



A

cultural

Archaeology

**EDITED BY
OKWUI ENWEZOR
MARKUS MÜLLER**

ECM

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**A CULTURAL
ARCHAEOLOGY**

Manfred Eicher in the ECM office, ca. 1976

Photo: Roberto Masotti







Manfred Eicher and Keith Jarrett, Amerika Haus, Munich, 1973
Photo: Roberto Masotti



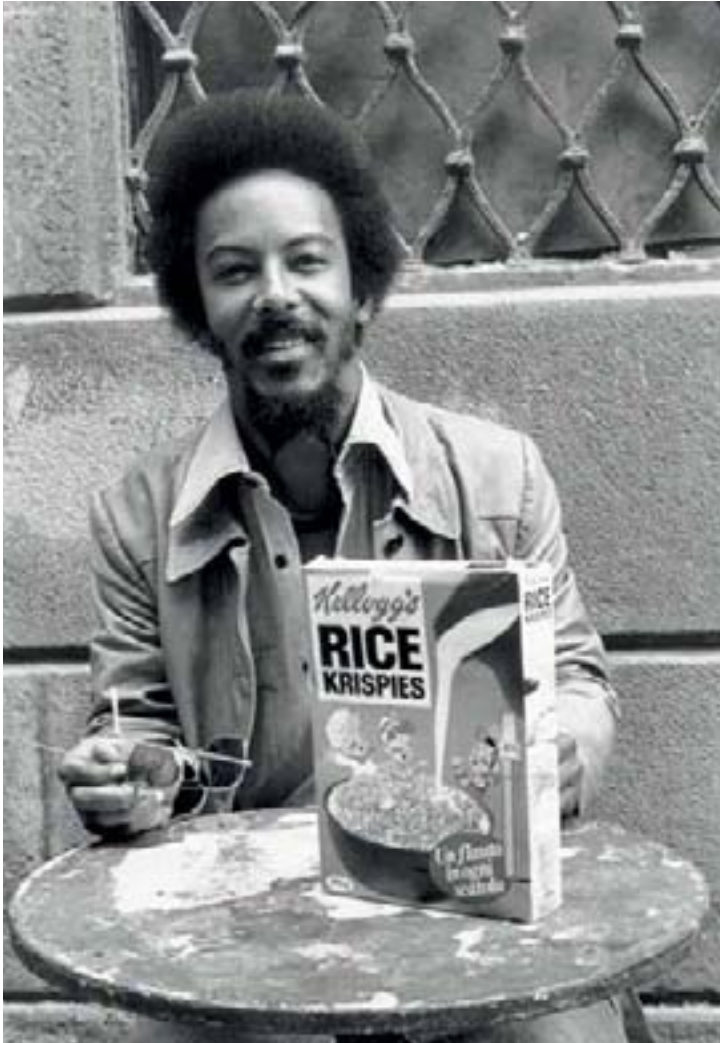




< Recording session in Oslo for Kenny Wheeler's *Deer Wan* (ECM 1102), with Manfred Eicher, Ralph Towner, Jack DeJohnette, Jan Garbarek, 1978, Photo: Roberto Masotti
Manfred Eicher and Benny Maupin in New York, ca. 1974
Photo: Waring Abbott



Don Cherry and Ed Blackwell during the recordings of *El Corazon* (ECM 1230), 1982, Photo: Ralph Quinke



Lester Bowie from The Art Ensemble of Chicago, n.d.

Photo: Roberto Masotti

Ed Blackwell during the recordings of *El Corazon* (ECM 1230), 1982

Photo: Ralph Quinke





Manfred Eicher, Jan Garbarek and Jack DeJohnette in Oslo, n.d.

Photo: Roberto Masotti





Carla Bley, n.d., Photo: Bill Roughen

Egberto Gismonti and Naná Vasconcelos, n.d.

Photo: Ralph Quinke



Charlie Haden, Pat Metheny, Michael Brecker, Dewey Redman,
and Jack DeJohnette on tour, n.d., Photographer unknown



Giya Kancheli, n.d.
Photo: Roberto Masotti



Anouar Brahem, Béchir Selmi, and Lassad Hosni, 2001

Photo: Vincent Lignier

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Mal Waldron, n.d.

Photo: Jörg Becker

FOREWORD

ECM – A Cultural Archaeology celebrates the work of the Munich-based record label ECM (Edition of Contemporary Music) and its founder and producer, Manfred Eicher. Since its founding by Eicher in 1969, a time when radical political, cultural, social, and economic forces were reshaping the ecology of the arts, ECM has been a pioneering presence in the field of recorded music. Spanning genres and historical periods, ECM's recordings in avant-garde jazz, improvised music, contemporary written music, and classical music, set a standard of aural clarity and spatial transparency from its inception, a standard that today still distinguishes its productions from those of other labels. The recognition that ECM has received in the recording field owes as much to the seminal albums it has released in the last forty-three years as it does to the great production and craftsmanship of Manfred Eicher, whose exacting musical sensitivity was constantly matched to the work of the musicians and composers whose music he has championed with passion and recorded with great care. One of the great figures of recorded music of the past fifty years, Eicher's work with ECM has insistently positioned the label's offerings as the most rigorous examples of artistic integrity and recording virtuosity. Working with a broad range of gifted artists and composers across geographic, cultural, and historical borders, Eicher's imprint on the sonic identity of ECM transformed the way in which the work of musicians and composers was recorded, bringing fresh insight into the creative and conceptual parameters of those signature recordings. As a consequence, ECM's distinctive aesthetic concepts shaped not only a new sound, but also set standards of recording rigor that still remain difficult to emulate or replicate.

ECM's distinctive sound was the result of a recording approach that enabled the intricacies of the music to be heard in a way that gave the impression of both unyielding intimacy and openness. The recordings not only reveal Eicher's passion to put forward some of the most advanced principles of production standards, but the recordings themselves also enabled the musicians and their work to be heard as they had never been heard before. That many of these recordings have become classics, not in the sense of being historical artifacts, but as references for contemporary listeners, is a testament to Eicher's musical and artistic vision. The musical innovations in jazz in the 1960s shaped ECM's early recordings. The work of the label developed in the way it perceived the reformulation of composition priorities and was influenced by the development of free jazz, as new forms of improvised and composed music took shape.

Almost forty-three years to the date after the release of ECM's first recording, *Free at Last*, by Mal Waldron, the American jazz pianist who moved to Munich in 1967, this exhibition marks the first comprehensive examination of the work of Eicher and ECM. In exploring the work of ECM, the exhibition *ECM – A Cultural Archaeology* incorporates visual, archival, and recorded material drawn from the label's archive. Though the materials displayed have been at the foundation of the label's work for more than forty years, they are nevertheless a very small range of what is necessary to visualize its history. To understand the work of the label, the viewer of the exhibition inevitably has to return to the music, for it is inside the music that the story of ECM is told, and that its truest achievements are revealed. However, the exhibition is presented to prompt not only a re-envisioning of the label, but also a thoroughly artistic and critical reappraisal of ECM's cultural impact and its musical contributions. Part of the reappraisal of the extended cultural and artistic field in which ECM operates is evident in a number of contributions to the exhibition by

contemporary artists. The work of some of these artists, presented as video installations, respond both directly to ECM's recordings, but also to parallel developments in sound and image that relate directly to the intellectual and conceptual impact of free jazz on the artistic field. It is our hope that these creative parallels will bring fresh insight into the work of ECM.

The process of preparing this exhibition with a figure such as Manfred Eicher has been immensely thrilling and gratifying. The initial impetus for this exhibition came from a brief conversation nearly two years ago in New York, with Jason Moran, the celebrated jazz pianist who recently started recording with ECM. Though Jason might not have immediately known it, he planted the idea of a project with Eicher and ECM. The happenstance of that conversation quickly evolved into a visit with Eicher, who was not only receptive to the idea but also supported the project with a depth of insight, generosity, availability, enthusiasm, and disarming modesty that has been humbling.

We are enormously grateful to Eicher and members of his team, notably Steve Lake, Guido Gorna, Gábor Simon, Heino Freiberg, Nicola Kremer, and Christian Stolberg for their unstinting engagement with us throughout the process of researching and organizing this exhibition. Without their work and knowledge—giving us access to the label's archive; introducing us to artists, writers, musicians, photographers, designers, and many other collaborators the process of knitting together the disparate materials that make up this exhibition—this project would have been particularly daunting. We thank them for the enormous commitment and dedication in all phases of the project.

From the very beginning of this project, we have been beneficiaries of the insight, generosity, and assistance of many other individuals as well. We especially wish to thank Gérard Amsellem, Jörg Becker, Dorothy Darr, Stan Douglas, Deborah Feingold, Jean-Luc Godard, Peter Greenaway, Peter Guyer / Norbert Wiedmer, Lanny Harrison, Patrick Hinely, Jan Horne, Takashi Itoh, Barbara Klemm, Latapie-Trombert, Dani Lienhard, Signe Mähler, Roberto Masotti, Jochen Mönch, Meredith Monk, Wilson Monteiro, The Otolith Group, Giuseppe G. Pino, Ralph Quinke, Andreas Raggenbass, Dieter Rehm, Anri Sala, Birgitta Singer, Ib Skovgaard Petersens, Kira Tolkmitt, Barbara Wojirsch, and the estates of Svein Erik Børja (1940—1992), Theodor Kotulla (1928—2001) and Ichiro Shimizu (1940—2009), all of whom have contributed to the exhibition.

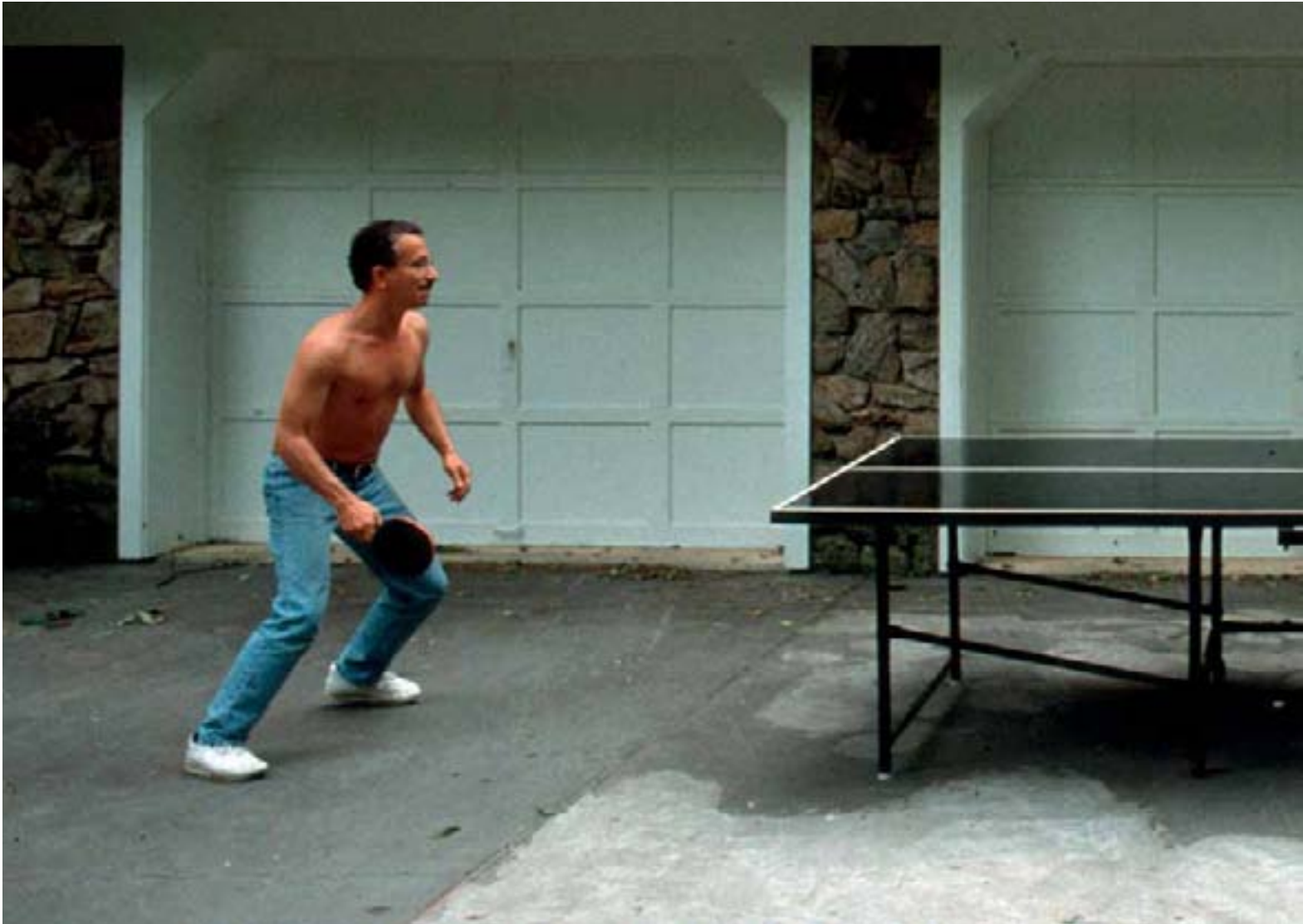
We also thank the contributors to the catalogue: Diedrich Diederichsen, Kodwo Eshun, Renée Green, Steve Lake, Markus Müller, Wolfgang Sandner, Jürg Stenzl, Manfred Eicher, and Karl Lippegaus for their astute critical judgments and appraisal of ECM's work. Chris Goennawein, the designer of this catalogue, has patiently and expertly created a book that is distinctive. Chris has not only fashioned a very elegant design, he has also been studiously and sensitively responsive to the visual idiom that has shaped the work of ECM, while at the same setting forth a fresh design proposal that is the hall-mark of clarity and precision. Katharina Haderer, editor-in-chief of Prestel, has been a champion of the publication from the beginning. We are delighted to work with her. Special thanks are also due to the copy editors of the catalogue: Max Annas (German), Monica Rumsey (English). For translations from the English into German we thank Heike Ander/Volker Zander, Barbara Hess, Caroline Kranich-Lake, and German into English, Brad Alexander, Daniel Brunet, Caroline Kranich-Lake, Paul Lytton, and Isabel Seeberg, each of whom responded to punishing deadlines with unremitting calm and efficiency.

A project of this scope often requires the support of many organizations and individuals in order to be realized. For their support, we wish to extend special acknowledgment and thanks to Ministerialdirigent Toni Schmid, Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst; Heike Lies, Kulturreferat der Landeshauptstadt München; Sree Goswami, Project88, Mumbai; Steinway-Haus München; and our media partner, Bayern 2. We also thank the lenders to the exhibition: Absolut Medien, Berlin; ECM, Munich; Estonian Theatre and Music Museum, Tallin; Lanny Harrison, New York; Anna Kotulla and Arsenal-Institut für Film und Videokunst e.V., Berlin; Roberto Masotti, Milano; Meredith Monk/The House Foundation for the Arts, New York; Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), Oslo; Arvo Pärt Centre, Harjumaa; Ralph Quinke, Hamburg; Dieter Rehm, Munich; Galerie Rüdiger Schöttle, Munich; The Vue Amsterdam; Vega Film AG, Zurich; Barbara Wojirsch, Imperia; and David Zwirner Gallery, New York.

I thank Markus Müller, my co-curator of the exhibition, for bringing his important historical knowledge as a critic and expert in jazz, as well as the work of ECM, and the broad network of recording labels that preceded and followed on the example of ECM. Markus's detailed knowledge as a critic of music and an editor of successive jazz magazines in Germany made him a special partner in the organization of the exhibition. I am grateful to Anna Schneider, the assistant curator of the exhibition, for her crucial role in the organization and coordination of all aspects of the exhibition. Anna has been a key partner in the entire curatorial process, and more importantly exhibited incredible creative agility and responsiveness to the project's many demands.

We have been fortunate to work with members of the team of Haus der Kunst, who each day bring unparalleled professionalism to the care, planning, and execution of each exhibition to an exacting standard. We thank Marco Graf von Matuschka, chief financial officer; Ulrich Wilmes, chief curator; Iris Ludwig, Teresa Lengl, Andrea Saul, Elena Heitsch, Jacqueline Falk, Anna Schüller, Martina Schmid, Tina Köhler, Anton Köttl, Marino Solokhov, Cassandre Schmid, Tim Wolff, Marjen Schmidt, Susanne von der Groeben, Tanja Eiler, Marzieh Kermani, Song Woo, for their dedicated work on behalf of the museum.

Okwui Enwezor
Director



Keith Jarrett and Manfred Eicher, 1991

Photo: Peter Laenger



GREAT BIG EARS: ECM – A CULTURAL ARCHAEOLOGY – NOTES TOWARD AN EXHIBITION

OKWUI ENWEZOR



Barbara Wojirsch, untitled, cover design, 1993

John Abercrombie Trio, Speak Of The Devil (ECM 1511)



Okwui Enwezor, Markus Müller

ECM

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Prestel

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Das Label ECM (Edition of Contemporary Music) wurde 1969 von Manfred Eicher in München gegründet, um improvisierte und Avantgarde-Musik einzuspielen, zu produzieren und zu veröffentlichen. Als eine der ersten von Musikern geführten Plattenfirmen in Europa sprachen ihre Aufnahmen vom Verständnis eines Musikers und setzten Maßstäbe für eine akustische Komplexität, die bis heute die Produktionen prägen. ECM achtete auf Werktreue statt auf kommerzielle Trends und setzte mit seinen kristallklaren Aufnahmen neue Maßstäbe für die Plattenproduktion. Zu seinen Künstlern zählen unter anderem Keith Jarrett, Chick Corea, Jan Garbarek, das Art Ensemble of Chicago, Don Cherry und Dave Holland: Spitzenmusiker des neuen Jazz. Selten zuvor war Jazz so sorgfältig aufgenommen worden - mit einem Sound, der den individuellen Sound jedes Künstlers genau widerspiegelt.

Die Publikation zum Werk von Manfred Eicher wird von Okwui Enwezor (Direktor Haus der Kunst, München) und Markus Müller herausgegeben. Die begleitende Ausstellung ergänzen Livemusik, Filme, Diskussionen, Workshops und Konzerte. Hinzu kommen mehrere Welturaufführungen, Europapremieren und exklusive Kooperationen mit Künstlern, Musikern und Filmemachern.