Friedman, black paint, a bowl, a balance, water, a rough slab (of natural stone or wood), hand-made models, instruments, four elements, a plain wooden table, two ordinary shoes, butter, salt, a life.

So can anything figure in a score – provide material for an event?
Anything ... and nothing?

The score is not about the picking out of some special class of things from among other things. Even a score, even a work by Ken Friedman, can figure as an object in a score.

There is an intimacy that exists between score and performance, between score and event (so that score, performance, and event can be the same). There is also an intimacy that exists between the score and the things that figure within it. In making visible the score as score, as well as in relation to the event, the score makes visible the things that figure within it. What appears in this way are things familiar and things unfamiliar, and each is rendered in the form of the other.

When a thing figures in an event, in a score, its character as the thing that it is – a symphony, fruit, a Christmas tree, a long period

of time – is brought to light, since it is by virtue of what it is that it figures in the event in the way that it does.

The event is the performing, the happening, the appearing of the things that figure in the score. The things that appear are familiar – they come from our everyday surroundings, are already there. Even those things that we may not have expected to appear are familiar in this way – death, a naked body, 720 clocks, a life (what could be more familiar than a life?). What is unfamiliar is their appearance, their proximity, their calling of attention to themselves. The score responds to, but also evokes, a nostalgia that perhaps we never knew we had – a nostalgia for the presence of things, for their appearance, their proximity, their familiarity, and a recognition of their ever-present strangeness.

Here is the joke that every score also contains: something appears, but its very appearance puts that appearance into question.

This the basic structure of the joke in general: contradict what you also say, juxtapose what is ordinary with what is extraordinary, make your audience expect the unexpected, and then give them something else.

The score has the format of the joke, while the joke exemplifies something basic to the character of the score. And isn't every joke, as opposed to the insult or the wisecrack, also nostalgic, also about the presence of what is lost, the loss of what is present?

Not every joke is something performed, some jokes are merely told. The score is also something performed, and the things that appear in the score are thus things that are to be acted upon – even if it is an acting upon that is identical with a reading, a writing, a thinking, a deciding.

Action requires something acted upon and someone who acts; a performance requires a performer. The performer may appear in the score as the object of the action as well as its agent. Inasmuch as the very reading of the score may constitute its realisation, then every reader is also a performer, just as every reading is a performance.

In a work such as *After Ad Reinhart*, in which a work is chosen and then painted black, is the work that results a work *by* Ken Friedman? Is the work by Ad Reinhart that gave rise to *After Ad Reinhart*, and that consisted in the painting black of a work by Ken Friedman, a work by Ken Friedman or by Ad Reinhart? Who was the performer of this work?

If the making visible of the score also involves the making visible of the strangeness of the score, and its ordinariness; if it involves making visible the intimacy of the relation between score and performance, score and event; if it involves making visible the intimacy of score and thing (and not just the words and sentences of the score) – and if all of this making visible is also a making dark, a making strange that is also a making ordinary – then what also occurs here is a making visible of the performer. It is also a making strange of the performer and the performance.

Who is the performer, and what is the relation between the performer and the performance, between the performer and the score, between the performer and the work? Who, or what, performs, and what, or who, is performed?

What are Ken Friedman's scores? Words and sentences, instructions, performances, events, ideas, works, things, appearances, a form of nostalgia, jokes, a making visible, a making

obscure, a making mysterious of what is ordinary, a making ordinary of what is mysterious, a painting black.

After 'After Ad Reinhart': Choose a work by Ken Friedman. Make it happen.