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## **Lily Greenham – stranger in a strange land – *Lingual music*, radiophonic art, voice performance and conceptual art**

Conversation with Ian Stonehouse, October 23, 2024, Goldsmith University of London

In conversation with Ian Stonehouse, Experimental Music Archivist and former Head of the Electronic Music Studios (2004–2017) at the Department of Music, Goldsmiths, University of London.<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

This conversation with Ian Stonehouse (Head of EMS, Goldsmiths) explores the legacy of Lily Greenham (1924–2001), a pioneering sound poet, composer, and visual artist. It focuses on her invention of *lingual music* – a voice-based sound art form – and her collaborations with the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, notably the award-winning piece *Relativity* (1974). Stonehouse highlights Greenham’s multilingual performances, her technical mastery of tape editing, and her later shift toward electroacoustic composition in works such as *Polar Polaris* and *Borges*. The discussion also addresses her wide network of collaborators, challenges in archival preservation, and her lasting influence as an interdisciplinary artist who fused poetry, performance, and studio innovation.

### **Lily Greenham**

The Austrian-born artist, poet, and performer Lily Greenham (1924–2001) is known for her groundbreaking work in sound poetry, electronic music, and visual art. She lived in Paris and London, becoming part of key post-war avant-garde circles. Her work blended language, voice,

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<sup>1</sup> Ian Stonehouse, British artist, educator, and researcher. Former Head of the Electronic Music Studios (EMS) at Goldsmiths, University of London, where he has taught since 1999. Trained in Fine Art at the University of Wolverhampton, he previously worked at London Electronic Arts (later the Lux Centre), collaborating with artists including Jane & Louise Wilson and Gillian Wearing. Since 2004, he has directed the EMS, focusing on electroacoustic composition, sound design, and media arts.

More informations: [https://biography.omicsonline.org/united-kingdom/goldsmiths-university-of-london/ian-stonehouse-602207?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://biography.omicsonline.org/united-kingdom/goldsmiths-university-of-london/ian-stonehouse-602207?utm_source=chatgpt.com) [accessed 29.7.2025]

Ian Stonehouse’ article about Greenham on Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lily\\_Greenham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lily_Greenham)

and tape music composition, and she was associated with movements such as sound poetry, concrete poetry, and the *Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV)*. Greenham is particularly noted for coining and developing *lingual music* – a unique fusion of speech and sound composition. Her contributions have gained renewed recognition in contemporary sound and media art histories. The Lily Greenham Archive is housed in the Special Collections at Goldsmiths, University of London.

### ***lingual music* – multilingual readings**

*Lingual music*<sup>2</sup> is a term coined by Lily Greenham to describe her unique form of sound art, in which she treated language as sonic material – using the voice not primarily to convey meaning, but as a musical and rhythmic phenomenon, and exclusively in recorded form:

The main feature of these tape pieces is the use of speech as a basic element. Contrary to the traditional way of ‘setting words to music’, in ‘lingual music’ speech ‘emerges as music’. ‘Lingual music’ pieces could not be performed live. The only sound source used is the human voice (if not otherwise stated). The recorded material is electronically processed<sup>3</sup>

A key strength of Greenham’s work – both as a composer and, more significantly, as a performer – lies in her linguistic agility. She moved effortlessly across texts in German, Danish, Spanish, French, Japanese, and Portuguese, frequently transforming phonemes into rhythmic, musical units. She flips between languages like a switch. In her performances, the phonetic textures of multiple languages become an essential compositional element. These textures prompt constant shifts in the audience’s perception – between hearing language musically and interpreting it semantically – depending on their familiarity with the languages presented.

Her readings include contemporary poets of her time, such as Eugen Gomringer<sup>4</sup>, Vagn Steen<sup>5</sup>, Kitasono Katsue<sup>6</sup>, Décio Pignatari<sup>7</sup>, José Lino Grünewald<sup>8</sup>, Ronaldo Azeredo<sup>9</sup>, and Haroldo de Campos<sup>10</sup> as well as classical avant-garde positions – evidence of Greenham’s deep

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<sup>2</sup> Lily Greenham: *lingual music* – „In 1973 Greenham coined the term ‘lingual music’ to describe her practice of layering and processing reel-to-reel tape recordings of her own voice. She detailed this approach in *Kontextsound*, the catalogue for the *tekst in geluid* festival at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1977.

Lily Greenham, *Kontextsound*, 1977, cited in [Voicing Lingual Music](#) [accessed 27 July 2025];

Further information at: [Writing: Lingual Music](#) [accessed 13 July 2025].

Further information at: <https://lilygreenham.org/aaol/voicing/lingual-music> [accessed 27.7.2025]

<sup>3</sup> Lily Greenham: *lingual music*.

<sup>4</sup> Eugen Gomringer (b. 1925): Swiss poet, considered the father of concrete poetry.

<sup>5</sup> Vagn Steen (1928–2016), Danish poet, internationally acclaimed for his concrete poems and poem objects.

<sup>6</sup> Kitasono Katsue (1902–1978): Japanese Dadaist and visual poet associated with the VOU group.

<sup>7</sup> Décio Pignatari (1927–2012): Brazilian concrete poet and semiotician, co-founder of the *Noigandres* group.

<sup>8</sup> José Lino Grünewald (1929–2000): Brazilian poet, critic, and translator of Ezra Pound.

<sup>9</sup> Ronaldo Azeredo (1937–2006): Brazilian visual poet, associated with the first wave of concrete poetry in Brazil.

<sup>10</sup> Haroldo de Campos (1929–2003): Brazilian poet, translator, and theorist, central to the concrete poetry movement.

engagement with both contemporary and historical strands of sound poetry. Her repertoire is documented on the *tendencious neo-semantics*<sup>11</sup> published in 1970. Greenham emerges as interpreter, performer, and composer – bringing vocal clarity, musicality, and humour<sup>12</sup> to the material. While her early concert programs followed a chronological order, she later adopted a more fluid approach, for example, in her 1976 performance at La Salle Gaveau<sup>13</sup> in Paris, she moved back and forth within the same repertoire.

Greenham speaks of the “turning back to semantics” in the need of communication:

i consider it essential to take the ‘turning back to semantics’. there are several reasons: the most important of these is purposeful communication without consideration of neither commercialized – nor ‘underground’ – trends of our epoch.<sup>14</sup>

Greenham’s remark underscores her claim to an independent artistic position, one that deliberately distances itself from both dominant and countercultural trends of the period.

### **KPFK Radio broadcast of a concert in KPFK, 1979**

Listening to the tape of a solo concert by Lily Greenham at the KPFK Radio in Los Angeles in 1979:<sup>15</sup> her performance at KPFK demonstrates her commitment to integrating multilingual material into a cohesive poetic-musical experience, reinforcing her standing as an international sound poet. The program was based exclusively on works from the classical avant-garde, including texts by Apollinaire, Mallarmé, E. E. Cummings, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Arno Holz, August Stramm, Kurt Schwitters, Paul Scheerbart, Christian Morgenstern, Lewis Carroll, Velimir Khlebnikov, Hugo Ball, Raoul Hausmann, and others. Lily Greenham emphasized “the musical aspect of the different languages.”

KPFK Studio here in North Hollywood, we bring to a full-length concert broadcast given by

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<sup>11</sup> Lily Greenham: *Internationale Sprachexperimente der 50/60er Jahre / Tendencious Neo-Semantics*, Frankfurt am Main: Edition Hoffmann, ca. 1970, LP, see: <https://galeriehoffmann.de/de/werke/internationale-sprachexperimente-der-5060er-jahre-tendenzi%C3%B6se-neo-semantik-1970-in-englisch/>

<sup>12</sup> Humour is central to Lily Greenham’s work: „the fact that i write in english has following explanation: the uncomplicated construction of the language, its elementarity and the multifarious-significance of many words fascinate me. from my point of view it is nearly unavoidable to develop a certain humour employing the english language. humour is to my mind the only ‘stable datum’ which always has survived any ‘ism’ and always will survive.“ in: <https://galeriehoffmann.de/en/in-focus/greenham-lily-tendencious-neo-semantics/> [accessed 28.7.2025]

<sup>13</sup> Paris, Salle Gaveau 1.12.1976

„recorded at the Salle Gaveau in Paris, France, on 1 December 1976, that was broadcast on Radio France. An 18 minute sequence of Greenham’s sound poetry – including *Ability*, *Focus Hocus Pocus*, *Outsider*, *Tillid*, *Capital*, and *Underground* – is followed by the tape playback of *Relativity*. What’s notable is the amount of energy, charisma, and clarity with which she performs these pieces, often segueing from one into the next, as well as improvising at certain points.“ in: <https://lilygreenham.org/aaol/voicing/radio-broadcasts> [accessed 27.7.2025]

<sup>14</sup> Lily Greenham: *tendencious neo-semantics*, edition hoffmann, LP, 1970.

<sup>15</sup> See: GREE/4/11: KPFK 90.7 FM, Pacifica Radio, Los Angeles: Broadcast of a Concert, 1979, no further information.

the British sound poet Lily Greenham. Lily Greenham comes to KPFK to perform her own semantic sound poetry and to present her own lingual music. This is music that uses speech as basic material, as for music, as opposed to the traditional concept of setting words to music. Lily Greenham, in addition, will be presenting examples of international sound poetry. As a performer of international concrete and sound poetry and her own works, she has occasionally performed voice and other parts in contemporary music by the likes of George Brecht, John Cage, Cornelius Cardew, Dieter Schnebel, Edgar Varese, LaMonte Young, and many others. She has been broadcast on BBC in London, Denmark Radio in Copenhagen [...] In a moment, Lily Greenham shall walk on stage, and we shall begin this full-length concert broadcast of her own music, but first, examples of international sound poetry from poets and visual artists around the world. And now, Lily Greenham.

[Applaus]

Lily Greenham: Hi. First I want to read you some concrete poetry, International Movement of the 50s and 60s. I don't know if you know anything about concrete poetry. I'll tell you a few words. The first countries where concrete poetry was published were Brazil, Switzerland, Austria and Germany. And the basic characteristics of concrete poetry are sparse material and form, and content are identical. In the beginning of the 60s, it developed into a kind of sound poetry and the late 60s, it started to go into text sound compositions, as you know them very well in California. And another thing I want to say is that I stress the musical aspect of the different languages. I'm going to read some poems by various authors, and you don't certainly need to worry about understanding the different languages because it's by a sound I'm communicating. And concrete poetry started off actually as visual poetry and I'll show you an example in a minute but first I want to tell you about a few authors by which all the concrete poets were very inspired. Like Apollinaire, Mallarmé, Cummings, Pound, Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Arno Holz, August Stramm, Kurt Schwitters, Scherbert, Morgenstern, Lewis Carroll, Chlebnikow, Hugo Ball, Raul Hausmann, etc.

Okay, and I'll start with this thing you can see here, and maybe for the listeners we can explain what's on this sheet. It is a poem by Ronaldo Azeredo from Brazil, and he used the word 'velocidade' in Portuguese and started like if you imagine a line in front of you and from your left you read ten v's. [...] <sup>16</sup>

The transcription of the KPFK Radio broadcast from Los Angeles demonstrates Greenham's remarkable ability to function simultaneously as a lecturer and performer of sound poetry – explaining while entertaining, performing while explaining. She seamlessly blends concrete and sound poetry, highlighting both the visual and sonic aspects of the texts.

### **Barry Summer School in Wales, 1968**

Her pedagogical approach is further illuminated by a documentary recording of her teaching a sound poetry course at the Barry Summer School in Wales in 1968. In her introduction to the lecture-performance, Greenham reflects on the act of listening to sound poetry as a musical experience:

If you didn't understand the words unless you know the particular language – but I would like to listen to the structure in the total modulation of the language. And also, please note the different range of color in each of these particular languages. To say a few words about the different variants of poetry, I'm going to read. The concrete poetry uses words to create an object in and by itself. Concrete poets see words, not poetic observations, or sentiments, as the raw material of their poetry. The way words look, and sound is as important to them as their meaning. I also use sentences in different constellations as you will hear.

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<sup>16</sup> KPFK, 1979

// but I would like you to listen to the structure // and to say a few words about the different lines[?] of poetry that I'm going to read. The concrete poetry uses words to create an object in and by itself. Concrete poets see words, not poetic observations, or sentiments, as the raw material of their poetry. The way words look, and sound is as important to them as their meaning. They also use sentences in different constellations as you will hear. Whether they are the rhythmical poems, that is a kind of musical poem, the sense in this word I would like you to understand in brackets emerges to the listener as an integration of language and music. The semantic poems, the significance is the word itself. No, the significance of the word. The phonetic poem, here the sound of syllables, is the carrying power of the poem.

And some of the poems are divided up in periods of time, certain sentences to be read slowly and others quickly. Wait a minute. Often you get some word repetition but repeated in other speeds. And well, then there are the experimental poems which use different ways of experimenting with the choice of work material. I'm going to start off with some concrete poetry. And by the way, the concrete poetry, you have a lot of-- it is purely visual, but I'm going to read these which lend themselves to be read aloud<sup>17</sup>.

This passage illustrates Lily Greenham's dual role as both performer and pedagogue – guiding her audience through a listening experience. Her articulation of the distinctions between concrete, semantic, phonetic, and experimental poetry reflects the formal properties of language across both visual and sonic dimensions. Rather than privileging meaning in the traditional literary sense, Greenham invites listeners to attune themselves to rhythm, modulation, and the physicality of speech. By foregrounding variation in tempo, repetition, and multilingual texture, she expands the perceptual field of poetry beyond comprehension into resonance. This approach reveals her broader artistic vision: to reimagine the voice not merely as a medium of expression, but as an instrument of composition.

### **The Making of *Relativity* – Technical Methods and Studio Craft**

An interview conducted by Ian Stonehouse with former *BBC Radiophonic Workshop* engineers Paddy Kingsland<sup>18</sup> and Peter Howell<sup>19</sup> offers insights into Lily Greenham's studio work at the *BBC Radiophonic Workshop* and further details about the production of her major electroacoustic piece *Relativity*<sup>20</sup> in 1974 in collaboration with Peter Howell.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ebd. = GREE/9/054 Lily Greenham's Tape BARRY 1968 1968, 7-inch EMITAPE spool stored in green and red Scotch Magnetic Tape box. Paper note inside box states: 'COPY Lily Greenham's Tape 7 1/2 I.P.S. Single Transcription of her performance as endnote

<sup>18</sup> Paddy Kingsland (\*1947 London), composer of electronic music and co-founder of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop and studio manager from 1970–1981.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Howell (\*1948): British composer, sound engineer, also affiliated with the BBC Radiophonic Workshop; notable for his reinterpretation of the *Doctor Who* theme in the 1980s.

<sup>20</sup> Listen to *Relativity*: <https://lilygreenham.org/aaol/voicing/lingual-music> (accessed: 24.8.2025)

<sup>21</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre, R97–Radiophonic Workshop | *Relativity* – File No.99, date 1976/1976: Desmond Briscoe, Radiophonic Workshop, 8, Maida Vale, 270&277, 8th April, 1975: Realisation: Richman Yeaman-Clark, assisted by: Peter Howell, with the voices of: Richard Baker, Lily Greenham, Judy Bennett, Jo Mannin-Wilson, Sean Barrett, Edward Kelsey, produced by Desmond Briscoe.

*Relativity* was originally commissioned by Desmond Briscoe,<sup>22</sup> then head of the *BBC Radiophonic Workshop*, for a *BBC Radio 1* broadcast commemorating the 20th anniversary of Albert Einstein's death. The piece represents complex studio production employing loop-based editing, multitrack layering, and tape manipulation. It later gained recognition in both electroacoustic and sound-art contexts. A remarkable adaptable composition that functions effectively across diverse listening environments. *Relativity* was awarded the Prix du Jury at the Festival Bourges in 1975.<sup>23</sup>

From 1973 – 74 Greenham was invited to work at the world-renowned BBC Radiophonic Workshop. There, she composed perhaps her most famous sound work, *Relativity* [...] using words from Einstein's *Special Theory of Relativity* and playing on the linkage between the word electron as used in both physics and electronic music. *Relativity* was broadcast by the BBC the following year and went on to win a prize for electro-acoustic music at the prestigious *5th Bourges International Festival of Experimental Music* in 1975.<sup>24</sup>

John Muir – producer at *BBC Radio 1*<sup>25</sup> known for launching ground-breaking programs, also produced a broadcast featuring Lily Greenham in collaboration with the Bob Downes *Open Music Trio*<sup>26</sup> – played a key role in introducing Greenham to Paddy Kingsland, initiating a collaboration on Greenham's early poetry recordings and experimental pieces.<sup>27</sup>

Greenham and Kingsland explored the possibilities of early electronic music through distinctive approaches to analogue sound manipulation, developing unique methods of tape composition. Their production process involved multi-track tape machines, demanding not only experimental creativity but also a high level of technical craftsmanship. Many of Greenham's concepts required extensive pre-editing, beyond the basic layering of audio tracks. A central technical challenge was the need for track bouncing. The cumulative build-up of tape hiss-imposed limits on how many overdub generations could be executed without compromising sound quality. In some cases, the extent of the tape editing was so intense that the back of the

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<sup>22</sup> Desmond Briscoe (1925–2006) British composer and sound engineer who co-founded and served as head of the *BBC Radiophonic Workshop* (1958–1983). Under his leadership the Workshop became a pioneering center for electronic and experimental sound, contributing to radio, television, and early electronic music in the UK.

<sup>23</sup> The *Festival de Bourges* was held from 1970 to 2011 and was organized by the *International Institute of Electroacoustic Music of Bourges* (IMEB/GMEB).

[https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institut\\_international\\_de\\_musique\\_%C3%A9lectroacoustique\\_de\\_Bourges](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institut_international_de_musique_%C3%A9lectroacoustique_de_Bourges)

<sup>24</sup> Lily Greenham: <https://lilygreenham.org/aaol/voicing/lingual-music> [accessed 27.7.2025]

Lily Greenham's website has been curated by James Bulley, Andrew Walsh-Lister, Anja Casser & Alex Balgiu. Consultant research and sound archiving has been provided by Ian Stonehouse. Website design and architecture by Paul Bouigue.

<sup>25</sup> John Muir (1937-2017) studio manager at the *BBC* (1961–1974), his engagement helped bridge contemporary music and avant-garde sound art.

<sup>26</sup> Robert George Downes (\*1937) flute and saxophon player (see footnotes 39 and 40)

<sup>27</sup> See footnote 44 on collaborations with Paddy Kingsland.

magnetic tape was entirely covered with splicing tape – rendering the original surface virtually invisible.

The production of *Relativity* was not accomplished in a single continuous session but across a series of working days<sup>28</sup>. According to engineer Peter Howell, Lily Greenham was closely involved in the early stages of production, attending the sessions extensively. She contributed a wealth of recorded material and provided precise conceptual direction. Greenham was present both as a voice performer and as a composer conceptualising ideas coming from a performance background. She was a 'theatrical' person, who was very much into performance art – an excellent speech performer. Various approaches to processing the material were discussed during the sessions. While Howell had deep knowledge of the studio equipment, there was enough room for experimentation. As mentioned, some of the material Greenham provided had already been pre-edited by her, demonstrating her technical engagement with the process. At a certain point, her continued physical presence became unnecessary. She had recorded all the required vocal elements and articulated her artistic vision. The remaining production work was carried out in her absence, following a workflow similar to that of film post-production, where the creative input is recorded collaboratively, then refined independently by the technical team, before the artist returns for final adjustments.

The technical production was executed using an eight-track tape machine, the standard format of the time. Much of the initial material was recorded and manipulated on quarter-inch tape, then transferred and layered during the mixing stage. This required precise pre-editing, as well as strategic planning regarding which elements to commit to tape at each stage, due to concerns over tape hiss and generational loss, which could compromise the sound quality after multiple overdubs.

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<sup>28</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre, file: R97–Radiophonic Workshop *Relativity*, File No.99, date 1976/1976: Letter to Miss Lily Greenham, 72 Greencroft Gardens, London, N.W.6: "Rehearsing and Recording, March–May 1974" – "Duration/nature of contribution: 18 days experimental workshop at the Radiophonic Workshop."



### *PA Stabilizer and tempophone*

Among the devices employed were BBC-developed tools such as the *PA stabilizer*, as well as phasers and one of the early harmonizers. The *PA stabilizer* modulated the audio signal onto a high frequency and then demodulated it to eliminate the characteristic ‘ringing’ sound. When used at very high frequencies, it could create a kind of feedback – a howling tone that would rise progressively in pitch. This effect can be heard at the end of *Relativity*.

In addition to the *PA stabilizer*, both a harmonizer and a *tempophon*<sup>30</sup> were used. The *tempophon* was mounted in front of the tape machine, featured a rapidly counter-rotating head that allowed real-time changes in playback speed without altering pitch. It produced what was often described as a magical effect, like ‘fairy dust’, notably creating an augmented fifth, a beautiful sound that became a favorite among studio engineers.

These technologies were applied in experimental and expressive ways, contributing to the dynamic, spatially fluid textures that characterize the piece. Howell emphasized that while Greenham completed much of the preparatory editing at home using *Revox tape* machines, the final assembly at the BBC Radiophonic Workshop demanded considerable studio expertise and intensive collaborative problem-solving.

### Loops and mute buttons

*Relativity* ends with a choir composed entirely of Greenham’s own voice. The voice has been accelerated and distorted, and in addition to altering tape speed, a common technique involved interrupting the audio by using the mute button on the mixing desk. This was a highly physical process requiring significant dexterity – a kind of performative act in itself.

In *Relativity*, the machine becomes the performer, delivering mechanical repetitions that Greenham carefully constructed through endless tape loops. These were often created by recording at a slower speed and then accelerating the playback, resulting in complex rhythmic structures. Greenham consciously embraced machine-based repetition. These labor-intensive sessions demanded both physical virtuosity and precise timing, demonstrating Greenham’s expertise.

Although Greenham was celebrated for her live performance skills, she purposely used the machine to enact her concept of *lingual music*, marking a conceptual shift from the human

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<sup>30</sup> The Tempophon is a tape-based audio processor originally developed in the mid-20th century. Unlike traditional tape machines, which change both pitch and tempo simultaneously when playback speed is adjusted, the Tempophon used rotating magnetic heads and a form of granular time segmentation to decouple these two parameters. This allowed, for example, a recorded voice to be slowed down without lowering its pitch – a feature that was revolutionary in pre-digital sound design and music production.

voice to mechanical agency. The result: works that are not meant to be performed live, but instead exist solely as studio compositions, as Greenham states:

the main feature of these tape-pieces is the use of speech as basic element. contrary to the traditional way of 'setting words to music', in 'lingual music' speech 'emerges as music'. the first step in the working-process is the recording of a 'repertoire' of letters/syllables/other fragments/words and sentences. this is then used mechanically only. 'lingual music' - pieces could not be performed live. the only sound-source used is the human voice (if not otherwise stated).<sup>31</sup>

It is not the words that are associated with music, but the music hidden in spoken language that comes to the fore through the tape compositions and only through them. Waveform analysis confirms that the repetitions in *Relativity* are verbatim copies – clear evidence of deliberate mechanical duplication. These processed voice segments were created separately and only assembled at the final stage of production, primarily to avoid the build-up of tape hiss.

*Relativity* operates across radiophonic, acousmatic, and poetic registers – serving as a rare example of a work that simultaneously fulfils conceptual, sonic, and technical ambitions. It was not originally conceived as a formal electroacoustic composition. Nevertheless, *Relativity* functions effectively as a radio work, while also translating seamlessly into contemporary sound art and multi-channel installation formats.<sup>32</sup>

### **1980s – *Polar Polaris*, *Borges* and *Seascape***

At some point during the 1980s, Greenham began working in her own studio using two tape recorders. Lily had a strong drive for aggressive, highly individual sounds – no one else would have edited them the way she did. All material is based on the voice. To analyse the complexity of the tracks, one must slow them down to search for the original speed so that the hidden layers emerge, revealing the astonishing amount of labour embedded in each piece.

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<sup>31</sup> Lily Greenham: "Kontextsound": *Tekst in geluid*, Ed. Michael Gibbs, Amsterdam: Kontexts Publications, 1977. Catalogue for the *Tekst in geluid* Festival, Stedelijk Museum, Apr.–May 1977.

<sup>32</sup> 26. Sept. 1974 / The producer and I [Lily Greenham] have found that a first hearing of *relativity* is for some people a stimulating experience which they would wish to repeat. / It is a highly complex piece with many events in a short time span. / We have attempted to transcribe the three dimensional score into an aural[?] terms by simulating a third dimension in addition to the lateral positioning. There are layers of sound, an in fact some listeners may have received an apparent quadrophonic effect from the stereo system. / We are now going to repeat the piece and would suggest that, in order to intensify the experience, listeners move somewhat nearer to their loudspeakers than their customary position.

Note of Lilly Greenham in: BBC Written Archives Centre, file: R97–Radiophonic Workshop *Relativity*, File No.99, date 1976/1976:

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*Polar Polaris*<sup>33</sup> was composed in 1982 followed by *Borges*<sup>34</sup> in 1984. These were the last two works she completed, and they stand apart from everything else she had produced before. These compositions seem to signal the beginning of a new artistic trajectory. According to Ian Stonehouse, these later works demonstrate a shift toward a different electroacoustic sensibility. The compositional focus moves away from performative gesture and toward the sonic texture of layered and balanced sound – quite distinct from her earlier, language-driven music.

In her early works, Greenham was primarily concerned with the act, the gesture, the performance. She was less interested in the timbral qualities of sound compared to contemporaries such as Elaine Radigue<sup>35</sup> or Bernard Parmigiani.<sup>36</sup> Now, however, a new interest in the sonic and textural dimensions of sound emerged. For *Polar Polaris*, *Borges* and a third work, *Seascape*,<sup>37</sup> Greenham abandons gestural expression in favour of an intricate fabric of noise and overlapping textures.

*Polar Polaris* (1982–83) is one of Greenham’s most enigmatic compositions, a complex web of noises, utterances, and rhythmic pulses that defies ready categorisation. Passages of mantra-like text are unevenly and robotically intoned: ‘polar polaris, solar solaris, solar plexus nexus to the stars, bundle of fibres, centre of nerves, impulse leads, transfer cables, magnetic tape recording pulses, messages from afar, heavenly bodies emitting codes, magnetic waves pulling and pushing, impulsive behaviour, spinning and spinning at various speeds, oscillating much, star explosion...’<sup>38</sup>

In *Borges*, the voice is obscured. The title evokes the labyrinthine narratives of Jorge Luis Borges, where meaning is fragmented and elusive. The spoken text – in Spanish and Portuguese – is deliberately veiled, the ‘truth’ obscured through a network of misdirections and sonic decoys.

*Borges* (1984), Greenham’s last known composition, was created as a film soundtrack, though little detail is known about the film itself. Something of a companion piece to *Polar Polaris*, *Borges* extends her lingual music technique into broader sonic realms, with a greater focus on timbre / noise and extended textures, whilst retaining a distinctive and unsettling edge.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Greenham: *Lingual Music*, 2007, CD 1 Track 3: *Polar Polaris* [8:51].

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. Track 7: *Borges* [10:07].

<sup>35</sup> Elaine Radigue (\*1938, Paris) American composer, pioneer in electronic and acoustic music 1960, initially working with with tape music and modular synthesizers, celebrated for its immersive, contemplative quality and subtle sonic detail, key figure of minimalist and drone music.

<sup>36</sup> Bernard Parmegiani (1927–2013) French composer and pioneer of electroacoustic music, renowned for his innovative sound collages and experimental compositions. Member of the *Groupe de Recherches Musicales (GRM)*.

<sup>37</sup> Greenham: *Lingual Music*, 2007, CD 2 Track 13: *Seascape* [7:58].

<sup>38</sup> <https://lilygreenham.org/aaol/voicing/lingual-music> [accessed 27.7.2025].

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

In *Seascape*, Lily Greenham constructs an evocative marine soundscape using exclusively her own voice as source material. This vocal approach stands in productive contrast to Delia Derbyshire's *Circle of Light*<sup>40</sup> from 1972, a composition created for a film by Anthony Roland, in which Derbyshire sonically renders the natural world through processes of technical abstraction. While both works can be understood as early examples of soundscape composition, their conceptual and material strategies differ fundamentally.

*Circle of Light* is characterized by an absence of human presence; Derbyshire utilizes manipulated environmental sounds – bird calls, water, ambient noise – to produce a listening space in which only the voices of animals remain audible. Greenham's *Seascape*, by contrast, retains the human voice at its core, shaping its textures and timbres to evoke the sound-world of the sea. Both artists engage with the same thematic subject – the oceanic – yet they approach it from opposing vantage points: Derbyshire from the perspective of nature heard in human absence, Greenham through the expressive extension of the human voice into nonverbal, elemental registers.

This juxtaposition reveals differing aesthetic commitments: Derbyshire's work emphasizes the removal of the human agent to foreground environmental presence, whereas Greenham reclaims the voice as a sculptural medium capable of sonic mimicry and abstraction. In doing so, she opens a space in which voice and environment become intertwined – not through imitation, but through embodied sonic transformation.

## **Collaborations**

Lily Greenham's career unfolded at the intersection of experimental music, visual art, and literary innovation during a period of heightened cross-disciplinary exchange in the latter half of the twentieth century. Operating across multiple geographies – London, Paris, Copenhagen, Vienna, and beyond – she navigated fluidly between avant-garde circles, engaging with a broad spectrum of practitioners in sound poetry, concrete poetry, free improvisation, and conceptual art. Her practice was characterised by a sustained commitment to linguistic experimentation, a willingness to embrace emergent media technologies, and an openness to collaborative processes that transcended national and disciplinary boundaries.

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<sup>40</sup> Delia Derbyshire (1937–2001) English composer of electronic music and arranger the theme of *Doctor Who*. She created the soundtrack for *Circle of Light: The Photography of Pamela Bone* (1972), a 32-minute film directed by Anthony Roland: <https://deliaderbyshire.bandcamp.com/album/circle-of-light>  
[https://wikidelia.net/wiki/Circle\\_of\\_Light](https://wikidelia.net/wiki/Circle_of_Light)

The following section examines the scope and significance of Greenham's artistic networks and cross-genre collaborations, situating them within the broader historical currents of post-war experimental art. By tracing her relationships with leading figures in sound and concrete poetry, her affiliations with visual art movements, and her ventures into collaborative projects with musicians and filmmakers, it becomes evident that Greenham not only participated in but actively shaped the interconnected cultural landscape of her time.

Greenham was part of a broad network of musicians, including John Tchicai, Hugh Davies, Barry Guy, Max Eastley, and Bob Downes, among others.

### Bob Downes Open Music Trio

The *Open Music Trio*<sup>41</sup>, an experimental jazz ensemble, brought Lily Greenham's lingual music into direct dialogue with avant-garde jazz practices. Led by Bob Downes (flute, saxophone, piano), the group featured a rotating lineup of musicians, including Barry Guy (double bass) and Dennis Smith (percussion), among others.

This collaboration enabled Greenham to merge her sound poetry with jazz improvisation – synthesis documented on the album *Lingual Music*, released in 2007.<sup>42</sup> The trio toured extensively across Europe, North Africa, and North America, presenting a fusion of spoken word, electronic texture, and free-form jazz.

### Hugh Davies

In 1967 Hugh Davies<sup>43</sup> founded the Electronic Music Studios at Goldsmiths, University of London and was its first director from 1968 – 1986. He continued as a researcher there until 1991. He collaborated with Lily Greenham in the early 1970s, particularly during her involvement in London's experimental music scene. Their work intersected at the boundaries of sound poetry, electroacoustic composition, and live performance. Davies brought his expertise in live electronics and self-built instruments, complementing Greenham's voice-based tape

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<sup>41</sup> Robert George Downes (\*1937) flute and saxophon player, working with Mike Westbrook and leader of the *Open Music Trio*, composer, arranger and singer.

<sup>42</sup> The collaboration of Lily Greenham with the *Open Trio* is documented on:

*Greenham, Lily: Lingual Music*, Paradigm Discs PD22, 2007

CD 1 Track 12: *Track French Persian Cats*, Open Music Trio, date of rec. unknown.

CD 1 Track 18: *Musica*, poem by Elena Asins, Open Music Trio, date of rec. unknown.

CD 2, Track 7 *Hymn To Lesbians* mit Bob Downes *Open Music Trio*, Bob Downes: flute, tenor sax, piano, Barry Guy: bass, Dennis Smith: percussion, Words: Gerhard Rühm, date of rec. unknown.

CD 2 Track 10: *Tillid*, Open Music Trio, date of rec. unknown

Reviews: [https://www.stalk.net/paradigm/releases/pd22.html?utm\\_source](https://www.stalk.net/paradigm/releases/pd22.html?utm_source)

<sup>43</sup> Hugh Davies (1943–2005) British composer, musicologist, and inventor of experimental musical instruments. A key figure in the development of British electronic music.

compositions. Their collaboration exemplifies a shared interest in expanding the sonic potential of language and sound through technological innovation.

### Paddy Kingsland

The sound engineering for several of Lily Greenham's early poetry pieces were provided by Paddy Kingsland.<sup>44</sup> Greenham's CD *Lingual Music*,<sup>45</sup> released on Paradigm Discs in 2007, credits Kingsland with electronic contributions on no fewer than six tracks, including *Tillid*, *Collision*, *Sino*, *Autor*, *Experience*, and *Gebet*.

The Lily Greenham Archive contains a particularly intriguing find: an unpublished, pop-inflected version of *Outsider*, set to a backing track titled *The Earthmen* by Kingsland. According to Kingsland, this track was produced for EMI<sup>46</sup> as part of one of their library records, licensed for use in television, film, radio, or advertising. Greenham obtained the track and added her own vocal part, singing over it and adapting the lyrics to fit.

Due to copyright issues, this piece was not included on the *Lingual Music* CD. Greenham's vocal delivery over the rock music evokes themes of alienation, identity, and belonging:

Are you an outsider?  
Are you an outsider of outsiders?  
Because your inside doesn't fit.  
It doesn't fit any concepts,  
Any circles, any parties, any professions  
it is without specialized knowledge or breeding  
and cannot be mixed. There is just you and your inside on your outside,  
And your outside is outside, even amongst outsiders.  
Are you in or are you out?  
You see, when one is in, then one is on the way out.

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<sup>44</sup> See footnote 17)

<sup>45</sup> Lily Greenham: *Lingual Music*, Paradigm Discs PD22, 2007.

Collaborations with Paddy Kingsland:

CD 1 Track 4: *Tillid* [1:34], electronics by Paddy Kingsland

"Tillid, [...] is based on the text rhythmical accent-translations (in danish) [...]. The Danish words tillid (confidence), i (in), til (to), and selvtilid (self-confidence) are the interacting 'key-words' here, with fragments then compounded, reversed, treated, and panned across the stereo field", in: Greenham:

<https://lilygreenham.org/aaol/voicing/lingual-music> [accessed 27.7.2025]

CD 1 Track 5: *Autor* [1:00], electronics by Paddy Kingsland

*Collision* [0:37], electronics by Paddy Kingsland

CD 1 Track 10: *Experience* [2:10], electronics by Paddy Kingsland

CD 2 Track 8: *Sino* [1:17], electronics by Paddy Kingsland

CD 2 Track 18: *Gebet* [0:46], electronics by Paddy Kingsland, poem by Gerhard Rühm

<sup>46</sup> Kingsland composed music for EMI's production music catalog, where it could be selected later for use in various media projects – EMI: Electric and Musical Industries, British media conglomerate founded in 1931.

EMI operated a library music division under the name EMI Production Music from 1969 – 2021

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conglomerate\\_\(company\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conglomerate_(company))

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KPM\\_Music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KPM_Music)

<https://productionmusic.fandom.com/wiki/Special:Search?scope=internal&navigationSearch=true&query=EMI+Production+Music+#>

An outsider is a horse,  
or person who is not known to have a chance in race or competition?  
Are you a member of this competitive society?  
Do you have a chance in the race?  
Does it depend on what race you aaaRRRRREEEE?  
Are you an outsider or an outsider?  
Because your insight doesn't fit.  
Any circles, any parties, any professions?  
Are you an outsider?  
[...]  
Are you in?  
Or are you out?  
You see, when one is in, then one is on the way out!  
An outsider is a horse!  
Or a person, who is not known to have a chance in race or competition.  
Are you a member of them?<sup>47</sup>

The condition of being an outsider – characterized by mobility and a stance akin to that of a guerrilla insurgent, capable of navigating and migrating between diverse media with relative ease – emerges as a recurring motif in her work. Greenham consistently positioned herself as a „stranger in a strange land“:

When I was heavily involved in one of the disciplines I actively pursued, I identified with certain professional groups for a time, but I was never exclusively dedicated to any single discipline. Others also seemed to recognise this, because in the field of music I was often described as a painter, in the visual arts I was seen as a poet, in literary circles I was a performer and so forth. And this was and still is, the true situation. Some people perceived me as a 'guest figure' in their own domain. They were right! Hahaha! Neither nationality, nor religion, nor profession, nor any sort of classification covers my own concept of myself. Categories don't fit my character, nor my soul. I am a stranger in a strange land.<sup>48</sup>

This unpublished track, *Earthmen*, is emblematic of an alternative artistic trajectory for Greenham – one that aligns her with figures such as Laurie Anderson, Yoko Ono, or even the Talking Heads – situating her within a lineage of avant-garde performers who blurred the boundaries between art, text, music, and popular culture. In this sense, *Earthmen* can be read not as an isolated experiment, but as part of a broader continuum of cross-disciplinary practice in the late twentieth century. Comparable approaches include Brian Eno's interpretation of Kurt Schwitter *Ursonata*<sup>49</sup> on his album *Before and After Science*<sup>50</sup>, or William Burrough's collaboration with Bill Laswell and the band *Material*. on album *Seven Souls* which

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<sup>47</sup> GREE/9/117: *The Earthmen* by Paddy Kingsland/backing track to 'Traffic', circa mid 1970s

<sup>48</sup> Lily Greenham: "Un Arte de Vivir" in: *Inventario*, no. 5, 1995.

*An Art of Living* (1994/95) is a translation from *Un Arte de Vivir* Goldsmith, published on <https://lilygreenham.org/aaol/writing/an-art-of-living> (accessed 28.7.2025)

[GREE/2/056–061]: Manuscripts of *An Art of Living*

<sup>49</sup> Kurt Schwitter (1887–1948) German artist, working across multiples genres such as *Dadaism*, *Constructivism*, *Surrealism* combining poetry, sound, painting, graphic design and sculpture. He conceived the *Ursonate* between 1923–32 in different versions.

<sup>50</sup> Brian Eno, *Before and After Science* (Island Records, 1977), track notes referencing an excerpt of *Ursonata* by Kurt Schwitters.

incorporates texts from *Cities of the Red Night*.<sup>51</sup> Greenham's archive further reinforces this perspective: among the materials are tapes of rap music recorded from radio broadcasts, documenting her sustained and open-ended investigation into the myriad ways language can be deployed as sonic material.<sup>52</sup>

John Tchicai

Among the many cross-disciplinary encounters in Greenham's career, her collaboration with Danish jazz saxophonist John Tchicai<sup>53</sup> stands out as a particularly vivid example of her capacity to navigate diverse artistic worlds. Emerging in the context of London's dynamic free improvisation scene – or perhaps facilitated through mutual acquaintances such as Hugh Davies – this partnership can be understood as a nexus of improvisation, transnational dialogue, and experimental performance. It underscores Greenham's sustained receptiveness to spontaneous, cross-genre exchange, as well as her ability to engage with artists whose practices, like her own, sought to blur boundaries between established musical forms and more exploratory, process-oriented approaches.

*Sound Poetry and Concrete Poetry* network

Greenham's work as both author and interpreter of sound poetry unfolded within an extensive, truly transnational network that spanned Europe, North and South America, and Japan. Throughout her career, she engaged in sustained correspondence and artistic exchange with many of the field's most influential practitioners. Materials preserved in the Lily Greenham Archive – including letters, manuscripts, and collaborative proposals – document her connections with figures such as Bob Cobbing,<sup>54</sup> Ian Finlay Hamilton,<sup>55</sup> Gerhard Rühm,<sup>56</sup> Eugen Gomringer,<sup>57</sup> Max Bense,<sup>58</sup> Ernst Jandl,<sup>59</sup> Pierre Garnier,<sup>60</sup> Vagn Steen,<sup>61</sup> Décio

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<sup>51</sup> William S. Burroughs with Material, *Seven Souls* (Virgin Records, 1989), incorporating texts from *Cities of the Red Night* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981).

<sup>52</sup> Cassette recordings, c. 1980s, Lily Greenham Archive, Goldsmiths, University of London.

<sup>53</sup> John Tchicai (1936–2012): Danish saxophonist known for collaborations with John Coltrane and the New York avant-garde jazz scene

<sup>54</sup> Bob Cobbing (1920–2002) British sound, visual, concrete poet, founder of the Writers Forum (1963–2002), pioneer of linguistic materiality.

<sup>55</sup> Hamilton Finlay (1925–2006) Scottish poet, artist and gardener of *Little Sparta* together with Sue Finlay.

<sup>56</sup> Gerhard Rühm (\*1930) Austrian writer, composer and artist, member of the *Wiener Gruppe* with Friedrich Achleitner, Konrad Bayer, and Oswald Wiener.

<sup>57</sup> Eugen Gomringer (\*1925) Bolivian-swiss poet and father of concrete poetry.

<sup>58</sup> Max Bense (1910–1990) German philosopher, writer, and publicist, known for his contribution to the philosophy of science, logic, aesthetics and semiotics.

<sup>59</sup> Ernst Jandl (1925–2000) Austrian writer, poet in the tradition of concrete and sound poetry (*Sprechgedichte*).

<sup>60</sup> Pierre Garnier (1928–2014) French poet, witer, critic and translator.

<sup>61</sup> Vagn Steen (1928–2016), Danish poet, internationally acclaimed for his concrete poems and poem objects.

Pignatari,<sup>62</sup> Ronaldo Azeredo,<sup>63</sup> Haroldo de Campos,<sup>64</sup> Agosto de Campos,<sup>65</sup> Jose Lino Grunewald,<sup>66</sup> Larry Wendt<sup>67</sup>, Kitasono Katsué<sup>68</sup> among many others. These relationships situate Greenham firmly within the central currents of the international sound and concrete poetry movements of the mid-to-late twentieth century.

### Performing the Voice / Performance Settings

As a transition to Lily Greenham's work as a visual artist, one final note on her use of audio technology in voice performance should not be overlooked. As numerous concert photographs attest, she explored not only the sonic qualities of her voice but also its spatial projection, experimenting with corresponding audio-technical configurations. Positioning the voice within the concert hall required a setup with multiple microphones – an approach that diverged from the standard mono configuration of most live performances.



Photograph of Lily Greenham and Hugh Davies performing on stage. Credit: Roel Visser.

<sup>62</sup> Décio Pignatari (1927–2012) Brazilian poet and translator.

<sup>63</sup> Ronaldo Azeredo (1937–2006) Brazilian poet and pioneer of concrete poetry, member of the Noigandres group.

<sup>64</sup> Haroldo Eurico Browne de Campos (1929 – 2003) Brazilian poet, critic, professor and translator.

<sup>65</sup> Agosto de Campos: (\*1931 São Paulo) Brazilian poet, translator, critic, a pivotal figure in the Concrete Poetry.

<sup>66</sup> José Lino Grunewald (1931–2000) poet, translator and essayist.

<sup>67</sup> Larry Wendt (\*1946, California) artistic text-sound compositions, use of 'low-tech' and 'repurposed' electronics, early designers of 'hand-built,' microprocessor-based, sound manipulation equipment.

<sup>68</sup> Kitasono Katsué (1902–1978), Japanese poet and photographer.

Employing more than one loudspeaker necessitated multiple microphones, a technically straightforward yet rarely utilised possibility at the time. A photograph on Lily Greenham's website<sup>69</sup> depicts her seated in front of two microphones, suggesting that their function extended beyond simple amplification to the deliberate projection and spatialisation of the voice within the performance space – further evidence of her multimedia approach as a sound poet, voice performer, and artist dealing with space.

### Lily Greenham's Artwork

In the 1960s, Greenham extended her artistic activities into the visual arts, aligning herself with avant-garde movements that interrogated perception, participation, and the materiality of form. After relocating from Vienna to Paris in 1964–65, where she was affiliated with the *Wiener Gruppe*,<sup>70</sup> she became involved with the *Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel* (GRAV)<sup>71</sup> and the *New Tendency*<sup>72</sup> movement – both of which championed kinetic and optical experimentation as a means of engaging viewers in active perception. Her works from this period, often structured around geometric precision, seriality, and chromatic interplay, were exhibited at the Denise René Gallery<sup>73</sup> – then a key platform for *Op* and *kinetic art*—and included in shows at the *Museum of Modern Art in New York*. These explorations in visual rhythm, spatial modulation, and viewer participation anticipate aspects of her later *lingual music* and sound poetry, where perception was similarly activated through repetition, structure, and sensory interplay. Collaborations with filmmakers such as Lis Rhodes<sup>74</sup> further underscored her capacity to navigate fluently between literary, visual, and time-based media.

In 1965, her work *study of differentiation and identity in visual perception: three variations* (1964) was displayed in the hugely influential exhibition *The Responsive Eye* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, a show that laid the foundations for the Op Art movement. Greenham's work at this time focused on what she called colour-interacting research, exploring the differentiation of colours and their reactions on each other. In *An Art of Living* Greenham describes *study of differentiation and similarity in visual perception* as being 'conceived to make observers aware of their own spatial relationship to it'.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Lily Greenham's website: <https://lilygreenham.org/>

<sup>70</sup> *Die Wiener Gruppe* mit Friedrich Achleitner, Konrad Bayer, Gerhard Rühm, and Oswald Wiener.

<sup>71</sup> François Molnar et al., *Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel: Manifestes et textes* (Paris: Éditions Casterman, 1963).

<sup>72</sup> Alessandro Spatola, ed., *New Tendencies: Art at the Threshold of the Information Revolution (1961–1978)* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019).

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.deniserene.fr/artistes/>

<sup>74</sup> Lis Rhodes (\*1942) British artist and feminist filmmaker.

<sup>75</sup> <https://lilygreenham.org/aaol/seeing/opto-kinetic-works>

These exhibitions were followed by an invitation to the *Venice Biennale* in 1970.<sup>76</sup> In these years she began to cross over into recording. She did not leave the art world behind but spreading out into the sound world as well. It would be wrong to think of her as moving between these fields. She just grew extra limbs. At the Venice Biennale she tried to bridge her interests for optical and linguistic issues:

At the time Greenham was moving away from visual work and into a linguistic space, and her plans for the exhibition went through a number of iterations. An earlier version of the piece had been shown previously at the Nürnberg Biennale and was developed further to be exhibited at Venice. In the catalogue for the 1970 Venice Biennale is a black and white reproduction of Greenham's typographic print, *bewegen konkret*, which can be considered a bridge between her optic and linguistic explorations.<sup>77/78</sup>

Stonehouse points to Greenham's post-musical creative emergence, teaching herself programming on early home computers like the ZX Spectrum, and pivoting toward computer-generated graphics alongside textual output.

from *Un Arte de Vivir* (An Art of Living)

... I worked on a series of visual investigations of geometric patterns, some of which were based on magic figures and placed on a grid-system. In the early 60's we called that kind of work 'programmed art' and I chose the title 'study of similarity and differentiation in visual perception' for one of my series. This particular work (comprising three variations) was conceived to make the observers aware of their own spatial relationship to it, because this interrelation is in actual fact the 'cause behind certain changes in their perception. Approaching and withdrawing in relation to the images makes it possible to grasp the complete visual information, since this bodily movement discloses that the 'fixed' two-dimensional image in front of one seemingly changes whilst one moves (2 panels from this work are included in the CD artwork - ed.). Finally, it struck me that here was a visual exemplification for the saying 'one in all, all in one', because each variation is unique and can at the same time be traced back to a basic pattern..... Similarity and differentiation are two sides of the same coin.

Later in the early 80's I experimented with computer graphics, using the then smallest and cheapest micro computer on the market (Sinclair ZX81)<sup>79</sup>

Greenham consistently demonstrated an exceptional artistic mobility, recasting and repurposing her works across multiple media. This capacity to adapt material fluidly underscores the boundary-crossing methodology that defines her voice-centered compositions. Few artists with such a breadth of interests have achieved an equally seamless integration of diverse modes of presentation – whether in the context of improvised music, the performative staging of sound poetry, or other experimental formats. In this respect, her practice not only mirrors but actively

<sup>76</sup> Overview over her exhibitions: <https://lilygreenham.org/aaol/exhibiting/previously> (accessed 28.7.2025)

<sup>77</sup> <https://lilygreenham.org/aaol/seeing/opto-kinetic-works> [accessed 28.7.2025]

<sup>78</sup> Greenham: "Un Arte de Vivir"

<sup>79</sup> Greenham: "Un Arte de Vivir"

embodies the transnational, interdisciplinary ethos, reaffirming her position as a catalyst within the interconnected cultural networks of the late twentieth century.

The new artistic trajectories remained tragically unfinished. Greenham's health deteriorated in the late 80s into the 1990s. Ian Stonehouse emphasizes that her diminished artistic presence in later life was multifaceted, shaped by health, declining institutional support, and economic hardship. She became politically invested, writing letters to UK Members of Parliament on air pollution, reflecting an enduring 'truth-seeking' impulse expressed through new media, social engagement, and writing.

### **Archival challenges and a multiform legacy**

According to Ian Stonehouse, reconstructing her oeuvre requires not only technical skill but also imaginative deduction, as many projects remain undocumented or were never formally released. Much of Greenham's tape archive is poorly labelled or lacks metadata, and a significant portion remains inaccessible. These archival absences are more than logistical hurdles – they have directly contributed to the under-recognition of her work, limiting scholarly access and public visibility. Despite these gaps, recent curatorial efforts – such as an exhibition at the Badischer Kunstverein in Karlsruhe<sup>80</sup> – have begun to restore her place in artistic history, revealing the breadth and prescience of her interdisciplinary vision.

Lily Greenham stands out as a rare polymath – simultaneously poet, performer, composer, linguist, and theorist. Her practice fused rigorous textual experimentation with technical innovation and performative immediacy. Whether improvising with jazz musicians, teaching students, or composing for eight-track tape, she maintained a radical commitment to the voice as both expressive instrument and philosophical medium. Her work resists linear categorization: she did not move from one medium to another in succession, but instead expanded the field, embracing multiple forms at once. Greenham's artistic identity was comprehensive and multifaceted – never singular, always in motion. She was an interdisciplinary pioneer whose work spanned performance, studio craft, computing, and later, live activism. While *Relativity* and similar pieces demonstrate her technical sophistication and

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<sup>80</sup> Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe: *An Art of Living*, 8. March – 26. May, 2024.

In celebration of the centenary of Greenham's birth, the Badischer Kunstverein in Karlsruhe, Germany hosted a major large-scale retrospective exhibition surrounding Greenham's work.

<https://www.badischer-kunstverein.de/index.php?Direction=Programm&list=Ausstellungen&Jahr=&Detail=998>

conceptual daring, her career reflects a sustained search for meaning across media. Her legacy belongs as much to the history of electroacoustic music as it does to broader narratives of media art.



Lily Greenham - Freibord journal\_Fr VII.30, X.45\_2

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### Further sources:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lily\\_Greenham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lily_Greenham)

<https://lilygreenham.org/>

unpublished tape material of the *Lily Greenham estate*:

- Interview of Ian Stonehouse with Paddy Kingsland and Peter Howell
- Broadcast of KPFFK, Radio Hollywood, 1979<sup>81</sup>
- Audio documentation of a lecture performance by Lily Greenham at the Barry Summer School, Wales, 1968<sup>82</sup>

further documents of Lily Greenham's teachings:

- GREE/3/015 Letter / preparatory assignment to students at Barry Summerschool 1971
- GREE/3/017 World-Stage' teaching exercise instructions

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### Endnotes

Barry Summer School [Datum]  
Transcription [Ausschnitte]  
Lecture – Performance by Lily Greenham

Programm:

Eugen Gomringer: [not specified]<sup>83</sup>

Vagn Steen: *Trykt Sprog*<sup>84</sup>

Kitasono Katsué *Monotonous Space*<sup>85</sup>

Ian Finlay Hamilton: *3 Happenings*<sup>86</sup>

Décio Pignatari: *Beba Coca-Cola*, 1957<sup>87</sup>

Ronaldo Azeredo: *Velocidade*<sup>88</sup>

Haroldo de Campos: [no transcription]<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> GREE/4/111 Lily Greenham in Concert', Canada and USA, October 1979, composite poster / flyer 1979, broadcast of a concert over KPFFK-fm 90.7, Pacifica Radio for Southern California.

<sup>82</sup> GREE/9/054 Lily Greenham's Tape BARRY 1968, 7-inch EMITAPE spool stored in green and red Scotch Magnetic Tape box. Paper note inside box states: 'COPY Lily Greenham's Tape 7 1/2 I.P.S. Single

<sup>83</sup> Eugen Gomringer (\*1925) Bolivian-swiss poet and father of concrete poetry, no further details on the poem.

<sup>84</sup> Vagn Steen (1928–2016), Danish poet, internationally acclaimed for his concrete poems and poem objects.

<sup>85</sup> Kitasono Katsué (1902–1978), Japanese poet and photographer: *Vocal Space*

<sup>86</sup> Hamilton Finlay (1925–2006) Scottish poet, writer, artist: *3 Happenings*, in: Finlay, Ian Hamilton: *A Poesy: Selected Works*. Edited and introduced by Alec Finlay. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999.

<sup>87</sup> Décio Pignatari (1927–2012) Brazilian poet and translator: *Beba Coca-Cola*, in: *Noigandres*, no. 4, 1957.

vgl. <https://deciopignatari.com/> Image of the poem: <https://www.blogletras.com/2012/12/decio-pignatari.html>

<sup>88</sup> Ronaldo Azeredo (1937–2006) Brazilian poet and pioneer of concrete poetry, member of the Noigandres group in São Paulo: *Velocidade*, in: *Noigandres* Nr. 4, 1957/58.

*Noigandres* see: [https://www.stuttgarter-schule.de/bense\\_konkret1.htm](https://www.stuttgarter-schule.de/bense_konkret1.htm)

Image of the poem: [http://www.antoniomiranda.com.br/poesia\\_visual/ronaldo\\_azeredo.html](http://www.antoniomiranda.com.br/poesia_visual/ronaldo_azeredo.html)

<sup>89</sup> Haroldo Eurico Browne de Campos (1929 – 2003) Brazilian poet, critic, professor and translator

Agosto de Campos: *Hiroshima Mon Amour*<sup>90</sup>

Jose Lino Grunewald: *forma*<sup>91</sup>

Cherokee

Max Bense: *Le [?] à la main*

Bob Cobbing: *ABC*<sup>92</sup>

Transcription of Gomringer, Hamilton, Pignatari and Grunewald

[...]

cars and cars, cars and elevators, cars and men  
elevators and elevators, elevators, and men  
men and cars and elevators, men, and men  
trains and trains, trains and men and elevators  
trains and elevators, men and trains, men and men  
cars and trains, cars and men and trains, men and men, men and men

Lily Greenham: Concrete poems by a Swiss called Eugen Gomringer. He's called the father of Concrete poetry.

Lily: Ian Finaly Hamilton, 3 happenings

the little leaf falls  
the little fish leaps  
the little fish falls  
the little leap leaps  
the little fish leaps  
[...]  
the little leap falls  
the little leap falls  
the little leaf leaps  
[...]  
the little fish falls  
the little leaf falls  
the little fish leaps  
[...]

Lily: Now I'm going to read some Brazilian concrete poetry which is translated into Spanish. First a poet called Décio Pignatari and this is an anti-propaganda for Coca-Cola.

Beba Coca Cola  
Bahia Cola  
Beba Coca  
Bahia Cola  
Caco  
Caco  
Cola  
Cloaca

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<sup>90</sup> Augusto de Campos: (\*1931 São Paulo, Brazil) Brazilian poet, translator, critic, and a pivotal figure in the Concrete Poetry, see: [https://monoskop.org/Augusto\\_de\\_Campos?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://monoskop.org/Augusto_de_Campos?utm_source=chatgpt.com) *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (ca 1980, no further information).

<sup>91</sup> José Lino Grünwald (1931–2000) poet, translator and essayist: *forma*, in: Grünwald, José Lino. *Um e Dois*. Rio de Janeiro: Edição do Autor, 1958.

Image of the poem: <https://joselinogrunewald.com.br/poemas.html>

<sup>92</sup> Bob Cobbing (1920–2002) British sound, visual, concrete poet, founder of the Writers Forum (1963–2002), pioneer of linguistic materiality: *ABC*, in: Cobbing, Bob. *Abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz: A Sound Poem Sequence*. 2nd ed., Writers Forum, London, 1965.

*ABC in Sound* in: *The Spoken Word: Early Recordings 1965–1973*. British Library, 2009. Audio CD. [https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/bob-cobbing?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/bob-cobbing?utm_source=chatgpt.com) [accessed 13.7.2025]. <https://poetryarchive.org/poem/abc-in-sound/> [accessed 13.7.2025].

[audience laughing]

Lily Greenham: A very small poem by Jose Lino Grunewald,  
which is a kind of visual poem really.

forma  
reforma  
disforma  
transforma  
conforma  
informa  
forma  
[...]

Lily: This is an Englishman Bob Cobbing

Adventure, aventure, aventure, aventure, aventureuse,  
adventurous, aventure, dire la bonne aventure, aventurier,  
aventurière, aveulge, aveulge, à la veuglette

[...]

Bombast, bombast... bombast

En phase...

You're gonna bomb us.

[...]

[Breath]

[audience laughter]

Lily: Greennnn, gremmm, green, green, green.

Gay green, grey green

[...]

Audience: you do it much better than Cobbing himself

Lily: thank's – maybe because I'm not English?

[...]