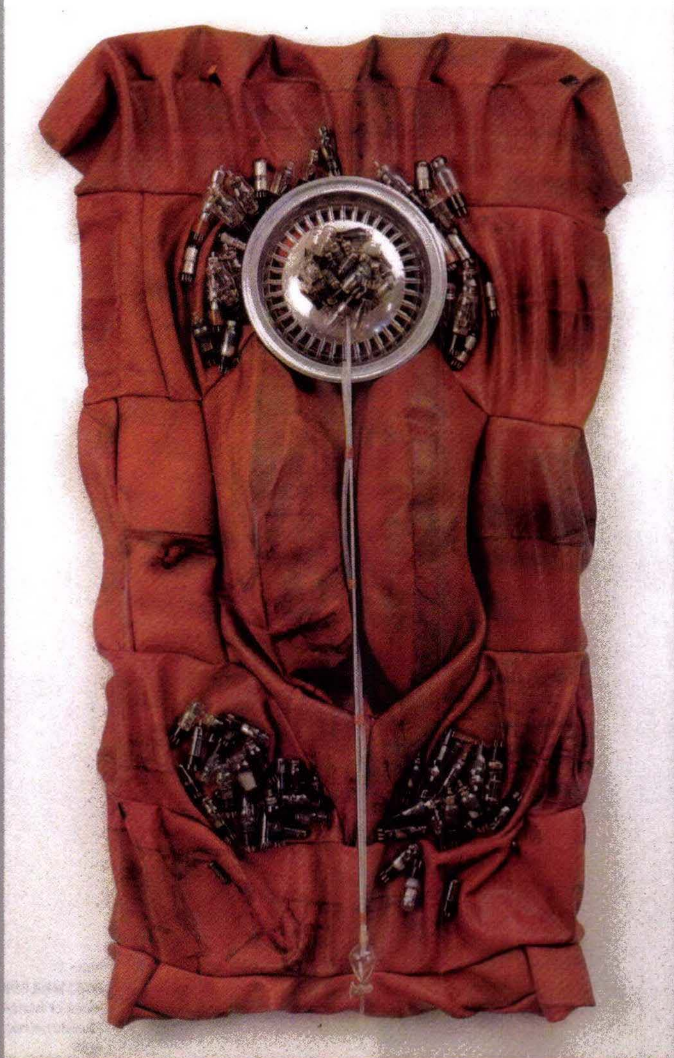

JAPAN FLUXUS

LUCIANA GALLIANO

Japan Fluxus

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Luciana Galliano

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"Purge the world of Europanism!"

George Maciunas
(Fluxus Manifesto 1963)

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Acknowledgments

My interest in the Fluxus movement dates back to the 1970s when my personal attitude was very much attuned to that of the Fluxus artists I had seen or read about. In the 1980s I prepared a series of four programs on this radical vanguard for the Italian national broadcaster, RAI, which they never used. The topic and the materials were still too radical, I suppose.

Then at the beginning of this millennium, while doing research on contemporary Japanese music, I learned about the brilliant group of Japanese Fluxus artists and thanks to a generous grant from the Japan Foundation was able to spend the autumn of 2011 in Japan doing research on how these artists had helped shape the international Fluxus movement. A Nichibunken Fellowship (July 2014 to March 2015) enabled me to continue my research making use of the priceless resources of the Nichibunken Library whose competent, courteous librarians—Mr. Egami Toshinori's staff—helped even when the problem was an unforgivable oversight on my part. The ample time for research afforded me by the Nichibunken Fellowship allowed me to track down difficult to find materials, talk with protagonists, converse with fellow scholars, and exchange opinions with outstanding scholars of Japanese modernity such as Professor Andrew Gordon. To Professor Hosokawa Shuhei and the entire staff at Nichibunken I extend my heartfelt thanks. The Nichibunken grant also made it possible for me to spend several weeks in New York where I did research in the MoMA archives, hosted by Sara Tiziana Levi—whom I warmly thank for her acumen in helping me deal with academic difficulties. Of the many people there who were always kind and helpful, I especially remember Jon Hendricks, Mary Griffin, Kaneda Miki, and Yoshimoto Midori.

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Last but not least I warmly thank Susan Finnel for her careful editing of my English manuscript.

I have followed the Hepburn system for transliterating Japanese words, and Japanese conventions in writing names, with family name preceding given name. I have used this method even for names that have become famous written differently, for example Yoko Ono and Takehisa Kosugi, which I write in the basic form of Ono Yōko e Kosugi Takehisa—except, of course, in citations.

All the translations from Japanese and other languages are mine, if not indicated otherwise. The many citations from Guy Debord's *The society of the spectacle* give the number of the heading, not page number. All quotes from works can be found in *the Fluxus Performance Workbook*, (Friedman et al. 1990) in the different editions listed in the bibliography.

I wish to dedicate this book and the whole period of related work to the memory of Fred Lieberman (1940–2013), the wonderful scholar and artist with whom this project was to be carried out. He would have brightened it with his ironic intelligence and firsthand knowledge, but this was no longer possible, alas.

Introduction

> "As often happens in Japanese culture, nature and nothingness are what artists finally turn to. Hopefully the echo their art leaves behind can help us understand the process of survival."[1]

This text investigates the work of a few Japanese composers, musicians, and artists who played an important role on the international avant-garde scene in the late 1950s and 1960s as harbingers of the "non-art" movement which was afterwards called Fluxus by its principal founder and organizer, George Maciunas (Kellein 2007).

Apart from the colorful images it evokes—people doing strange, childish, and humorous things[2]—there is now consensus that Fluxus was a pivotal movement in redefining art's role and the artist's identity in the contemporary world, so that its aesthetics—as well as many of its gimmicks—have become so deeply embedded in our social setting that we now no longer realize where they originally came into being. Fluxus has been described as the most radical and experimental art movement of the 1960s, challenging conventional thinking on art and culture. It had a central role in the birth of such key contemporary art forms as concept art, installation, performance art, intermedia and video (Friedman 1998). One description of the ambitious book, *Fluxus. The Practice of Non-Duality* by Natasha Lushetich, says that it ". . . reinstates Fluxus as an influential cultural, rather than a 'merely' artistic paradigm" (Lushetich 2014, back cover). In fact influencing culture as well as art was in some ways Maciunas's aim, as it will become clear in the discussion that follows. The scope of this cultural paradigm was closely related to what Arthur Danto authoritatively termed "the disenfranchisement of art" (Danto 1986).

A brief description of its key characteristics will serve to show how Fluxus was unique, even among the many avant-garde movements that spanned the

decade between the late 1950s and late 1960s. Albeit inadvertently, it was the first global avant-garde art movement in history, since it brought together artists (sometimes literally, when they were engaged in working on the same piece in the same place) from the United States, Europe, Australia, and Japan (although he was born in Korea, I will consider the work of Nam June Paik as being part of the Japanese art scene since he studied in Tokyo and his wife was Japanese). This means that although Fluxus was a global movement, it was confined to the so-called developed countries, something that proved to be a constituent characteristic of the movement. The role of Japan in Asia as a pioneer of modernization/westernization, with all the tragic and the positive implications this had, was not irrelevant in determining its role in Fluxus.

Another revolutionary characteristic was that Fluxus addressed gender and discrimination issues from a stance I would define as one of serene consciousness, at a time when these issues were just beginning to surface in Western societies. Again, Japanese attitudes on the status of women, gender roles, and sexism shaped the sensibility of a generation of women in the postwar period, as the significant presence of women artists in the Japanese Fluxus group makes it clear.

Last, but from my perspective not least, Fluxus was the first and so far the only artistic movement or trend in which music played a prominent role. Many of its members were trained musicians, and were involved in composing and performing, and the movement's events were often associated with musical labels or titles. Its artistic endeavors were often presented within the representational mold of the music world, connected with the gestures and settings associated with musical performances or even with sound (which was not, however, a must of Fluxus's extensive concert activity). As I will argue in chapter 6, this is a key element in understanding what brought the Japanese artists together and their key role in the movement as a whole.

For a piece of work, an event, or an idea to be labeled "Fluxus" it must comprehend certain key characteristics. Jacob Proctor, in his essay "George Maciunas's Politics of Aesthetics" (Proctor 2011, 23), exploring what consistently represents the Fluxus aesthetic, mentions "The *Originale* Affair": on September 8, 1964, a small group of Fluxus artists led by Maciunas picketed the US premiere of Karlheinz Stockhausen's happening-like theatrical composition *Originale*; most of the Japanese artists present in New York were among the picketers.[3] Several Fluxus artists were taking part in the performance, and the picketers were commonly mistaken for participants. According to *The New York Times*, "they looked like the participants in 'Originale,' they talked like the participants in 'Originale,' they acted like the participants in 'Originale,' and they were dressed like the participants in 'Originale'" (Proctor 2011, 24). Yet Proctor succeeds in demonstrating that there was a

profound difference between the two groups: the unicity of Maciunas and the Fluxus demonstrators represented the

> ongoing repudiation of an aesthetic and political order in which "professionals" are the speakers and spectators, the spoken-to—in which some subjects have the voices and others do not. In at least one respect Maciunas [and consequently Fluxus] was almost, if not entirely, unique: his insistence that artists should be actively trying to work themselves out of a job, demonstrating the self-sufficiency of the audience by speaking not from a position of authority but from a position of radical equality. (Proctor 2011, 31)

This political stance to me seems to be what significantly distinguishes Fluxus from other trends of the postwar avant-garde, a sort of litmus test that makes it possible to decide whether or not something or someone is "Fluxus." In my talks with Shiomi, Hendricks and others, they all confirmed Japanese artists' affinity with and support for Maciunas's political views.

Maciunas was absolutely clear about the non-professional quality of Fluxus work, and insisted there was no need to call it art. In his often cited letter of November 8, 1963, to Tomas Schmidt he scolds Schmidt, insisting he finish his university studies:

> You seem to imply that Fluxus people should turn into Professional Fluxus Performers.
>
> FLUXUS IS ANTI-PROFESSIONAL
>
> If you have read the manifesto.
>
> Fluxus people must obtain their 'art' experience from everyday experiences, eating, working etc.,—not concerts etc.
>
> Concerts serve only as educational means to convert the audiences to such non-art experiences in their daily lives.
>
> I frankly can't understand what you mean when you say you can be more useful to Fluxus by not working? Useful by doing what? What were you doing the past week?
>
> Fluxus should become a way of life not a profession.[4] (Hendricks 2002, 160)

Even before the dismantling of all aspects of what Lushetich calls "positional logocentrism," before the abolition of every hierarchy between artist/producer and public/viewer, Maciunas dismantled the directionality of what went into making art: not from the artist to the world, but from the (daily) world to the artist. Even in the interview that Maciunas gave to Larry Miller shortly before his death, we find the following exchange: "L.M. You don't consider Fluxus art? G.M. A high art form? No. . . . First of all, high art is very marketable" (Friedman 1998, 196).

Taking into account that the gradual official recognition accorded to a "professional" artistic movement called Fluxus, and its being seen as "marketable high art" (or "highly marketable art") dates to the late 1960s, I will end my investigation of Japanese Fluxus in those years.

Focusing on Japanese artists involved in Fluxus, I will try to arrive at a new understanding of this movement which, in spite of its anti-academicism, its aversion to authorial identity and the ephemeral character of its output, is "the best documented and best cross-indexed art movement in history," to quote no less an authority than Nam June Paik (Paik 1994, 77). As a glance at any one of a number of scholarly bibliographies makes clear, it has also been intensively studied and written about by others.[5] The amount of Fluxus-related scholarly activity has increased since 2009, when New York's Museum of Modern Art acquired the world's largest collection of Fluxus works, the Lila and Gilbert Silverman Collection, and this in turn led to a series of exhibitions, first at MoMA and subsequently at other institutions worldwide.

Fluxus artists claimed to be anti-academic and care little about their egos; they eschewed every attempt at a definition of their aesthetic (apart from Maciunas's); they were part of a group that never officially had membership, and on occasion even denied that they *were* a group,[6] (Klintberg 1993, 115) yet many of them have written about the movement and shared their views on what the Fluxus experience entailed.[7]

JAPANESE FLUXUS

In Japan, as in Europe and the United States, a few artists were "acting Fluxus" some years before its official founding, and they naturally took part in the movement when it came together with a name, an identity, and a center in New York. As will be shown in this book, in the late 1950s there were already Japanese artists elaborating on the principles and thinking that would later be called Fluxus. Hannah Higgins wrote that "Experiments in sound art, installation, and performance were occurring simultaneously in Japan, Germany, Eastern Europe, and the United States in the late 1950s and early 1960s. . . . These cells of activity would become united under the rubric of Fluxus in about 1962 and in large part as a result of the travels of Cage around the world (Higgins 2006, 266–267). I will illustrate the circumstances in which Cage's 1962 stay in Tokyo was instrumental in bringing together people who recognized themselves as participants in a similar artistic project: Akiyama, Ono, Tone, Kosugi, Shiomi, Kubota, Paik, Ichiyanagi, and others. Journeys subsequently made from and to Japan by Paik, Ono, Akiyama, Shiomi, Ay-O, and others, also contributed to constructing a Fluxus trend.

What can be learned by investigating a specifically Japanese Fluxus path? What is remarkable about the Japanese artists in Fluxus? As was said above, the history and output of Fluxus, including the work of its Japanese artists, have been extensively (and intensively) studied. However, this was done without attempting to identify what distinguishes the Japanese from other artists in the movement. The Japanese postwar avant-garde, including Fluxus, has also been authoritatively addressed (Munroe 1994, Stoll 2012, Chong et al. 2012). Nevertheless I think that given the cultural identity of the Japanese, focusing on their specific contribution will yield useful insights about the movement as a whole. Tone Yasunao wrote that Maciunas ". . . explicitly sought Japanese artists to join Fluxus . . . [and] asked us Japanese artists to send him work, and we did, that was still before Fluxus had even gotten started" (Kaneda 2013). The presence of Japanese artists in Fluxus should be understood as having a wider and deeper meaning than that attributed to it as part of a larger framework; in fact I have found many of what I see as specific "Japanese issues" discussed by Lushetich as having general relevance. There were slight but fundamental differences between Japanese and other artists regarding common practice, and examining them may in turn shed light on some aspects of the Fluxus aesthetic identity.

In this book I consider the Japanese scene from the end of the 1950s until the late 1960s; the chronological list of their activities in Appendix makes clear the time span and the events I define as Fluxus.[8]

The list makes clear that these artists were active, part of a wide intellectual network, present and represented in the media (magazines, newspapers, criticism, radio, television), *influential* in their special way. The starting date corresponds to the first musical encounters of Group Ongaku's members, discussed in detail below, while the closing date is that of Expose 1968, the last event that openly and unashamedly challenged institutional conventions on art. I will explain the significance I attribute to this event. The focal point of my time span is 1964, which I see as the peak of movement's activities, followed by a gradual decline in its activities and its consistence. It is also the most interesting decade in postwar international art connected to a positive and hitherto unmatched social fervor.

As Baas pointed out, "Fluxus developed during a canonical decade of change. The 1960s were a time of social upheaval around the world. . . . In the parlance of the period, Fluxus aimed to be part of the solution, not part of the problem" (Baas 2011, 8). The established social order was visibly shaken by the outbreak of rioting in Europe and the United States in 1968. In Japan, major strikes and demonstrations had been occurring since the end of the allied (SCAP) occupation in 1952. At the same time, the international political turn ushered in by the 1968 election of Richard Nixon signaled a mutation in the geography of power: attitudes to the social progress that had

begun in the previous decade were changing; social complexity as a whole was no longer moving in the direction of civil rights as something due, but rather as privileges that could but did not necessarily have to be conferred. The idea that art could be political was in itself a radical concept in the 1960s, and many of the Japanese events which can be considered Fluxus were deeply political.

The Japanese postwar avant-garde was made up of small collectives (Tomii 2007). One of the groups whose activity I see as Fluxus is Neo Dada, active between 1960 and 1964. Initially calling itself Neo Dadaism Organizers, with about a dozen members, it was the largest group; one member, Akasegawa Genpei (1937–2014) would later be the "red" (*aka*) in Hi Red Center. Group Ongaku and its work is also analyzed. Actively starting in the 1950s, it was officially founded in 1960 and continued to work as a group for a few years. Its members were Kosugi Takehisa (1938–2018), Shiomi Mieko (formerly Chieko) (b. 1938), and Tone Yasunao (b. 1935); Kubota Shigeko (1937–2015) was affiliated with the group. Other artists and musicians who participated in Fluxus were Ono Yōko (b. 1933), Ichiyanagi Toshi (b. 1933), Saito Takako (b. 1929), Ay-O, whose birth name was Iijima Takao (b. 1931), and the influential intellectual and critic Akiyama Kuniharu (1929–1996). Obviously, I also include the group Hi Red Center, founded in the early 1960s, whose members were Akasegawa (who, as noted above, was its red/*aka*), Nakanishi Natsuyuki (1935–2016) and Takamatsu Jirō (b. 1936)—who contributed *naka* (center) and *taka* (high) to the group's name.

KuroDalaiJee's monumental work, *Anarchy of the Body - Undercurrents of Performance Art in 1960s Japan* (Kuro 2010), helped me identify the Fluxus-like elements in the various collectives active in those years; in a more recent, shorter essay (Kuro 2013) he defines five types of performance art that were presented in Japan between 1957 and 1970: "1. public demonstrations of art-making processes; 2. *objects*- and instructions-based events; 3. intermedia; 4. street actions and urban interventions; and 5. antimodern rituals . . .". (419)

In addition to the elements I regard as characterizing Japanese Fluxus, that is, the non-professional, anti-authoritarian, and essentially egalitarian nature of its interventions, I see their work as being charged with sociopolitical meaning. I will analyze types 2, 4, and 5 on Kuro's list. As for Kuro's first type, the fact that Fluxus artists demonstrated art-making processes does not seem to me as a factor that brought the movement to prominence or is an essential part of its legacy. Regarding type 3 on the list, labeling the simple ingenious techniques used by Fluxus artists in their intermedia works would make them seem more specialized than they in fact were. Kuro mentions that "the event-type performances that arose in the first half of the 1960s ingeniously incorporated everyday objects and environments" before turning to "more complex imaging and sound technologies" (Kuro 2013, 423).

In fact the word *intermedia* was coined by Fluxus artist Dick Higgins, in whose view:

> The behavior of the different arts (including the art of thought, philosophy) is sufficiently close that these are properly seen as media, with the ground between such media, then, the *inter*-media. . . . Of course not all such intermedial works are fluxus works: the fluxus phenomenon appears when these works are treated as conceptual models, with no excess of *matière* involved in their realization. (Higgins 1984, 93–94)

The performance art of Neo Dada, Hi Red Center and Group Ongaku incorporated this and many other characteristics typical of the Fluxus concept. The main differences between them and other well-known experimental groups of the first postwar wave of Japanese avant-garde art, Gutai or Jikken Kōbō, for example, is that they did not gather hierarchically around an influential artist or intellectual (unlike Gutai, which had formed around critic Jirō Yoshihara, or Jikken Kōbō, which looked to Shūzō Takiguchi as their central figure/mentor) and they showed no interest in staging "classic" events, in the form of exhibitions or concerts, as a way to present their new aesthetic. Their interventions were largely performative, and the performative aspect is their link to and a fundamental legacy from the two 1950s groups: Gutai, the first group of artists to shift from the visual to the gestural, often indicated by Maciunas as being at the roots of Fluxus history;[9] and Jikken Kōbō (mainly members Akiyama and Takemitsu, close friends who agreed on the need to act innovatively), whose second concert event, held in 1953, was the first musical event to use visual elements (an audio slideshow).[10]

THIS BOOK

My objective is not to produce an encyclopedia or a history of the work of these artists, nor do I wish to become involved in the complex, stratified debate on what the overall Fluxus movement was. Instead, in each chapter I will examine and discuss a series of topics that were defining characteristics of Japanese Fluxus. To show what Japanese Fluxus artists had in common, I have chosen six characteristics from the lists compiled by two Fluxus artists and theoreticians, Dick Higgins and Ken Friedman, intended to serve in deciding whether or not a given work could be defined as Fluxus. Higgins's essay, "Theory and Reception," originally written in 1982, listed nine criteria, while in "Fluxus and Company," Friedman added to Higgins's list and presented "Twelve Fluxus Ideas" (both essays were published in *The Fluxus Reader*, Friedman 1998; the lists are on pp. 224–227 and pp. 244–251 and all

the quotations on the next pages are taken from them). The following features of artworks were considered:

1. Higgins's first criterion was "internationalism," which in Friedman's integrated, updated version became "globalism." While Higgins had noted that "Fluxus arose more or less spontaneously in various countries" (224), Friedman added that it welcomed "the dialogue of unlike minds, . . . [the idea of a] world inhabited by individuals of equal worth and value" and anti-elitism. In my view, in addition to its artists sharing ideas and values, this quality comprehends the practice of doing and experiencing things together, interacting directly with the world, questioning received beliefs and challenging the traditional inward-outward dichotomy;
2. "Experimentalism and iconoclasm," Higgins's second criterion, became Friedman's fourth idea, "Experimentalism." Whereas Friedman took iconoclasm for granted, I see it as a vital part of Japanese Fluxus, especially given the uncertain, conflicted self-representation typical of postwar Japanese society, tempted by the modern yet obsessed with doubts about respectability, the result of both traditional Japanese mores and the influence of US puritanism. As for experimentalism, I believe it includes the choice of engaging in a challenge, which was the route taken by many Fluxus works, often tinged by the Japanese sense of sacrifice;
3. "Unity of art and life," Friedman's second idea, corresponded to Higgins's fifth criterion, "an attempted resolution of the art/life dichotomy." As Friedman trenchantly stated: "When Fluxus was established, the conscious goal was to erase the boundaries between art and life" (247). This was surely an affirmation based on hindsight, since Fluxus was never "established" and surely not with a "conscious goal"—unless we see its thinking and goals as coming solely from Maciunas. In Higgins's list, this unity is an unintended result rather than a conscious goal: "Working so close to the minimum possible made the Fluxus artists intensely conscious of the possibility that what they did would not be art at all . . . [and] that most art work was unsatisfying anyway, that life was far more interesting" (225). This is consistent with what Maciunas saw as Fluxus's core values, set forth in his 1963 letter to Schmidt (cited above). In essence, efforts to integrate art into the praxis of life and accordingly the attack on art as a bourgeois institution had been part of the avant-garde from its very beginning (Bürger 1984).[11] Yet the issue is a fundamental one for the way Fluxus developed in Japan, since the Japanese view of "art" and "life" and the relationship between them is utterly different from the way they are seen in the West. In a society whose everyday gestures are as deeply "aestheticized" as they are in Japan, revolution would have entailed the "everyday life-izing" of art, and this is exactly what the avant-garde Fluxus did. The

"descent into the everyday" was commented on in 1963 by an influential critic and triggered lively debate, as I will relate in chapter 3.

4. "Ephemerality," Higgins's eighth criterion, entails "incorporat[ing] some element of on-going change—flux—." In some ways it contrasts with Friedman's eleventh idea, "Presence in time," since Friedman added the perspective of a "different sense of duration" (Friedman 1998, 250). The idea of things being ever-changing and drifting in eternal flow, that is, the concept of impermanence, with its Buddhist roots, is one of the most pervasive in Japanese thinking and aesthetics. This concept was picked up by adherence of neo-Buddhism when it became popular in the United States in the postwar years (Fields 1986). Friedman's focus on duration is rooted in his discussion of how radical works may last for years or instead suddenly vanish. Air and water, two ephemeral elements that were widely used in Japanese Fluxus activities, fall into this category;
5. "Specificity" is both Higgins's ninth criterion and Friedman's tenth idea. For Higgins it was a characteristic of works that give "*specific* solution to specific problems. . . . They must not be vague" (Higgins 1998, 225). Friedman noted that "most art works rely on ambiguity," but concluded that even if this might involve a contradiction, specificity "is a key element in Fluxus." I prefer Higgins's definition, as it encompasses other ideas then isolated by Friedman, such as "Simplicity" and "Exemplativism." In dealing with this topic I will examine the subtle ways Japanese Fluxus artists pose questions and address specific problems, whether these were related to gender, material life, or identity;
6. "Musicality" is a vital concept that was overlooked by Higgins and added by Friedman. As I have mentioned, music played a prominent part in Fluxus; in fact most of the people in the New York group knew or had studied with John Cage and almost all of the Japanese members were trained musicians. In addition, performances and events were often associated with musical labels or titles and many were played within a sort of musical frame. Fluxus artist Henry Flynt (Flynt 1990, 101) discussed at length the avant-garde role music acquired in the late 1950s. While Flynt recognizes the importance of Cage's having redefined music as an attitude of listening, he nevertheless signaled the "structural artificiality" of Cage's compositions as a trait not shared by pupils of his who became Fluxus artists. I feel that music was also important for Fluxus for the way it contributed to shaping the group's approach to work. As such it represents a further step taken by Fluxus artists in distancing themselves from the "Cage legacy": as music involves time, both as a performing art and as an artistic way for giving shape to time (Minsky 1981), music ineluctably consists in a shared experience, in which the source(r) and the receiver must be present simultaneously; any other circumstance would be a

reproduction, which is not the pure aesthetic experience Fluxus advocated. This idea of a work consisting mostly of the very time of its *happening*, shared and experienced *equally* by artist(s) and viewer(s), regardless of whether or not it is made of sounds, was epitomized by Giuseppe Chiari, a trained musician, whose work adhered to the Fluxus imperative of "doing things that cannot be reproduced" (Conversation, Florence, September 20, 2000). There is a highly relational aspect in deciding that a piece of artistic work should be called "music" instead of object, happening or event. This keen interest in the relational attitude of "making music" is evident in the Japanese output.

Limiting the discussion to these six topics treated separately, even though at times they may overlap or converge, I will focus on the particular qualities found in the works of Japanese Fluxus artists, which constitute the originality of their contribution. Taken together, these topics epitomize Japanese society in the postwar period, facing the world afresh, and also the new status being conferred on art (Tomii 2009), torn between institutional patterning and insecurities and above all flooded by Western models (and music) both in private and public life. I hope that the conclusions I have tentatively reached will contribute to the process of understanding and judging cross-cultural works of art.

A DEBORDIAN READING OF JAPANESE FLUXUS

My discussion of Japanese Fluxus artists' contributions to the Fluxus movement as a whole is based in part on the concept of the Fluxus artist as an individual, similar in many ways to the equally highly refined, urban, intellectual figure of the *flâneur*, in a genealogy that proceeds from Charles Baudelaire (the inventor of the term) as seen by Walter Benjamin,[12] to the Situationist idea of *dérive* propounded by Guy Debord (Debord 2014). Instead of following the common genealogy that begins in Dadaism, moves through Surrealism incorporates Cage and Duchamp, and finally leads to Fluxus; the Baudelaire-Debord is a parallel path which I find more interesting because it is more politically and socially oriented, and because I think it better reflects the Japanese scene. Although Debord's influential book, *La Société du Spectacle*, was published in 1967, which means almost at the end of the period considered in this book, the reading of contemporary society given by Debord through his definition of the *spectacle* is in my view the best conceptual basis for dealing with Japanese Fluxus, as I will argue in the chapters that follow.

The term *flânerie* goes back at least to 17th century French literature, denoting strolling and idling, with the connotation of wasting time. It was

François-Victor Fournel, in his *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris*, who introduced the idea that there was nothing lazy in *flânerie* (Fournel 1867). It was instead a way of understanding the rich variety of the city landscape, and Walter Benjamin takes this as the starting point in his discussion of Baudelaire's figure of the *flâneur*, as the modern poet caught in a life-and-death struggle with the forces of urban commodity-capitalism that had emerged in Paris around 1850 (Benjamin 2006). In Benjamin's reading, Baudelaire is the *flâneur* who haunts the arcades, the new epoch-making architecture, ancestor of the 20th-century mall, that were built by Haussmann and revolutionized trade and shopping in Paris. Benjamin devoted thousands of pages in his last project, *Passagenwerk*, to a discussion of this change, which he viewed as signaling a turning point in the rise of modern capitalism. The work, which he left uncompleted, was found in 1981 by Giorgio Agamben among the papers of Georges Bataille in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Benjamin 1999).

The Paris shopping arcades were big enough to accommodate large numbers of people, and Baudelaire defines the *flâneur* accordingly:

> For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement. . . . Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life. (Baudelaire 1964)

In Benjamin's reading, the *flâneur*, represented by Baudelaire, is no longer the decadent dandy of late Romanticism: he is the poet in modern times who wanders through the city experiencing unprecedented feelings he then turns into poetry. What Baudelaire described as "the ebb and flow of movement . . . [and] the flickering grace of all the elements of life" can be applied to the Fluxus artists, similarly marked by the contradictions and paradoxes of modern life. According to Benjamin, who in his discussion of *flânerie* introduces the idea of shock in the medical sense of overstimulation, Baudelaire "speaks of a duel" between consciousness and the shocks of the external world (Benjamin 2006, 163). Benjamin contends that for Baudelaire, "this duel is the creative process itself," and that Baudelaire therefore "placed the shock experience at the very center of his artistic work" (ibid.).

There are evident points of correspondence between the unmistakably urban Fluxus artists and the *flâneur*, both immersed in the crowd, indistinguishable and yet isolated, experiencing urban life at a moment of a sudden, profound change in direction in technological-capitalist society, faced with unrelenting pressure to commodify artistic work. It seems to me that the idea

of "over-," in receiving input from the external world and in responding to it, is central to Fluxus, where the artist sometimes overreacts to tiny details (Ono's *Touch Poem V*, 1963: "Feel the wall") and sometimes overdoes pretending that they have produced a simple piece of work (Ono's *Kite Piece I*, 1963: "Borrow the Mona Lisa from the gallery. Make a kite out of it and fly"). This steadfast resistance to the commodification of art works is clearly an issue of the entire Fluxus output.

The Surrealists reused the concept of *flânerie*, putting greater emphasis on the role of randomness. By playing with random occurrences while strolling about the city, the Surrealist *flâneur* expected to gain a higher awareness of the city, beyond immediate reality, and the ultimate goal was to reach a higher level of consciousness where "reality" and "surreality" converge; this is how André Breton developed his novel *Nadja*.

The question of whether Japanese Fluxus actually had Surrealist roots will be addressed in chapter 2. There are definitely Surrealist influences in the Situationist movement which, like Surrealism, addressed art and politics together in revolutionary terms (Zagdanski 2008; McDonough 2002). Debord, the theoretician and one of the founders of this nihilistic, destructive anarcho-surrealist movement, spoke of the subversive truth of the Surrealists. The early days of Situationist activity at the end of the 1950s were heavily focused on the formulation of a critique of art, and the Situationist International was being talked about in the art world for a number of its interventions. In 1958 Debord published an article in the second issue of the magazine *Internationale situationniste* entitled "Théorie de la dérive," in it he defines "the playful-constructive behavior" of the *dérive* as "one of the basic situationist practices . . . [in which] one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there." Debord updates Surrealist *flânerie*: "Chance is a less important factor in this activity than one might think . . . [since] the action of chance is naturally conservative and in a new setting tends to reduce everything to habit or to an alternation between a limited number of variants. Progress means breaking through fields where chance holds sway by creating new conditions more favorable to our purposes."[13]

The *dérive* is similar to Fluxus practice as it does not eliminate chance from "playful-constructive behavior" but instead organizes it in a specific manner, a Fluxus attribute contemplated by Higgins and Friedman (cf. Topic 5, p. xxi). Moreover, the act of doing something with an artistic meaning, in the sense that even though it may not be readily identified as a work of art, it is still an action in the domain of art as political criticism of art, is a distinguishing feature of the Fluxus output which converges with the concept of

dérive. As for the Dada/Surrealism dichotomy, I see Fluxus work leaning a bit more toward Dada, being a creative rearranging of things and ideas, giving them a new and unexpected meaning in a new interpretation. This does not exclude a Surrealist approach to reality, but is more connected with the dreams of what artists would like things to be like.

Finally, I will trace the *flâneur*-Debord-spectacle line of thinking and will argue that the emergence of Japanese Fluxus art was linked to the implacable rise of a mass consumer society in Japan.

In the postwar years when Japanese society was wracked by deep, albeit concealed conflict, restless young artists who had grown up during the war created their own version of mature inner consciousness. It included the desire for peace and solidarity, and placed greater value on relationships between people than on commodities and improvements in the nation's standard of living. This vision was set against the new social image being imposed by institutions and corporations, and the ways in which this was done is what I will examine and analyze in this book.

NOTES

1. Hayashi 2012, 14.
2. See for example the Ay-O, *Flux-Rain Machine*, ca 1965 at the site https://www.moma.org/collection/works/128031 (seen on 25/6/2016). On the MoMA site it is possible to see the works of the Silverman Collection; in MoMA's site Post there are several pages dedicated to Fluxus.
3. They were Shiomi, Kubota and Wada, but not Nam June Paik who, as a student of Stockhausen had performed in *Originale* from its premiere, neither Ay-O who participated in the performance, invited by Paik. Maciunas and Henry Flint had organized another demonstration against Stockhausen, when he was present at a concert of West German music, at New York's Town Hall on April 29, 1964. They picketed and distributed a flyer entitled *Fight Musical Decoration of Fascism* (Hendricks 2002, 167). It is an angry, acrimonious denouncement of Stockhausen for the contemptuously dismissive remarks he had made about jazz.
4. In a letter to De Ridder from 1964, preserved in the Bonotto Archive, Maciunas wrote that "Thomas Schmidt has been expelled and purged from Fluxus."
5. The most complete bibliography is to be found in Friedman 1998; an updated version is in Baas 2011.
6. MacLow related that "at the end of 1961 a number of us received letters from George [Maciunas] informing us that we were all 'editors' of something called 'Fluxus'," in Bonito Oliva 2008, 260.
7. See Bibliography.
8. Studying Fluxus from 1958 to 1968 means that Wada Yoshimasa, a 1970s newcomer, will not be considered.

9. The inclusion of this experimental group of artists in the Fluxus genealogy may have to do with what Yoshihara Jirō wrote in the 1954 *Gutai* bulletin: "Anything that happens in the human soul might be expressed through substance (*gutai*)." See also the manifesto Yoshihara published in *Geijutsu Shinchō* in 1956. The performative aspect was probably introduced to the movement by Shiraga Kazuo, founder of Zero Kai, a group that merged with Gutai in 1954; Shiraga was born in Ashiya, and in July 1955, at Ashiya River Park, Gutai's "Experimental Outdoor Exhibition of Modern Art To Challenge the Mid-summer Sun," was the first outdoor gestural exhibition ever held.

10. For the three charts with the Fluxus diagrams by Maciunas see Kellein 1995.

11. Referring to the historical avant-garde he affirmed: "The apartness from the praxis of life that had always constituted the institutional status of art in bourgeois society now becomes the content of works" (Bürger 1984, 27).

12. Benjamin brought Baudelaire's conception of the *flâneur* into the academy, and established it as an essential part of current ideas of modernism and urbanism (Baudelaire 1863, Benjamin 2006).

13. It was "an insufficient awareness of the limitations of chance, and of its inevitably reactionary effects, [which] condemned to a dismal failure the famous aimless wandering attempted in 1923 by four surrealists." Knabb 1981, without copyright. Another translation of the Debord text is in Andreotti and Costa 1996, 22–27.

Chapter 1

Globalism

> "The catastrophe of this century still hasn't been measured, although we have already begun to do so. Its amplitude surpasses everything that has been formulated until now (even by me in my most beautiful excesses)."[1]

"Globalism" is a widely used word; nowadays entire library shelves are dedicated to the analysis of this phenomenon, in its current form as globalization. What in the 1950s seemed to indicate that the dream that borders between peoples would disappear might come true has now become a complex issue that ignites sometimes barbarous localism, and by accentuating competition for resources and jobs, has made the world a less habitable place for many. Thus when the Fluxus way of thinking globally emerged it had very different connotations, as the horrors of war had led people to want a world free from divisions and conflicts. Writing on Fluxus, Higgins declared, "It was, from its outset, *international*." (1998, 224)—meaning, according to Friedman, that its members had a "complete lack of interest in the national origin of ideas or of people." In continuing his analysis of what in those years was effectively thought or felt within the debate on global dialogue, Friedman focused on two cores of egalitarian thought: democracy and consistent anti-elitism. He speculated about what was needed in order to allow "each individual to fulfil his or her potential," discussing elitism and the links between Fluxus and Buddhist thought, definitively examined by David Doris (1998, 91–135). I will address the theme of anti-elitism later in this book, and will now describe and analyze the Japanese attitude to the world and to foreign countries, in particular to the United States, which was a special interlocutor.

JAPAN AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD (THE U.S.)

It may seem contradictory to focus on the Japanese to identify their cultural particularity within a movement that refused to recognize national differences. Yet a sort of short circuit occurred at the root of the postwar Japanese avant-garde between democracy, the country's relationship with the outside world—specifically the United States—and the individual's identity as Japanese. Japanese singularity has been addressed in a book focusing on another singularity, that of gender (Yoshimoto 2005), not entirely in relation to the Fluxus artists. While, since the 1920s, Japan's status as a technologically developed country has never been in doubt, Japan's "cultural location" is an issue in itself. On a scale that goes from the most traditional and rural to the most technologically advanced, Japan's position is definitely eccentric, given that the efforts of the Meiji generation of rulers, the "enlighteners," succeeded in protecting Japan from the exploitation they saw taking place (and feared) in neighboring China, and enabled the country to catch up with the West in terms of development and industrialization.[2] Postcolonial studies' insightful speculation clearly does not apply to Japan, but it would be difficult to deny that in the prewar period, and even more so in the postwar years under SCAP, that is, the American occupying force, the Japanese somehow felt the strain that Homi Bhabha argued is part of what it means "to survive, to produce, to labor and to create, within a world system whose major economic impulses and cultural investments are pointed in a direction away from you, your country or your people" (Bhabha 1994, xi). This is true although it was precisely the government (and some strata of the social structure) that had long chosen (or had been driven) to ally themselves with these "foreign economic impulses and cultural investments."

I see attempts "to analyze the character of the Japanese people" (e.g., Gibney 1952, 5) as both dated and fruitless, as are analyses that set out to identify the unique nature of Japanese culture, the purpose of many texts written in the 1990s (Pfeiffer 1996). I have quoted Gibney because, although his is not an academic text, it examines the situation around 1950. Gibney described Japan as "a troublesome spirit, unsure of its place, but jealous of its station." (3) He proceeds by asserting—quite amazingly—that "the Japanese is oddly young. He is childlike in his refusal to admit defeat. He is childlike also in his plastic ability to assimilate new ideas and adjust to sudden changes in his situation." (4) I will subsequently return to Gibney's attribution of childlike traits to the Japanese. Here what I wish to stress is that the refusal to admit defeat and the ready assimilation of new ideas were not Japanese personality traits, but instead decisions made at the top and imposed on the population, strengthening a fabricated representation of the country (Vlastos 1998). Ludwig Pfeiffer maintained that " it was the advent of 'Japanology' that brought about the

hardening of cultural discourse into a referential one bound to find out, in the most rigorous fashion, facts designating some givenness of cultural characteristics and differences" (Pfeiffer 1996, 190). I fully agree with Pfeiffer when he states, in speaking of transcultural understanding, that "there is hardly any difference, in principle, between . . . moderately witty to downright absurd aphorisms, and ambitious, serious cultural description" (Pfeiffer 1996, 187).

Pfeiffer (Chapter "Between Radical Otherness and the Vanishing of Difference," 194) deals with the "*almost paradoxical disappearance of difference in a context of its strongest presence.*" (195, emphasis in the original)—which is what I see as characterizing the postwar relationship between Japanese society and foreign models, specifically the American one. According to Pfeiffer the idea that "Japan had become more western than the West itself" (202), is

> a partly unfortunate concept. It distracts from the question to what extent cultures should be seen not only as objects of descriptive or observational habits, but as *loosely organized spaces for the negotiation of behavior and, by extension, of ranges of cognitive and affective orientation* [emphasis mine]. For that, concepts of *cultural styles* might do better than latent or open notions of cultural meanings out there to be translated in situations of cultural contacts. The negotiation of styles will not produce structures of meaning, but semipermanent, semitransitory patterns. (Ibid.)

I will use the idea of cultural styles and negotiation of styles in my discussion of the transcultural products of Japanese Fluxus artists, who when the movement began were caught between cultural imports (both those they welcomed and those that were imposed by the United States) and the search for individual and national identity in the dire conditions of the postwar years.

POSTWAR JAPAN

Over the over six years of SCAP occupation, from Japan's formal acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration on August 15, 1945, to the implementation of the San Francisco Peace Treaty on April 28, 1952, the Japanese government's paternalistic attitude was strengthened by the United States policy of retaining the emperor, in whose name all the atrocities of the war had been committed, along with the *kokutai* system which guaranteed a sort of mental control over the populace: "MacArthur always maintained that Japan would be ungovernable without him [the emperor]. This fitted his idea of Japanese as childlike people who would run amok without imperial guidance. . . . [Actually] the unaccountable throne had simply moved to Washington, D.C. . . . but it did

nothing to strengthen Japanese democracy" (Buruma 2003, 141). Notwithstanding the reforms that were made, power was still held by the same forces as during the prewar period, and the recurring idea of a childlike nation paved the way for agreement on taking order from the United States.

In 1958 the Police Duties Law Amendment Bill was passed by the Kishi cabinet, giving the government the power to deal firmly with strikes. Kishi Nobusuke (1896–1987), who had been head of the government since the previous year, and was returned to office after the May 1958 elections, was, according to Buruma, "always on the opposite side of liberalism" (Buruma 2003, 156). He had been condemned as a war criminal but was saved by his many important connections. Thus the co-signer of Japan's declaration of war against the United States, which had unleashed the Pearl Harbour attack, became a key ally of the United States in the implementation of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, signed by the two countries in September 1951 during the last months of the Allied occupation, shortly after the San Francisco Treaty with the Allied Powers was signed. The Security Treaty made Japan reliant on the U.S. armed forces to preserve its security, granting the United States the right to station troops in Japan to be used not only "to contribute . . . to the security of Japan" but also, if necessary, "to put down large-scale internal riots and disturbances."[3] Kishi was highly unpopular and protests against the further strengthening of police powers to arrest and interrogate, and the curtailing of freedom of assembly were foretokens of the violent protests that would occur when the Security Treaty with the United States (widely referred to as Anpo in Japan) was renewed (Sasaki-Uemura 2001). Kishi resigned after the forced approval by the Diet of the Treaty. His successor was Ikeda Hayato, whose first act was to impose an unfavorable settlement on the mine workers' unions and force workers at the Miike mine of Mitsui Mining Company, who had been on strike for nearly a year, to return to work. His "income-doubling plan" (*shutoku baizō*) and policy of "patience and reconciliation" (*kan'yō to nintai*) sought respectively to promote economic development and minimize social tensions. Under his government, Japan's GNP grew at an annual rate of 10.6 percent in real terms. This economic growth was largely made possible by U.S. military involvement in Korea and Vietnam that the *zengakuren* (far-left students' movement) and others bitterly opposed. The majority of the populace, however, never chose to vote the conservative party out of office and wholeheartedly embraced the real-life miracle presented to them as the American Dream.

After its surrender to the allies, Japan underwent a process of democratization. A law enacted in 1947 empowered the unions and contained provisions on workers' rights (guaranteed minimum wages, paid holidays and sick leave, maximum working hours and safety conditions, accident compensation and the right to belong to a union and to strike). Under U.S. guidance, a new

constitution was drafted, which drew much of its inspiration from the U.S. Bill of Rights and the constitutions of European countries. Ratified by the Diet in 1946, with its provisions guaranteeing democratic process and civil rights, it supported the aspiration for freedom, which contradictorily went together with a desire to reject the American model of consumer society and belligerent foreign policy. Some 6 million people participated in the violent demonstrations organized on May 15, 1960, to protest against the Police Bill and the renewal of the U.S. Treaty, and although even more workers went on strike a week later, little was achieved beyond calling attention to Japanese people's desire for peace and their repudiation of militarism. By the early 1960s, when the Japanese government was a staunch supporter of the United States in the Cold War, it was clear that the opposition had lost. The government had been "effective in diverting opposition and gaining widespread support" through astute use of the media, with "affirmative advertising, light journalism, and semi-governmental management" (Marotti 2007, 16).

ARTISTS' ATTITUDES TO CONSUMER SOCIETY

Opposition movements had been unable to stop the transformation of

> Japanese society resulting from the postwar diffusion of American models of mass consumption, commercialized culture, industrial relations, and the displacement of distributive conflict by an ideological consensus around the pursuit of economic growth—what Charles Maier has influentially termed "the politics of productivity." Radio, television, advertising, and above all Hollywood cinema, according to this view, worked alongside Marshall Plan propaganda to diffuse seductive images of the "American way of life," driving "the demand side of the economic and social transformation, speeding and channelling the changes in mentality and behaviour" towards an Americanized "era of high mass consumption." (Zeitlin 2000, 7)[4]

There were many radical political groups in the art world opposed to what was taking place, but these artists were generally unwilling to ally themselves with left-wing parties as they felt the parties were ineffective in voicing social discontent (Scheiner 2006, 37). In this reading, "political" is not connected with party politics but to its original meaning, which derives from the Greek *polis*, that is, regarding social and civil life, the public sphere of the individual.

In any case none of the artists discussed here was the least interested in backing a given political position. The artists who banded together and signed a declaration against the Police Duties Bill (Packard 1966, 102–103) and then strongly opposed the renewal of the U.S. Treaty belonged to what was called

the Shōwa "single-digit generation"—that is, those born during the first ten years of the Shōwa era, which began in 1926. They had experienced nationalism, militarism and the war, and were strongly convinced of the need to fight for civil liberties.

The "discourse on *generations*, which takes the first Shōwa cohort (1926–1935) as a moral standard of postwar adult role commitment" is surely an example of "institutional patterning" (Kelly 1993, 192) and an "ideological theme of postwar public debate" (197). Yet the definition of this generation "as a moral standard of postwar adult commitment" is correct (192–197). They suffered without inflicting suffering; theirs was the generation that reconstructed the nation, whose efforts made possible *kōdo shinchō*, the high rate of economic growth. Members of what is known as the "double-digit generation" (those born between the mid-1930s and the mid-1940s) were profoundly different as in early adulthood they were already immersed in the unprecedented change taking place during the late 1950s. The name used for them was *mai hōmu gata* (my-home-person), meaning an individually oriented person, whose priority was owning a home of their own and focusing on the private sphere. In Japan's newly affluent society, they were definitely driven by consumerist desires but also resistant to "a single scale of commitment to societal roles and responsibilities" (198). They had been too young to elaborate a view of what had led the country into the war (which the generation of Matsudaira Yoritsune, for example, had done) and also too young to have experienced "the compensational personification of war as 'hostile history' to the direct naming of the actual human enemy" (Povrzanović 1997), which is what politicized collective identities in ethnic terms, for example in the recent wars in Croatia and Palestine. They were children of the war who had had recourse to the space of utopian structures of dreaming to cope with an inapprehensible and cruel reality, desperately turning to the liberating potential of the imagination as a projection of better times. Shiomi Chieko, who was born in 1938, recalled such frightening experiences as bombing raids and, at the age of six, losing sight of her mother and searching for her body amidst piles of corpses (Yoshimoto 2005, 141). Shiomi also recalled how she "together with [her] two brothers, drafted the scripts of plays to be staged by three people with roles, dance and music" in which she improvised by singing, and how, with this activity of making musicals of imagined stories, "we children, living such a poor, disheartening life, were able to find a personal way for inventing a little joy to survive" (Conversation, Osaka, November 25, 2011). Ono Yōko remembered "spending the afternoons hiding with her brother Keisuke from the irate and unbalanced world outside. 'Lying on our backs, looking up to the sky through an opening in the roof, we exchanged menus in the air and used our powers of visualization to survive'" (Munroe 2000, 13). The imaginary realm of daydreams challenging the status of reality is a

locus of later work, perhaps more as a means of survival than as a repository of creativity—a way to come to grips with a world flooded by unnecessary, unwanted commodities, and totally lacking in answers to the fundamental questions of life. The need for strong and clear-cut detachment from the past was obviously felt more deeply in Italy, Germany, and Japan, the nations that had lost the war. In Italy the Communist Party became the second largest party after the Christian Democrats. For about thirty years, until the mid-1970s, its percentage of the vote increased steadily—although in line with the policies of the North Atlantic Pact, it remained in the opposition and was never included in a coalition government at the national level. In Germany responsibilities for the war and the burden of Nazi genocide were publicly and painfully investigated and discussed. In Japan the deep disquiet felt by many at the prospect of being forced onto a path to a "democratic" consumer society (as defined by the Occupation and by government policies) was manifested in many currents of the artistic avant-garde. Starting in the late 1940s, an impressively large number of avant-garde individuals and groups were active on the art scene. Their number increased even further after the end of U.S. occupation. For the last ten years this phenomenon has gained international recognition, both in terms of research on the artistic movement and exhibitions of its artists' work.[5] It was best represented by the controversial Independent Exhibitions, which will be discussed in chapter 2. (See figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 **Katō Yoshihiro, *Kazakura Shō, and Kosugi Takehisa* [behind], *Performance at the 15th Yomiuri Independent March 1963.*** *Source*: Courtesy of the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art.

As Reiko Tomii has pointed out, "the development of postwar Japanese art often paralleled, and in some instances preceded, that of Euro-American art. In other words, the state of 'international contemporaneity' existed in the 1960s, and Japan was a vital part of this equation. However, its perception of itself at the time was painfully saddled by the mentality of 'catching up'—that is, catching up with the West" (Tomii 2009, 124–125).

GROUP ONGAKU

The idea that Japan somehow lagged behind Europe and the United States—or rather, the feeling that it did[6]—was rejected outright by Fluxus artists. One of the first groups to act Fluxus consisted of undergraduates in the Musicology Department at Tokyo Geidai (the University of the Arts), who came together as Group Ongaku (Group Music) in November 1959: Shiomi Chieko (b. 1938); Kosugi Takehisa (1939–2018); Mizuno Shūkō (b.1934), plus Tsuge Gen'ichi, Tojima Mikio and Tannō Yumiko who dropped out of the group when they finished college. While at university, they met regularly for rehearsals of *Pierrot Lunaire* and at one of these sessions started to improvise and experiment with their instruments as a way to relax (Shiomi 2005, 62). Tone Yasunao (b. 1935), not a student of music at Geidai, joined soon after the group was founded.

Resolute in their rejection of the European concept of music as compositions of fixed sounds, they sought instead to explore "different acoustics that gradually and constantly changed within actual time and space" (Okamoto 1996, n. p.). In the frequent collective improvisations of the late 1950s, they experimented with non-musical sounds obtained using instruments and/or miscellaneous everyday objects: "drum cans, washtubs, water jugs, forks, plates, hangers, metal and wood dolls, a vacuum, *go* stones, cups, radio, gardening reference books, a wall clock, cello, a rubber ball, an alto saxophone, prepared piano, etc" (Tone 1960, 15).[7]

Group Ongaku regularly had meetings, talks, and music sessions at venues including Mizuno's house, and university classrooms. Shiomi, who had started to explore improvisation even before meeting Kosugi, (Shiomi 2005, 62) has described the Group Ongaku improvising sessions as boxing matches with each of the players belligerently confronting the others, (Shiomi 2005, 69) as each one had their own way of addressing historical, theoretical, philosophical, and ethnomusicological perspectives on music. In his article on the first concert program, Tone discoursed competently on chance, Stockhausen and Cage—while Shiomi and Kosugi knew Cage by name only and were unaware of what he was doing (Conversation, Osaka, November 25, 2011). Before enrolling in the Tokyo National University of the Arts, Mizuno had

been a student at Chiba University and become a friend of fellow student Tone Yasunao. On one occasion, after he had met Tone at a performance of Stockhausen's *Kontra-punkte* in the late 1950s, Mizuno played him a tape of the improvisations, and despite the fact that at the time Tone knew almost nothing about music, Kosugi invited him to join the sessions[8] (Interview by Kaneda, 2013). Kosugi's invitation to Tone had a lasting impact on the other members of the group, as Shiomi recalled:

> We thought it was interesting that he [Tone] did not have any basic musical training for playing. Thinking about the music texture at that time, I can say it was not organized on phrase but mostly on the *objets sonores* created by different playing techniques. In other words, we wanted the base of our doing to be the soul of informel sound. The *objets sonores* produced by Tone had no aesthetic consciousness of the musical past, unlike ours. Therefore we all happily welcomed this unconventional intruder. (Shiomi 2005, 63)

Tone was also responsible for the name of the group, a reference to the magazine *Littérature*, founded by Aragon, Soupault, and Breton in 1919 (Marotti 2007, 14). This happened at one of the group's favorite hangouts, Fūgetsudō, a music bar in Shinjuku where records of contemporary music were played. Tone's proposal was accepted unanimously, both because its Dadaist connotations appealed to his fellow musicians and because they saw it as a sign of their hope that they would be able to produce "the music of the future" (Shiomi 2005, 64). It was used at their first public performance in August 1960 as part of an event of the Nijū seiki buyō (20th Century Dance), in particular the performance of the Kuni Chiya Dance Institute where Mizuno had a part-time job working as the piano accompanist. It was here that Kubota Shigeko, a relative of Kuni's, first met the group and participated.

Playing musical instruments known in Japan for less than a century (violin for Kosugi, piano for Shiomi, cello for Mizuno), the musicians of Group Ongaku used them in ways which seem to bring them closer to a typically Asian oral concept of music, while the officially recognized avant-garde of, say, Jikken Kōbō, was looking for an autonomous way to cope with the linguistic novelties of the European avant-garde. In their struggle to find non-predefined expression, Group Ongaku's musicians were simply not interested in identifying themselves as Japanese, as the Jikken Kōbō artists were. The latter, a fairly cohesive group, engaged in collectively speculating on art and art making, learning about the latest trends in Western art and mediating a personal way to express a specifically Japanese sensitivity. Attentive as they were toward their private lives, the Group Ongaku musicians confronted the world directly and as individuals. Their generation can be seen as the first *individual* generation of Japanese, whose members felt

more strongly that they belonged to a future, as yet unidentified (but hopefully peace-loving) world than to a specific, problematic Japanese nationality. However what was at the heart of Group Ongaku's intentions was the desire to abandon the mainstream European concept of music and manipulate individually, negotiating with others, their own idea of music which was, simply put, more open and all-encompassing: "a total idea of music, looking at what is happening on the earth, being personally involved, being fascinated. Maybe destroying the Western concept of music?" (Shiomi, Conversation, Osaka, November 25, 2011). The Group Ongaku musicians were exposed to examples of the overcoming of national/cultural boundaries such as the arrival at Geidai of the ethnomusicologist Koizumi Fumio, back from India, who introduced them to new concepts and instruments sitting cross-legged on a grand piano. Shiomi recalled that Koizumi told many stories about the Indian concept of life, music, individual property, and so on that deeply impressed the young musicians, and Kosugi wrote his thesis on Indian music. In short, these artists and musicians belonged to the first generation which was fully aware of the outside world and very much attracted to it.[9] Moreover, they were the first group to experiment with improvisation and sound research not in jazz but in a cultivated music milieu, years before the similar MEV and AMM experiments of the mid-1960s took place (see Holmes 2012).

Later, after Shiomi started working more on the concept of music than on sounds, she defined music as any occurrence of sound and silence as a "concentrated duration of activity" (Shiomi 1973, 42) which in fact encapsulates the Fluxus music activity as a whole.

AESTHETIC DISCUSSIONS, CRITICAL DEBATE, WORKS

The years immediately after the war saw the spread of heated debate on realism in the Japanese art world. The issue was since time on the scene: "No problem seemed more important in the interwar period than those considerations that prompted thinkers, writers, and artists to worry about the capacity of art and literature to accurately represent the real in a society in which reality was subjeted to endless differentiation" (Harootunian 2000a, 67). The prewar currents of modernism (by groups such as Mavo in the 1920s, for instance) had clashed with the realistic depiction that had been the fundamental requirement for art during the war, and the groups and collectives reorganized or founded after the war "obsessively investigated the threshold between the actual and the fantastical, the material and the psychological" (Yoshida 2012, 39). The critical debate

between leading intellectuals—literary critic Hanada Kiyoteru, Surrealist poet Takiguchi Shūzō, and the younger generation of writers and critics, represented by Haryū Ichirō, Tōno Yoshiaki, and Nakahara Yūsuke—was waged in magazines and symposiums. My principal source is the MoMA publication of primary documents (Hayashi et al. 2012) and many of the quotes come from essays that I had already translated that were part of these materials. The intellectual debate of the early 1950s was sophisticated and intense. Those taking part in it often looked to European artists and intellectuals, and felt akin to them, while writing in Japanese on Japanese art, and their ideas were often related to the nationality of their cultural references—mostly French and German. In the years before the war, with the different currents of Futurist, Dada, Constructivist, and Surrealist art, and much more so after the war, with the heated debate on the booming avant-garde, it almost seemed that in mainstream discussions of Japanese art, it was part of the European art scene, whereas the country's economic drive was very much U.S. oriented. What is interesting in the debate on realism is the speculation on the relationship between the artist's interior world and the external world and on the different ways there were for attempting to mediate between reality and the artist's interior life. As early as 1949 the painter Okamoto Tarō compared the suffering of a child who has failed to embrace the sun to what is felt by the "true artist [who] does not daydream in vain" (Hayashi et al. 2012, 35). He continued: "the artwork (object) overcomes the contradiction between reality (object) and artist (subject)" (37).

Art critic Hanada stated that "the method of avant-garde art has been used to give shape to internal reality, and now we must adopt it again to shape external reality. . . . The artistic avant-garde would transform into the political avant-garde [. . .] if they were to turn the gaze that they had directed to the inner world to the world outside" (42)—in some sense setting in motion the dialectical interaction between inner and outer realities. This tension was created when mediating between inner representation and an increasingly alien outside world is seen in many of the radical experiments by Fluxus artists. It was a striving toward locating the individual as a vital component of the world and equal to it and the Japanese, with their particular globalist vision, were more inclined to experience the inner/outer relationship as the physical, concrete being of the individual artist facing the outside world. How this would become collective and political is acted out in the *Anima* series of pieces by Kosugi Takehisa, starting from the title of the work itself. In *Anima 1* (1961) he wound string around his entire body; in *Anima 2 (Chamber Music)* (1962), after getting inside a zippered bag, he stuck parts of his body out, inevitably if inadvertently making sounds (which were not the main focus of the work). The score of *Anima 2* reads:

Enter in a chamber which has windows.
Close all the windows and doors.
Put out different parts of the body through each window.
[...][10]

As Michael Nyman wrote on *Anima 7*, a work which consists of performing any action as slowly as possible, "Kosugi seems to have used these processes not as a means of taking the performer out of himself, but of making him more intensely aware of the interior actions which he normally performs quite instinctively. As a result he is drawn outside the universe of his own physical functioning" (Nyman 1999, 81). On occasion of an exhibition with a series of four of the artist's most important performances from the early 1960s held in 1996 at Ashiya Museum of Art and History, Kosugi himself said:

> I am interested not in the things that until now have been stressed as pluses—the things that can be seen or heard—but their opposites—the things that cannot be seen or heard. . . . Unless there is also an element of discommunication in the equation, there is only communication. The issue of perceiving information that is unseeable or unhearable is important, and without this element, it seems to me that the balance is destroyed.

Kosugi's "communication of discommunication" can be considered an example of "disjunctive communication"—a desire to communicate with a kind of afterthought about the impossibility of being able to do so, captured by Okamoto in 1949 with his image of the daydreaming artist as a child who wants to embrace the sun.

A more social view of how inward and outward are related is found in the piece Shiomi composed for the Sōgetsu Hall concert of Group Ongaku. The concert was divided in two parts, the first of free improvisation and the second with compositions by each member. The concept at the core of her piece, *Mobile I, II, III*, was that

> while everyone, in the hall, was facing the stage, and everyone's ears were trying to hear the sound being played on stage . . . I wanted them to become aware of the outside of the venue. On the stage, there were a metronome ticking, a person like a conductor who indicated the time, two players of cello and marimba. At the back of the stage, there was a large gong I had asked the younger students to bring and play. Then laughter, many women with loud laughs. I also asked Kosugi to play the sax right next to the aisle of the hall. I was wearing wooden clogs, going up and down the stairs and a loud sound came down. It sounded like a kind of loud sound outside of the hall, as I wanted to direct the audience's ears to the outside. A music of centrifugal space. That is, rather than focusing the listening toward one point inside, I directed it to the environment, toward the

sound we were in. I wanted to open everyone's sensibility to the environment, I thought I was making such work." (Conversation, Osaka, November 25, 2011)

Shiomi conceived a new form of temporal/spatial art, and her "environment," a constructed and open *outside*, conceived to open the consciousness, was very different from Cage's, who Shiomi knew nothing about at the time. Cage's "environmental sound" is simply there to be heard unexpectedly, while Shiomi's outside is conceived to destroy the hierarchical representation of a musically privileged space.

There is also a definite distance from George Brecht's widely known work, *Exit*, which consisted of a readymade sign mounted by the artists and used as a performance prop in many of their concerts. Brecht's aim was to re-direct attention to normal, everyday gestures, something that may relate to Nyman's reading of Kosugi's work, but the outside was not part of the event.

The outside of Shiomi's music is also the individual's openness to the world and curiosity about what is going on in it and it was this that brought her to New York a couple of years later. Toward the end of her stay there, Shiomi initiated the series of nine events called *Spatial Poem*, which exemplify the idea of "being personally involved with the world," conceiving of "the world as a single stage," as the artist later explained (Shiomi, Lesson at Kyoto University, Faculty of Fine Arts, November 21, 2014). Each poem began with post cards sent to a large number of friends and colleagues, from people Shiomi had met in New York to others located in Tokyo, Łódź, Montevideo, and New Delhi. Recipients were asked to follow simple instructions, which often took the form of an intimate action poem that anyone could perform. The score of *Spatial Poem n. 1* reads: "Write a word or words on the enclosed card and place it somewhere." She was pleased with the responses she received in the mail, which then became the work (figure 1.2), encompassing a wide variety of human and poetic responses.

Shiomi's work is markedly different from other examples of mail art—that is, art created by sending something through the postal system. Ray Johnson, considered by many the originator of mail art, began by mailing collages, along with a series of manifestos, mimeographed for distribution, to friends and strangers; in 1962 he founded the New York Correspondance [sic] School of Art. What is central to his work is the exchange of something that is thought of, albeit negatively, as a work of art. The same is true for the mail art of Robert Filliou, who defined the concept of the Eternal Network (also known as "La Fête Permanente"/The Constant Festival): "the artist must be aware that he is part of a larger social network, part of the 'Constant Festival' which surrounds him everywhere and elsewhere in the world,"[11] and it is precisely this that is the sense of his mail art.

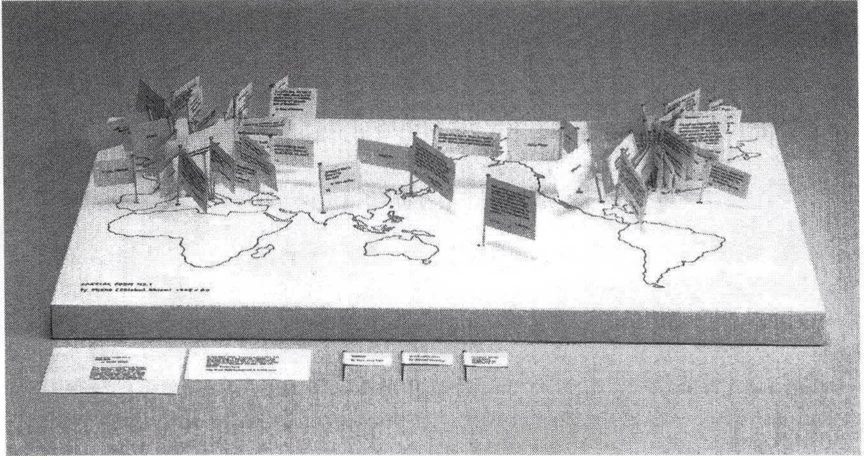
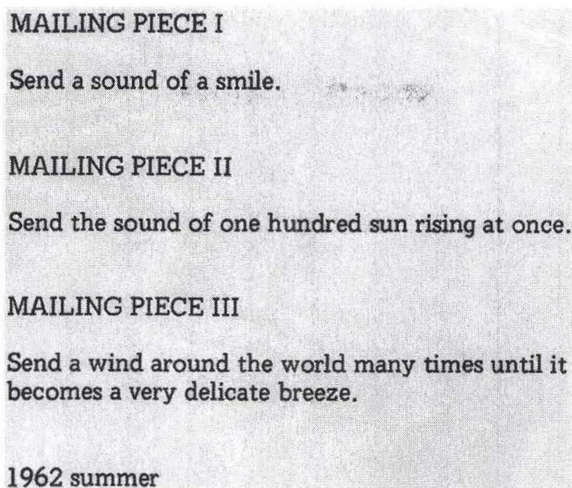


Figure 1.2 Shiomi Mieko, *Spatial Poems n. 1*, 1965; Urawa Art Museum, Photo by Uchida Yoshitaka. Courtesy of the artist. *Source*: Courtesy of Shiomi Mieko.

Shiomi's mail art does not affirm a net of artists or the art work in itself, but is instead the *space* and the *relationship* between the people that are at the center of the creation. Lushetich analyzes "Systems of Economic Exchange" in her chapter 6, and in discussing "The Relational Economics of George Maciunas" argues that "the relation of *social reciprocity* . . . is always already present in any given good. . . . Much like a gift initiates a social obligation . . . the barter system within which Shiomi's *Spatial Poem* is framed demands a thoughtful choice of the prospective 'purchaser's', or rather, 'partner's in exchange' means of exchange" (Lushetich 2014, 206). It is an insightful analysis, although Shiomi had not intended to sell *copies* of the work. As Maciunas saw participants as potential buyers, *Spatial Poems* sparked a quarrel between Shiomi and Maciunas, but the divergence in opinions did not cause a permanent rift between them (Conversation, Osaka, November 25, 2011).

Shiomi's suggestion that each participant should write "a word, or words" that could be sent and received builds a context of what I see as another example of "disjunctive communication," created in the process of exchanging the sense of belonging to a global community. Shiomi refers to this idea of feeling confined to a place and time—and not wanting to be—as "the inconvenience of communication" (Yoshimoto 2005, 155).

This idea of focusing on the global space as well as on the exchange of a "disjunctive communication" is also found, though with a more dreamlike poetic quality, in Ono Yōko's works that mention mail: her imaginative scores evoke a range of intimate thoughts and feelings that can be communicated and then answered, but whose scope is clearly directed inward, for example in the following poem (1962) at figure 1.3:[12]


MAILING PIECE I

Send a sound of a smile.

MAILING PIECE II

Send the sound of one hundred sun rising at once.

MAILING PIECE III

Send a wind around the world many times until it becomes a very delicate breeze.

1962 summer

Figure 1.3 Mailing Piece. "Grapefruit" © Yoko Ono, 1964, 1970, 1971, Simon and Schuster, first Touchstone edition. Used by Permission/All Rights Reserved.

Ono's concept of people's relationship with the world is that of existing on a common meeting ground. This longing to consider the world as a single scene is also evident in a line from Ono's first "score" in the Music section of her book *Grapefruit*. (See figure 1.4).

The inner quality of Ono's work as a practice will be discussed in chapter 2, while here I will focus on the interior/exterior relationship in her work. Lushetich's argument is interesting. In her reasoning on Fluxus's practice of non-duality, specifically in relation to what she calls "Social Rites and Rituals," Lushetich expands on Nishida Kitarō's radical principle of the absolute contradictory principle of self-identity (*zettai mujunteki jiko dōitsu*).[13] "For Nishida, there is no alterity or intersubjectivity which would imply the dichotomy of objectivization and subjectivization by referring to the facticity of the other. . . . The self is simultaneously identical and alter, simultaneously individual and social" (Lushetich 2014, 172–173). This comprises the principle that subject and object do not exist separately as they are the two inter-related sides of one reality, the sole reality that exists and is consistent with the universe. Lushetich concludes that since

> the particular—or the individual—is always involved in the determination of the universal and vice versa, there is also no definite individuality or communality. The individual is always in the process of structuring the communal content as well as in the process of being structured by it. Important to note, however, is that the individual-communal interpenetration characteristic of Nishida's thought was not entirely absent from the social environment Nishida was living in—the prewar Japan—while this cannot be said of the increasingly

LET'S PIECE I

500 Noses are more beautiful than
one nose. Even a telephone no. is more
beautiful if 200 people think of
the same number at the same time.

a) let 500 people think of the same
telephone number at once for a
minute at a set time.
b) let everybody in the city think
of the word "yes" at the same time
for 30 seconds. Do it often.
c) make it the whole world thinking
all the time.

1960 spring

Figure 1.4 Let's Piece I. "Grapefruit" © Yoko Ono, 1964, 1970, 1971, Simon and Schuster, first Touchstone edition. Used by Permission/ All Rights Reserved.

> industrialised, striated and fragmented society of the 1960s and 1970s Europe and the United States. (174)

I find that the outside of one's inside self, the second term in the relationships established in the works, that is, what is outside oneself is not necessarily "other"—already diverges from the logic of binary opposition. For the Japanese works mentioned I think of this outside as a kind of whole, an overall setting the self has to face so that it can locate itself within it. While this is happening—mostly in works by Ono, but also in ones by Shiomi and Kosugi—this move also serves to nurture the self's autonomous consciousness. Japanese culture is based on a different apprehension of reality, one that is more encompassing and in which there is an intertwining of the living and non-living, existent and non-existent. The foreign binary logic, which Lushetich describes as "'is' and 'is not' logic, which entails a host of binary oppositions . . . [is] what the Japanese philosopher Nishitani Keiji has aptly termed the 'two world theory' (1991, 77)," and which she sees as "the cornerstone of the Western metaphysical tradition" (Lushetich 2014, 3). In counterposition to this, a deeply rooted nonbinary condition can be seen as the episteme of Japanese cultural identity, and continued to exist after the war, in fact contrasting the progressively prevailing "industrialised, striated and fragmented society of the 1960s." Lushetich demonstrates how Fluxus defied the logic of binary opposition in its practice of non-duality, and how its dynamic can be

explained as part of the 1960s culture of the West. I would suggest, however, that the non-duality of the Japanese episteme surfaces in a specific way in works questioning the relationship between inner and outer, which is almost absent in non-Japanese Fluxus work.

NOTES

1. Letter, December 5, 1992, Guy Debord to Annie Le Brun, *Guy Debord Correspondance, Vol 7: Janvier 1988–Novembre 1994*, Paris: Librairie Artheme Fayard, 2008.

2. The originality of Japanese binary path tradition/modernization has been addressed in a number of studies, from scientific ones to those on economic and social questions. See Ward 2015.

3. The original Japanese text is at http://mofa.ac.jp/mofaj/area/usa/hosho/jyoyak u.html (23/10/2011).

4. Zeitlin cites the following: Maier, "Politics of Productivity"; Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe*, Ch. 12 (quotation, 227). See also Anthony Carew, *Labour under the Marshall Plan: The Politics of Productivity and the Marketing of Management Science* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987); and the literature discussed in Killick, *United States and European Reconstruction*, Ch. 14. An influential national study along these lines is Volker Berghahn, *The Americanisation of West German Industry, 1945–1973* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1986); for extensions of his argument, see also idem, "Technology and the Export of Industrial Culture: Problems of the German-American Relationship, 1900–1960," in Peter Mathias and John A. Davis (eds.), *Innovation and Technology in Europe: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 142–61; "Resisting the Pax Americana? West German Industry and the United States, 1945–55," in Michael Ermarth (ed.), *America and the Shaping of German Society, 1945–1955* (Oxford: Berg, 1993), 85–100; "West German Reconstruction and American Industrial Culture, 1945–1960," in Reiner Pommerin (ed.), *The American Impact on Postwar Germany* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995), 65–82. For "the postwar triumph of the 'politics of productivity' and the 'Westernization of consumption patterns'" in Japan, see Gordon, "Struggles for the Workplace," 375–378; and Charles Yuji Horioka, "Consuming and Saving," in Gordon, *Postwar Japan as History*, 259–292, esp. 273–279.

5. See Bibliography, especially "Catalogues of Exhibitions."

6. This is a recurrent theme, while in fact the catch-up problem was Japan's "long-standing deference to the West. . . . As they learned of their civilization, they were similarly awed by its philosophy and literature, music and art. The West was to be the center and the norm. . . . [The Japanese] had to cope with their own sense of insecurity" (Miyoshi 1994, 283).

7. Quoted in Marotti (2007, 22).

8. Tone scored *Anagram for Strings* (1963) as a "graphic score" without ever having seen one, purely on the basis of the description that Ichiyanagi had given him on his return from New York (Kaneda 2013).

9. The issue of Japan's seclusion and foreign policy is a complex and controversial one that cannot be satisfactorily addressed here. The literature on the question is vast and I will only cite historian Arano Yasunori 1992 who challenged the current perception of early modern Japan as uniquely isolated.

10. In 2005 Kosugi revised the work, which now reads: "Enter into a chamber, which has windows and door(s). / Close all the windows and the door(s), and then open them/one at a time, putting various parts of the performer's body out of them." In this new version it is specified that the "chamber" can be a zipped bag (Kosugi 2017).

11. From the text by Filliou explaining the project of the Eternal Network, quoted in the Sprengler exhibition catalogue 1984 and also at https://redletterdayzine.wordpress.com/tag/the-eternal-network/ (15/7/2013).

12. This work by Ono was composed in 1962, but published in *Grapefruit* in 1964.

13. The concept, which has also been translated as "contradictory self-identification," is developed in Nishida 1966. On Nishida, see Kozyra 2004.

Chapter 2

Experimentalism and Iconoclasm

> In the spectacle's basic practice of . . . *inverting* living values into purely abstract values, we recognize our old enemy *the commodity*.[1]

I use the concept of "disjunctive communication" to define the kind of artistic communication which is aware, albeit unconsciously, of the problems inherent in the process of communication where there is never a direct line between the source and the receiver. It is a question that many Fluxus artists addressed. The concept is obviously closely connected to "disjunctive modernity" which Gyan Prakash defined as the result of a process of "reappropriation and relocation . . . fabricated upon the fissure that appears to separate the Western and the native, the modern and the traditional, its authority perpetually unstable" (Mitchell 2000, xxv). Charles Merewether borrowed the term and used it in the title of his excellent essay "Disjunctive Modernity. The Practice of Artistic Experimentation in Postwar Japan." He saw it as the "juxtaposition of a persistent imperial order and elite culture with an expanding, industrially driven, mass culture" (Merewether 2007, 2).

THE ADVENT OF MASS SOCIETY

Starting in the 1920s, Japan moved at much the same pace as Western industrialized countries in terms of the emergence of a mass society. In fact between 1920s and 1930s, the population of Tokyo more than doubled and Japan's economic growth was the highest in the world. By the end of the decade, Japan was the third or fourth largest economy in the world (Takemura 1998, 182). As early as the beginning of the 20th century, there were pioneering industrialists whose companies produced a range of goods. Their

success rested on their openness to innovation and the speed with which they were able to change. Many of these companies are still in operation and their brands have become household names. Yet workers' right to organize in unions was not recognized, there was no universal suffrage, workers' salaries were low and the country was without a pension system and health care system.

After the Second World War conditions were qualitatively different. Mass production entered a new phase. The level of sophistication of the goods produced and the pervasiveness of supply were extremely high, probably at least as high as European countries' and perhaps those of the United States as well (Horioka 1993, 259–264). Yet the discrepancy between the nonfulfillment of social and civil rights and the rise in the standard of living was profound. The philosophy and policies of the political elite were neither rational nor democratic. According to Harootunian, "Japanese political arrangements have consistently been represented as a democratic stand-in for capitalist development where in fact, they are driven by a single party devoted to managed capitalism" (Harootunian 2000, 34); elsewhere he specified that "a policy directed at fusing democracy and consumption, state and market on an unprecedented scale was in play" (Harootunian 2012, 20). A clash of ideologies ensued, similar to the situation in Japan in the 1920s when an urban mass society emerged. Suzuki Sadami has shown that "the advance of capitalism led to the standardization of the individual and a decline in vitalistic feelings of social cohesion[2] and an emphasis on material wellbeing. It was the disruption of self-consciousness based on human relationships" (Suzuki 1992, 237). Everything that had formerly been based on experience and relationship, albeit mediated by social representations, shifted to a new level of superimposed consumeristic imagery and representation (Ivy 1993, 242 passim).

I now wish to introduce the cogent definition of consumer society proposed by Debord, who called it a "society of the spectacle," in which

> the spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images. The spectacle cannot be understood as a mere visual excess produced by mass-media technologies. . . . In all of its particular manifestations—news, propaganda, advertising, entertainment—the spectacle is the . . . omnipresent affirmation of the choices that have *already been made* in the sphere of production and in the consumption implied by that production. In both form and content the spectacle serves as a total justification of the conditions and goals of the existing system. (Debord 2014, 7)

I hold that the "spectacular" artistic inventions of Japanese artists in the 1950s contained a painful awareness of this condition, as I will try to illustrate.

With the return of economic wellbeing in the postwar years, the Japanese were happy to be living in an affluent society. Yet, at the same time, many

people felt ambivalent about the consumer revolution and the affirmation of modernism that it entailed. They were disturbed and unhappy about the gradual retreat from the precepts of neo-Confucianism "such as sympathy, distributive justice, duty consciousness, ritual, public-spiritedness, and group orientation" (Tu 2000, 264) and of the Meiji period, such as commitment to collectivity and frugality. The influence of traditional morality persisted but was constantly under attack from consumer pressures and young artists expressed their consciousness of Japanese consumer society's lack of freedom. While the standard of living improved and the level of prosperity grew, the government and people in positions of power became more and more indifferent to the demands of civil society. The dramatic changes in everyday life, the feeling of having relinquished freedom and individual dignity in exchange for material welfare was subterraneously perceived, and the younger generation of artists expressed it vehemently.

In *History's Disquiet*, a book concerned with the conceptualization of everydayness and the encounter between the diverse inflections of it in Euro-America and Japan, Harootunian defines

> everyday life . . . [as] the experience of the lived reality that marks the appearance and expansion of industrial capitalism and its propensity to install similar conditions everywhere it is established. Everyday life has the impressive and probably unparalleled credential of standing at the intersection of four intellectual movements that are at the heart of our own, contemporary historical conjuncture: Marxism, surrealism, existentialism (especially in its phenomenological perspective), and cultural studies. (Harootunian 2000, 54)

The Japanese explored the credentials of everyday life's self-representations in their own *style*: existentialism with timely contributions from Watsuji and Kuki (Watsuji 1992; Kuki 2004). Cultural studies developed within an established network of international academic and institutional relationships, even though there was some degree of control as Harootunian pointed out in the essay cited above (Harootunian 2000, 25–58). Marxist thought undoubtedly had a significant influence (Barshay 2004). The influence of Surrealism, the second of the four movements Harootunian listed, will be discussed in the following section.

SURREALISM AND RADICAL EXPERIMENTATION

Surrealism is said to have caught on in Japan in part because it resembled depictions of dream-like fantasies in pictorial art. New Surrealist works from Europe were displayed in a major exhibition in 1931, which traveled around the country and brought a much larger group of artists into the Surrealist

orbit (Munro 2012). As Majella Munro recently made clear, the enthusiastic reception of Surrealism in Japan was not a "one-way conversation" (Munro 2012, 9). It emerged as a dominant force in the revolt by artists and critics against the "academy" that controlled government-sponsored art exhibitions, which had been displaying Japanese- and European-style "fine art" in juried exhibitions since 1907. Under the harsh censorship laws enacted in 1940, some Japanese Surrealist artists were imprisoned and this added tragic depth to the movement.

The Surrealist conjuncture, with its Dada ancestor, was the fertile ground on which the revolt against the official status of art grew in the postwar period. Young people distrusted the older generation, and people in general distrusted the country's leaders. There was widespread, deep-seated resentment among young artists against the hierarchical, "ossified, corrupt and stunted art world" (Marotti 2013, 152), and the difficulties they encountered in finding venues in which to exhibit. Angered by the paternalism of the selection process of the exhibition organized by Nihon Bijutsukai (the Japanese Fine Art Society), in 1949 they participated in the first annual Yomiuri Independent Exhibition (Anpan).[3] These exhibitions, sponsored by the national newspaper Yomiuri, were annual shows without a jury that were held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum and became a hotbed of radical experimentation. Nevertheless after a few years, as Takiguchi Shūzō reported in a 1956 article, the old conservative, hierarchical mentality began to progressively neutralize the democratic thrust of the exhibition's origins (Marotti 2013, 143). In response, in 1957 the exhibition became even more radical, with the participation of a younger generation of artists determined to challenge established authority and accepted notions of art. Outside influences encouraged the Japanese tendency to radicalism: although work by Pollock and Rothko had been exhibited in the early 1950s, it was the gestural abstraction of the European *Informel* that had the greatest impact, thanks in part to a large exhibition entitled *Sekai Konnichi no Bijutsuten* (Today's World Art Exhibition) held at the Takashimaya department store in Nihonbashi in November 1956, with works by hundreds of European and Japanese artists, and Michel Tapié's and Georges Mathieu's visit in September 1957 (Ming 2011, 208 ff.).

The American avant-garde was introduced by the young critic Tōno Yoshiaki. In 1959 he published a hotly debated article entitled "Kyōki to sukyandaru. Katayaburi no sekai no shinjintachi" (Madness and Scandal. Unconventional New People in the World), on paintings by Tinguely, Rauschenberg and Johns, which were then exhibited at Minami Gallery, where works by Kurt Schwitters and Sam Francis were also exhibited at the beginning of the 1960s (Ōka 1985).

Anpan's young artists expressed their discontent and feeling of displacement in society in challenging works, exhibiting perishable materials and

even waste, dangerous objects, objects with explicit sexual content and also the artists' bodies—calling all this "art." It soon came to be called Anti-Art (*han-geijutsu*, Merewether and Iezumi, 2007) though no one was more aware of the *geijutsu* legacy of those who practiced Anti-Art in search of new authenticity, as Shinohara Ushio asserted a few years later (Shinohara 1968, 61). The Exhibition Work Standards, issued in December 1962 by the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum where the exhibitions were held, gives some idea of what the artworks exhibited were like. The following items were prohibited:

1. those which make unpleasant and/or high frequency sounds
2. those which produce bad smells or use materials which rot easily
3. those which use cutlery that could injure people
4. those which make the spectators uncomfortable from a hygienic point of view
5. those which use gravel or sand spread directly on the floor and could damage it
6. those which hang directly from the ceiling. (See footnote 3)

The organizers wanted to avoid getting into trouble, and in 1964, probably to "clean up the scene" for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics, decided to discontinue the exhibitions just before the sixteenth one. Before this, the artists would rent all the walls in a room so they would be able to act in the space within without much control. Progressively the works still made up of objects were replaced by works consisting of installations, performances, and concepts—called an event, action, happening, or sometimes (when the work included sound), a "piece."

A great deal of experimenting was taking place in music.[4] It is interesting to see how the authoritative critic Kōji Sano defined the difference perceived during the "dynamic decade" of the 1960s:

> Avant-garde music is such that it is possible to perform a work, which possesses a new perspective but is also reproducible, again. Instead experimental music, which happens on stage, from a few indications, uses a lot of improvisation. For example, this "Concert of experimental music" [looking at a Sōgetsu Series program] is particularly . . . (laughs) for the Japanese public it was a frighteningly experimental era. . . . For example *Visage* by Takemitsu, works by Xenakis or the like are still performed today, but experimental music is always new, unprecedented. (Conversation, Tokyo, September 4, 2011)

The practice of incorporating junk and everyday objects led to the "dematerialization" of art, identified and theorized in 1963 by the critic Miyakawa Atsushi as the passage from modern (*kindai*) to contemporary (*gendai*).

Miyakawa related the increased use of matter ". . . as a thing that has the potential for expression inside of itself" to the "negation of the system of form . . . because a material exists not on the surface but in the interiority and depth hidden behind its shadow, and moreover because the potential for expression is premised on the destruction of form" (Hayashi et al. 2012, 109). What is interesting here is that Miyakawa, distinguishing Art Informel from Anti-Art, identifies as the "collapse of the modern" not the abstraction of *informel* gestural art as the "adventure that challenges the authenticity of the expression by the act of expressing," but the *move back to the reality* of the object: "With its *objets* being grasped simply in terms of a movement against abstraction and back to reality, Anti-Art has become nothing more than the bastard child of Art Informel" (Hayashi et al. 2012, 112). I share the reserves expressed by Marotti (Marotti 2013, 365) regarding "a strange cultural particularism, or even nominalism" in the critics' treatment of Anti-Art and the practices associated with the label. One heated exchange appeared in *Bijutsu techō* (Art notebook) in 1964. Miyakawa and Tōno gave their views on Anti-Art, in two articles published in the magazine after a public debate entitled "Anti-Art: Yes or No?," held in February of that year at Bridgestone Hall in conjunction with the *Young Seven* exhibition curated by Tōno at Minami Gallery (the exchange has been widely discussed, for example, Munroe 1994, Hayashi et al. 2012, and I will come back to it in chapter 3). It is interesting that finally, in questioning the meaning of (Anti-) Art, the issue of the artist's individuality came to the surface, related to what expression is and what it would subsequently be. Miyakawa argued that, if artists

> reduced art to a dialectic of *matière* and *geste*, . . . the process of expression could be rendered autonomous. They should have concentrated on achieving such autonomy; they fell short and turned, as usual, to an all-consuming direct self-expression, indulging their passions for the sake of nothing. (Munroe 1994, 38)[5]

He concluded, in his comments on a work by Natsuyuki Nakanishi exhibited at the *Young Seven* exhibition that "the concept of reality has been emptied out by the furious ambivalence toward identity and metamorphosis" (Hayashi et al. 2012, 131).

In what Tonō would call "extremely abstruse words," Miyakawa had touched on the dilemma being faced by artists who were, on the one hand, pressured by the ongoing individualism of a changing society to adopt an extremely personal, highly individual stance in dealing with "*matière* and *geste*" while, on the other, were questioning the collapse of autonomous and effective investment of individuality in the stifling society they condemned.

EXPERIMENTS IN VISIONARY CONCRETISM

After the war it was inevitable that individuals should feel abandoned and alone in facing their own tragedies and finding ways to recover, in a situation that Alexandra Munroe accurately described as one of "absolute loss and absolute freedom": "All they can do was cultivate what authority deems 'perversions,' which will hopefully liberate them from 'the territory' of society" (Munroe 1994, 159). The process of substantiating a selfhood was undermined by the paternalistic attitude of the latently fascist political power structure (exemplified by the election of Kishi, who had served a three-year prison sentence as a class-A war criminal)—and with pressure to consume constantly increasing failed to move in the direction of mature individual responsibility, but instead made possible, "indulging their passions for the sake of nothing."

Debate on the concept of individuality (*shutaisei*) occupied the early postwar years. The term, a compound of the characters *shu* (subject, sovereign), *tai* (body, substance), and *sei* (quality, feature) was coined by the Kyoto School to express what were seen as the main characteristics of Western civilization: "subjectivity; subjecthood; independence; identity" (Kenkyūsha Dictionary). In Miyoshi Masao's acute analysis, the "autonomy of the private," "a space outside of collective existence" was discovered by the Japanese as a result of their defeat, and "was effectively incorporated into the economic pattern of production and consumption with the dazzling economic success of the sixties, bypassing political individualism" (Miyoshi 1994, 273–274; see also Kersen 1996, 90–93). Questions raised about what and who were responsible for the war and the discussion that ensued inevitably comprised *shutaisei*: "The *shutaisei* controversy is cognate if not identical with the issue of war responsibility" (Miyoshi 1994, 279). Miyoshi examined the work of a few Marxist historiographers, well-known writers from the prewar years and young writers of the postwar period to conclude that what was lacking was a criticism of the hypocrisy of both the Western occupying powers and the acquiescent Japanese government.

> Above all, Japan's immense economic power is exercised in conjunction with global corporate appropriation of individuals, that is relentless and ubiquitous consumerism. Culturally uprooted, the collective unindividuals in Japan seem to be leading the whole pack of peoples and nations, both in the West and the Rest, to the fantasy of self-emptied, idea-vacated, and purpose-lost dystopia of production, consumption, and daydreaming.
>
> All encompassing consumerism is, ironically, a version of *shutaisei*, since it is sensual, boldly and systematic. . . . [Isn't that] . . . the ultimate consumerist vacuity in which the act of buying alone serves as the confirmation and reassurance of individual beings? (292)

Without going further into the issue, I maintain that in postwar Japan the process of recognizing individuals as responsible for their actions, with the freedom to make judgements and decisions was overwhelmed by the determination of both the United States and Japanese governments to maintain political and social control—"The Occupation's willingness to tolerate ideological diversity lasted for only a very short time" (Olson 1992 xviii)—in order to promote the level of consumption necessary for the establishment of mature capitalism.

Two years before the Miyakawa—Tōno debate, on June 9th a manifesto by Maciunas entitled "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art, 1962" was read at the Fluxus concert in Wuppertal, West Germany. The movement was in its early years and the manifesto was a latent declaration of its intentions. In this concise but dense text, Maciunas defined the neo-Dada field of creativity as encompassing a wide range of arts, from "'time' arts to 'space' arts . . . bound with the concept of concretism." He saw this as being in opposition to illusionistic and abstract art and discourses on "mild concretism, which becomes more and more concrete, or rather nonartificial till it becomes non-art, anti-art, nature, reality. Concretists in contrast to illusionists prefer unity of form and content, rather than their separation" (Hendricks 2002, 89). He subsequently added: "a truer concretist rejects pre-determination of final form in order to perceive the reality of nature, the course of which, like that of man himself, is largely indeterminate and unpredictable. . . . [He creates] a concept or a method by which form can be created independently of him" (Ibid.). This statement by Maciunas expresses the position of Fluxus on the issue mentioned above, "the dialectic of *matière* and *geste*." Considered in this way, the "self-indulging" subject is no longer an issue, as this type of artist would be entirely divested of power in relation to their work and its audience. This dismantling of positionality of any sort is a key issue in Lushetich's previously mentioned 2014 book, *The Practice of Non-Duality*. Kosugi wrote convincingly about "private experiences . . . [whose] accumulation must be returned to the original anonymous territory. . . . A collectivized accumulation of memory would not be personal. My way of thinking is to bring this personal thing back to the primordial stage. I feel that improvisation can do this, and I feel I've been successful at it" (Hudak 1992, 26). In his rejection of control by reason or intention, Kosugi referred to *automatisme*—a term he may have borrowed from Tone, who wrote a thesis on Surrealism,[6]—but in my view is more closely related to his desire to free himself from the compelling imperative to the individual consumerist ego: "It's a kind of dream: during performance I've felt something, a freedom from my limits," he wrote.

In this sense, it may seem that the Fluxus artists escaped the Gordian knot of individual expression by altogether ignoring the question of *who* expressed a work, even maintaining its *aboutness* and *embodiment*, the two conditions

given by Arthur Danto for something to be called art, always "ground[ed] on an interpretive hypothesis" (Danto 1998, 130). Yet "reality," somehow contrasted with subject, as conjured up by Maciunas, still had to be dealt with. Haryū Ichirō had framed the question correctly as early as 1957:

> The concept of 'avant-garde', either politically or artistically, has been badly watered down. . . . We understand that what is to be discredited exists both inside and outside ourselves. In order to create authentic art, we must *probe into the cracks of discommunication* and rigorously scrutinize the internal as well as the external through *constant self-negation*. . . . [Artists] have the integrity and discipline, or the lack thereof, to define freedom from within and clear the way for new possibilities." (Munroe 1994, 384; emphasis mine)

"Discommunication" can thus be seen as being similar to the "disjunctive communication" I proposed above.

The focus on inner-outer relationship had already surfaced. The bitter debate of the postwar years often embodied bipolarity. Before the end of the occupation,

> the clash over identity and subjectivity was cast primarily as a battle between mind and body. Proponents of the mind—"modernist" (*kindaishugisha*) intellectuals and academics from the elite schools—quarreled with those who grounded subjectivity in the body and saw "thought" as the myth that deluded people into disastrous defeat and hid from them the nature of this defeat. The struggle bespoke a more profound disagreement between those who privileged the body over social constraints that had bound that body to concealment and conformism and those who promoted the formation of an autonomous political subject. (Harootunian 1994, 19)

Connections may be seen between this mind/identity versus body/subjectivity opposition and the distinction posed by Nishida Kitarō between pure-logic (epistemology) and pure-empiricism (psychology); surely social constrainment of the body had something to do with the clash between Japanese culture and U.S. puritanism. The progressive role of the iconoclastic naked body is therefore impressive in the works of the 1960s, performed in numerous installations at a level unknown in parallel contemporary manifestations of radical art in the West—as a glance at any art history book of postwar Japan will show. The body was on the scene in the most combative experimental and iconoclastic sense: the body dreadfully devastated by the first use of the atomic bomb; the body depicted with tragic deformity in the paintings of Yamashita Kikuji (*Oto otemu*, Totem, 1951) or those of Hamada Chimei (*Shonenhei aika 'Byou'*, Elegy for a new conscript 'Mausoleum', 1952),[7] or carried to the extreme in the *butō* dancing of Hijikata Tatsumi

and so in sharp contrast with the beautiful body increasingly and pervasively being celebrated in advertising.

The body was central to the work of the Fluxus generation of artists. Having reached adulthood in the late 1950s, they had an original stance regarding Japanese rulers' ambivalence on social issues, that is, concrete reality. Most of the meaning of their "experiments" lies in the iconoclastic challenge to the socially defined, accepted everyday environment, and will be dealt with in chapter 4, in my discussion of the idea of ephemerality and its Zen implications.

CUT PIECE

I will come back to the issue of individuality when I discuss the idea of commonality. What I wish to emphasize here is the diffuse presence of the body as the element that can most concretely offer an experience, rather than a *self* showing its own expression, within the frame of Debordian spectacle. I can think of no better example of an experimental critique of the spectacle, its malignant appearance, than Ono Yōko's famous *Cut Piece*.

The first version of *Cut Piece* reads

CUT PIECE
Throw it off a high building
1962 summer (Ono 1970, n.p.)

and recalls Shiomi's *Falling Event* (1963, "I. Let something fall from a high place. II. Let yourself fall from a high place using an elevator, parachute, rope, or anything else, or using nothing"). It was conceived by Ono on her return to Japan in March 1962, after 10 years in New York. Ono was surely a "nomadic soul," as defined by Deleuze and Guattari. (1987, 472 ff). Her father was working in California when she was born and she met him for the first time when she was two. She spent the war years in Tokyo but subsequently moved back and forth between Japan and the United States. A new version of *Cut Piece* was conceived for the Kyoto premiere, on July 20, 1964, at the Yamaichi Concert Hall:

CUT PIECE
Cut.

This piece was performed in Kyoto, Tokyo, New York, and London. It is usually performed by Ono Yōko coming on the stage and in a sitting position, placing a pair of scissors in front of her and asking the audience to come up

on the stage, one by one, and cut a portion of her clothing (anywhere they like) and take it. "The performer, however, does not have to be a woman" (Ono 1970, n. p.).

Kevin Concannon has traced the inspiration for this piece to a painting in a shrine at the Hōryū Temple in Nara, the oldest existing wooden temple in Japan. It is a picture of Prince Mahasattva (the future Buddha) who, on his spiritual journey to liberation from earthly pleasures, offers his flesh to hungry animals (Concannon 1998, 39). The offering by Ono of her clothes as a body on the stage created a powerful piece that made possible concentration on the relationship between individuals when some of them are given power over others, all the more so when the latter is a woman; in fact when the piece was enacted, some participants acted aggressively. Yoshimoto maintained that "through intense exchanges between the performers and participants, *Cut Piece* eloquently addressed the issue of the self versus others—namely, private versus public—and violence versus giving" (Yoshimoto 2005, 101). The piece also testifies to Ono's interest in the passions and inadequacies of members of the audience, who were asked to be active while the performer remained passive and equated herself to the viewer. This equation is a central point of Fluxus non-professionalism. In reversing the roles of artist and viewer, the piece challenged the hierarchical relationship between creator and public and called into question the performance as a spectacle that requires consumption.

In Lushetich's discussion of the "shift of consciousness" derived from the "*change* from the dualistic conception of the world" in Fluxus practice, she refers to Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. She wrote:

> As human beings living in a highly ideologically saturated universe which dictates the continuous consumption of commodities, locations, experiences and relations, we are socio-culturally formatted to perceive ourselves as separate from the world, separate from others and separate from the object of our attention, perception, consumption. . . . Non-positional consciousness, on the other hand, is that of a non-formatted, or, indeed, enlightened, samadhic awareness." (Lushetich 2014, 7)

Circulating references to Zen are relevant, although Lushetich did not conclude that the position of the Japanese artists, for whom Zen is an internalized cultural attitude just as Christianity is for Westerners, should therefore be seen as particular.

Along with the idea of *gift*, another interesting point in Ono's *Cut Piece*, also found in other works by Ono and other artists, is managing time. This is related to the general shift to *event* that was operated by the Fluxus artists: the staging of something consisting *in the very time of its being*. Debord defines

the idea of Spectacular Time in this way: "The time of production—commodified time—is an infinite accumulation of equivalent intervals. It is irreversible time made abstract" (Debord 2014, 147). Debord had previously considered "irreversible time" in the following way: "the class that organizes this social labor and appropriates its limited surplus value, simultaneously appropriates the temporal surplus value resulting from its organization of social time: it alone possesses the *irreversible time* of the living" (Debord 2014, 128; emphasis mine). I see all the efforts by these artists—and specifically by Ono in calling her performance an "event" or "piece"—as proceeding toward retransforming the work into something, that is, a performance, that exceeds the idea of representation with the deceit this entails, by proposing a *piece of real time*, in a sense reappropriating their "*time* of the living" against appropriation by the capitalist class. Moreover, by referring to the music frame, the artists added the issue of constructing a time which would be *shared* with the audience, thus establishing *real* time as the content of their work. This, then is the fundamental meaning of acting musically: establishing a *relationship* between performers and audience present in the same place at the same time, something which music—but not other arts—requires for the aesthetic experience to happen. I will come back to this in chapter 6, Musicality.

EXPERIMENTALISM AS CONSCIOUSNESS

Another remarkable example of experimentalism and iconoclasm is to be found in the work of the Neo-Dada Group, formed in 1960 by a dozen artists who had participated in the 12th Yomiuri Independent Exhibition, around Yoshimura Masanobu. Soon afterward, when Shinohara Ushio joined in March, they changed their name to Neo-Dada Organizers for the political connotations this had, and finally shortened this to Neo-Dada (Marotti 2013, 173). It was substantially Neo-Dada artists who accelerated the transition from *sakuhin* (work) to a practice of anarchist performances and events: "the concern was to reach into an everyday context through a critical art that *acts (kōi, kōdo)*" (Ibid., emphasis mine). For example, Shinohara made and exhibited 300 jelly-bean shaped balloons, and Yoshimura marched in the center of Tokyo wrapped in exhibition posters. A striking work, on which much has been written, is one by Nakanishi Natsuyuki, in which the artist used a humble everyday object and gave it an impressive power of disturbance. Its title, *Sentaku basami wa kakuhan kōi wo shuchō suru*, is generally translated as "Clothespins Assert a Churning Action," but I would prefer "Agitating Action," which better captures the political connotation conferred on the work by the original Japanese term *kakuhan*, which denotes both social agitation and that of a washing machine (see figure 2.1). Exhibited at the last

Independent Exhibition in March 1963, the work consisted of "masses of clothespins, like strange swarms of aggressive metal insects, [which] coalesce into half-formed images across six canvases, including something resembling a mushroom cloud. The feeling of attack and transformation was strengthened by large rents in several of the canvases, looking as if they had been torn by live clothespins" (Marotti 2013, 170). The work was then performed on the streets of Tokyo on May 28 as the 6th Mixer Plan by Hi Red Center, with Nakanishi's head covered with clothespins. The faces of the viewers, as seen in photos, show more amusement than anxiety, as though it did not occur to them it was extremely painful for the artist to move about wearing the installation.

The big change these artists sought through their experimentation was played out entirely within themselves, in exposing their experiential training to a different take on human beings' *inner* reality. It is therefore not surprising that the use of the body often comprised some aspect of sacrifice. This was characteristic mainly of the Japanese artists' works, for example *Cut Piece* and *Clothespins Assert*. . . . To these, other works by Ono can be added, such as *Blood Piece* ("Use your blood to paint. / Keep painting until you faint. (a)

Figure 2.1 Hirata Minoru, "Nakanishi Natsuyuki's *Clothespins Assert Churning Action*, for Hi Red Center's '6th Mixer Plan' Event, Tokyo", 1963 © Minoru Hirata.
Source: Courtesy of Taka Ishii Gallery Photography/Film.

/ Keep painting until you die. (b) spring 1960") or—it may seem with a hint of humor—*Wall Piece for Orchestra to Yoko Ono* ("Hit a wall with your head. winter 1962"). What is apparently a ghastly work containing the idea of sacrifice is the famous *Music for a Revolution* by Kosugi (1964): "Scoop out one of your eyes 5 years from now and / do the same with the other eye 5 years later." Yet in this work there is an underlying concept, which is common in Buddhism, that getting rid of the imperfection of the senses enables us to develop a higher consciousness, linked to the idea that only by silencing the temptations of the flesh is it possible to free ourselves from suffering. It is in this attainment of a higher consciousness that real revolution consists. The quiet revolution to which mostly the Japanese Fluxus artists seem to have aspired occurs in the inner person, in her/his disposition to the world.

It is interesting that some of Maciunas's works, like his *Fluxus Smile Machine*, share this sacrificial, somewhat grotesque aspect. He had a deep knowledge of Japanese culture, as Yoshimoto reported:

> Maciunas's enthusiasm and admiration for Japanese culture and art were as significant as the change in Japanese foreign policy in strengthening the nascent connection between Japanese and American artists. Not only did Maciunas possess Japanese swords and other artifacts and furnish his apartment with tatami mats, but he led an ascetic lifestyle. . . . A committed anti-capitalist and utopian, Maciunas felt a strong connection to the Japanese—and particularly to their group ethics, which were so far removed from Western individualism." (Yoshimoto 2013, quoting Williams and Noël 1997, 133)

"Group ethics," the trait that Yoshimoto identified as specifically Japanese, is connected to what I have spoken of as commitment to "personal sacrifice," intrinsic in Japanese art making, that is, art conceived of as *michi*, meaning "way," that can be found in compounds such as *dō* (*jūdō*, *aikidō*, *sadō*—the way of tea, etc.). The traditional Japanese arts always comprise the concept of *dō*, written with the Chinese character "dao," an important character with many layers of meaning, one being the eternal principle of Daoist thinking (Pinnington 2006). Briefly, this concept is a fundamental aspect of the artist's activity, which is seen to require a strong sense of commitment, where the sincerity of the commitment and adhering to the principles and practice of art/*dō* is more important than the result, or rather, it *produces* the result, which also consists in a growth of consciousness on the part of the artist. As Ono put it, "If my music seems to require physical silence, that is because it requires concentration to yourself—and this requires inner silence which may lead to outer silence as well. I think of my music, more as practice (*gyō*) than music."[8] The Japanese word *gyō* is connected to the Buddhist practice of chanting sutras. In fact, "The sage-philosopher of the Oriental tradition [and

I would add, the intellectual and the artist too] is one who wrestles with the conflicting emotions and attitudes that afflict all humans and after a period of struggle attains a kind of inner harmony and serenity that balances opposing forces" (Clarke 1991, xv). This is the meaning of the concentration and meditation that enable the artist to produce a perfect brush stroke or write a perfect line of poetry, which need no revision (and cannot be revised) since they are the expression of the superior consciousness attained by the artist. The experimentalism of the conception is redirected towards the artist her/himself so that a deeper consciousness is reached, from which creativity flows.

The way *dō/michi* of the arts, of any art, must then come to non-art (Tollini 2014, 50). The mastership in any art, obtained with strenuous practice, must reach at non-art, which represents the overcoming of and detachment from the art itself. The process is similar to that described in the *Ten Ox-Herding Pictures*, by the Chinese Zen master Kakuan Shien Zenji (12th century) together with poems and commentaries on the famous subject. They trace a universally recognizable path of contemplative spirituality, using the metaphor of a young ox-herder looking for his lost ox. In the ten paintings we are shown that the ox is found and reached, it is subdued, and at the end one forgets to have an ox. Art must forget itself as art in order to be non-art, at a level of awareness and depth of life often advocated by Maciunas, evoked especially by Japanese artists and quietly put into practice by most of them.

A gentle example of experimentalism as adherence to a strict procedure can be seen in the version of *Water Music* Shiomi conceived for the Tokyo FluxWeek performance at Crystal Gallery in September 1965. The score reads: "A record is covered with any soluble material, such as clay or water-soluble glue etc. Play the record on a record player and drop a small amount of water over the record. The needle will pick up music from spots dissolved by water. Adjust quantity and location of water to obtain desired pattern of music and non-music" (Kahn 1999, 287). She spread diluted glue on an SP record of Weber's *Aufforderung zum Tanz* (Invitation to the Dance, 1819), so that the needle slipped over the surface and only noise was heard. Using an eye dropper, the artist dripped water onto the record, and where the glue melted the music could be heard; she continued until the whole piece of music came alive, and the performance had the feel and sense of wonder of a mysterious scientific experiment (Conversation, Osaka, November 25, 2011).

This innocently youthful scientific attitude toward experimentation is a trait common to Fluxus work and performances, whose meaning may be that of emphasizing a character of truth and democracy borrowed from the scientific world. Another example of a scientific approach to experimentation is that of a composer included in the concert program of Fluxus Wiesbaden, Matsudaira Yoriaki, a scientist and researcher in biology who in 1961 composed a score for piano entitled *Instruction*. When the work was premiered

by Takahashi Yūji at Yamaha Hall in Tokyo, there was an argument with the management that claimed that the hall's Steinway had been damaged during the performance (Conversation, Tokyo, October 22, 2011). The score consists of a large sheet of music paper on which different elements of the texture are arranged around a square opening; through it, several other parts of the composition can be seen and arranged in a free and improvised way, yet "scientifically" organized, Aa + Ab + Ba + Bb and so on.

In his manifesto for an anarchist utopia, Guy Debord stated: "rebellious youth are raising new protests, protests which are still vague and confused but which clearly imply a rejection of art, of everyday life, and of the old specialized politics . . . a new spontaneous struggle that is at first taking on a *criminal* appearance" (65). This issue was directly incorporated in the name of the group Hanzaisha dōmei (League of Criminals), one of whose members let himself be arrested with a book of prints made with Hi Red Center. It is also illustrated by some of the events organized by Neo-Dada, exhibiting the aggressive aspects of a reaction to what had not happened, for example, democratization through art (as advocated by Takiguchi in the article mentioned above) or the government heeding the demands of the massive protests held in the 1960s. Yoshimura Masanobu's installation at the third Neo-Dada group exhibition, at the Hibiya Gallery in September 1960, re-presented in a different version at the Yomiuri Independent Exhibition in 1962, centered on the body of the artist surrounded by everyday objects made from empty whisky bottles (the bottles, supposedly emptied by the group, were actually received from a store). The titles of the installations, *Sadadashi no ōsetsushitsu* (Mr. Sadada's drawing room) and *Sadadashi no tō* (Mr. Sadada's party) refer to a "Mr. Kill Dada" (Marotti 2013, 164).[9] The critic Nakahara Yūsuke, who wrote a contribution for the catalogue of the 1963 Anpan exhibit and then reviewed the show for *Nihon dokusho shinbun* (Japan readers' newspaper), perceptively understood the action of these "gentle criminals" who were exhibiting everyday objects "chosen in order to eliminate, erase, and conceal reality. What is at stake here is not presence but absence. . . . The quasi-furniture gathered here provides concrete evidence to dispute its own reality. . . . *Here, the fetish of commodity is dying from a fatal wound*" (Munroe 1994, 384; emphasis mine, highlighting in the review part of the article; the rest comes from the catalogue). In my view, what the artists wanted "eliminated, erased, and concealed" was the unfree, commodified reality being implemented against their will, which they wanted to replace with a deeper, more human, and more credible reality. Nakahara realized that one of the key intents of radical art, in my view specifically Japanese Fluxus art, was fatally wounding "the fetish of commodity." The artists knew that commodities could not be eliminated, but insisted that their role be questioned, especially in relation to people's attitudes to social life. What the Fluxus artists perceived as the only possible political action was

a personal inner change of attitude. What Nam June Paik noted is relevant: "When Kosugi came to New York, he said: 'I came to New York to teach New Yorkers how to be shy.' I have not heard a more pertinent cultural critique than this one." (Paik 1994, 81)

EXPERIMENTALISM AS PLAYFULNESS

Among the many important Fluxus events in Japan, the two most glorious ones were the 1965 FluxWeek and the 1966 *Basu kankō hapuningu / Happening for Sightseeing Bus Trip* in Tokyo organized by Ay-O, Akiyama, and Yamaguchi (see discussion in chapter 7, p. 111).

With the meticulous seriousness of a child playing, during the FluxWeek, September 6–14, all the Fluxus artists in Tokyo presented their mental, spatial, temporal, and musical experiments (see figure 2.2).

Alongside the exhibition held at the Cristal Gallery, Akiyama, Ichiyanagi and Yamaguchi organized a series of events. The evening of September 8, which was dedicated to Shiomi's performance pieces, included different versions of *Water Music* and *A Piece for Two Performers*. On the following evening, short films were projected, such as Nam June Paik's *Zen for Film*, *Chair* by Kuri Yōji, one of the most important figures in the history of Japanese independent animation; *Kinecalligraphy* by artists in what its members called Graphic Group, and *Fireworks* by Osuji Kiyoshi.

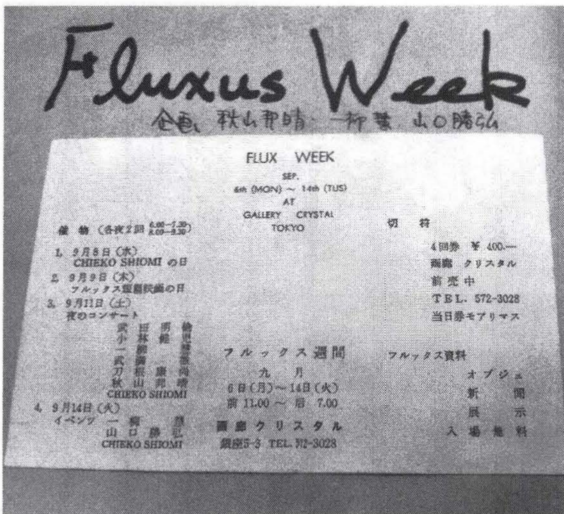


Figure 2.2 FluxWeek Postcard. Photo by Nishiyama Teruō. Courtesy of the artist.

On September 11, all the artists gave a concert of Fluxus works for a small audience (see figure 2.3): the program included LaMonte Young's *400 for Henry Flynt*, Tone Yasunao's *Ready Made*, Jackson MacLow's *Poem*, George Brecht's *String Quartet* and *Drip Music*, and Takeda Akimichi's *Summer Piece*. The piece *Ready Made* by Tone consisted in Tone sticking bandages on his feet and face and spitting out water he had drunk from a cup, while Ichiyanagi watched him through binoculars, Takeda wiped his glasses with a handkerchief while Akiyama, who was wearing a mask, continued to dial numbers on a disk phone. The other pieces were somewhat similar: a careful combination of gestures where the sounds were those of a hammer, sticks, a telephone, a gong, a radio, a tape played on a tape recorder, and a guitar. Two events were staged on September 14: *Rainbow Operation* by Ay-O and *Serenade for Alison* by Nam June Paik. In the first, while Akiyama was brushing himself with something that resembled a string mop and Yamaguchi played with a yo-yo, the people in the audience were asked to shine a flashlight on one color of the clothes worn by the person sitting next to them. Similarly to the events staged regularly at Sōgetsu Hall, these series of apparently meaningless actions were a sort of ritual shared by artists and public, reciprocally exploring their willingness to participate in a sort of liberating experiment in which they playfully exposed themselves to unprecedented feelings and reactions. The events were successful, and the authoritative

Figure 2.3 FluxWeek Performance. *Source*: Photo by Nishiyama Teruō. Courtesy of the Keiō Art Center.

magazine *Gendai Bijutsu* (Contemporary Art) reviewed them in articles by Akatsuka Yukio and Tone ("Making of Fluxus"). As critic Sano Kōji and others reported to me, it was fun; it was like participating in a strange experiment involving patience, attention, amazement, and wonder. Not surprisingly Akiyama entitled his article in the women's magazine *Shinfujin* (The New Woman), "Communication like wind, or the art of gestures. Essay on amorphous music" (Akiyama 1965). The meaning of calling such experiments "music" focused less on the fact that they involved sounds and more on their being on a shared experience, a flow of experimental time which in the arts is generally achieved by music. The idea was that such shared time is more important than any definite construction of sounds imposed on a passive audience. I will come back to this question in chapter 6.

NOTES

1. Guy Debord (2014, 35).
2. Suzuki is referring here to concepts elaborated by Nishida Kitarō (see Suzuki 1997) but also pertaining to the spread and growth of importance of neo-Confucianism. See Tu (2000, 261–266).
3. The fifteen-year-long history of the exhibitions and the social and historical context of this period have been examined by William Marotti (Marotti 2013, 114–199).
4. See Chapter 1 on Group Ongaku, one of the leading experimental music groups of this period.
5. This translation is very similar to mine, while in Hayashi et al. (2012, 129), the translation reads: "Although everything should have been staked on the artist's exclusive engagement with achieving autonomy of the expressive process—and making this an end in itself through a return to the dialectic of material and action—as usual the approach was reduced to a means of complete and direct self-expression, and this could not avoid turning into a gratuitous outburst."
6. "Automatisme psychique pur par lequel on se propose d'exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale." André Breton, *Manifeste du surréalisme*, see Yriarte (2011, 17).
7. See some paintings by Hamada, including the *Elegy* . . . , at https://www.tumblr.com/search/hamada%20chimei (seen on 27/7/2017).
8. From Ono's speech To the Wesleyan People, January 23, 1966. See *Grapefruit* or Ono's homepage http://imaginepeace.com/archives/2526 (22/6/2012).
9. See also 211–13 for other "criminal" actions, like the frequent appearance of references to the guillotine, seen in the title of the book.

Chapter 3

Unity of Art and Life

"the art of historical societies—*belated* portrayals of *someone else's* dialogueless life which accepted this lack as inevitable"[1]

In 1967 Guy Debord wrote: "rebellious youth are raising new protests, protests which are still vague and confused but which clearly imply a rejection of art, of everyday life, and of the old specialized politics" (65). There were many reasons why Japan's generation of child survivors were impatient and rebellious. The Fluxus artists received their primary education during the First World War. When they were in their early years in primary school, education was overtly and aggressively nationalistic. However after 1945, after Japan's defeat, schools changed dramatically. In their adolescence, they experienced a sudden change of values: what had been good and noble became perverse and ludicrous. Dramatic social changes took place, the most noticeable being the ready availability of consumer goods: in the course of a few years Japan went from dearth to profusion. It is understandable that the basic elements of daily life very concretely became the objects of their works, paralleling their dissatisfaction with the form progressively being taken by civil society.

JAPANESE ATTITUDES TO CONSUMERISM

In a consumer society, using the materials and objects of daily life in art produces significance and in Japan's case had to do with Japanese attitudes to consumerism, which was an aspect of the country's complex, often contradictory attitude to the United States.

Many analyses of Japanese consumerism are based on comparisons with the United States, and obviously there are points in common in the two

countries. In addition, postwar Japanese consumerism was heavily influenced by American TV serials such as *Father Knows Best* and *I Love Lucy*, presenting the "American dream," in which every home has a refrigerator, washing machine, and vacuum cleaner, and naturally every family owns a car. While it is true that in the period between the wars the Japanese had produced and marketed consumer goods of their own, the consumption of superfluous and luxury goods were confined to the urban upper class. Instead, from the mid-1950s on, a far larger number of people were able to purchase consumer goods and at the end of the decade, 50 percent of Japanese households owned a television, while electric appliances, a sign of a middle-class status, became the true objects of desire. By the end of the 1960s almost all households owned a television, washing machine and vacuum cleaner (Miura 2014, 10–11). The year 1955 is identified by many Japanese scholars as marking the end of the postwar period: "According to Kurihara Akira, 1955 is also the year that marks the true advent of a 'mass culture' as a particular historical formation associated with advanced industrial societies" (Ivy 1993, 241). The rapid expansion of the media after the mid-1950s (most of the extant large-circulation magazines were first published in these years), and the nearly universal ownership of televisions is another key point: people's everyday roles were "incorporated into a series of strikingly uniform and standardized taste groupings. These groupings were appropriately differentiated in terms of gender and generations" (Ibid.). Such institutional patterning acted more in the direction of a standardization than homogenization, resulting in the well-researched idea of a "90% middle-class society," as their adherence to a mainstream norm led the Japanese to consider themselves, much in line with the government's desire that social inequalities remain hidden.

It is interesting to note that during these years the percentage of imported Western commodities rose while that of indigenous commodities declined in response to increases in income (Horioka 1993, 278). Japanese consumers' tastes changed as a result of greater exposure to foreign commodities and life-styles. Nevertheless, "An international comparison showed that [during the early postwar period] both the level and composition of consumption improved more rapidly in Japan than in the United States and the other developed countries but that despite the rapid improvement Japan still lags considerably behind the most highly developed countries in both respects" (290). According to Horioka, Japan's comparatively low level of consumption can be explained by its very high level of savings: most Japanese people saved some portion of their income, and the deeply rooted Confucian values of frugality and family, strengthened by the spread of neo-Confucianism in the period before the Meiji Restoration (Haga 2001) worked to ensure that consumer purchases were family-oriented and to impose some degree of restraint.

This suggests what is in other respects clear to many scholars, that is, Japanese people's *resistance* to the models being proposed, as "culture in the postwar period has been an argument, not a consensus" (Kelly 1993, 194). Kelly concluded:

> Neither elite coercion nor negotiated consensus most appropriately characterizes the social order of middle and late Shōwa. Its order is better described as co-optive, complicit, and contested. Postwar society is a co-optive order in the sense that predominant ideologies and institutions have been remarkably inclusive, embracing much of the population and regularizing their lifeways. It is a complicit order in that the inclusiveness of these ideologies and institutions has defused much potential conflict and infused widespread commitment. And it is a contested order in that public rhetorics and institutions shape and constrain ordinary lives in ways that are neither direct nor mechanical nor complete. There are no ideologies of sameness masking a reality of differences, with coercion and false consciousness preserving the former while masking the latter." (216)

Feelings about consumption were ridden with contradictions. Nevertheless the *image* of Japanese consumer society, with beautiful, enormous department stores selling an infinite variety of luxury goods and thousands of objects seen as status symbols, was unique in the world at the time, since by the 1920s they were already a "pillar of urban popular culture . . . [and] also the locus of urban entertainment and leisure services" (Young 1999, 56). While I would not say that Japanese department stores in the 1960s anticipated today's malls, since they were by no means the *non-lieu* exposed by Marc Augé in 1992, they were, however, clearly "at the heart of the cluster of leisure practices that constituted modern consumer culture" (Ibid.).

ART AND EVERYDAY LIFE: A STRUGGLE FOR REALITY

In the late 1950s, "art" and "everyday life" became the opposing poles of a bold and impressive production on the Japanese art scene, and consequently of a subtle and refined yet discouraging debate. Going back to the previously mentioned 1964 magazine debate between Miyakawa and Tōno, after the February Anti-Art Forum, Miyakawa coined an expression that was to become a keyword for the understanding of the frame, the "descent into the everyday" *(nihijō-sei he no kakō)*. It was the last phase of postwar radical art; artwork, already freed from the matter/form dialectic, moved away from the places of art, and went out into the streets. (Yoshimoto 2006) This was another aspect of the dematerialization of art: from the combat zone of Anti-Art into the no man's land of Non-Art (*hi-geijutsu*). In the same article, Miyakawa discussed

the statements Ichiyanagi Toshi had made at the February forum; the composer had asserted: "what has value to me is constantly breaking down the vision of painting or vision of music that I have within myself" (Miyakawa 1964, in Chong et al. 2012, 128). Ichiyanagi's entire life's work, a production that went through radical changes in language and expression, confirms this position. The artist's statement led Miyakawa to conclude that "this will lead us to the dead end of 'art' that cannot be reduced to anything else." Shortly afterward he asserted: "the everyday must remain a sign that reveals the absence of any reality . . . one can see the depth of contemporary alienation in the ambiguity of this kind of anti-art, that by itself does not go far enough. Or rather . . . something we might call a fundamental impatience in the absence of any reality that bears communicating" (131). For Tōno, who replied in the following issue of the magazine, Miyakawa's analysis was fundamentally correct, but he saw the question from a positive perspective: "In my mind, the mental exercise as 'eternal possibility' and the 'work' as 'what is inevitably formed' never cross each other. While moving in parallel, they confirm each other by means of their hostility. I regard that scene itself as a huge spiritual adventure" (Tōno 1964, in Chong et al. 2012, 134).

I suggest that, for the Fluxus artists, "the absence of any [credible] reality" had been central to their experience of growing up. In their struggle to locate personal experience and its representation within their mental apprehension of reality they had to cope with a new, unwanted way of life, and found the world they were living in was littered with lies. After the hardships of the war years, the sharp contrast of an influx of luxury goods did not compensate for the disheartenment and disappointment they felt for their dashed hopes and the failure of their protests. "For Tokyo's Neo Dada Organizers [and the other Fluxus artists], art was an extension of life and a discovery of the shocking grit of everyday, found materials spawned by the devastation of postwar Japan and contemporary urban reality. 'One by one,' Akasegawa recalls, 'unobtrusive articles of daily life become redolent with new secrets'" (Munroe 1994, 155). In a sense, the senselessness of reality pleaded its own unreality, or at least the lack of any likelihood of being called reality even when it pretended to mirror everyday life.

Even local, daily "secrets" were handled differently yet parallelly in artists' assessments. A few years before the critics' exchange discussed above, on the occasion of her Japanese debut at Sōgetsu Hall in May 1962, an article by Ono entitled "Kyokōsha no gen" (The word of a fabricator) was published in the Sōgetsu Art Center (*SAC*) *Journal*. In it Ono addressed the idea of "the first man in human history who lied. . . . Did he try to make the world of lies into a real world by deceiving others?" Some years later, as an antiwar advocate, she asserted that a dream of one individual is a dream, while a shared dream is reality, while in the 1962 article she talked about "a body of a

betrayer—*l'étranger* to the natural world . . . about us, the contemporary men, who are soaked to the bones with a fabricator called consciousness." To get rid of this she imagined a "world of fictional rules . . . The conceptual reality, as it were, becomes a concrete 'matter' only when one destroys its conceptuality by asking others to enact it, as, otherwise, it cannot escape from staying 'imaginary.' . . . Thus, the conceptual reality finally becomes a concrete reality by an enactment of an intrusive, and therefore destructive, outside force" (Munroe et al. 2000, 285). This is exactly what she would stage in her *Cut Piece*, bringing "concrete reality" to the audience.

Akasegawa, in an article he wrote in 1966 when he was about to stand trial for allegedly having counterfeited a 1000-yen note (the trial is described in detail in Marotti's 2013 book), reasoned:

> To "lead a life" is to keep and maintain the everyday, to protect the system of one's thoughts. When confronted with something that cannot be explained within that system, one gets confused on behalf of that conservative everyday, and tries to resolve the disorder so as to fit back somewhere within that system, even if it requires some degree of distortion. And so, a new and even more indecipherable, flabby, grotesque, comical thing is tagged on to that system. (Akasegawa 1966, in Chong et al. 2012, 190)

The artist accused the system of everyday life of a grotesque exercise of authority over people (as was in fact confirmed when he was found guilty of counterfeiting). His accusation is a staunch defense by the artist of *his own* system of thought, which has at least the same "reality" as any other way of leading a life. Shortly before, in the same article, Akasegawa framed his idea in the following way: "in everyday life you cannot just peel back and look under the thick flesh and everydayness that covers humans. We must peel back and look under 'the human' to peel back and look under everydayness" (189–190).

In a recent article, KuroDalaiJee, an expert on the alternative Japanese avant-garde scene, maintained: "To transcend a premature end of the 1964 debates on 'Anti-art' which were confined to an 'art world' that overtly referred to foreign trends, we need to expand the concept of 'Anti-art' to reflect the secularity of everyday reality caught in the old-fashioned life style, while also taking the new phenomena into consideration—the spread of urbanization and omnipresence of mass-media" (Kuro 2010, from the English abstract, n.p.).

What is suspicious for Miyakawa—"Anti-Art's descent to the everyday works to reinstate the 'factual' world while in fact emptying out the concept of reality"—was the stimulus that made Fluxus artists move toward the "final annulment of the boundary between art and nonart" (Miyakawa 1964, in

Chong et al. 2012, 132)—none other than their ardently sought "attempted resolution of the art/life dichotomy" inherent in the Fluxus program.

INTERPRETATION

Within a society as deeply regulated as Japan's, in which even routine, daily acts and gestures were "aestheticized," revolution entailed "everyday-izing" art. Against the progressively increasing power of a consumer society and its commodification of life, the Fluxus artists conceived works made of the minimum possible—a note on a sheet of paper, small objects made from recycled materials, everyday objects, or gestures. It was again Ono who stated their aim concisely and effectively: asked to expand on the idea of "total communication" introduced at the press conference for her show at the Everson Museum of Art in 1971, she reversed McLuhan's famous aphorism, asserting that "the message is the medium. . . . we all have a message. . . . if you wish to communicate it and you find a method, this method is art" (Imura 2001, 164). In Ono's view, McLuhan's "The medium is the message" might work for artists and intellectuals, but if we want to make it possible for everyone to communicate a message of their own, we need to reverse his dictum. The sense of everyday-izing art lies in this utopia of egalitarianism, of abolishing every hierarchy and power/authority relationship between the artist and the public so that both can experience the same enhanced sense of aesthetic puzzlement regarding the everyday aspects of contemporary life and the need to communicate.

In a 2002 article on Fluxus, Arthur Danto stated: "Closing the gap between art and life was a project shared by a number of movements. . . . None of these movements reached further or went deeper in this effort than Fluxus. . . . The revelation of Fluxus was that everything is marvelous" (Danto 2002, 25). I would prefer to say that, for the Japanese, it was in their complex movement between different, not always marvelous strata of reality, that Fluxus artists found grains of marvel, wonderful enough to be shared with friends and others as pieces of art.

In his definitive 1986 work Danto questioned what it is that makes a trivial object like a urinal into a piece of art, that is, Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917), and his answer was "interpretation," based on the spread acceptance by the artist and the viewer that something is being considered a piece of art. What is different? What is it that makes an ordinary object, gesture, thought into a piece of art? For Danto it is "interpretation," while in Fluxus works, interpretation is already in the artistic intervention of interpreting an object or a gesture "marvelously"—like Ono's *Painting to be stepped on* (1960–1961) or the smashed violin in Paik's *One for Violin Solo* (1962). In a 1998 article

entitled "The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense," he strove to define art as grounded in the past, going back to Hegel, but in focusing on Duchamp, he concluded: "The 'end of art' . . . is a theory of consciousness" (Danto 1987, 137—Maciunas would have agreed).[2] Within this framework, the viewer is as much a creator as the artist is, and it was this that was Duchamp's starting point in creating his revolutionary work: both his paintings and his ready-mades require viewers to draw their own meaning from the work's elements. Duchamp maintained that art always involves two poles, artist and viewer: "The spectator completes, if it were, the creative process not as a passive consumer but as an active interpreter" (Judowitz 1998, 1). This may be seen as a gentle yet pointed criticism of the forced passiveness of the individual versus production in a consumer society: "The passive acceptance it [the spectacle] demands is already effectively imposed by its monopoly of appearances, its manner of appearing without allowing any reply" (Debord 2014, 12). Fluxus artists responded with an unexpected, ubiquitous placing of meaning.

One issue regarding the importance of the relationship between producer/viewer is found in Chinese art, especially Chinese music—and, consequently, in the art and music of Japan, where the relationship between artist and audience is much closer to one of personal sharing, than to the self-sufficiency of the artwork in Western thought (Galliano 2005, 34). As Ichiyanagi Toshi told me, he could not ignore the listener as he saw Cage do (Conversation, Tokyo, October 15, 1989). Regarding Duchamp, his strong presence for example in the work of Kubota Shigeko is noteworthy (Yoshimoto 2004, 183–185); Duchamp's influence is also felt in Saito Takako's extensive production of chessboards and chess pieces, which may have been inspired by Maciunas's suggestions but surely also involved an inclination in the artist to think of her work as a playful exchange between two interlocutors—an extreme example being the *White Chess Set* (1966) by Ono, in which all the pieces are white. The idea of a playful exchange is the starting point of much Fluxus work, and is definitely inherent in their way of understanding life and also life *together*, as was often the case, in keeping with the trends of the times. In fact there were *Fluxweddings* and *Fluxdivorces*, *Fluxdinners*, and *Fluxmoves*.

The story goes that when the two young Japanese artists, Shiomi and Kubota arrived in New York in August 1962—Akiyama was instrumental in the coming of Shiomi and Kubota to New York, assuring the two young artists that Fluxus people were kind and "safe"—Maciunas let them stay in his studio, and they were the cooks at the first Fluxdinners. The two had other ideas about how they wished to spend their time in New York and told Maciunas they wanted to find a place of their own. He was friendly and supportive, and arranged everything: he found them an apartment near his studio/home, collected furniture, and organized a *Moving Event* with other artists (Shiomi 2005, 81). At some point, Ay-O and the couple Paik and Kubota, who had

married in 1965, were living in the same building and everyone was sharing dinners and ideas and spending a great deal of time together (Kubota 2009). Sharing life and sharing an aesthetic experience was seen as being much the same thing. It is likely that what the work of Fluxus artists, in their equating art and life, challenges the spectator (and before that, the artist) to interpret is *life*.

I have no intention of being drawn into the controversy on the relationship between art and life, but I see a piece like *Haisen kinen bansankai* (War Defeat Anniversary Dinner Party), held on the August 15, 1962, as epitomizing what was going on in Fluxus artists' lives related to their art (and vice-versa). Yoshida Yoshio had invited artists to his gallery for an event he called *Geijutsu mainusu geijutsu—Haisen wo kinenshite* (Art minus art—Commemorating the Defeat), but Akasegawa rented the rather shabby Kunitachi Public Hall, and the event was held there. Nine artists were present: Akasegawa and Yoshida, plus Kazekura Shō, Yoshino Tatsumi and Yoshimura Masanobu (of Neo Dada), Kosugi Takehisa and Tone Yasunao (of Group Ongaku), Hijikata Tatsumi and Hirokawa Harufumi; they arranged all the chairs in the hall around a table in the center, and prepared food (roast chicken, spaghetti, bananas, etc.). Other members of Neo Dada and of group Unbeat were in the audience (see Munroe 1994 Glossary, 393 ff.), as was the critic Nakahara Yūsuke. Tickets had been sold at a rather hefty price and those who had bought them were convinced that they would enjoy a lavish banquet, only to find that they were only "entitled" to observe the artists eating dinner instead. Some of the participating artists quietly ate their meal so they would not attract the attention of the management; then Yoshimura brushed his teeth until his mouth was red with blood; Kazakura donned a mask and staged five or six falls from a chair; Hijikata danced naked with the sound of water coming from a hydrant in the background; Tone sat at a piano playing notes generated by the random operation of overlaying a transparent score on a map; and Kosugi wound a string around himself and performed his *Anima I* (Kuro 2010, 176–177). As Paik recalled, he was surprised that they "managed not to get arrested. . . . Generally, the Japanese make a big press event on Hiroshima/Nagasaki day, when their victimhood is clear. But on Pearl Harbor Day or VJ Day (Koreans call it Liberation Day) they are rather quiet. If they mention it, they call it 'War Ending Day.' Hi Red Center challenged this 'hypocrisy'" (Paik 1994, 80; he spoke of a "restaurant" and mentioned only three of the Hi Red Center artists, but he had not been present at the event in Tokyo and had heard about it from others). The idea of holding a banquet to commemorate Japan's defeat in the Second World War, and perhaps also call attention to the fact that to some extent Japan owed its improved standard of living to its support for the United States in the Vietnam War was perhaps not grasped by everybody in the audience, but by recalling the defeat and the war as something that could fill the bellies of some while others watched but

went hungry, definitely challenged people's widespread hypocritical sense of (civil) life. Each artist's individual performance highlighted a specific aspect of the general sense of displacement caused by the war, defeat and the return to "normality" and the artistic expression at this event was a very special occurrence in the world of performance art.

COMMONALITY

Many Fluxus works are meant to be acted, staged, performed, read or put on by a group. While Ben Vautier recently wrote: "Although some supposed Fluxus after Cage and Duchamp contained less ego I still believe Fluxus contains as much ego as any other art movement," (Vautier 2012). Fluxus artists consistently shared ideas, sometimes literally (working on the same piece in the same place), and there is a sharing of gestures and materials—water, ropes, dripping, hanging, and so on—that cannot be overlooked. The postwar avant-garde's practice of working collectively is discussed by Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette (2007), with Reiko Tomii exploring what occurred in Japan, where artists had been organized in groups since the influence of westernized art and music had made itself felt after the Restoration (Galliano 2002, 182). The artists involved in Fluxus recognized each other as similar and developed a special idea of collective work: even when artists concentrated on a work of their own, collaboration existed, consisting in several artists working on the same idea(s). A striking example is *Composition #10 1960* by LaMonte Young: "Draw a straight line and follow it," which was powerfully interpreted by Nam June Paik in *Zen for Head*. The two had met at the 1959 Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt, where they also met Akiyama, instrumental in many subsequent Fluxus events, who urged them to go to New York to follow Cage's work.[3] Paik's rendering of the piece consisted in dipping his head in paint and drawing a line on paper—in this way respecting the score's directions with the radical action of following the line with his whole body, an action which also referenced Oriental calligraphy (figure 3.1).

Zen for Head was first presented in Cologne on October 26, 1961, when Stockhausen invited Paik, who was his student at the time, to make a brief appearance in the performance of his piece *Originale*. It was next performed in 1962 at the Fluxus Festspiele neuester Musik in Wiesbaden. The New York avant-garde art scene in the early 1960s was dominated by abstract expressionism and critic David Doris commented that *Zen for Head* "provides a welcome, unexpected relief from the high seriousness of abstract expressionism" (Doris 1998, 39), pointing out that Fluxus was gently poking fun at the movement's seriousness.

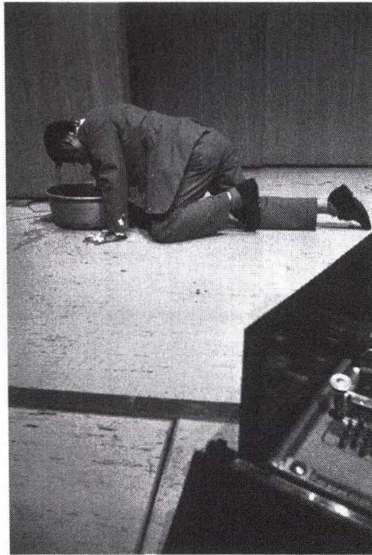


Figure 3.1 Hirata Minoru, "Nam June Paik's *Cleansing Event* at Sōgetsu Art Center", 1964 © Minoru Hirata. Courtesy of Taka Ishii Gallery Photography/Film.

Maciunas was a fervent advocate of collective work and Jon Hendricks discussed the role collectives played in Fluxus in his "bible," *Fluxus Codex* (Hendricks1988).[4] A little over one-sixth of Hendricks's book is devoted to collective and anonymous works, which in itself is significant, and he is right in asserting that "This artistic collectivism—centralization of production and control of product, [that is, collaborations with Maciunas]—was a unique aspect of Fluxus, and is central to an understanding of the work" (38). It is evident in the pervasive graphic rendering by the expert, rigorous, and creative hand of Maciunas, which somehow linked and unified works by different artists. Shiomi and Kubota clearly benefited from Maciunas's graphic artistry. In his letter of January 1964 to Tomas Schmidt (cited on p. xv). Maciunas wrote:

> Fluxus objectives are social (not aesthetic). They are connected to the group of LEF group of 1929 [sic] in Soviet Union (ideologically) and concern itself with: Gradual elimination of fine arts (music, theatre, poetry, fiction, painting, sculpt—etc. etc.) This is motivated by the desire to stop the waste of material and human resources. . . . Thus Fluxus is definitely against art-object as non-functional commodity—to be sold & to make livelihood for an artist. It could temporarily have the pedagogical function of teaching people the needlessness of art. (Maciunas 1964 in Hendricks 2002, 163)

The many quarrels known to have occurred between Maciunas and the artists around him were almost always about alleged bouts of egotism by

(Western) artists, who Maciunas felt had not adequately let it be known that they were part of Fluxus, and had thus failed to promote the movement. Such omissions may have been caused by egotism, as Vautier claimed, but it is also possible they occurred because many Fluxus artists did not really feel they belonged to anything; a country, creed, political party or group, movement or the like. Moreover, they may not really have been interested in gradually eliminating art, while they most definitely were interested in *sharing* the making of art with fellow artists and viewers—who were often the same people. Numerous Fluxus works require an audience's active participation, if only imaginatively, in response to a seemingly absurd, senseless challenge. This sort of breaking down of the distinction between an active artist and a passive audience is a feature of Ono's consciousness oriented work, which presupposes commonality. In a December 1965 entry in one of her Notebooks, Carolee Schneemann recorded a fellow Fluxus artist's feelings about Ono: "'The trouble with Yoko Ono's pieces is that she wants to make you feel what she felt, to feel like her, and I don't think I want to do that,' said Higgins tonight" (Sandford 1995, 250).

Maciunas had plans to buy a house in Japan, where he and his artist friends could live but instead purchased properties in the United States. In Kubota's account of what occurred,

> He would later buy a farm, saying, 'I will make a Fluxus Farm.' He bought that horrible run-down house in Connecticut. . . . The house was surrounded by a vast farm. I was born in Niigata, and so I was good at farming. I went there to plant beans and flowers, and I enjoyed it. That's what George bought to 'create a Fluxus Farm.' . . . Barbara Moore, who has a lot of Fluxus material, and Peter Moore also came. We ate together. At that time, George was married to a woman named Billie [Hutching]. And so she was there, too. We cooked all together. And the meals we cooked were masterpieces. George cooked something totally inedible. [*Laughs*]" (Kubota 2009)

His last place was a farmhouse in New Marlborough, Massachusetts, purchased in 1977, where he made a further attempt at creating a Fluxus art center.

Kubota has also described Maciunas's pioneering efforts to create what would now be called co-ops, offering artists lofts they could use as living and working spaces in downtown Manhattan's SoHo district (Bernstein and Shapiro 2010). With financial support from the J.M. Kaplan Foundation and the National Foundation for the Arts, Maciunas began in 1966 by buying several loft buildings from closing manufacturing companies and in 1967 he bought 80 Wooster Street, creating the first artists' co-op, and one of Manhattan's most buzzing avant-garde hotspots. The 80 Wooster Street was home to Trisha Brown, Jonas Mekas and Robert Watts, and dozens of other artists. It was not all clear sailing: a number of problems with city regulations

emerged (Ibid.). But as Kubota recalled, "We lived in a community. Fluxus is sharing. . . . All artists have ego, but how you share ego together with one goal—that's Fluxus."[5]

This idea of commonality, seeing the act of living and working together as itself a piece of art, was at the heart of the convergence and consistency that existed between these young artists; it is probably one of the things the Japanese artists found New York made possible that would not have been an option in Japan, at least not for the women artists. Hendricks has noted that for Fluxus, collectivism was a basic survival issue: "Fluxus was an essential art movement—where 'essential' means in opposition to mainstream art—intentionally alienated from a society it disagreed with. The idea of collectivism . . . [was] central to Fluxus objectives and philosophy" (Hendricks 1988, 37). Shiomi has said that it was easier to carry on with personal radical projects knowing that she had the support of other artists.

SHARED ELEMENTS

The desperate need for a new, freer interpretation of everyday experience, searching for meaning in a mass-consumption society, was clearly one element which caused Japanese Fluxus artists to present art and life as an entity in their works. The extensive use of the basic elements of life can also be explained by the fact that these are things that have meaning in themselves. Air, water, food, essential furniture and the like very concretely became the objects of their works—paralleling their dissatisfaction with the ways society was changing.

Food is very present in the Fluxus world. At one time or another, most Fluxus artists explored eating rituals and used food to call into question the Western hierarchy of the senses and present art as a total experience, freed from fixed definitions: life and food are nearly indistinguishable. In addition, food possesses its own, real-world, time. This is a substantially different approach to food than that of the Futurists, who sought to create original works on the plate. Hannah Higgins dealt with the issue in her article "Food: The Raw and the Fluxed," (Baas 2011, 13–21), accurately identifying the cyclical, temporal meaning of food. Since food was rarely used by the Japanese Fluxus artists in their work, I refer readers to Higgins's discussion of the topic. The elements most often present in Japanese works are air, water and sky, imbued with a sense of the close communality between life and art. Water was discussed in connection with Shiomi's work and will be addressed again in my discussion of the idea of ephemerality (chapter 4). Air as breath, wind, breeze is present in many of Ono's works. In *Air Talk* it is an image of sharing, an aspect of the everyday, engendering a strong sense of commonality (figure 3.2):

AIR TALK

It's sad that the air is the only
thing we share.
No matter how close we get to each other,
there is always air between us.

It's also nice that we share the air.
No matter how far apart we are,
the air links us.

from Lisson Gallery brochure '67

Figure 3.2 Air Talk. "Grapefruit" © Yoko Ono, 1964, 1970, 1971, Simon and Schuster, first Touchstone edition. Used by Permission/All Rights Reserved.

The same may be said for another of her texts, which was part of the "13 DAYS DO-IT-YOURSELF DANCE FESTIVAL (as it was done)" (figure 3.3).

shake

go shake hands with as many
persons as possible. write
down their names. try in the
elevator, tube, escalator,
street, toilet, on top of a
mountain, in the dark, daydream,
on the clouds, etc. make it a
nice handshake by holding a
flower in your hand, perfume or
wash your hand, etc.

9th day
afternoon

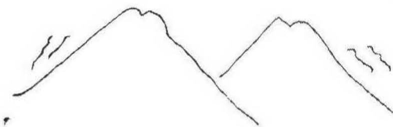


Figure 3.3 Shake (this is an excerpt from the piece). "Grapefruit" © Yoko Ono, 1964, 1970, 1971, Simon and Schuster, first Touchstone edition. Used by Permission/All Rights Reserved.

As for the sky, there are countless pieces by Ono on this subject. The one which follows connects it with food (figure 3.4):

TUNAFISH SANDWICH PIECE

Imagine one thousand suns in the
sky at the same time.
Let them shine for one hour.
Then, let them gradually melt
into the sky.
Make one tunafish sandwich and eat.

1964 spring

Figure 3.4 Tunafish Sandwich Piece. "Grapefruit" © Yoko Ono 1964, 1970, 1971, Simon and Schuster, first Touchstone edition. Used by Permission/All Rights Reserved.

The Fluxus artists genuinely, manifestly *acted out* the unity between art and life. All the actions of these artists seem to proceed in emphasizing the intimate, subtle, and powerful poetic/artistic intensity that belongs to everyday life. As Dick Higgins wrote, "Fluxus is not a moment in history or any art movement. Fluxus is a way of doing things . . . , a way of life and death" (Higgins 1998, 240).

Working so close to the minimalism of the everyday, "made the Fluxus artists intensely conscious of the possibility that what they did would not be art at all . . . [and] that most art work was unsatisfying anyway, that life was far more interesting" (225). In choosing life and distancing themselves from the art world and academic world, in the non-reproducibility of their pieces of work as and in life, Fluxus artists reject and condemn the concentration on the individual personality as a place of consumerist desire exploited by the increasingly invasive advertising of goods they were witnessing.

Together their works brought about the seminal shift from the content of the message, which was also a *form*, to the *body* of the message, to its very concretely being a piece of everyday life—a box, an instruction, a sound—that is, whatever conveyed the *experience* of message/communication, including *addressing* a message and *receiving* a message in the true *aesthetic* sense, which is *perceptual*, that is, it is a sensory experience.

But Fluxus artists deprive the physicality of their work of any further meaning, while maintaining that it is, however, *something*. In their choice

of (common) life-as-(not)-art, Fluxus seems to be connected more to Dada than to Surrealism, as the main point of difference is the reality of perception (always absurd in Dada) versus the conceptual sense (always concrete in Surrealism). In the rejection of art as a tool for expressing something related to beauty or meaning, and separate from life, Fluxus is the direct descendent of Dada, since it represented the opposite of everything that art had previously stood for, and consisted in a re-arrangement of elements and their use. According to Hans Richter, Dada was not art; it was "anti-art" (Richter 1965). As Hugo Ball explained, "For us, art is not an end in itself . . . but it is an opportunity for the true perception and criticism of the times we live in."[6] Something Tzara wrote provides a clue to what is meant: "Dada n'est pas du tout moderne, c'est plutôt le retour à une religion d'indifférence quasi-bouddhique. Dada met une douceur artificielle sur le choses, une neige de papillons sortis du crâne d'un prestidigitateur" (Linhartova 1987, 41). However, while Dada sought to offend, Fluxus, mainly Japanese Fluxus, hoped to amaze and, in doing so, lead to a surge of consciousness. It is easy to see the distance between the grace and delicacy of Fluxus works and performances, where if there is an excess the artist turns it on him/herself, in comparison to other more aggressive practices of some similar post-Dada avant-gardes of the era, such as the Vienna Aktionists (Klocker 2014).

Fluxus artists very quietly, yet very radically, put into practice one of the most widespread and innovative aspects of the 1960s, that of living together outside the family framework, sharing ideas, views, and plans. I would like to stress how the Japanese understanding of *sharing* is based on a very different perception of reality and experience. I will loosely refer to the 20th-century Japanese thinkers of the Kyoto School, who developed original philosophies by creatively drawing on the intellectual and spiritual traditions of Buddhism, as well as on Western philosophy. One of its central philosophical concepts is "absolute nothingness," based on the original Buddhist concept of *śūnyatā*, which should be understood as a dynamic negation of the opposition between being and (relative) nothingness. In 1934 Nishida Kitarō wrote: "Reality is being and at the same time nothingness; it is being-and-nothingness [*u-soku-mu*], nothingness-and-being; it is both subjective and objective, noetic and noematic. Reality is the unity of subjectivity and objectivity, and thus the self-identity of what is absolutely contradictory" (Nishida 1970, 29)—a concept previously addressed in chapter 1.

Genuine encounter with another person no longer takes place simply within my, or your, or even our world horizon. Ueda Shizuteru, a student of Nishida's, illustrated how mutual self-negation—the emptying of all ego-centered presumptions and agendas—returns us to a communal place where we, paradoxically, share "nothing" in common. "There, by way of making

oneself into nothingness, one returns into the infinite depths of that 'between' where there is neither an I nor a you" (Ueda 1991, 67).

The self finds its most originary freedom, and its most open engagement with others, through radical self-negation which returns not to an encompassing Being, but to an essentially self-negating absolute nothingness that, in turn, finds expression only in the interaction of truly self-determining individuals. For Nishida, the true individual is an interpersonal self-determining focal point of the self-determination of absolute nothingness, in other words, an interactive and creative element of a creative world. (Nishida 1987, 70)

The I and the Other share the same belonging to a boundless, infinite medium which Nishida saw as "absolute nothingness," in which each finite individual is simply a particular determination (Clark 1991, xix). We must therefore understand the Japanese artists' propensity for sharing and commonality in these terms, more in line with empathy than compassion or sympathy. The cultural background of the Japanese allowed for this idea of commonality, and made it possible to see the sharing of life as art; this resonated deeply in the already attuned ear of Maciunas and fellow artists. The subtle difference between the Japanese attitude and ideas coming to the fore as part of the vast social revolution of the 1960s was an important influence on U.S. artists who had in some way been influenced by the neo-Buddhist ideas of the period.

NOTES

1. Debord (2014, 187).
2. This is the logical conclusion to Danto's argument that Hegel "was obliged to think that art had come to an end when it becomes suffused with critical thought about itself" (Danto 1987, 136).
3. Akiyama Kuniharu had corresponded with Maciunas from Japan after Ichiyanagi had provided an introduction. He traveled to New York in late 1963, and soon after his arrival, Maciunas showed him how to limit his food budget to five dollars a week, down from the eight dollars per day that he had been spending. Just as Akiyama was getting ready to leave for Europe around April 1964, Maciunas asked him to conduct the first Flux concert at Carnegie Recital Hall. Having had no prior conducting experience, Akiyama initially declined, but he gradually gave in to Maciunas's repeated pleas and stayed in New York for an extra two months. He went a couple of times at Ozawa Seiji, rehearsing in front of a mirror.
4. It is a voluminous book with pictures and texts, which Hendricks decided to compose at the beginning of the 1990s. His aim was to re-examine the works in the Silverman Collection, evaluate them and decide which were authentic Fluxus works (Conversation, New York, May 23, 2015).

5. Interview 2010, by filmmaker Jeffrey Perkins, who has been gathering research material and shooting interviews for *George*, a documentary film he is producing on the life and achievements of George Maciunas.

6. Quoted from http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2006/dada/cities/index.shtm – the Dada page of the National Gallery Washington (21/4/2014).

Chapter 4

Ephemerality

> "The time based on commodity production is itself a consumable commodity . . . concentrated capitalism is increasingly tending to market 'fully equipped' blocks of time, each functioning as a unified commodity."[1]

While it is impossible to fully explore the Japanese sense of time, we must at least take note of the kaleidoscope of mirror reflections between the widespread appeal Buddhism had in the United States after the Second World War (neo-Buddhism) and the implicit "Buddhist" consciousness, if any, of the Japanese. Ichiyanagi remembers:

> When I lived in New York [1958–1961], there was one thing that struck me as very interesting. All my acquaitances and friends were doing research on Zen and Indian philosophy; they approached the Chinese and Japanese traditions and sought solutions to their problems within Eastern spirituality. In a dimension which was separate from the general society, it was not something professional, it was more that what was embryo of modern Orientalness represented the background of New York culture. (Ichiyanagi 1963, n.p.)

Time is a central theme in studies of contemporary Japanese culture in all its complexity, as was noted by Dipesh Chakrabarty: "the experience in the flow of time stands out as one of the central motifs of . . . [Japanese] modernity" given the "heterogeneity or plurality in the experience of time by the subject of modernity . . . [and the] cultural differences and the politics of the tradition/modernity binary." Chakrabarty goes on to suggest that this might be thought of as a "collage of times experienced as a problem of identity, and made part of an attempt to center and ground the modern Japanese subjectivity" (Chakrabarty 1998, 288–289).

UNDERLYING NOTIONS OF TIME

The perception of time has to do with the deep structure of the representation of time experienced by a culture: all of reality is represented in the related categories of space and time, and the representation of time occurs in the tension between a subjective perception and an objective representation of reality. These themes were addressed by the structuralists and in cognitive studies, which are based on the work of Jean Piaget (1896–1980). Piaget was the first to refute Kant's theory that ideas of space and time are a priori and innate. He developed a model that demonstrated the ability to create a concept of time that is neither innate nor epistemological, presupposing instead the construction of a temporal universe. In his view, this happens during childhood, and is the outcome of processing memories in a time that is the story of one's own universe, after which, "la durée propre est située par rapport à celle des choses, ce qui rend possible à la fois l'ordination des moments du temps et leur mesure en relation avec les points de repère extérieurs" (Piaget 1937, 306). A similar view was propounded by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, in which he argued that the description of the temporal sequence of events is only possible if we rely on another process (Wittgenstein 1922, *Tract*. 6.3611). There are always two terms of reference: one is a "proper duration," its own "description of the timeline"; the other is how this is related to "another process."

Time is always two-fold: it must be measured and it must also be experienced, and these two facets can either coincide or diverge. As for measurements of time, the crisis of classical physics culminated in Einstein's theory of relativity, whose consequences were discussed by epistemologists and philosophers such as Alfred N. Whitehead, Ernst Cassirer, and Henri Bergson, a fierce critic of the time of physics, as opposed to the actual inner experience of lived time. The metaphysical problem of time was explored by Edmund Husserl through the phenomenological analysis of the experience of consciousness, and it was this analysis that his student Martin Heidegger used as the basis for making the issue of time a pivotal question in existentialism and the entire history of Western metaphysics.[2]

At present, the notions of time proposed by physicists' time are coupled with a social perception of disorientation with respect to time (Parker, Harris and Steineck 2010).

THE JAPANESE PERCEPTION OF TIME

In Japan, unlike in China, the measurement of time was substantially qualitative and not quantitative until the late eighteenth century, following the

course of cycles perceptible to the senses, like day and night, lunar phases and the seasons (Galliano 2010). The cycle of the day was divided into six night periods and six day periods, calculated from the position of the sun at sunrise and sunset. This means that for example in summer the six day periods lasted about sixteen hours, from 4 a.m. to 8 p.m., while in winter the day lasted about eleven hours, from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. Time was therefore unstable, changeable, experiential time, necessarily administered by someone for the community. It is interesting that in the 16th century, when the Jesuits brought the first mechanical clocks to Japan, and therefore the concept of a distinctly quantitative Western time, the Japanese response was to reproduce and "improve" European timepieces, producing the *wadokei*, a mechanism of extreme technological precision whose measurements correspond to hourly periods of time. In writing on the Japanese perception of time, social scientist Tomonaga Tairako hypothesized that the idea of individual autonomy may be connected with the European autonomous administration of time made possible by measuring it, while in Japan collectively conceived individuality would depend on "the intervention (in most cases rather arbitrary, as in traditional Japan or China) of ecclesiastical or secular political powers in time measurement" (Tomonaga 1975, 94).

Buddhist thought was subsequently grafted onto this native conception of a qualitative perception of time. Buddhism was brought to Japan from China, which means that the original Indian teachings were grounded on proto-Daoist thinking, where an "abstract time" was always complementary to and in tension with the "present time," as in the case of Hui Shi who paradoxically "set off for Yue today and came there yesterday" (Watson 1968, 374).

Introduced in Japan in the 6th century, during the Kamakura Period (1185–1333), Buddhism evolved from being an intellectual pursuit of the upper classes, to being the general thinking of Japanese society and culture in its entirety, and was embraced by people in all social classes, much as Christianity was in medieval Europe. In the flourishing culture of the Kamakura Period, with the spread of Tendai Buddhism, some Buddhist tenets became topos of popular entertainment (LaFleur 1983, 116–132; Tyler 1987). There was a Japanese rethinking of Buddhism and the empirical world and a constitutive Buddhist episteme took shape, whose fundamental feature was the remolding of a linear idea of time into a "being" consisting in the creation of an abiding "present" that was seen as impermanent and dynamic, as William LaFleur showed in his outstanding book *The Karma of Words* (1983). The Buddhist conception of time is circular and comprised of single instances whose only reality is impermanence. A concept shared by the different Buddhist schools is the consciousness that the plurality of phenomenon is in its essence transitory and impermanent, and ideas like "self" or "time" are substantiated by casual circumstances resulting from haphazardly organized perceptions. It is

this specific Buddhist idea of time that Nishitani Keiji (1900–1990) explored in 1961 when discussing the "daily life that is lived beyond all cares and worries . . . [which is] existence in authentic 'time,' in time that is time because it is not time. Rather, this existence is identical with the ripening of that time" (Nishitani 1976, 67). Over the course of time, starting from the qualitative Japanese conscience of time, the new episteme pervading Kamakura Buddhism progressively came to encompass the following principles:

1. the idea that a conception of time as something that is both persistent and linear is false;
2. the idea that time is comprised of single instants, in which nothing can persist, and on the contrary the idea that infinity can be perceived in each passing moment.

NEO-BUDDHISM'S EPHEMERAL TIME

The general thinking of many artists in the postwar United States shows a special affinity with Zen Buddhism: freedom from dogma; nomadic life (both physical and intellectual); regaining corporal presence; spontaneity, radical simplification, and so forth. John Cage was not the only composer attracted to Eastern philosophy. Henry Cowell, Harry Partch, and Lou Harrison shared his interest in Oriental and Buddhist ideas. Paralleling modern-day Islam, the presence of Buddhism in the United States was the result of immigration, mainly to the West Coast. In 1875 San Francisco's Chinatown had eight Buddhist temples and the first American Buddhist Association was founded there in 1899. On the East Coast, interest in Buddhism spread as a logical follow-up to interest in Unitarian theology, which rejected traditional Trinitarian beliefs. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) and Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), important sources of Cagean thought, were influenced by Buddhism and many of their transcendentalist ideas, which in turn promoted the intellectual awakening of 19th-century New England, derived from it. The talks that Sōgon Shaku (1859–1919) gave on Zen at the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, were widely discussed and generated a great deal of interest. His contribution had an enduring result and opened the way for two of his students, Sokei-an (1882–1945) and particularly Daisetzu Suzuki (1870–1966). In the late 1940s when Buddhism became extremely unpopular in Japan because of its deep involvement in the war, Suzuki along with others went to the United States in view of the new horizons opening there.[3] His first series of *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (Suzuki 1927) along with the book *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy* (1947) by Takakusu Junjirō were read by Jack Kerouac, who in 1956 wrote to a friend, "One day, the

President of United States will meditate in the Meditation Room" (Kerouac 1997, 569). Suzuki had begun teaching courses on Zen Buddhism at Columbia University six years previously and Cage had been a student of his.

Zen Buddhism appears to have been quite fashionable in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s generally, as exemplified by the rise of beat-Zen, Alan Watt's square-Zen invention and so on (Scott, Quli 2015). Many of the people who were disenchanted with the U.S. way of life in the postwar years turned to Buddhism and Zen in everyday matters such as mental attitude, meditation, and approach to food and body care. A general need for more radical approaches to existence and art was also felt, explored in books such as Arthur Waley's *Zen Buddhism and its Relation to Art* (1922). One Fluxus artist, LaMonte Young, meditated for up to eight hours a day (Conversation with Ichiyanagi, Tokyo, November 10, 2011), while it is well known that George Brecht, another member of the group, maintained a lifelong interest in Zen Buddhism, and others were attracted by Buddhism and sympathetic to its teachings. As for the Japanese, their way of life and culture were permeated by Buddhism, in much the same way that life and art in the West can be said to have Christian influences. David Doris proposed a Zen reading of Fluxus, whose artists, he wrote, "attempted to wake up to the experience of simply being human, a supremely strange enterprise indeed" (Doris 1998, 92). In their tacit fight against shallow consumer society and the commodity as the Enemy, the Fluxus artists produced sound-objects, actions, works of a "musical" duration of no (or minimal) substance, examining the limits of "consciousness"—and this connects them to Zen beyond any specific affiliation by individual artists, more as a sort of coinage of the time.

Referring to ephemerality, Higgins stated: "A masterpiece in this context was a work that made a strong statement rather than a work that would last throughout the ages in some treasure vault" (Higgins 1998, 225). These "strong statements," whose value lay in something which consisted of a few words, a small box made of paper or the like, all seem to have in common "scores" that prescribe chilling or poetic, trivial or impossible actions ("make a salad" by Alison Knowles, "fly" by Ono, or "creep into the vagina of live whale" by Paik), in fact all focus on a detail of the Dharma, regardless of the possibility or impossibility their being achieved in any conventional sense, with a serene acceptance of the impermanence of all phenomena (what in Japanese Zen would be called *mujō*). Not only in music, but in all Japanese theater and the visual arts, from ink drawings to the formalization of the so-called minor arts, aesthetic perception is never focused on building a monumental work, but rather on reaching a momentum of stasis. The aim is to create a moment that is in itself perfect and concluded, beautiful precisely because it is impermanent and focused through the artist's sensitivity. In the Fluxus works we can see, at a low, daily level, what scholar Steven Heine

described, in writing on Zen master Dōgen, as "a genuine understanding of *mujo-as-mujo* unbound by arbitrary ego-oriented decisions to accept and enjoy or reject and dismiss evanescence or self-centered attitudes of optimism, nostalgia and nihilism" (Heine 1981, 48). There is always an everyday consciousness that any "unreflective and ignorant attempt to be free of the tribulations of impermanence" is doomed to failure, and, to paraphrase a Fluxus catchword, that impermanence is wonderful enough;[4] that any statement or work that aspires to lasting forever and becoming famous is without artistic value. A well-known *mondō* (the seemingly absurd exchange between teacher and pupil) illustrates the meaning of the Fluxus way of acting:

> A monk approaches Zen master Hotetsu, who is fanning himself, and asks, "The wind-nature is constant. There is no place it does not circulate. Why do you still use a fan?" The master replies, "You merely know that the wind-nature is constant. You do not yet know the meaning of it circulating every place," and continues fanning himself. That is, the permeation of wind, symbolic of Buddha-nature, seems to render superfluous any contingent human activity, such as waving a fan. But, if the fan, which represents full immersion in impermanence actively realized, is not used, the coolness and freshness of the breeze will never be felt. (Heine 1981, 49)

The very essence of Japanese Zen was born from Dōgen's dissatisfaction with the idea of a "statically-conceived eternal Buddha-nature"; moreover, he "challenged the conception of Buddha-nature as a potentiality somehow falsely detached from everyday experience" (Ibid.). It resides in these two qualities, a fluid, non-static, impermanent idea of the absolute, and the awareness that it is not separate from everyday life, the great strength of the Zen substrate for many Fluxus artists, enhanced for many by their contacts with the Japanese for whom the Zen vision of impermanence was part of their culture.

EPHEMERALITY AS IMPERMANENCE

It is in this way that one should understand works like *Organic Music* (1962) by Kosugi, describing the ever-present, yet fleeting human action of breathing:

> Breath by oneself or have something breathed
> For the number of times which you have decided
> At the performance. (Merewether and Hiro 2007, 21)

or *Theatre Music* (1961):

Keep walking intently
Close inspection of an object. (Nyman 1999, 81)

Attentiveness is obviously a corollary of seeing things in their impermanence. It is Ono who stated: "When a violinist plays, which is incidental: the arm movement or the bow sound? Try arm movement only."[5] It may be that what is incidental, what is perishable and ephemeral is a locus of beauty: in Japanese culture, the various aspects of nature and human life are perceived as most beautiful, with more charm precisely because they are ephemeral, illusory, impermanent. The almost obsessive, conventional celebration of youthful beauty, the fleeting nature of the seasons and moments of happiness—wonderful because momentary, above all the delicate cherry blossoms that fall—become symbols of impermanence and fleeting beauty and are recurrent themes in Japanese art and life.

Ono Yōko produced many works which were completed and ended precisely when nothing more of them was there to be seen, substantially consisting in exposing their impermanence: burning a painted canvas; cutting something into pieces; the transient experiencing of something called "music" or "piece." One example:

Painting for the Wind
Cut a hole in a bag filled with seeds
of any kind and place the bag where
there is wind.
(Ono 1970, n.p.)

Kubota placed herself differently, but nevertheless clearly expressed the meaning ephemerality had for Fluxus: "their work disappears. Their work vanishes after the fact. I didn't like that. . . . Fluxus did something and it's gone. They were musical in that sense. Their work was fleeting. Even if I worked with time, I wanted to have some sense of permanence" (Kubota 2009).

Of the other poetic pieces that might be considered a *mujō* work, one is the famous *Disappearing Music for Face* (February 1964) by Shiomi:

smile ---------------------------------- stop to smile.

This is the original score, which Shiomi later changed to "stop smiling" or "no smile" because "stop to smile" would be understood as "stop in order to smile [again]" (Yoshimoto 2005, 229). There is no time indication, and the work suggests from one side the impermanence of something as beautiful as a smile, and from the other side the progressive change of an individual

facial expression, like a musical diminuendo. There is a famous version by Ono on film.

Another one is Ono's *Snow Piece* (*Tape Piece III*, 1963). The score reads (see figure 4.1):

TAPE PIECE III

Snow Piece

Take a tape of the sound of the snow
falling.
This should be done in the evening.
Do not listen to the tape.
Cut it and use it as strings to tie
gifts with.
Make a gift wrapper, if you wish, using
the same process with a phonosheet.

Figure 4.1 Tape Piece III. "Grapefruit" © Yoko Ono 1964, 1970, 1971, Simon and Schuster, first Touchstone edition. Used by Permission/All Rights Reserved.

The deep poetry of this tiny gesture lays in the extremely volatile character of the phenomenon evoked: the snow falling and its sound: more than a real sound it is the faint sense of the sound of falling snow, which is a poetic locus in haiku, as Kahn noted in his discussion of this piece (Kahn 1999, 238). However, as seen by Ono, even this tiny sound should be offered in its untouched ephemeral purity rather than listened to. This insubstantiality contrasts poetically with the knot, which is hard and permanent, and binds a gift of friendship, which is also perhaps ephemeral but is envisaged as permanent. Many event works Ono made in the 1950s and 1960s reflect this inclination to abstractness, concern for relationships between people, and *mujō*.

Both works mentioned above make reference to music in their titles, but neither of them contains any sound, and were in fact meant to be silent. I will discuss this original meaning for musical silence in chapter 6, while here I wish to emphasize the extent to which both the composers focused on a slight, tiny, ephemeral fact to create a deep emotional experience, something that came to be called an "event."

EPHEMERAL EVENTS

Nowadays the word "event" defines an occurrence, especially one of some importance, but in its original meaning, from the Latin *ēventus*, it meant something that had already happened and was sharply localized—the most striking example of *ēventus* being birth.

Ono and George Brecht were the two Fluxus artists who most consistently used short texts accompanied by instructions on how they were to be performed and it was probably Brecht who first used the word. He called these texts "event scores." They often involve an activity that is almost entirely internal, such as acts of thinking and/or observing, in which both artist and audience participate. Ono clarified her view of what an event is: "Event, to me, is not an assimilation of all the other arts as Happening seems to be, but an extrication from the various sensory perceptions. It is not 'a get togetherness' as most happenings are, but a dealing with oneself. Also, it has no script as happenings do, though it has something that starts moving—the closest word for it may be a 'wish' or 'hope'" (Ono 1970, n.p.).

It is interesting to note that, in Ono's *Snow Piece* and in many other similar pieces, notwithstanding the use of mechanical equipment, the product is reduced to a perceptually *static* material. The "score" becomes a kind of time container, and "the 'event' consists in giving form to little devices for cutting an instant portion of interest from the perceptual flow of the 'everything that happens'" (Kotz 2001, 72). The event is finally a strategy for deviating from the manufactured to the temporal "object," not conceptually far from the *objet sonore*, the sound object of Kosugi and Group Ongaku.

The event may have the temporal form of either a point (as in most of Brecht's and Ono's works) or a line (as in Young's *Composition #10* or Shiomi's *Disappearing Music...*), but what distinguishes "event" from "happening," giving to the former a specific Fluxus character, is that it is monomorphic, whereas a happening is a sort of collage of different things, polymorphically taking place at the same moment. I will deal with monomorphism in relation to Fluxus in the following chapter. Here I wish to focus on the content of the event, which may consist of something which is made or simply be a definite portion of time in which even if nothing happens, attention is focused on something evoked by the score. Friedman called this "Presence in time," something which therefore adds to the "ephemeral quality [which] is obvious," a "different sense of duration," mentioning "performances that take place in segments over decades"—thinking perhaps of the grim instructions in *Music for a Revolution* by Kosugi mentioned in see chapter 2, p. 32. Of more interest is the idea introduced by Kotz, of *perceptual readymades* in relation to "Brecht's 'event' structure [which] would isolate simple, unified everyday occurrences" (Kotz 2001, 81) to focus on, thus eliminating any confusion with Conceptual Art. I am not certain, however, that this directly applies to the Japanese Fluxus output where the perceptual readymade is a presentation of a perceptual element simply available for experiential observation. What is specifically Japanese is instead the discovery, the unveiling of a subtle nuance of meaning or feeling in the folds of everyday life, as in Ay-O's series of *Finger Boxes*: his 1964 *Finger Box Suitcase* contains wooden

cubes with a hole in which to insert a finger thus rediscovering the sense of touch in an intriguing, subtly erotic way.[6] In "The Sensorium," chapter 4 of her book on Fluxus, Lushetich explores this question, discussing how "Fluxus works operate to dethrone the sacrosanct object-hood of the art object" (Lushetich 2014, 105). In doing this, she has recourse to Nishida's concept of interexpression,[7] defined as a "dialectic mutual negation and affirmation of self and the other, subject and object" (108); shortly afterward she adds: "The notion of actional aesthetics—which is the aesthetics of interexpression and which forms part of the longstanding tradition of everyday aesthetics practised in Japan—is crucial to understanding the *Fluxkit*" (110). At the beginning of the chapter, she defines the *Fluxkit* as "a portable performative score in the form of objects, mostly *objet trouvés*" (105). An example of a *Fluxkit* by a Japanese artist is Kosugi's *Theatre Music* (1961), mentioned above, which in 1964 became a Fluxkit: the performer, instructed to "Keep walking intently" walked in a spiral on handmade Japanese paper. Another is Kubota's *Fluxmedicine*, realized in different version in the 1960s, consisting of some twenty different kinds of neatly arranged pills. For both works it is likely that the kit was conceived by Maciunas. The scores of these pieces by Kosugi and Kubota use routine gestures, such as walking or taking a pill, as evidence and focus on them as things that must be *performed* for the connection between them and their mysterious normality to be grasped.

The very act of "bringing things into evidence" in their ephemerality is better expressed by an event than by objects, and a kit should be understood not as an object but instead as what Lushetich called "a portable performative score," since in the case of the event it is the "evidence" itself which is ephemeral, and disappears as soon as the event is over.

Water, which in its natural state flows continuously and cannot be stopped so that it can be examined or appreciated, is a perfect example of ephemerality, as I mentioned in my discussion of Shiomi's *Water Music* in its Tokyo Fluxus Week version. It is in fact astonishing how many water-music works were composed by Fluxus artists. Water as ephemeral was mentioned by Cage in 1966, (Kostelanetz 2003, 220) but it was George Brecht who composed the first *Drip Music* in 1959, while attending Cage's lessons at the New School for Social Research.[8] In the same year Cage produced his *Water Walk: For Solo Television Performer*, for his appearance on an Italian television quiz show.[9] It was followed by *Water Music* in 1952, using sounds which he said "were, just from a musical point of view, forbidden" (107). Brecht had studied Buddhism but despite the close intellectual relationship between him and Cage, Brecht's use of dripping in his work was inspired by Jackson Pollock, who at the time was Brecht's source for the idea of chance operation. I will discuss the differences between Cage's and Fluxus's approach to musicality in chapter 6. About his *Drip Music*, Brecht told to Michael Nyman in an

interview, on appreciating the sound of dripping, "I can imagine that in China and Japan people have been appreciating dripping water for centuries." Further Fluxus water pieces (for a comprehensive list of these pieces, see Kahn 1999 Part IV) are Takemitsu's 1960 *Water Music*, composed using electroacoustic sounds; Ono's 1963 and 1964 versions of *Water Piece*; and Shiomi's *Water Music*. In its original 1964 version composed for the Perpetual Fluxfest held at New York's Washington Square Gallery in October, Shiomi's score reads: "(1) Give the water still form. (2) Let the water lose its still form." The deep poetry contained in a *musical* gesture of this sort is heightened by the concentration required to *listen* to the sound of water being poured from one container to another, making evident the ephemeral being of form.

Pursuing ephemerality is a fundamental step in moving toward the elimination of the object, which makes possible the emergence of experience, that is, life, and also the final abandonment of art, by contesting the notion that art is something that must be preserved.

Even when it is not specified how long the action to be performed will last, and it is therefore expected that it will probably continue for a long time, it remains something that manifests ephemerality because of the contradiction of its being presented as a *work*, and in this respect what Kubota wrote about wishing for "some sense of permanence" makes sense. Nevertheless even when the event consists in a series of repetitions, in which the sudden, small enlightment of a *mujō* is the result of boredom, the draining of meaning from a word or an action repeated over and over again produces the experience, which is vital in Zen, of emptying the mind, something which Paik talked about on many occasions. Boredom was discussed by Dick Higgins in his 1966 essay "Boredom and Danger," and by Ina Blom in her 1998 essay "Boredom and Oblivion," published in *The Fluxus Reader* edited by Ken Friedman. The first interesting quality of repetition and boredom is "the capacity to cause disappearance on two different levels which must be experienced as reciprocal: the work will disappear in the surroundings, and the spectator will disappear into the work . . . repetition has the capacity to undo identity" (Blom 1998, 66). Repetition (and boredom) free a work from any relationship between content and context, and also free it from any temporal structure, which finally collapses into real (boring) time. We find here another short circuit between the real and its perception as transient, with attention shifting to minor changes and rupture, thus giving rise to a local consciousness of impermanence even in the very permanent pattern of repetition.

At Sōgetsu Hall in May 1962, at the concert for her official debut on the Tokyo avant-garde scene after her return from New York, Ono ended a highly articulated program (Katō et al. 1998, 218–219) divided into Music, Events, Poems, and Instructions for Paintings, with a music piece, *opera aos to david tudor*. In this, after a series of seemingly nonsense actions done by

the performers, including key figures of the avant-garde such as Hijikata Tatsumi, Kosugi Takehisa, Tone Yasunao, Mayuzumi Toshirō, Akiyama Kuniharu, and Akasegawa Genpei, and the critics Nakahara and Tōno, in the last of the five scenes of the opera the performers were asked to line up and look at the public in the very same way the public was looking at the stage (Munroe et al. 2000, 150); Ono later extracted this and scored it as an independent *Audience Piece.*

In the 1961 version of the opera for the Carnegie Recital Hall performance, in the total darkness of the last scene, the stage directions specified that, "One of the performers should go on shouting until exhausted. The performer may use any violence against himself during the performance" (Munroe, Hendricks 2001, 275). Ono changed the finale for the Sōgetsu performance. She wrote to Maciunas, refusing to send him a "score": "Most of my pieces are meant to be spread by word of mouth, therefore, do not have scores. This means is very important since the gradual change which occurs in the piece by word spreading is also part of the piece" (275). For the Sōgetsu Hall Japanese premiere of the piece, Ono had decided it would finish when the public, bored and exhausted, had left the hall.

> Most of the public left, but one spectator came on stage and even tried to pull the performers' noses. Generally, however, the very polite members of the audience at the experimental performance did not move until it came time for the caretaker to close the hall and he opened the doors and turned on the lights (Sano Kōji, Conversation, Tokyo, October 12, 2011).

Before the concert, "the Japanese press treated Ono as a novelty, a young female avant-garde composer who had come back from New York after ten years," but after the concert the press criticized the concert as eccentric, and responsible for introducing the "happening" and even Donald Richie accused her of copying Cage's ideas. In chapter 3 I introduced part of the text Ono published in the *SAC Journal* shortly prior to the concert, in which she criticized "chance operation as human's own," a statement that can be understood as a criticism of Cage, as also Yoshimoto has pointed out (Yoshimoto 2005, 95). Ichiyanagi published a response to the newspaper attacks, defending Ono from Richie's accusation (Ichiyanagi 1962, 138). Clearly, Ono's work had little in common with the underlying concept of the happening (see quote at p. 65). Although Ono realized this herself and published an answer to the criticism, noting that Tōno Yoshiaki recognized the importance of her work being created using words instead of *objets* as was being done in the *informel* wave, the general Japanese trend at the time, the barrage of criticism she was subject to and her feeling of isolation caused her to have a nervous breakdown (Yoshimoto 2005, 95).

What is striking in the simplicity of this "piece" by Ono is that it *ends* with what Tōno called an "opera without the sounds of instruments." It is as if the only end to a series of difficult-to-be-given-a-meaning acts can be the reciprocal acknowledgment by public and performer, of the common loss of a rationale. In her text quoted above, the artist stated: "if we assign the most fictional rules, only then may we possibly transcend our consciousness. . . . We can call these rituals a means to rationalize the irrationality in us humans." And commenting on why her stage directions for the 1961 Carnegie Hall performance had indicated that most of it was to be performed in darkness, she explained she had "made the stage very dim, so you had to strain your eyes, because life is like that" (Munroe, Hendricks 2001, 233).

Nam June Paik dealt with the same question in *Zen for Film* (1964). The work consists in the projection of a loop of unexposed film, where the act of projecting adds dust and minor damage to the film, thus changing the constant image appearing on the screen, while doing nothing to relieve boredom. Like Ono, in whose piece the changing of position by the performers (who at the end were so tired that they lay down on the stage) does not redirect the gaze of the public, Paik proposed a way for emptying the mind, for letting the spectators move toward a transcendent consciousness. For both artists the experience of boredom, of long durations and repetitions, can change sign and become a way to enter the consciousness of the ephemeral, of impermanence, of the *mujō* of Being.

NOTES

1. Debord (2014, 151–152).
2. Following Tanabe Hajime's visit to Heidegger in 1923, the philosophical movement known as the Kyoto School became interested in his philosophy. They reacted critically to Heidegger's thinking, however, signaling its neglect of the social status of human beings and denial of academic freedom. See Buchner (1989).
3. Suzuki was not a Zen master, having spent less than four years in a Zen temple, but his prodigious learning and timely arrival in the United States allowed him to be instrumental in spreading Buddhist thought. As Larson wrote, "He was probably just Zen enough, at the time" (Larson 2012, Prelude).
4. As Fluxus theorists affirmed on numerous occasions, "the ordinary is wonderful enough" (Danto 2002, 26).
5. Ono, "To the Wesleyan People," January 23, 1966, see above Chapter 2 n. 7 (in Ono 1970, n.p.).
6. See one of these boxes on the Fondazione Bonotto website, at http://www.fondazionebonotto.org/it/collection/fluxus/ayo/91.html (seen on 13/4/2014).
7. Lushetich uses David Dilworth's translation of "表現的関係" as "interexpression," signifying that expression is the encounter of mutually negating entities—*zettai*

ni aihan suru mono no so go kankei wa, hyo gen-teki denakereba naranai 絶対に相反するものの相互関係は、表現　的でなければならない. Nishida (2004, 347); Loughnane (2016).

8. The lessons were by no means as playful and happening-like as many now think. Cage explained recent music trends in Europe and Darmstadt, as well as other topics, always with a very serious attitude (Altshuler 1991, 17); Brecht, with his scientific background, was perhaps the student best qualified to follow Cage's mathematical and conceptual approach to music (Kotz 2001, 64–65).

9. Cage was working at the Milan Studio di Fonologia at RAI (the state radio and television corporation), staying with friends like Luciano Berio, and when he ran out of money they suggested he apply to be a contestant on Mike Buongiorno's quiz show *Lascia o raddoppia*, where he actually won a large sum of money as a mushroom expert. See Chianura and Tartari (2011, 32–35).

Chapter 5

Specificity

> "This time urges them to attack the *machinery of permitted consumption.*"[1]

Human beings are not born with a predetermined set of concepts for apprehending reality, but instead acquire these concepts through process in the first years of life, when many of our cognitive abilities are specialized to handle specific types of information. In short, much of human cognition is domain-specific. It is interesting that although it is generally held that the more ambiguous art is and the more cross-references it contains, the more interesting it is, Fluxus artists saw specificity as an essential component of their work. Higgins suggested that this was in part because

> Maciunas's background . . . was in graphic and industrial design. The design approach is usually to design *specific* solutions to specific problems. Designers characteristically distrust universals and vague generalities. Generalisations are used in Fluxus works only when they are handled with all the precision of specific categories and necessities. They must not be vague. This was, typically, Maciunas's approach and it remains typical for us now that he is gone. (Higgins 1998, 225)

I have included this long citation to show Higgins's deep respect for Maciunas, with whom he and other artists sometimes quarreled because they disagreed with his conception of Fluxus as a common project, largely subject to his control, although they recognized his dedication to Fluxus and his generosity. In fact Maciunas used most of his money to support Fluxus projects (Shiomi 2005, 82).

SPECIFICITY AND BEAUTY

What emerges as a necessity regarding specificity is a strong aversion to anything which could be considered superfluous, that once again links this quality to an underlying concept of frugality as an attribute of beauty, found in Japanese (Fluxus) thinking. The *wabi-sabi* fashion of the 1990s (Koren 1994) cannot invalidate the fact that *wabi*, the word used to describe the elevated style of the tea ceremony in the 16th century, is a fundamental aspect of Japanese sobriety. *Wabi* is a concept of constraints, absence of excess, the solemn, austere beauty of frugality.

What a Japanese artist creates is "saved" through *mono no aware* (the artist's "empathy toward things") plucked from the constant flow of life, and moved as far as possible in the direction of reducing to the minimum the material needed to create it. The focus on something seen as privileged within the all-encompassing Dharma acquires deeper meaning and beauty through the economic use of materials—as in haiku, in some largely white canvases, in the few sounds of a piece of music.

> The aesthetic consciousness of reticence [in Japanese art]—concentrated in *yojō*, the surplus of sentiment of the doctrines of asymmetry, incompleteness, imperfection—is the hole in common sense, with its daily theories of symmetry, sufficiency, perfection. I will not discuss here frugality as an element widely found in Japanese aesthetic sensitivity. It seems worth noting that the roots of frugality, also an integral part of Japanese religious consciousness, lie again in the Buddhist view of impermanence. The Buddhist concept of the uncertainty and vanity of all things is the denial of a sense of sufficiency, of welfare belonging to the world of the everyday. (Minami 1983, 38–39)

Surely the young artists here discussed kept themselves at a distance from any kind of Japanese tradition, seen with the suspicions of the suffering prewar infantry, and yet a cultural attitude, internalized in respect with those deep rooted concept and values, cannot be denied, as it was learned together with the language and other identifying connotations of Japanese culture; it was part of their particular sensitivity.

The frugality of their materials (a few words, small pieces of paper, plastic, objects salvaged from rubbish bins, etc.) is an evident and constitutive aspect of Fluxus works, and not only those by Japanese members of the group. While on the one hand, there is definitely determination to oppose the commodification of aesthetic feelings, on the other there is—and this is especially part of the Japanese worldview—a sense of the economy of the materials needed to make possible greater transparency of an artwork's aesthetic significance, as something caught in its specificity and distinguished from the perennial flow of being.

The same frugality of using as little material as possible can be applied to content; and two other ideas propounded by Friedman (Simplicity and Exemplativism) are attributes of Specificity, as Higgins pointed out (Friedman 1998, 249–250).

Specificity, in viewing a problem as having a solution and in fact *corresponding to its solution* is summed up in the oft-cited Buddhist proverb: "If you have a problem that can be fixed, then there is no use in worrying. If you have a problem that cannot be fixed, then there is no use in worrying"—thus returning to the diffuse neo-Buddhist mood of the 1960s as described in chapter 4. It seems to me, however, that the change of perspective brought in by thinking in terms of specificity should be seen as an anticipation of the major changes in the philosophical assumptions and values of contemporary Western attitudes that were being discussed in the late 1970s and are now called postmodernism. This was connected to a suspicion of reason and to an acute sensitivity to the role of ideology in gaining and maintaining political and economic power, as was highlighted in Jean Francois Lyotard's groundbreaking book (Lyotard 1979). Yet similar ideas were already being examined by deconstructivist and structuralist critics. What they came to mean was the collapse of faith in what a sarcastic Giacomo Leopardi called the "grand and progressive destinies" of "the great human race" (Bickersteth 1923, 341).[2] In Lyotard's discussion this corresponded to the end of metanarrative, the grand narratives, which in turn made possible the emergence of more modest, "localized" narratives, the *petit récits* Foucault wrote about in his critique of the power of narrative (Foucault 1979), which was followed by "the applied side of cultural criticism: the groundings of its rhetoric on variously thorough or haphazard projects of recovering specific context of detail . . .: New Historicism's paradigms, Geertz's cockfights, or Bourdieu's slices of anthropology . . . Fernand Braudel's historiography, Mikhail Bakhtin's 'heteroglossia,' formalist close reading," and so on (Liu 2009, 116). In the domain of art it was signaled by the small remains of some of Ono's works, or by Maciunas's *Venus de Milo Apron* and other works dismantling the idealistic concept of Art with a capital A. Maciunas wrote and spoke on numerous occasions about the preferability of tiny works, ones that go unnoticed and are perfectly located as minimum elements in everyday life and therefore positively placed outside the artistic sphere—and outside *spectacle*.

Within Fluxus, it was not only the group's Japanese artists who sought specificity, and it would be trivializing to attempt to demonstrate a direct lineage between the theoretical perspective given above and what has been said on the basic postmodern condition of Japanese modernity (Miyoshi, Harootunian 1989). This would involve making a case for Japanese people's love of detail, small objects, and propensity to produce miniature versions of larger things. I will give a few examples of the direct approach to specificity

by the Japanese—recalling that in statistics, sensitivity and specificity are the two measurements of the performance of a classification function.

SPECIFIC EVENTS

Discussing event scores, Liz Kotz stated that they "represent both an extension and a focusing of the Cagean project—an extension because not only sound and hearing but 'everything that happens' provides potential materials, and a *focusing* because *singularity*, rather than multiplicity or simultaneity, will be the result." Although a derivation is evident, this is one of the major points of difference between Cage and the artists who were his "followers" and would take the "discrete" or "individual" unit as their goal. Whereas Cage accepted "the overall, dispersed field of chance encounters" as the transparent "screen" through which unheard sounds can be discovered, Fluxus artists made a different kind of choice, isolating often very tiny elements as the object of their aesthetic experience. It was LaMonte Young who claimed to have been "the first to concentrate on and delimit the work to be a single event or object in these less traditionally musical areas" (Young in Kostelanetz 1968, 194–195, quoted in Kotz 2001, 77, with a remark on "Cage's antipathy to the controlling, hyper-focused nature of Young's work," n. 60). I disagree with Kotz that "Ono's more varied and provocative scores often diverge from this proto-minimal 'event' project" (Kotz 2001, 77–78). Ono's first event score, *Secret Piece* 1953, focused on a single note (see figure 5.1):[3]

It is a minimal "event project." What is more varied and wider is the emotional *space* evoked.

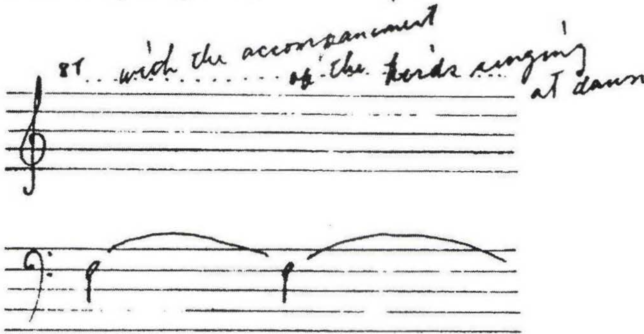
In a work by Ono mentioned in chapter 4, in its Carnegie version as *AOS—To David Tudor*, the stage directions for the third scene indicate that "a tape of the performance of the first and second scene, plus any number of tapes of any kind—maybe voice of animals or other living things—should be all (should be all in voice) together. The scene will end when the first scene, second scene tape is over, though it may be played in any speed. The environment should be completely lighted" (Munroe, Hendricks 2001, 274). The artist made a very up-to-date use of a basic live-technology, where the consistent sound ambience helps to give a monophormic character to the piece. The mention of the "voice of animals or other living things" is striking, as is the fact that human beings were not expected to be on stage in this third fully lighted scene. The binary opposition of what is intended to be the focus of attention, that is, darkness + humans versus light + living things' voices, literally illuminates the idea of specificity as drawing attention to *one thing at a time* (paraphrasing Maciunas's "one joke at a time," Friedman 1998, 196). In this scene the focus seems to shift to sound; the remapping of sound via

SECRET PIECE

Decide on one note that you want to play.
Play it with the following accompaniment:

The woods from 5 a.m. to 8 a.m.
in summer.

(The above is the later revision of the
following original.)



1953 summer

Figure 5.1 Secret Piece. *Source*: "Grapefruit" © Yoko Ono 1964, 1970, 1971, Simon and Schuster, first Touchstone edition. Used by Permission/All Rights Reserved.

the technological use of reproduction widens the scene to comprehend every "living thing," in a still life of musical presentation where music dissolves as a quantified progression of defined sounds to become a *qualified* progression of undefined voices. The fundamental rupture in the nature of music brought about by technological reproduction allows complete freedom not only regarding the choice of sounds but even the measure of time, since "it may be played at any speed."

SPECIFIC ISSUES: THE STATUS OF JAPANESE WOMEN

As in many other parts of the world, in Japan during the 1950s feminism and women's rights were becoming key issues. The cultural elaboration of gender differences has varied over time and in different social classes. Although in Japan over the centuries there is evidence of women holding high positions in society, a strong neo-Confucian model of society progressively lessened the status of women during the Edo period. After the Meiji Restoration, enlighteners such as Fukuzawa Yukichi and Mori Arinori denounced the

subordination women had been subject to for centuries, but a number of intellectuals were suspicious of the pro-women efforts and argued against the notion of equal rights. During the 1920s *atarashii onna* (the new woman who has rights and can vote) became a topic of debate, evoking a range of reactions in the media, with opinions ranging from acknowledgement that women had been subject to a form of slavery for over three thousand years to warning against the damage that would be done if women were seen as being men's equals and having the same rights.

The view of women that prevailed in Japan before and after the Second World War and determined women's lives saw them as wives, while during the war the Japanese government emphasized the importance of women as mothers (Wöhr, Sato, Suzuki 1998, 7–8). During the war, with the men at the front, women replaced them in many crucial areas in civil organizations and production, and women were given the right to vote in 1946. The legal position of women was redefined by the occupation authorities, who included an equal rights clause in the 1947 Constitution and the revised Civil Code of 1948. Individual rights were given precedence over obligations to the family. However, the aspirations of women in line with this new status and social role were in sharp conflict with the value system of traditional habits, and also with the interests of the rampant capitalism of the postwar years.

The New Life Movement initiated in 1952 was a set of connected initiatives launched by corporations and government bodies, which were directed at women's groups, a network that had been in existence since before the war.[4] Given the task of rationalizing and westernizing everyday life, the NLM played a part in two crucial social and cultural processes in the postwar years. It powerfully reinforced the idea that the needs of corporations were "naturally" congruent with the needs of Japanese people; and it naturalized and finally postulated a model of gender relations in which women of all social strata managed the home, while men managed the work place. In particular, dozens of major corporations set up outreach programs to teach the wives of their employees the skills they needed to be successful homemakers and child rearers; they "empowered" them by entrusting to them responsibility for family planning and home management, in fact stabilizing employees' everyday lives: "happy employees, untroubled by financial, sexual, psychological, organizational or childcare problems at home, would be better workers" (Takeda 2005, 141).[5] Moreover, "The birth control planning was also part of company personnel management policy, as 'it would become burdensome for companies to pay a dependant's allowance for children under eighteen-years old if employees have five or six children'" (131). In the 1950s, most women employees were young and single; 62 percent of the female labor force in 1960 had never been married. Yet in the first postwar general elections, held

in 1946, over a third of the votes were cast by women, and this unexpectedly high female voter turnout led to the election of thirty-nine women candidates (Gleich-Anthony 2007, 151). There were other well-known women, such as Kamiya Mieko (1914–1979), a psychiatrist known for the translation of philosophy books; Yamaguchi Yoshiko (1920–2014), a Japanese actress who made a career in China and the United States and was also active in politics; and the artist Maruki Toshiko (1912–2000). However, neither General MacArthur nor the Japanese government and society intended to allow Japanese women to give up their central role in the home as wives and mothers. Prostitution was widespread during the SCAP occupation and for four months, from August 1945 until January 1946, it was officialized as the Recreation and Amusement Association: a system of brothels established by Japanese government for the 350,000 allied soldiers stationed in the country. After the RAA was disbanded, in part to combat the spread of venereal disease, there was an average of over 300 rapes committed by soldiers in the occupying armies (Dower 1999, 579). The whole affair was dealt with hypocritically.

In the 1960s, women's sense of personal freedom was becoming strong, due in part to the democratizing process of the first postwar period, in part as a result of the psychological and material difficulties they had faced in surviving the war, and they were no longer willing to choose between the limited options formerly available, that is, wives and mothers or prostitutes. It was in this climate of increasing empowerment that many Japanese women artists decided to go abroad.

WOMEN'S STATUS ADDRESSED BY ARTISTS

Some male artists addressed the question of gender very directly in their work, for example Akasegawa Genpei in his *Vagina Sheets* (*Vajina no shītsu*, 1961, first of a series; figure 5.2). "Typically assembled from cheaply obtained mass-produced items and finds from garbage dumps, the *objets* confronted spectators with the debris of the economic expansion in transformed, hieroglyphic form. . . . Akasegawa's inner-tube works and *Vagina Sheets* ultimately led him to think about the mutual imbrications and productivity of flesh and things" (Marotti 2013, 153). The work was set in Akasegawa's apartment and soon occupied the entire space; his artist friend Kazakura Shō "felt a bit like a microscopic person groping about inside internal organs. He concluded that Akasegawa was looking for the point of contact where 'inside' and 'outside' reverse themselves, suggesting another level at which contemporary observers understood the vagina reference of the works" (155).

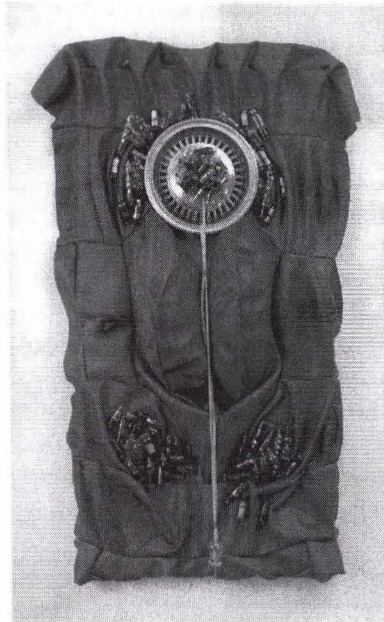


Figure 5.2 Akasegawa Genpei, *Vajina no shītsu*, 1961. *Source*: Courtesy of the artist/ Gallery The Bathhouse.

In chapter 1, in reference to event works, I touched on the question of how inner and outer are related and we here see the same question surfacing in a visual work. In it, the anatomical reference is produced by the color and the softness of the materials, and, in the *Second Present* version, by corrosive liquid that drips from a pipette. The work can be seen as a contemporary version of Gustave Courbet's 1866 *L'origine du monde*, although the young Akasegawa knew nothing of the French work. Nevertheless his work seems to be imbued with the same rejection of academic, smooth, idealized nudes, perhaps also rebelling against hypocritical social conventions, where eroticism and even prostitution were accepted if kept secret, and the role of women involved both idealization and subjugation. In the community of young artists at the time, the work of Akasegawa was probably in some sense competing with Kudo Tetsumi who, in 1961, allegedly in protest at the signing of the U.S./Japan mutual security treaty, created his breakthrough work, the installation *Philosophy of Impotence*, which took up an entire room at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum as part of the Yomiuri Indépendent Exhibition. He hung the walls and ceiling of the black space with penises sculpted from tape and inlaid with mini-light bulbs that looked like pre-cum. Rather than being a reflection on patriarchy or sex, Kudo was looking for something

post-sexual, working to "find the ground zero of sex, the ground zero of culture." It was a radical installation, which stunned the Tokyo art world in 1962 and came to be known as one of the most iconic works in postwar Japanese art. Kudo's diagnosis of the illnesses and contradictions of the uncontrollable consumerism and technologization of postwar society, actually the very title of the work, refers to a kind of displacement, theorizing inability to intervene in one's own life—in this way looking for zero degree of procreation, and the work by Akasegawa can also be considered in this light. Both Akasegawa and Kudo may have been aware of the famous *Elegy for a New Conscript* (1952) by Hamada Chimei, one of his series of etchings, depicting a naked figure with legs spread apart and a stick emerging from the genitalia—in a desolate landscape: a grim image in contrast to the sound cheerfulness of Akasegawa's work. (See chapter 2 n. 7)

Many Fluxus works addressed the issue of gender discrimination from original perspectives, some by exposing the performance of gender roles, as Judith Butler later observed (Butler 1990). A good example is George Maciunas's *Fluxwedding* to Billie Hutching in 1978, shortly before his death. In this special celebration, the imminent death was celebrated together with the marriage, and the deconstruction of gender roles was enacted by the simple and effective exchange of clothing by bride and groom. A work that directly addressed the gender issue is the famous *Vagina Painting* by Kubota Shigeko, performed on July 4, 1965 at Cinematheque New York as part of the Perpetual Fluxfest. It preceded *The Vagina Monologues* by Eve Ensler by more than thirty years, by simply bringing female sex organs on the scene. Kubota attached a brush to her underpants, dipped the brush in a bucket of red ink then squatting on large sheets of paper painted big marks as red calligraphy. I do not think it is necessary to focus on the fact that she did or not actually use her vagina to paint: this was what was staged, and it was enough as a representation. Yoshimoto, in her insightful discussion of Kubota's work, reports feminist readings of the work, by art historians Kristine Stiles, Amelia Jones and Rebecca Schneider (Yoshimoto 2005, 168–183). Kristine Stiles asserted that Kubota's performance "redefined Action Painting according to the codes of female anatomy" insofar as Jackson Pollock can be considered to have "ejaculated" paint upon horizontal-stretched canvas (Jenkins 1983, 82). *Vagina Painting* challenges the tradition of masculine—not only Japanese—artmaking based on patriarchal aesthetics but, beyond this, the work, provocative as it is, before anything else staged the act of breaking with the basic socially accepted connotation of the (Japanese) woman, characterized by kindness, grace, and composure. Kubota was excited by the freedom she found in New York, and when asked to present a performance she realized the *Vagina Painting* that was like a final, total statement of freedom. Afterward she was annoyed at being identified with this

work, perhaps because it had been poorly received not only by the public but also by fellow artists (Hendricks, Conversation, New York, May 27, 2015). Yet everything is there: the focus on female genitalia as procreative, with the red ink suggesting menstrual blood, conception, labor, and giving birth, and above all the work of an artist *as* a woman and not *in spite of* being a woman. The fact that some of the Fluxus artists reacted badly is a confirmation of the challenging nature of the work.

Kakinuma Toshie, however, pointed out to me that Kubota herself disclosed how it happened in her recent book. In reality Paik asked her to do it. He told her, "Could you paint in front of the audience with a brush inserted in your private part? Actually I myself want to do the performance. But I am a man, I cannot do it. So I want you to do it instead. But keep it secret that I asked you to do it." Kubota at first did not want to carry out the performance, but she dared to do it because she really wanted to be his companion in art. *Vagina Painting* was Paik's idea that was realized by Kubota (Kubota 2013, 97–100). Incidentally, Kakinuma heard from Shiomi that Kubota complained she had aches in her lower abdomen after the performance. It seems that actually she used her private part to do the performance.

Kubota explained that one of the major factors behind her move was that "Japan [was] so conservative," made up of "all male artists and male-oriented society" (Mellinger, Bean 1983, 21). On July 4, 1964, soon after Japan began issuing tourist visas to facilitate international travel, Kubota and Shiomi took the same flight to New York and received a warm welcome from the Fluxus community. While Shiomi stayed for only one year, Kubota decided to remain permanently. She was instrumental in establishing contacts between the Hi Red Center artists and Maciunas. When in New York, she corresponded with Kosugi and Akasegawa, and edited materials collected from them, the most famous being a map of Tokyo sites that had been involved in Hi Red Center events, in which Maciunas's graphic rendering is readily identifiable, that she then made into a ball and wrapped with string, in imitation of some of Akasegawa's objects.

POLITICAL SPECIFICITY

The year 1964 was a special year: the Tokyo Olympics raised the curtain on Japan's era of rapid economic growth, with the construction of expressways and bullet trains taking place at this time. However, urban infrastructure was not the only change. A new sentiment of national pride and social order, but also one of repression, took hold, an example being the case of the investigation and subsequent trial and sentencing of Akasegawa for having allegedly

counterfeited a1000-yen bill. The print of a copy of the bill on one side of an invitation to an exhibition (Marotti 2013, 12–109) was obviously not an attempt to counterfeit money, but the case resulted in a court sentence against the most radical wing of the avant-garde. In reaction, the number of radical events and exhibitions which took place skyrocketed.

Tone and the Hi Red Center organized a number of events in 1964, the first (*Sherutā keikaku*—Shelter Plan) held indoors at the Tokyo Imperial Hotel on January 26–27, and a subsequent one (*Yogen ibento. Tsūshin eisei wa nanimono ni tsukawareteiru ka*—Prophecy event. Who uses communication satellites?) on April 12 for a television channel, Tokyo Channel 12 (now Tokyo Television). These were followed by *Dai-panorama ten*, an event held at the Naika Gallery, which consisted in closing the Gallery during the entire exhibition period, May 12–16, so that it was called *Closing Gallery Event*). Then, with the news from the management at *Yomiuri Shinbun* that the upcoming 16th edition of Yomiuri Indépendent Exhibition was being canceled (not even Kaidō Hideo, the exhibition's sponsor had been informed of the decision), many artists literally hit the road, as shown in the 1964 documentary film *Aru wakamonotachi* (Some Young People) by Nagano Chiaki, (Yoshimoto 2006). A non-sponsored exhibition, "Indépendant '64,'" organized by the artists was held from June 20 to July 3 at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum, which they rented as a venue for showing their work. It was an important exhibition, presenting emerging artists, from both Tokyo and Kyoto, who would be leading figures in the performance field in the second half of the 1960s.

Shelter Plan was presented in January. Fifty-six people were invited, including Nam June Paik who was then studying[6] in Tokyo. It was an elaborate performance in which the members of Hi Red Center rented a room at the Imperial Hotel, organized a sort of office in which they carried out a physical examination and measured each of the guests, supposedly so they would be able to build each of them a personalized shelter against nuclear attack. The performance made fun of U.S. imported fashions such as medical check-ups and the building of bomb shelters, as well as the many ways in which Japan's rulers tried to regulate and control social life during the preparations for the Olympic Games. In his subtle reading of the event, Taro Nettleton discussed different aspects of the complex relationship between 1960s Japan and the United States, "the victor," analyzing the existence of an intricate network of mirror representations with regard to nuclear power, militarism, the body and ideas of democracy and well-being. Nettleton quoted Igarashi: "Bodies were subjugated to a new American medical discourse that sought their normalization. . . . As displaced objects of nationhood, these bodies were feminized, cleansed, normalized, and democratized by the victor's hand" (Nettleton 2014, 6–7). *Shelter Plan* focused attention on this as well as on the necessity

of undergoing scrutiny, in order to show the world that Japan was a nation that had long since emerged from postwar hardship and underdevelopment. The Imperial Hotel, where the event took place, besides the significance of its being the work of an American architect (Frank Lloyd Wright) had been the site where the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, analogous to the Nuremberg trials for war criminals, had convened. Moreover, "that this [*Shelter Plan*'s] kind of scrutiny was intended to evoke a sense of surveillance and control is underscored by Akasegawa's later explaining that the Imperial Hotel's manager had forced his way into their room to inspect it on the first day of the performance" (7). As a final confirmation, together with Nam June Paik's statement that "the extensive measurements taken of the visitors were similar to 'things you would be forced to do if you were under police arrest'" (6), there is the circumstance that only hours after *Shelter Plan* ended, Akasegawa was arrested and charged with counterfeiting. In its manifold meanings, this work is of striking specificity.

On February 3, at Minami Gallery in Tokyo, Tone had a "one man show," though a number of friends also exhibited, including Group Ongaku members, Akimichi Takeda, Toshi Ichiyanagi, et al. The first piece was entitled *Drastic*. The artist explained that

> for *Drastic*, the idea was to take drastic laxatives and then bang on a drum to hold off from going to the bathroom during the performance. The title *Drastic* is a combination of drumstick and drastic laxatives. Mizuno Shūkō, who performed the piece at that time, took about five to eight minutes. It's a good thing there was a bathroom right behind the wall next to where the performance took place at Minami Gallery! The audience could hear the flushing sound. (Kaneda 2013)

Maciunus would have enjoyed the sharpness of this piece "overcoming" with sound the need to evacuate with its latent coprophilia and his outspoken love for specificity in the making of a piece.

Hi Red Center then staged two important events in the streets. On the opening day of the Olympics, October 10, *Dropping Event* was performed, during which Hi Red Center associates flung the contents of a suitcase, followed by the suitcase itself, off the rooftop of the Ikenobo Flower School's headquarters in Kanda. The items they dropped included "books, pants, shirts, shoes, full trunk, etc.," according to the text on the map Kubota drew in New York. Shiomi's *Falling Event* and the first version of Ono's *Cut Piece* had been created a short time before (see chapter 2), but there is no record of their having been performed; in the Hi Red Center work the simple singularity of dropping something from the highest point possible is examined in reality.

A couple of day later, from October 12 to 17, there was another "solo exhibition" by Tone Yasunao entitled *Investigation Event* at Naika Gallery, in which Akasegawa, Kazakura, Ichiyanagi, Ono, Takeda, Kosugi, Nakanishi, Takiguchi, and others took part. It was at this event that Tone announced that Hi Red Center had united with Group Ongaku to form High Group, but actually Group Ongaku had been swept away by the strong personalities of its former members, and collaboration with Hi Red Center did not need a constitutive sanction. On this occasion a Tone Prize was awarded to participants' works and Hi Red Center accepted applications from people who wanted to participate in the second major outdoor event of 1964, the famous *Shutoken seisō seiri sokushin undō* (Movement for the promotion of sanitation and order in the capital, later known simply as *Cleaning Event*) staged on October 16 on the sidewalks of the elegant Ginza district (figure 5.3).

Like *Shelter Plan, Cleaning Event* was a specific event clearly making fun of government efforts to make Tokyo safe and pleasant for foreign visitors to the Olympics, and was even more subtly sarcastic in regard to the intensified surveillance surrounding the games. The instructions stated: "Performers are dressed in white coats like laboratory technicians. They go to a selected location in the city. An area of a sidewalk is designated for the event. This area of sidewalk is cleaned very thoroughly with various devices not usually used in street cleaning, such as: dental tools, toothbrushes, steel wool, cotton balls with alcohol, cotton swabs, surgeon's sponges, tooth picks, linen napkins, etc" (Friedman et al. 2002, 49). It should be noted that for the Olympics the authorities cleaned the streets not only physically, but also took advantage of the situation to disperse many "undesirables" (e.g., veterans, Koreans,

Figure 5.3 Hirata Minoru, "Hi Red Center's Cleaning Event (officially known as *Be Clean! and Campaign to Promote Cleanliness and Order in the Metropolitan Area*)", 1964 © Minoru Hirata. Courtesy of Taka Ishii Gallery Photography/Film.

homeless, etc.) who still lived in the streets and parks of Tokyo. Moreover, the diligent citizenry was fervent in taking part in preparations, and by the end of 1963 many had volunteered to clean their neighborhood, so that seeing people busily sweeping the sidewalks or picking up litter was relatively common. This was mimicked by Hi Red Center in grotesque detail and with exaggerated actions, hinting again at scrutiny of the body: "One of Hirata Minoru's photographs of the event shows one collaborator in a white lab coat clipping the nose hairs of another similarly dressed collaborator in front of the office of a newspaper company" (Nettleton 2014, 7).

Maciunas had tried to assimilate Hi Red Center into Fluxus, but none of the group's artists ever went to America—the contradictory feelings of hatred and love the Japanese felt for the United States had, at the beginning of the 1960s, changed into a feeling of condemnation and rejection of what was perceived as the violence intrinsic to that society (Yoshimi 2007, 149 ff.). Both the Hi Red Center events were restaged in New York by members of the Fluxus circle around Maciunas who, according to Shiomi, "showed a reverence . . . that bordered on worship" for Hi Red Center, (Shiomi 2005, 12) possibly due to their being extremely hard-hitting and highly political in specific performances, while maintaining a high degree of poetry. But the two events, renamed respectively *Hotel Event* and *Street Cleaning Event* with the latter performed by students of Robert Watts and Geoffery Hendricks at the Grand Army Plaza in June 1966 (Kellein 2007, 102), when staged in New York turned into a simple instance of "épater le bourgeois," lacking the detailed background of the political context of the Tokyo staging. The first, described as *Fluxclinic: Record of Features and Feats*, was performed at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York on June 4, 1966.[7] In a letter to Ben Vautier, Maciunas wrote: "*Hotel Event* was a clinic in a room, where we measured the visitors for their head volume (head to pail of water), volume of mouth, weight of 1 minute saliva—some 40 bizarre measurements . . . it went very well, for some 30–40 minutes"(Baas 2011, 59). The event was restaged in 1965 but the sharp, specific criticism of the Hi Red Center work had been lost.

NOTES

1. Debord (2014, 115).
2. The book was reprinted in 2013.
3. Ono subsequently added lines to the original version, see Yoshimoto (2005, 82).
4. According to Shinozaki Nobuo, at the time employed at the Institute of Population Problems, another reason for the New Life Movement was to create jobs for people working in the welfare departments of private companies established during the war (Takeda, 2005, 131).

5. Even today the choice for Japanese women, who continue to bear the responsibility for family care, with little support from public structures, is between a private life with a husband and children and a public career.

6. During 1963 Paik returned to Tokyo, for studying video technique. There the engineers Uchida Hideo and Abe Shuya showed Paik how to interfere with the flow of electrons in color TV sets, work that led to the Abe-Paik video synthesizer, a key element in his future TV work. He spent also three days in a Kamakura Zen temple. Soon after the concert at Sōgetsu Hall at the end of May 1963, he went back to Germany.

7. See the flyer on the Fondazione Bonotto website at http://www.fondazionebonotto.org/it/collection/fluxus/maciunasgeorge/206.html (seen on 24/3/2013).

Chapter 6

Musicality

> "Brands can make claims about themselves, but the marketplace will ultimately decide what feels credible and true."[1]

At least three of the concepts I have used in this book to define Japanese Fluxus apply to music: ephemerality, experimentalism, and specificity. In fact, most of the Japanese artists whose work I have discussed were trained musicians and considered themselves to be composers, like many of their Western counterparts. Therefore, their attachment to musical labels and titles, seeing their work in terms of musical concepts, whether or not it was composed of sounds, demonstrates their interest in other intrinsic qualities that are peculiar to works of music. This led to a revolutionary rethinking of relationships, and of the nature of artistic creation between artist and audience, and a general approach to creativity, as I will argue in this chapter.

The revolt of Group Ongaku against a predefined idea of (Western) music was grounded in a culture whose sensitivity to sound differed from that in the West, and was one in which European music (principally 19th-century compositions), although fully accepted, had only been heard for a few decades. In contrast with the self-sufficient idea of music in Europe during the Romantic period, in Japanese culture music was never seen as a self-contained entity, and has always been an integral part of social events, such as public rituals and entertainment. In these events music was important in several ways: it did not just set the mood and pace, it also defined the event's social status and place in the structure of society. Music was never considered to be a purely abstract art form. It could be used as a setting for words or it could be an integral part of a theatrical performance, yet at the same time it was deemed capable of expressing profound spiritual and intellectual qualities. Unlike Western music, which places great importance on technical precision in performance

and has developed music as an impressive architecture of sounds, Japanese music instead emphasizes the quality of individual sounds and prizes the richness and complexity of each instrument's sound spectrum; it pays great attention to microtonal shadings and appreciates subtle differences in sound colors and unpitched sounds, such as those made by percussion instruments or those produced as "side effects" by pitched instruments, like the shakuhachi, biwa, or shamisen (Galliano 2009, 23–24). The world of sound is perceived as being a continuum in which the musical quality of noise is as important as the quality of conventional musical sounds. I will refer to this way of thinking when dealing briefly with how Japanese artists saw Cage's ideas.

THE POSTWAR SOUNDSCAPE IN JAPAN

I cannot start a discourse on the musicality of Fluxus without first saying a few words about the sound of the postwar years. The extent to which the soundscape had changed should not be underestimated. There was a proliferation of new sounds, or rather noises resulting from the progressive mechanization of various aspects of urban life, where the boom in the purchase of private cars forever changed the sound atmosphere in cities.

The soundscape also changed as it was progressively filled with acoustic frequencies used in modern techniques of reproduction and distribution. In 1958 the first mass-produced stereophonic long-playing record was released by the U.S. company Audio Fidelity, launching a revolution in the way the world would henceforth listen to music: on two channels, for two ears, in stereo. This unexpectedly increased the purchasing of home record players, even though the price was almost twice the amount as for a mono device.

Japan had been one of the major record buying countries in the world since the late 1930s; the market very soon began to focus on the vast potential of youth. In March 1959, Asahi started publishing a weekly magazine, *Shonen Magajin* (Youth Magazine). The commercial television channel Fuji-TV began to broadcast a rock 'n' roll show, *The Hit Parade*, entirely dedicated to youth music.

> The emergence of a *music* industry is surely one of the triumphs of capitalism, channelling the prerogatives of church, court, nation, and home through the energy of the talented individual, now raised to commodity. (Slobin 1993, 29)

Meanwhile, in the late 1950s, the Sōgetsu Art Center held a vibrant series of jazz concerts. Starting in the prewar era, there was a large production and consumption of jazz music. "There is ample historical evidence testifying to the prominence of jazz in Japanese urban cultural life for nearly as many

years as the music is old" (Atkins 2001, 9). Prewar era jazz was "a site of contestation where competing aesthetic and social values, definition of modernity and of self, and standards of artistic originality vied" (10). In the early postwar period "the role that the Occupation and the Korean War played in promoting jazz among the general public in Japan, via radio and entertainment facilities, cannot be overstated" (179). The music proved seductive enough that millions of Japanese did not object. Jazz came to represent the cultural power of the victor: "radio broadcasts blending jazz music with American style optimistim and democracy ideals provided the sonic backdrop for life in the ruins" (172). It was everywhere, given that during the Occupation "some three hundred and fifty [jazz] bands were required on a nightly basis in Tokyo" (177) and that "By the late fifties there were some thirty regular programs broadcasting live and recorded jazz performances around the country" (185). During the Cold War, jazz continued to represent many aspects of U.S. democracy and freedom.

"Jazz was essentially reintroduced to Japan in bebop, cool, and progressive guises, collectively known as 'modern jazz'" (167). Having started for the entertainment of U.S. troops, it was a form of "democratic propaganda" (171). The vast majority of the Japanese audience were in their twenties, and jazz was part of their desire for rebellion and freedom, within the context of their controversial feelings about their relationship with the winner, their own identity, and the desire for new lifestyles. As a "vehicle for transcending inhibitions" (189), jazz took up an important space in the emerging world of mass culture and mass entertainment, together with early rock 'n' roll.

"At the end of the 1950s and during the 1960s the consolidated structure of the music industry was shaken to its foundations. The development is usually explained by reference to the advent of rock 'n' roll music in concert with changes in the broadcast media environment" (Wikström 2013, chapter 2). Substained by the new technologies of music reproduction, it signaled a big change in the prevailing *type* of music people were listening to, whose protagonists were now mostly very young, targeting a teenage audience that had little interest in the types of music their parents listened to: classical music, songs.

In 1955 the famous jazz singer Hayama Peggy recorded the first Japanese rock 'n' roll release, a song by Bill Haley, followed shortly afterward by Japanese renditions of American rock hits sung by brash, provocative, sexy young rock singers like Yamashita Keijirō, Kamayatsu Hiroshi, and Kazura Kosaka (Cope 2007, 34–35). In the fabulous 1960s, music exploded; American pop music gradually began to occupy public spaces, as quite a few Japanese friends who were then in their teens remember. In Japanese houses, the three C's of the 1960s—a slogan playing on the authoritative three sacred imperial regalia (mirror, sword, and jewel) in terms of consumer desires—were *car*, *cooler* (i.e., refrigerator) and *color* television, but most households also had

a Japanese-made radio and record player, as well as records. Music was still heard on the radio or in *kissaten* (coffee houses); there were a number of *jazu-kissa*, which specialized in jazz, while other *kissa* were dedicated to other kinds of music (Seidensticker 2011, 197). In fact, one of them, the Fūgetsudō, which specialized in modern and contemporary music, was regularly attended by Group Ongaku members (Shiomi, Conversation, Osaka, November 25, 2011).

Determined not to allow the act of listening to be degraded to passivity, Fluxus musicians began exploring the ways we engage with music. In a sense, they could not help questioning the presence of music in modern life, and the way it affects what we experience. In the program for the concerts planned and supervised by Toshi Ichiyanagi as "Japanese Experimental Music of the 1960s, 'Where Are We Going? And What Are We Doing?'" held on September 13, 20, and 21, 1997 at the Tokyo Concert Hall ATM, we read: "The fall of 1961 marked the dawn of Japan's era of experimental music, during which people explored the true significance and purpose of music. Some thought that music should be freed from its status as a human possession, trying to make it music of 'all the universe.'"[2]

One example of music as a locus for a different—and all-encompassing—experience, is *Chironomy I* by Kosugi (1962):

> Put out a hand from a window for a long time.

In the reading David Doris gives, "Kosugi's text is a *musical score*; like any written musical score, one must *perform* the piece. . . . During my own private performance of *Chironomy I* . . . soon it seemed clear that the piece, for me, was no longer one of formal duration—that is, was no longer concerned with the simple passing of time—but of *endurance*, of a body situated within a shifting, temporal network of physical and mental phenomena" (Doris 1998, 103). The consciousness that emerged from interpreting *Chironomy I* was rooted in a temporal network that was both physical and mental, and in his interview with Doris (one of the few released, November 10, 1992; 103–104) Kosugi noted the tension between inside and outside I discussed in chapter 1: "Putting one part of the body through the window, it becomes part of the outside—but the body is inside—psychologically, it's very unusual, very affecting to the consciousness" (Ibid.). Kosugi went on to say:

> The sound object is not always music, but action, action. Sometimes no sound, just action. Opening a window is a beautiful action, even if there's no sound. It's part of the performance. For me that was very important, opening my eyes and ears to combining the non-musical part and the musical part of action. In my concerts, music became this totality, so even if there was no sound I said it was music. Confusing. This is how I opened my eyes to chaos. (110)

Kosugi's statement has the further significance of establishing a relationship between music and the "opening the eyes to chaos," that is, of abandoning oneself to the flow of experience and life.

Defining his radical *Music for Revolution* ("Scoop out one of your eyes five years from now and / do the same with the other eye five years later"), in the Doris interview, "This is music, says Kosugi: music for a revolution in *perception,* a revolution in *consciousness*" (Ibid.).

CAGE'S NOISE AND FLUXUS'S NOISE; CAGE'S SILENCE AND FLUXUS'S SILENCE; CAGE

Many of the objects used in performance by Group Ongaku are means for making noise. Musical instruments can also be used to produce noise, but this noise is a "musical" one, composed of sounds which are not part of the everyday world. Instead a noise produced with, say a vacuum, *does* belong to the everyday, and even if it is not taken as "normal" noise, it is nevertheless something that pertains to daily routines. In this sense Cage's actions on stage were musical gestures, as was evident in his Sōgetsu concert in October 1962. He made everyday gestures, emphasizing their sounds with microphones, thereby musicalizing sounds within the framework of the concert. In other pieces, like the famous silent piece *4'33"* Cage opened the musical piece to the noise there was in the concert space. Acts by Fluxus artists brought on stage the noise existing in everyday life as such. If we consider what enormous changes occurred within the soundscape in postwar technological consumer societies, in the everyday experience of sound/noise, these musical gestures have profound meaning.

Shiomi recalled carrying a 10-kilogram Sony open reel tape recorder to Ueno Park to use with other things for recording sounds in an open space. At the same time, the *real time* of life was entering the "music" piece. Tone's first solo concert held at the Minami Gallery in Tokyo (see above) presented fifteen pieces lasting six or seven hours, full of everyday noises expressly brought into play.

According to Douglas Kahn, ". . . whereas Cage carried the promise of technology forward to the point where there was no such thing as silence . . . Fluxus played at the delicate threshold of audibility and then edged over into a liminality of conceptual dimensions whose impossibility was left to flourish in its own right" (Kahn 1999, 236). Inaudibility is embraced, not denied, the fascination of that threshold is explored and, especially in work by Japanese composers, the weight of the conceptual gives way to the weight of experience, as happens in Kosugi's *Chironomy I* or in this 1963 piece by Shiomi:

Music for Two Players II
In a closed room
pass over 2 hours
in silence
(They may do anything but speak.) (Friedman 1990, 95)

In this piece the silence Shiomi demanded lasts two hours. It is the silencing of a secluded space shared by the two players, but what is especially required is the silencing of words, of logos and egos, which can also engender noise. As in the Kosugi work, the focus is on what Doris described as "a body situated within a shifting, temporal network of physical and mental phenomena." This ambiguous contact with silence is utterly different from the "structural artificiality" of Cage, who never actually rejected the setting of the classical concert for presenting his compositions, which he fully scored, so that they were theoretically executable by anyone. Philip Corner has aptly noted that "even his way of doing chance is very much related to this idea of like I am a composer, I am doing a highly intellectual highly intelligent serious piece of music. He wouldn't just like Duchamp, pick the notes out of a hat."[3]

In writing on a Kosugi performance of *Chironomy*, Alvin Curran commented on how "in certain 'atmospheric' conditions anything audible may combine to produce the disorienting but pleasurable sensations of not having a body or a mind that responds to you and your name, and without an identity—no papers—you momentarily step out of time into another space" (Curran 2010, 103). Reasoning about the meaning of a totally new music and listening experience, Curran focused on the kind of silence sought for in these prescriptions for "music": the collective sense of being a social body in a shared experience, silencing the ego and the logos. In another realm of fantasy, the *YOKO Ono Self-Portrait*, in a first Fluxbox by Maciunas, consisted of a small round mirror, like ones found in face-powder compacts, presented in the wrapping-paper envelope typical of Maciunas's Fluxus boxes. As such it presents *you* as Yōko—as Erik Satie is said to have written of himself: "I am called Erik Satie, just like everybody else" (Orledge 1995).

Something similar to this mirror effect must have been at the heart of the so-called John Cage shock. When Cage appeared on the Tokyo scene, at Sōgetsu Hall, performing his strange sound rituals, the Japanese contemporary music world was in some sense prepared, since news had arrived from Europe and in 1960 Akiyama, who had been interested in Cage's work since the days of Jikken Kōbō, had written and edited articles for the *SAC Journal* on European and American techniques for inserting chance in musical language (Akiyama 1960).

Ichiyanagi also played an important role in introducing the new U.S. music and poetics, heavily influenced by Cage. In 1961, when Mayuzumi Toshirō

urged him to return to Japan, Ichiyanagi left New York and went back to Tokyo. He and Mayuzumi had met when Mayuzumi was in New York after the success of his *Nirvana Symphony* (1958). While in New York he participated in many of the downtown avant-garde events staged by the Japanese—one example is the evening of "Contemporary Japanese Music and Poetry," presented by David Johnson at The Village Gate on April 3, 1961. In this event, works by Ichiyanagi and Mayuzumi were performed, and *Of a grapefruit in the world of park* [sic on the program] by Ono, a mysterious and evocative work was performed by three pianists (Ichiyanagi, Mayuzumi, and David Tudor) and a string quartet. One of the pieces by Ichiyanagi performed that evening is titled AOS for voice, and a work with a similar title appears in a work by Ono staged at the Carnegie Hall recital and the Sōgetsu Hall concert, and became part of her first solo recording, *Yoko Ono/Plastic Ono Band*.

On his return to Japan, Ichiyanagi threw himself into the work of disseminating his new Cagean ideas, writing articles and essays and holding workshops. In February 1961 he published an article entitled "John Cage" in the prestigious musical magazine *Ongaku Geijutsu* (Musical Art), in which he introduced Cage and many of his works. In the following month's issue of the magazine, the composer Matsushita Shin'ichi published the article "Gendai ongaku ni okeru guzensei no mondai" (The problem of alea in contemporary music) addressing the use of aleatoric elements in works by Western composers. In August Ichiyanagi presented a concert program entitled "Contemporary American Music" in Ōsaka, as part of the Twentieth-Century Musical Laboratory's fourth (and last) Festival. The program included pieces by Morton Feldman, Earle Brown, Christian Wolf, John Cage, and other U.S. composers, as well as works by Ichiyanagi himself. The concerts were extensively reviewed, positively (Akiyama in *SAC* 18, September 9, 1961) and negatively, with great competence, regarding Cage as a highly influential musician. What Ueno Masaaki wrote is significant: "Some of the pivotal articles played an important role in directing the trends in the critical reviews on Cage's music" (Ueno 2011, 19).

After the concert at Sōgetsu Hall by Group Ongaku, there was a homecoming recital of Ichiyanagi's works; both concerts had a strong Fluxus ambiance.[4] The highly controversial Ichiyanagi concert was a great success, and was positively reviewed by Akiyama, Tōno Yoshiaki (Tōno 1961, 25), and others.

In 1962, with Cage's autumn visit to Japan, the Cage-related intellectual turmoil turned into what was termed "Cage shock": discussions about Cage's ideas were even more heated than those that had taken place over twelve-tone music and serialism, and some composers, such as Shibata Minao and Moroi Makoto, stopped composing for several years while they sought an adequate response to this challenge. As early as December, *Ongaku Geijutsu* published

a special issue on the subject with contributions by Akiyama, Yamaguchi Katsuhiro, Matsushita Shin'ichi, Sō Sakon, Moroi Makoto, Hewell Tircuit, Satō Kenjirō, Matsudaira Yoriaki, Sugano Hirokazu, Takahashi Yūji, Hirano Keizō, Ōoka Makoto, and Bekku Sadao (*Ongaku Geijutsu* December 20, 1962, 6–44), followed in by a long article by Akiyama (*Ongaku Geijutsu* March 21, 1963, 16–23).

Why did Cage's appearance cause such deep shock in the world of Japanese music? Tone affirms that, "the whole notion of 'John Cage shock' was a fiction! Cage's music and ideas would not be such a shock—Japanese people accepted them with relative ease. After all Cage himself said that Japan was the first country to recognize and understand what he was doing" (Kaneda 2013). In the same interview, Tone quoted a review by Tircuit published in *Japan Times* of one of Cage's concerts, in which he wrote that "what Cage was doing was something that had been developing in Japan for quite a while," probably referring to Group Ongaku's music.

Ultimately, on the one hand we have a radical avant-garde group of people working on the basis of ideas that were even more radical than those of Cage, and on the other a sort of mature internationally connected contemporary music world which had been elaborating a concept of avant-garde since the immediate postwar years, and wished to develop a language that would be individual, innovative, and capable of freeing Japanese music from its sense of inferiority in regard to European and Western musical culture. Listening to works by U.S. composers echoing Zen Buddhist concepts and totally freed from any of the European torments regarding musical language (series, end of music, alea . . .) was a shock for the Japanese contemporary music world. In my understanding it was like seeing a beautiful face without makeup, that very much resembled one's own, after spending years learning to apply lipstick, powder, and rouge.

This is demonstrated by the fact that the debate was conducted with the usual depth and refinement, with many references to the latest European intellectual trends—existentialism, structuralism, deconstruction—but it was only after several years that the Japanese began to wonder what was genuinely Zen in Cage's ideas (Kakinuma 2005, 180–207; Shiina 2003).

PERFORMANCE AND THE MEANING OF "MUSIC"—*MA* 間

Numerous musical metaphors in the output of Japanese Fluxus artists (and what they contributed to the movement as a whole) show they were convinced of the importance of the *performative* aspects of music. Conceiving music primarily as performance is deeply rooted in non-idealistic Japan

music practice; and in analyzing how the concept of sound in Japan differed from that in the West, it can be seen that the performative aspect is also a distinguishing characteristic of the Japanese experience of music. More specifically, it was a vital legacy from the 1950s: of Gutai Group, the first group of artists ever to shift from the visual to the gestural, often indicated by Maciunas as having inspired Fluxus practice;[5] and of Jikken Kōbō, the close friends Akiyama, Yuasa, and Takemitsu, who produced in 1953 the first ever musical event with visual elements (a slide projection). It is a quality which surfaced consistently in the avant-garde of 1960s musical life in Japan, and it continued through the 1970s in the avant-garde, somewhat more orthodox-style concerts in the New Direction and Cross Talk series—so that they acquired a certain Fluxus aura.[6]

In music, differently from in other arts, the performers cooperate in building a *time* which is *shared* with the audience, and this is the most important meaning of acting musically. The concept of music as a unique and representational event consisting in the very time in which it is happening, shared, and experienced equally by artist(s) and listener(s), regardless of whether it consists of sounds, applies to the many Fluxus "concerts," "pieces," or "music" without sound.[7] The frame of time in which this happens is called music, and relates to what Shiomi realized while improvising with Group Ongaku: "When different timbres crowd, at a climax all the sounds become transparent, and you can't distinguish them any more . . . it is a radical music that allows consciousness of the time as a frame" (Conversation, Osaka, November 25, 2011). After the end of the Group Ongaku experience, Shiomi conceived her *Endless boxes* as a representation of a "musical diminuendo." The work consisted in thirty-four interlocking paper boxes of diminishing size, and the composer explained: "I was thinking about transparent music, music in which nothing could be heard but the ceaseless passage of time. And I thought, perhaps this could be presented to the senses not necessarily through sound, but by some other method." It constituted the beginning of her relationship with Fluxus: when she showed them to Paik in 1963, he immediately put her in touch with Maciunas who was so enthusiastic about the work that he produced and paid for the boxes, allowing her to buy a plane ticket and accept his invitation to New York.

The focus on the interaction between the onlooker and the artist was at the core of the thought of Marcel Duchamp, one of the Fluxus masters, who maintained that art is always based on two poles, the painter and the viewer: "Painting is made not by the painter but by those who look at it and accord it their favor" (Judowitz 1998, 183).

The importance of the relationship producer/listener in Chinese music and, consequently, in Japanese music, too—in comparison with the objectivity of the work in Western thought—is extremely important. As said before, Toshi

Ichiyanagi told me, he could not ignore the listener as he saw Cage was doing (Conversation, Tokyo, October 15, 1989).

There is in Japanese culture an underlying feeling of "substantial sharing" among musicians, and between them and listeners, where this sharing comprehends space and time. Fundamental to this is a very precise definition of the perception of space and time in Japanese aesthetics that is called *ma* 間—even if it is not an academic concept, however, and is more a pervasive term of language (Minami 1983, Nitschke 1988, Galliano 2004). The character used is *kan,* which depicts a door with the sun inside it (though *kan* was interpreted in classical poetry as the moon observed through a window by two lovers). *Ma* might be translated as "*a between,*" that is, *between* treated as a noun and not as a preposition. It is the time between events, the space between objects, the relationship between people, or that moment between thoughts in a person's mind. It is the white space in a pen-and-ink drawing, a pause between notes, or the moment in a *shite* dance in the last section of a Noh play when all movement is frozen. In daily language *ma* is also used to talk about chronological time, physical space, and the "space" between an emotional feeling and the object of that emotion. It often defines the specific mood of a relationship, be it among objects or people. Because *ma* often defines an apparent hiatus in a flow, it might seem to indicate a break or interruption, but this is not the case. *Ma* is that element of implicit potential in all concepts of separation (spatial, temporal, emotional, or whatever), whereby the space between becomes a "journey between." And so space as defined by *ma* becomes not a moment of division but a moment of union that lends character to what would otherwise remain nondescript and colorless. In other words *ma* describes neither space nor time, but the tension connecting people, sounds, and objects. Indeed, one of the greatest compliments for a performance of a piece of music is to say that it is "full of *ma.*" What is meant by this compliment is that the individual sounds of the music did not occur in a vacuum and that the silences in the music were full of a sense of "betweenness," or *ma*, for *ma* reflects aesthetic sensitivity.

As said before regarding frugality, the young musicians were suspicious and indifferent to any kind of Japanese tradition and yet, especially in respect with time, a cultural attitude was internalized together with the language and other identifying connotations of Japanese culture; *ma* represents an element of that particular sensitivity.

The relationship between producer and onlooker or listener as equals, and the focus on the shared *ma* is set up as a sort of open space to accommodate more. "Brecht's stated understanding of his events as 'an extension of music' opening onto a kind of total, multi-sensorial perceptual experience" (Kotz 83) I think is applicable to Kosugi's or Ono's kind of events. Ono's *Snow Piece* for tape was discussed in chapter 4; what should also be noted is its new and

highly relational meaning to being defined as music. Music appears here not as something to be heard but to be thought of in order to maintain its high meaning and purity—like the one hinted at in the many Chinese classical pictures that show a lute without strings on the knees of a wise man—which is probably at the roots of the highly poetic idea of this *musikalisches Offer* by Ono.

SCORES

In the radical avant-garde trend of the late 1950s and early 1960s, many young, committed composers on the international avant-garde music scene began to explore innovative instrumental and vocal techniques and to introduce aleatoric practice in their work, establishing a new relationship with the interpreter.[8] This included the production of new notations, which progressively conformed to a network of new musical symbols (Karkoschka 1965). In a sense music acquired new visual facets, and the most radical works proposed "scores" that took a different path, partially disengaged from sound and investigating it from the visual point of quantitative volume, shape, and color, as a new way to communicate ideas about music. Even though the scores represented sound, they did so in a colorful way, sometimes using tablature, in which it is not the sound outcome that is indicated but the gesture required to produce it. The scores of Fluxus pieces/events are partially directions for producing gestures, sometimes a hint for concentration where sound is not a must, and what is being sought is the shared experience of focusing attention on some specificity. It was this that was Fluxus artists' objective: music as a shared time/experience, capable of stimulating a new awareness of a new present. The Japanese members of the group were among the first to identify music and its circumstances—performance, gesture, players, space, and above all *scores*—as a specific locus.

In February 1961, in the same issue in which the previously mentioned article by Ichiyanagi entitled "John Cage" appeared, Ichiyanagi published and explained many of his own graphic scores for piano and string quartet, together with *Music for Electric Metronomes*, a meandering journey of metronome sounds based on chance and interpretation that he had written in New York in April 1960, two years before the similar piece by Ligeti *Poème Symphonique For 100 Metronomes*. At the performance of his radical and controversial works held on November 30, 1961 at Sōgetsu Hall, Ichiyanagi created a sensation by "displaying his graphic scores as art in the lobby and offering performance of them on stage" (Everett 2009, 197).

Shortly afterward, from December 20 to 29, Minami Gallery held an exhibition of works by Gruppo T, the Italian artists Giovanni Anceschi, Davide Boriani, Gianni Colombo, and Gabriele Devecchi. This collective had opened

new research scenarios and experimented with new operational methods. They started by producing both collective and individual works based on the effects of variations in material, surface, color, and so on, without any personal sign of the artist, and open to the intervention of the audience. All the group's collective and solo manifestations were entitled "Miriorama" (never-ending visions, from the Greek "*orao*," to see, and "*myrio*," which denotes a nearly uncountable quantity), numbered consecutively 1–14 in order to stress the continuity of a shared program. In 1961 the group was invited by the artist Takiguchi Shūzō to exhibit at Minami Gallery in Tokyo and sent "Miriorama 9," consisting of fifteen ultra-light artworks. This was one of only two times Gruppo T exhibited work outside Italy.[9] Like the members of Fluxus, the artists in Gruppo T wished to present installations as scores for works of art conceived in four dimensions, including the idea of time. Another shared characteristic was their welcoming contributions from members of the audience in the collective completion of the work. The attention they attracted from the Japanese intellectual world demonstrates the latter specific sensitivity in this regard.

The next exhibition at Minami Gallery, held in February, was *tone yasunao one man show*; the gallery then hosted the ambitious *Sekai no atarashii gakufu ten* (Exhibition of World Graphic Scores, which I will come back to shortly), followed by a Takiguchi exhibition entitled "My heart marks the time" (Ōta 1985, passim). During the years that followed, Minami Gallery held regular exhibitions of work by Ay-O. The gallery, which was managed by the intelligent, dynamic dealer Shimizu Kusuo, a devotee of avant-garde art, who was a close friend of the influential critic Tōno Yoshiaki, was one of the private galleries, such as Naika in the Shinbashi district and Tokyo Gallery in the Ginza district of Tokyo, committed to a type of avant-garde that hosted Fluxus events and artists.

From April 16 to 26, 1962 Tokyo Gallery hosted the exhibition *Yonin no sakkyokuka* (Four Composers), presenting scores by four Japanese musicians: Ichiyanagi Toshi, Mayuzumi Toshirō, Takahashi Yūji, and Takemitsu Tōru, with a performance by Ono Yōko, whose name was written in *katakana* to signal that she belonged more to a Western than Japanese avant-garde, since she had only been back in Tokyo for about a month after spending many years in the United States (Yoshimoto 1991, 39, 284). In the same month, for the magazine *Geijutsu Techō* Takiguchi Shūzō published a special issue entitled "Gendai no imēji," in which Takiguchi discussed the ongoing life of images from the perspective of "Words of imaging humans," the title he used for his introduction. Only one score is listed as being part of the exhibit: the second version, for strings, of *Corona* by Takemitsu, an aleatoric work scored together with artist Sugiura Kōhei. Akiyama, who had attended the exhibition *Musikalische Graphik*, curated by Roman Haubenstock-Ramati for the

Donaueschingen Musiktage in 1959, published "Gakufu no kakumei. Zukei gakufu. Yonin no gakufuten wo miru" (The revolution of scores. Graphic scores, at the exhibition of scores by four—friends, as he defines them in the article) in *Bijutsu Techō* in June. It is significant that at the same time, Sylvano Bussotti and Giuseppe Chiari inaugurated the exhibition "Musica e Segno" at Galleria Numero in Rome, with works by Feldman, Cage, Berio, Rzewski, and Schnebel, as well as works by a number of Fluxus artists (Higgins, Maciunas, LaMonte Young, and Paik). Bussotti had met Paik and Young, together with David Tudor, in Darmstadt, where he was taking part in the famous Ferienkurse and in the social life connected to the gathering, sometimes dancing on tables at night (Conversation, Venice, November 19, 2004) and at the time Fluxus's musicality was what most closely resembled his. The Rome exhibition was the two Italians' first participation in an international Fluxus event. They subsequently joined the group and scores they submitted were performed at the Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik concerts in Wiesbaden from September 1 to 23. After Wiesbaden, this festival moved to Cologne, Paris, Düsseldorf, Amsterdam, The Hague, London, and Nice and in the programs we find the names of many Japanese composers: Kosugi, Ichiyanagi, Tone, Ono, and Akiyama, as well as Matsudaira, Ezaki, and Takemitsu, testifying to the continuity that there was between different strata of the avant-garde. Ichiyanagi and Matsudaira agree that the scores were probably brought to Germany by David Tudor, since his European Fluxus tour began shortly after his performance at Sōgetsu Hall in Tokyo.

At the same time as the exhibit at Sōgetsu Hall, from November 10 to 20, 1962 the abovementioned Exhibition of World Graphic Scores was held at Minami Gallery—a bigger exhibition of scores, similarly including a network of international participants. It was organized by Akiyama Kuniharu and Ichiyanagi Toshi to open during John Cage and David Tudor's first visit to Japan.[10] Some hundred and fifty scores by five Japanese and thirty-three international composers and musicians were exhibited in the small gallery, and during the ten days the show remained open many events, concerts, and performances were held. The presentation, written by the two organizers, stressed the relationship between Cage and the new concept of music, open to the fortuity of life expressed in graphic scores, in opposition to the "small universe" of traditional music expressed using staff notation. In one of Akiyama's sketch books, the list of scores by Japanese composers comprehends "*Corona II* by Takemitsu, *Ekstasis* by Takahashi (pp. 1–4), *Instruction* by Matsudaira Yoriaki (全), *Anagram* by Tone (全)," where the sign 全 is intended to be the entire score. *Grapefruit in the world of park* by Ono Yōko is listed but was subsequently crossed out, and the list of works by Ichiyanagi includes:

Music for electric metronomes (全)
Duetto for P. & Strings
Stanzas ? n. 1 / ? n. 2 [sic]
IBM
Music for piano n. 1–7
FOR STRINGS #1, #2,
SOLO FOR KOTO
Pile[11]

Akiyama may have removed the score by Ono from the exhibition because he felt it was an *event*, or even a narrative score rather than a *graphic* one.

Scores of this kind, "tightly focused, extremely compressed linguistic structures which produce a more cognitive, even conceptual response," (Kotz 2001, 83) are a step ahead of the graphic scores. Both establish a different relationship with the interpreter, who takes on an interpretive responsibility of different degrees, but while for most graphic scores (including those by Cage) the interpreter must perform the piece in compliance with the composer's intentions, the most radical of the graphic scores, like those of Schnebel and Ichiyanagi, and all of the Fluxus event scores, instead present very little material, mostly a short sentence on which the performer is asked to concentrate, in order to produce something s/he considers a piece of music corresponding to the conceptual or even prescriptive input from the score. We are once again in the context of experience, something which cannot be reproduced, that was intended to build a different, shared consciousness in all participants, whether they were performers or listeners. For Ichiyanagi, liberating sounds through spontaneous musical response signified the liberation of the vital principle of conscious life. He developed his own techniques and aesthetic approach in composing graphic scores in the years from 1959 to 1964. The score for *Music for Electric Metronome*, completed in New York in April 1960, was added to *An Anthology*; it can be seen as visual art, designed as it is with red circles, dots, numbers in different sizes and different kinds of lines.[12] Anywhere from three to eight players can perform the piece choosing one of multiple paths. The players can operate a metronome while performing a single action (clapping or whistling) without moving; or they can perform an action of displacement (walking, jumping); or perform a single action using an external object. Throughout the performance, Ichiyanagi cautions the performers not to be swayed by the visual layout of the score. In a 1962 text, he clearly envisaged the death of the idea of the performer as a "score worker" complying with the demands imparted by the composer (Ichiyanagi 1962). In his thinking, the perspective regarding alea or chance operation, or allowing chance to be part of music would shift attention from the correspondence between music and the composer's creativity, to focus on

the musicality of the performers and their free expression in the complexity of the contemporary world. Ichiyanagi was critical of performers who acquiesced to composers' demands, and what emerges from his words is a call for the abolition of all hierarchies and the full realization of each person. Surely performing a Beethoven symphony requires the diligent work of some sixty "score workers," but Ichiyanagi and fellow Fluxus artists suggested that they see music differently and embrace another idea of "music," questioning the very concept of "score."

NOTES

1. Lieb (2013, 20).
2. The three concerts presented works by Ichiyanagi, Kosugi and by ex Gutai members Motonaga Sadamasa et al.; see the program at http://www.arttowermito.or.jp/1960/music-e.html (consulted October 2013).
3. Oral History, Interview with Philip Corner by Kakinuma Toshie and Luciana Galliano, September 20 2015; published on the website http://www.kcua.ac.jp/arc/ar/philipcorner_en, p. 47. (25/5/2016).
4. For a description of this event, see Everett (2009).
5. See Introduction n.9.
6. For an introduction to these concert series, see Galliano (2002, 221 ff).
7. Perhaps the musicologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez's definition of music is applicable here, that is, "music is whatever people choose to recognize as such" (Nattiez 1990, 47–48).
8. There is a selection of Japanese articles on graphic notation compiled by Kaneda Miki and Uesaki Sen is in MoMA's online resource Post, at http://post.at.moma.org/content_items/483-moving-forms-writings-on-graphic-notation (viewed August 23, 2014).
9. They also exhibited in Ulm, Germany, where Anceschi taught at the Hochschule für Gestaltung.
10. Kaneda, in her article for Post/MoMA, translated the title as *An Exhibition of Graphic Scores*, perhaps because the title of this exhibition in Akiyama's notebook is "Exhibition of Graphic Scores," catalogue A.1.28 in the MoMA Queens Archives.
11. See note 10. I have made a literal translation from Japanese.
12. Its full title was *An Anthology of Chance Operations Concept Art Anti-Art Indeterminacy Improvisation Meaningless Work Natural Disasters Plans of Action Stories Diagrams Music Poetry Essays Dance Constructions Mathematics Compositions*, subtitled "An Anthology, an artist's book that used the indeterminacy inspired by John Cage." It was co-published in 1963 by LaMonte Young and Jackson MacLow in New York City.

Chapter 7

Fluxus Off

Conclusions

One day we wake up to be thankful about basic things.[1]

In a thought-provoking series of studies speculating on the transnational foundations of avant-garde performance, (Harding, Rouse 2006) David Goodman examined and analyzed the Japanese *angura*[2] and speculated on the *nostalgie* of the Japanese avant-garde, since it "has achieved its greatest success, not when it aimed at some as yet undefined future utopian goal, but rather when it tried to recapture and rearticulate a lost or otherwise irretrievable past" (Goodman 2006, 250). While this may be true for that part of avant-garde recognized and metabolized as a portion of the overall picture, it does not apply to the artists who were part of Japanese Fluxus. As I have tried to show, in the texture of their works, Fluxus artists in general, but mainly the Japanese Fluxus artists, anticipated by decades the end of metanarratives on social projects, embracing a praxis of life which is political in its private dimension and in the 1960s had already started referring to such contemporary concepts of social economy as *sharing* and *cooperative behavior* (Stephany 2015). In his 2014 essay *The Rise of Sharing. Fourth-stage Consumer Society in Japan*, Miura Atsushi, writing on "the history of consumerism in Japan" (Miura 2014, xvi) stated:

> The United States in the 1950s strikes me as similar in many ways to Japan's third-stage consumer society. High school students rode around in their own cars, and homes overflowed with merchandise that could hardly be called necessities. Again, in the Vietnam-era antiwar movement and the counter-culture explosion of the late 1960s and early 1970s we can find trends in American society that presaged Japan's later fourth-stage consumer society. The value placed on a simple life, on ecology, on Zen, on the do-it-yourself ethic all resembles what we are seeing in contemporary Japan today. . . . The United States was one of the wellsprings of today's fourth-stage consumer society in Japan. (xviii)

Fluxus undoubtedly played a part in these new anti-consumer trends, but Miura neglected the extent of their importance in Japan, where however, both the anti-Vietnam-War movement and the counter-culture explosion as radical avant-garde happened at the beginning, not at the end of the 1960s.

LOCATING THE JAPANESE

I have tried to highlight the main events in the Fluxus movement in Japan and discuss the ideas of those that participated in them, inferring the history of the movement from their work/activity as a way to define the Fluxus identity (Baas 2011).

In doing so, I have taken into consideration a number of Fluxus artists, selecting them on the basis of their nationality, and in chapter 1, *Japan, the outside world and the U.S.*, I discussed the issue of Japanese singularity. These are, however, dangerous grounds. Even where it is obvious that cultural connotations are present in the work of an artist, it is nevertheless difficult to pinpoint the specific loci of a cultural identity without generalizing and perhaps neutralizing the singular identity of the artist as an individuum. It is also difficult to go beyond false binary oppositions like Japan versus the West, radicals versus realists, modernity versus tradition. The paths are more intricate and difficult to trace, and issues of "culture location" arise, in locating the eccentric position of Japan which is neither a Western nor an underdeveloped country and not even a former colony—whose status can perhaps be described as "semi-colonial" (Harootunian 2000, 37). Criticizing post-colonial scholars and studies, Masao Miyoshi was trenchant in affirming that in the "double processes of colonization and decolonization. . . . Western culture was to be the normative civilization, and the indigenous cultures were banished as premodern and marginal" (Miyoshi 1993, 729). Miyoshi saw the continuity of colonialism in the transnational capitalism of global corporations, and pointed to the "cultural studies and multiculturalism [which] provide students and scholars with an alibi for their complicity in the TNC version of neocolonialism" (751). I touched on the issue of the relationship between Japan and the United States in chapter 1 p. 2, while the then widespread feeling of Japan being a post- or semi- or neo-colony of the United States was—with its wide range of emotional nuances from resentment to gratitude—indubitable. A number of Japanese Fluxus works seem to be an attempt, a declaration to make manifest if not resist American neocolonialism—for example, Hi Red Center's *Shelter Plan*. Ultimately, in addition to condemning the invasive presence of (U. S.) consumerism, they were lucidly testifying to one of the first open manifestations of the new colonialism: "the Korean War (whose origins are not as yet unambiguous) . . . [thanks to

which the U.S.] GNP rose by 8.5 percent in 1950 and 10.3 percent in 1951" (732–733). Yet, although Fluxus artists were convinced opponents of Japanese participation in that act of economic and political aggression, they failed to take part in protest actions. It is meaningful that, as Maciunas many time said, the Japanese were firmly on his side in some difficult political circumstances, like the picketing of Stockhausen's *Originale*, or in disagreements between members of the group (Shiomi, Conversation, Osaka, November 25, 2011), because they shared a cultural attitude, including visceral anti-U.S. capitalism. But there was no true revolutionary thrust: clearly the Japanese artists, who all came from well-off families and some of whom were from privileged, affluent backgrounds, were not really interested in trying to rise up the social ladder. They were instead intent on focusing on their own aesthetic intentions, manifesting their inner disquiet, and addressing the minutiae of daily life. As Ina Blom has noted, their work "collapses the notion of art-time into real time" (Friedman 1998, 67).

In response this makes for the performative aspects in what I call "acting Fluxus." Harding and Rouse argued that we need to conceptualize "the avant-garde gesture as first and foremost a performative act" (Harding, Rouse 2006, 1), which represents a cultural understanding that "can shift away from the Eurocentrism that has dominated avant-garde studies almost since its inception" (2). Moving toward a "transnational conception of the avant-garde" makes it possible to recognize "sites of unacknowledged cultural hybridity and negotiation" (Ibid.). In chapter 6 p. 94, I emphasized the originality of the fundamental performative aspect of the avant-garde music scene in Japan, an element conceived and put into practice by those who became the advocates of "acting Fluxus" in Japan: Akiyama, Kosugi, Shiomi, Ono, and so on. In this sense what I call "acting Fluxus" explicitly separates (see Group Ongaku poetics) its own opposition to art institutions and dominant social thinking from the "official" Japanese avant-garde, which may have had links with what Harding and Rouse called an "influential European cultural commodity," though it would be unfair to simply see the vast Japanese avant-garde movement in the postwar years in these terms. Yet in this respect, the debate mentioned in chapter 1, p. 10, *Aesthetic discussions, critical debate, works*, although internal to the Japanese critical understanding of Japanese avant-garde art, represents a convincing contrast to the conceptual freedom of Fluxus artists while representing the theoretical background of the aesthetic trend in society.

I suggested in the Introduction that there were close links of coexistence between advanced capitalistic societies and the avant-garde. The relationship of mutual existence (even complicity) between avant-garde and capitalism is widely recognized, evidenced by such diverse theories as those of Clement Greenberg—at the very start of its conceptualization—or by the Frankfurt School (Adorno, Benjamin). The classic *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974)

by the German literary critic Peter Bürger saw insistence on bringing art back into the sphere of daily experience, in order to gain effective power for change, as one characteristic of avant-gardes (Bürger 1984, 36 ff.). Given their intimate perception of the overlap between art and life (discussed in chapter 3), with their collective "acting" or even "living" Fluxus—prevailing to "produce" Fluxus works—, the small group of Japanese Fluxus artists fully corresponds to this criteria. Nevertheless the marginality of their output and their moving in a protean collective that was difficult to define helped them to resist the neutralization dialectics existing (as Bürger argued) between the establishment and the avant-garde for nearly half a century, remaining a reference for subsequent avant-garde artists worldwide.

Another interesting characteristic of the Japanese Fluxus artists is that they literally moved out of their singularity, traveling to the United States and connecting with foreign networks of artists, to escape from what Kubota described as the stifling (male chauvinist) reality of Japan (Yoshimoto 2005, 174). Lushetich stated that "Fluxus created *alternative relational paradigms*" (emphasis in the original; Lushetich 2014, 21) arguing that Fluxus helped "to dismantle the elaborate system of otherisation by which duality is held in place and to create alternative relational systems" (22) and this is certainly true of work by the group's Japanese artists. They somehow managed to move beyond the binary oppositions mentioned above. They annihilated the idea of a border being something with two sides, taking up residence in what can be seen as a realm at the *edge*, the margin, in its multifaceted meaning of being a limit (economic and otherwise) and of somehow being what denies whatever marginalizes or whatever is marginalized.

In Situationist terms, negation relates to another meaning of producing/being on the edge, one that for decades has excluded the Fluxus output from the art market: creating works that were destroyed in their been completed. A list of such pieces would include many works by Ono, Paik smashing musical instruments to smithereens, and many works by Shiomi (*Shadow Piece*, *Water Music*). Obviously all Fluxus musical events were impermanent like any piece of music.

WERE THE JAPANESE FLUXUS ARTISTS SITUATIONISTS?

Fluxus art succeeded in neutralizing the mechanism of reciprocity between avant-garde art and capitalism, thanks to its finding a place at/as the edge, which also served as a way to avoid entering the *spectacle* of Debordian vision. Japanese Fluxus was firmly situated in "the spatial field of the dérive [which] may be precisely delimited or vague, depending on whether the activity is

aimed at studying a terrain or at emotional disorientation" (Andreotti, Costa 1996, 24). Both "studying a terrain" and "emotional disorientation" are obvious Fluxus issues, practiced in the real through technical skills and artistic intent—what else could many of Kosugi's works be? They incarnate the egalitarian Situationist concept: "Our ideas are in everybody's mind."[3] In addition, even more so, Kosugi conceived his work as an experience without any purposeful assumptions—cfr. his statement quoted in chapter 2, p. 25, *Experiments in visionary Concretism*. As recalled by the musician and colleague Blue Gene Tyranny, before each session, Kosugi always repeated "No ideas, absolutely no ideas!" (Conversation, New York, May 25, 2015).

In chapter 8, "Negation and Consumption Within Culture" of *The Society of the Spectacle*, Debord addressed the meaning of culture in the society of the spectacle, as "the meaning of an insufficiently meaningful world" (183). He proceeded to discuss the dissolution of art and then concluded that "this art is necessarily *avant-garde*, and at the same time it *does not actually exist*. Its vanguard is its own disappearance." The coincidence with Maciunas's ideas about "teaching people the needlessness of art" is complete; I touched on the issue in chapter 3, p. 44, *Interpretation*. Debord continued by propounding a "critical theory of the spectacle [which] cannot be true unless it unites with the practical current of negation in society" (203) and averring that this negation would presume a "resumption of revolutionary class struggle" (ibid.), but, as noted above, this did not happen in the case of the affluent Japanese Fluxus artists. Their work, however, complied, at least in part, with Debord's critical theory, which declared that art "must be dialectical in both form and content" (204), and that this could be achieved by using a "style . . . [that] while it makes concrete use of existing concepts . . . simultaneously recognizes their rediscovered *fluidity* and their inevitable destruction" (205, emphasis in the original). The congruencies are indisputable.[4] It is precisely what Japanese Fluxus artists did: they "made use of existing concepts" and in doing so rediscovered their fluidity of meaning and consistence. "This style, which includes a critique of itself, must express the domination of the present critique *over its entire past*. . . . It is manifested by the *reversal* of established relationships between concepts and by the *détournement* of all the achievements of earlier critical efforts" (206, all emphasis in original). *Détournement*—which means "diversion"—serves to define the Fluxus attitude: focusing on details or gestures, as they did, the meaning is subject to a diversion, an enlightening diversion. In the discussion that follows, Debord stated: "Ideas improve. The meaning of words plays a part in that improvement. Plagiarism is necessary" (207). His dictum applies to all Japanese Fluxus event scores and the artists' unabashed use of pieces of high art. Shortly afterward, we are told that "Détournement is the flexible language of anti-ideology" (208). I see the diversion of meanings—created by focusing

on something at an unexpected distance or by interpreting it in an overly literal way—to be one of the best descriptions of what was entailed in acting Fluxus. The Situationists' final goal, as expressed by Debord at the end of *La Societé. . .*, seems to me to perfectly describe what acting Fluxus was and I will therefore quote it in its entirety.

> The self-emancipation of our time is an emancipation from the material based on inverted truth. This "historic mission of establishing truth in the world" can be carried out neither by the isolated individual nor by atomized and manipulated masses, but only and always by the class that is able to dissolve all classes by reducing all power to the de-alienating form of realized democracy—to councils in which practical theory verifies itself and surveys its own action. Only there are individuals "directly linked to world history"—there where dialogue has armed itself to impose its own conditions. (221)

I cannot fully unravel this Situationist reasoning in terms of clarity, but wish to note the importance of the fact that "establishing truth in the world" seems to be connected to the use of raw, simple materials *in the real world* for creating art, and is not something that can be achieved by artists operating alone, which was a common feeling among Fluxus artists, especially Japanese ones, who were culturally collaborative and positively experienced art together in their desire to work for democracy. As said, Shiomi explained: "Being one of many was a way to find courage to do what you had conceived" (Conversation, Osaka, November 25, 2011).

"Verifying practical theory" was a common practice in acting Fluxus: an event score, a gesture, some indication on a piece of paper were intended to be directions on how to produce a piece of art capable of leading to "emancipation from the material based on inverted truth." The quote's last words, on the "dialogue [that] has armed itself to impose its own conditions" clearly correspond to the Fluxus disposition to coexistence (or even cohabitation), paritarian exchange and egalitarianism, approaching what Jürgen Habermas subsequently called communicative action, equipped with a poetical thrust to fantasy, wonder, astonishment, and freedom.

The freedom which these artists envisaged is larger than libertarian freedom; it is the freedom that turns into Paik's *caosmos*: the imperative that we destroy barriers and remain open to chaos, to a space that admits/contains chaos. In this fertile space only something which is really new and true can be born. As Paik said, "I cannot have any pre-imagined vision before working" (Hanhardt, Jones 2004; originally published in *Fluxus cc Five Three* 1963). The ties with Kosugi's request that pieces be played with "no ideas" are evident. The obvious consequence of this attitude is the rejection of art as a fraud: theirs is a vision of the artistic work as a building of caosmos-space (even if this were to entail destruction), working within absolute reality. The

development of this innovative, radical conceptualization of the future takes into account the roles of communication technologies in the expanding global media culture. In this Paik was a true pioneer, recognizing the real pressures of a world fabricated by the media in its physical appearance, as in his many TV-set based works. In general, Fluxus's brilliant manipulation of materials goes in the direction of "straightening up" reality, that is, truth.

CONFLICT EXCLUDED: NEW ATTITUDES

Young artists who "acted Fluxus" in Japan were prone to a predictable attitude of distance, loss of social involvement as a practical political attitude, the feeling of not wholly belonging, and longing for something else which they felt could be found in the freedom of "producing art" that conformed to no traditional scheme or accepted concept. This feeling was described by Yoshida Yoshishige, the renowned director who in the 1960s presented films such as *Blood is Dry*: "Our way of thinking will not fall into line with the thinking of society"[5]—by which he meant not even the thinking of a progressive society. Yet their attitude was highly political in the sense of the Greek *politikos*: "of citizens, pertaining to the state and its administration and to public life." In the 1960s a rallying cry was "The private is political," a political argument of Gramscian origin used by the student movement and second-wave feminism. It underscored the connections between personal experience and larger social and political structures. It was the Japanese, who had grown up in and were members of a highly integrated society and were culturally respectful of others, that strengthened this aspect of social consciousness, especially in consonance with Maciunas.

Their highly critical stance toward the social sphere did not lead them to take up guns, occupy public spaces, or engage in protest demonstrations. They were not really interested in changing society, as their parents' generation had been and as their contemporaries in Western countries were. Yet in their work it is easy to detect a higher degree of social commitment in general than in the work of the United States and European Fluxus artists. Their contribution should be seen from the perspective of their being part of a bottom up, small-scale but significant social revolution, and one that was highly innovative: on the edge of the end of great narratives on "progress," having witnessed the increasing commodification of society, they brought their inner awareness of what was happening and sense of responsibility to the scene and in many instances foresaw the questions now being raised about the global economic and social crisis (Brown, Timmerman 2015, 36). Examples of this are Ono's attitude toward gifts in a youthful work in which the gift was flowers on the street, and the various mentions of gifts in many of her "musical" works.[6] While many young

people in Western countries in the 1960s dreamed they would be able to change society and the world peacefully (although in some countries, not surprisingly Italy and Germany, there were armed radical groups), it quickly became clear to the Japanese Fluxus artists that people in positions of power would never give in to demands for change and that the only goal they could achieve (what is now being advocated by activists from civil rights movements to the New Age fringe) was to find absolute inner freedom through inner change in the direction of sharing and cooperation.[7] In his essay *The Rise of Sharing*, Miura Atsushi saw fourth-stage consumer society in Japan as based on sharing. In chapter 1, p. 5, *Artists' attitudes to consumer society*, I analyzed the differences in attitudes toward consumerism in Japan's integrated society and in Western countries, which seems to me to be the key to what distinguished the Japanese from the U.S. and European members of Fluxus. It was also somehow what made even works that were tinged with playfulness serious (although "serious playfulness" may seem to be an oxymoron). They were not "jokers," as Maciunas asserted; they were more similar to Pierrots, as was expressed in the title of a 1968 event which I will discuss shortly, and that in my opinion concludes the authentic period of Fluxus in Japan. After this event, the normalization of the avant-garde and its involvement in the great project of Expo 70, with all its necessary financial compromises, would change the outlook dramatically.

THE ENVIRONMENT

There was a new reading of the concept of environment by the Japanese Fluxus-like avant-garde artists. The innate sense of continuity between human society and the environment typical of Japanese culture was further sensitized by the events of the war and the atomic bomb strikes against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and this led to their concern for the natural world and a new approach to thinking about it, which represented another aspect of their greater awareness.

Environment was a very important topic both for Fluxus and for the coming official event of Expo 1970. Kakinuma Toshie reminded me that the attention to environment originated from Alan Kaprow, and was diffused through Ichiyanagi and others in Japan. Ichiyanagi will compose two pieces of *Environmental Music* for the Expo 70. The Environment group (Envairanmento-no-kai) was also instrumental for the development of the issue.

An event entitled *Kūkan kara kankyō he* (*From Space to Environment*) was presented at the Sōgetsu Art Center on November 14, 1966, in conjunction with an exhibition with the same title at the Matsuya Department Store Gallery (November 11–16). Yoshimoto Midori has examined the significance of the emerging concept of *kankyō* (environment) "as a site/catalyst for a 'dynamic relationship between humans and their surroundings,'" as was

stated in the flyer (Yoshimoto 2013, 17). In an earlier essay, printed in 2008, she used the term "environment" to mean "a precursor to the later popularized term *intermedia*" (Yoshimoto 2008, 26), since the event resulted from the cooperative efforts of thirty-eight multidisciplinary artists and critics. It comprised a variety of techniques and its goal, as stated in the manifesto, was as said to establish a "dynamic relationship between a human and his or her surroundings" (Ibid.). The Sōgetsu Art Center evening, called *From Space to Environment—Happening*, presented works by Ay-O, Yamaguchi, Ichiyanagi, Takemitsu, and Akiyama, and *Compound View I* by Shiomi, not listed in the flyer.[8] On the MoMA Post website there is a brief description of the event by Yoshimoto. I fully agree with her conclusion that although these performances were presented as happenings, "they were closer to Fluxus Events in their brevity and content, which encouraged the audience to rethink aspects of their daily lives and environments" (Yoshimoto 2013, 17).

This interest in the environment had been kindled, as stated in the introductory pamphlet, by the "self-collapsing" of different artistic genres that had resulted from the enormous changes occurring in the social context and people's lives. The environment which was the focus of the refined intellectual and artistic Japanese world was the *urban* one, technologically transformed and home to new drives and new objects. It was in this environment that art was trying to reconcile people's consciences with their experience of everyday life. One goal of the event was in fact "to promote a dynamic relationship between the viewer and the art" (Yoshimoto 2008, 28). Many works therefore incorporated interactive or kinetic elements. What I personally find of interest is that the concept of environment as what surrounds a person here is not a typical Western discontinuity between "nature" and "culture," but a given continuity. Elements that were part of the evening's presentation, like Ay-O's rainbow colors, or water turning blue inspected in Shiomi's piece, testify once more to the key difference between Fluxus works and those by other artists and musicians, including Cage: they do not use material as a technique for producing sounds or anything "art"; they use elements in their reality, placing them in the realm of art because of their poetic and philosophical background. They are not conceptual: their "concept" is a set of instructions that make it possible for an experience to be shared.

The whole Tokyo Fluxus circle was present at the Sōgetsu evening—Ichiyanagi, Shiomi, Akiyama, Takamatsu Jirō, Ay-O (who had returned from New York in 1966 after an eight-year absence from Japan)—plus fervent supporters like the art critic Tōno Yoshiaki, composer Takemitsu Tōru, poet and mentor Takiguchi Shūzō, Yamaguchi Katsuhiro and the brilliant polymath graphic designer and intellectual Awazu Kiyoshi, recipient of major awards, who was a central figure in the debate about art and environment.

A few weeks later, on December 18, Ay-O organized the piece *Happening for Sightseeing Bus Trip in Tokyo*, with the help of Shimizu Kusuo, founder

and director of Minami Gallery. Assistance was also provided by the artists Yamaguchi Katsuhiro and Akiyama Kuniharu. Because in Japan the word "happening" sounded trendier than "event," it was used in the title for the tour. Around noon on a cold day some sixty participants boarded two sightseeing buses that had been rented from the nearby Tokyo train station. In the manner of a commercial sightseeing tour, the buses made various stops around the city: an island in the bay, the Meiji Shrine, the Gokoku and Sengaku Temples, Tokyo Station. At these stops, the artists performed more than fifteen works defined as events, while others were referred to as happenings. The performers included Shiomi and Tone and a number of Fluxus-related artists and sympathizers. The performances included works by Alison Knowles, Daniel Spoerri, Willem de Ridder, Joe Jones, *One for Violin Solo* by Nam June Paik, *Mirror Piece*, and a version of *Water Music for Ben Patterson's 70th Birthday* by Shiomi Mieko. A review in *Bijutsu Techō* (February 1967) explained that these happenings were "environmental play": the participants paraded with balloons and/or toilet paper, smashed eggs on a TV then threw it in the sea, exchanged handshakes and bows in front of a temple, and so on (Kuro 2010, 216). Looking at the photographs taken by photographer Nishiyama Teruō it is possible to get an idea of this collective *dérive*, which all the participants seem to have enjoyed very much.[9] Visiting the famous tourist spots in Tokyo, they staged their events, insisting on using the space peacefully; occupying it in a way that was later called "critical mass," they performed their simple playful gestures of displacement of spatial meaning, replacing the normal use of each space with gentleness and fantasy.

The bus event was attended by personalities such as Takiguchi Shūzō and Tōno Yoshiaki. This continuity between different fields of aesthetic and intellectual production and the activity of Fluxus artists testifies to the integration of the Japanese art world, the dense network of reciprocal acknowledgment between musicians, critics, publishers, magazines, and committees, supported by a large cultivated audience eager to learn and experience something new. As Tone Yasunao said, "The Sōgetsu Hall seats about four hundred, and we had a full house at our concert. You wouldn't see that in New York even nowadays! The audience for avant-garde music in New York was really negligible" (Kaneda 2013, 21). It was in these circumstances that the work of a few radically experimental poetic artists transformed the general scene.

EXPOSE 1968

Early in the 1960s an original Japanese movement, Metabolism, was founded, "under the influence of architect Tange Kenzo. . . . [It] contended that architecture and cities should be designed to continually grow and change in the

same way as organic life. Keenly ambitious to give shape to a new future for Japan, the movement produced a large number of works" (Mori Art Museum 2011, 1). Key figures were architects—the most renowned being, besides Tange and Isozaki Arata, designers such as Awazu Kiyoshi, and other intellectuals (Kurokawa 1977). It is almost impossible to describe the imagination, intellectual rigor, and novelty of their projects. They understood "'Environment' as Relationship," art critic Kataoka Mami wrote in her essay in the catalogue of the exhibition *Metabolism. The City of the Future* (Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, September 17, 2011 to January 15, 2012), significantly opening with a quote from a classic of happening theory, the book by Allan Kaprow (Kaprow 1966). At first glance, some Metabolist works resemble works by Fluxus members: Asada Takashi's *Scale* (1955), consisting of a sheet of paper with lines of numbers, small figures, and colors; or the well-known *Shinjuku Terminal Redevelopment Project* (1960), an impressive combination of volumes, illustrated with a colorful ironic collage. In its Metabolist reprojection of time and space for future living, it is interesting that the group included Ichiyanagi Toshi, whose then radical musical project, comprehending time and space in the imaginative scores for *Music for Piano 1-7* (1959–1961), and ideas about what music should be like, were discussed in chapter 6.

There were other interesting continuities between this special architectural movement producing utopian projects and the avant-garde art world, in particular Fluxus. Based on similarities in vision, such as the need to think deeply about reality and decide whether to project it inward or outward, some of the main figures in the Metabolism movement worked together with Fluxus members. A very special event, Expose 1968, epitomized the continuity of that clash in thinking and new perspectives on the complexity of contemporary history. In the special issue of *Dezain Hihyō* (*The Design Review*) meant to be a catalogue of the intents of the event, the title is spelled *Ex-Pose '68 (#6 1968, dated April 1). Awazu Kiyoshi was the organizer, and other members of the committee were another founder of Metabolism, Kawazoe Noboru; group member Iijima Koichi; the three main art critics of the period, Nakahara Yusuke, Tōno Yoshiaki, and Haryū Ichirō; and the film director Matsumoto Toshio.

It was Awazu who gave the event its title, "Nani ka itte kure, ima sagasu," the translation of an exchange between Vladimir and Estragon in Samuel Beckett's play *En attendant Godot*: "Vladimir: Dis quelque chose! Estragon: Je cherche." The exchange occurs soon before the epochal statement "On attend Godot" uttered by an exasperated Vladimir, who would like Estragon to be more communicative, and *exposes* the treacherous reality of being, actually waiting for Godot. This, it seems to me, was the meaning of Expose 1968, the most politicized event held at Sōgetsu, serving as a sort of manifesto

contradictorily for and against the Expo 70 (the official event parodied in the title) and against the automatic renewal of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in 1970 (Uesaki, Conversation, Tokyo, February 7, 2015).

Starting in 1967, after bloody clashes at Haneda airport between police and demonstrators attempting to forcibly stop Prime Minister Sato from leaving for Vietnam, there had been a change in the Theater of Protest (Marotti 2009) with a shift to violence in the anti-war movement Beheiren, which was short for "Betonamu ni heiwa o!" Shimin rengō (the Japan "Peace for Vietnam!" Committee). Seen as a commercial event, Expo 70 was the target of Banpaku Hakai Kyōtōha (Expo 70 Destruction Joint-Struggle Group), connected with Japan's movement against the Vietnam War.

The number of student associations and others groups, the progressive involvement of citizens (*shimin*), and the extent of the protests paralleled those of 1960, to the point that some 350 students performed "an energetic snake dance, with rank upon rank of participants linking arms and quick-marching in a zigzag pattern . . . [a tactic] famously employed during the 1960 Anpo demonstrations . . . [that made] it difficult for police to disperse the protest or seize individual members" (109).

Although this had occurred in the fall of 1967, the protest movement was still the social background to Expose 1968. It was thought of as the second installment of a symposium promoted in 1966 by the magazine *Dezain Hihyō*, but turned in the direction of videos and happenings.

The program of the symposium included conferences and debates, comprised of five public encounters with different sets of people and objects in the realm of art and criticism, each focusing on a specific issue. As it turned out, what was supposed to have been a debate consisted of a show of gestures, performances, art works, and installations ranging from the very serious to the irrepressibly facetious and exhibiting, in keeping with its title, a set of ideas and instances of paralysis and contradictions. The antagonistic and demonstrative events received highly negative criticism and often left their audience feeling disappointed, bewildered and angry (Uesaki, Conversation, Tokyo, February 7, 2015).

The first "Symposium" on April 10 was entitled "Kawatta? Nani ka (Gendai no henshin)" (Changed? Something (modern makeover)); Kurokawa Kisho, a prominent Metabolist, took part in it together with Ichiyanagi, Shiomi, designer Yokō Takanori and other Fluxus-related artists like Takamatsu Jirō and Tone Yasunao. Geoffrey Hendricks performed *Blue Box*: "cardboard boxes were painted white and built into a wall on which slides of sky were projected, and then taken down by performers dressed in white, who had been doing exercises, I believe. Then at the end Mieko Shiomi and others wrapped a large bouquet/branch of cherry blossoms with gauze bandage, and then covered it with shaving cream foam. The wall of boxes was

coming down under strobe light and passed across the audience" (Geoffrey Hendricks, Letter, January 20, 2016). It was followed by *Psycho delicious*, a psychedelic show in which dance, fashion, harmonica, and electronic music were mixed. On the same evening, Ichiyanagi came on stage and announced that because he had no trust in the power of verbal communication, he would not say anything.

On April 1, Expose 1968 held an event with a title that may be a reference to Jean-Luc Godard's 1965 film, *Pierrot le Fou*: "Oretachiwa minna kichigai Pierrot da" (We're all crazy Pierrots). The issue of the evening was "conflict" and in fact the main event was the screening of the film *Tsuburekakatta migime no tame ni* (For the right eye, which was nearing collapse) by Matsumoto Toshio, an experimental film that lasted less than 15 minutes, showing images of Japanese 1960s counter-culture psychedelia projected on two separate screens superimposed on a third square image: student riots, drag queens getting ready for a night on the town, and fires, juxtaposed with swinging hippies, Japanese women casually arranging their clothing, people commuting to work, and various cartoon strips. All this appeared while flickering images of fires and disfigured babies flashed intermittently on the screen.[10] With no narrative, the meaning was purely audiovisual; the soundtrack composed by Akiyama Kuniharu consisted of a collage of very different music samples, from classic to noise, snippets of news reports warning about the Communist threat, radio recordings, a Rolling Stones concert, Japanese pop tunes, and Hitler delivering a speech. The film was released the following year at the first edition of the Art Film Festival, but was not particularly successful. As for the evening's title, apart from a possible connection with Godard, it cannot but recall a well-known statement by Maciunas, "we came out to be a bunch of jokers" (Kellein 2002, 51)—yet there is a conceptual difference between the two, as was stated above.

On April 20, the third event actually *was* a symposium of sorts. Dealing with "Violence and ecstasy" (Behavior and possession), it was chaired by Iijima, and the theme was discussed by three panelists: the Director of the Sōgetsu Art Center, filmmaker Teshigahara Hiroshi; the playwright and critic Ishidō Yoshirō; and the prominent poet Takahashi Mutsuo. What invalidated the significance of the debate and emphasized the substantial lack of freedom of whatever the participants said, was the fact that panelists spoke from inside locked wooden boxes from which only their heads emerged (at a time when images of stoning were unknown). The debate was followed by a concert entitled *Fugue for provocation* on a scene densely staged by actor Makiguchi Motomi.

Presented on April 25, "Evaporating recommended" (Virtual and real image) was a video and slide event organized by Yamaguchi Katsuhiro, with the participation of Kara Jurō, a key figure in the underground theater movement *angura*.

On the last day, April 30, in "Tomorrow comes up to the day after tomorrow" (The power of constructing the future) the underlying theme was technology. Poetry was read by Ōka Makoto and there was a happening entitled "Space modulation by light and sound."

Expose 1968's involvement of authoritative critics and intellectuals performing happenings on stage conferred a sort of official recognition on the openness that had been acquired in manners and morals, while at the same time expressing a feeling of inanity and demonstrating the need to develop new attitudes. In the aforementioned issue of *The Design Review* devoted to the event, this supposed second edition of the symposium was described as "strange . . . in the form of a show" (*The Design Review* 6, 17). The *Asahi Shinbun* review signed by Awazu, published on May 14 and reprinted in the *Review*, presented the event as a "frightful . . . fierce symposium" whose intent was to "denude, expose, exhibit, reveal." This was to have been done posing the following questions: whether any alteration/degeneration was part of the contemporary world; if there existed a dramatically changing world of expression and technology; would it lead to conflict; in this world of compenetrating real and virtual images, how would rebellion progress; what would proper human behavior be; and last, whether people still had enough strength to imagine a future. The key word was *shōtotsu*, composed of the characters "opposition" and "collision," therefore meaning harsh, confrontational opposition that, however, ultimately succeeds in establishing a relationship, albeit a conflictual one. The description included the information that over thirty people from very different fields of art ("architecture, design, painting, sculpture, film, theatre, music, television") had come together on the scene and there had been a large audience. The article proceeded to discuss the self-collapse of the arts in the postwar period, concluding that "brilliant wildness" would be a good description of the new mood (107).

Expose 1968 in fact encapsulated many of the contradictions that beset the intellectual and artistic scene. For example, it was organized by members of the Metabolist movement who, however, were working for Expo 70, which was to become "the apotheosis of the movement" (Koolhaas, Obrist 2011, 506–507). Actually in Expose the "Expo faction and anti-Expo faction were in an undifferentiated condition" (Kuro 2010, 221), and its critics called Expo 70 a dystopia that was removed from reality (Sasaki 1970, 143). "By then, prominent critics Haryū Ichirō and Taki Kōji had intensified their criticism of Expo 70 for what they felt was a hidden government agenda 'to distract the nation from the renewal of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty' and to 'establish domination through technology and communication' while 'incorporating intellectual elites within the institution'" (Yoshimoto 2011, 9).

In my opinion, Expose 1968 represented the end of the authentic Fluxus movement, at the end of a tumultuous decade of social and political change,

with the coming on the scene of the new assertive creativity and productivity of Expo 70. The Fluxus artists were growing up and growing older and were interested in gaining economic recognition for their art, while at the same time the market began to be interested in their production. A few decades later, their totally unrealistic ideas about life and society would be propounded—in their highest form—as goals of Degrowth movements, and—in their lowest—as New Age beliefs and practices.

CONCLUSIONS

The extent of what might be considered an autonomous Japanese history of Fluxus enhances our understanding of the Japanese postwar avant-garde. Japanese Fluxus has its own history, spanning an intense decade as a presence on the artistic and intellectual scene, exercising a deep influence that although subliminal and tacit, was not found in any other country. I have considered the proximity of Fluxus to the entire art world and the "official" avant-garde, as well as how Metabolism and Fluxus were related: the many links that existed with outstanding intellectuals and artists like Takemitsu Tōru and Yamaguchi Katsuhiro, and the countless authoritative figures in the large circle that gravitated around the Sōgetsu Art Center. Their projects were more elaborated and articulated than those of their Western counterparts: *Shelter Plan* by High Red Center at the Teikoku Hotel; the *Happening for Sightseeing Bus Trip in Tokyo* by Ay-O; *Spatial Poems* by Shiomi were examples of works with layered, complex meanings, and had been difficult to make, involving large-scale organization and cooperation. The events were always covered by the general and specialized press, and were attended by a large open-minded audience. All these were typically Japanese facets of Fluxus.

Seen from the point of view of the international Fluxus movement, the contribution of its Japanese artists was essential. This is not only because of the convergence that existed between them and George Maciunas—an "elective affinity" (it is likely that if Ono and Maciunas had not met, nothing would have happened)—but also because they embodied, each in their own way, key aspects of the Fluxus poetics. They brought with them their cultural education, that is, their habit of being attentive to people, their Zen cultural episteme and their highly refined, stratified poetics, free from the 19th-century idealistic heritage. Artists in the United States influenced by neo-Buddhism found confirmation of their ideas and further incentives to deepen their knowledge in their contacts with the Japanese. It was Ono's projects[11] which begun with a clear aesthetic identity in her Chamber Street loft, that influenced Maciunas's gallery policies, as Kubota and Shiomi had years later by living together and being part of the artistic commune. Saito, who moved

to in New York in 1963 and met Maciunas through Ay-O, charmed everyone with her simple and direct kindness of heart, and with the poetic craftsmanship of her paper and leaf works.[12] The Japanese were kind, passionate and culturally advanced, engaged in a network of intellectual and intercultural exchange, parallel and complementary to what Tomii called "international contemporaneity" (Tomii 2009).

The movement emerged from an encounter between Western and Japanese artists, and for a while it bloomed, although, as Philip Corner said,

> It's not surprising it failed. The idea was this would be really post-capitalist, non-bourgeois; that collective creativity . . . [would emerge] so that nobody claimed the pieces. But the problem with that was that we are still all living in a capitalist society. So that would mean that people would contribute ideas, but they would still be using those ideas as their own work in another context. And then, you get to think: whose idea was that? So, it became very contradictory, but it was an attempt to go further and to eliminate private property and contribute equally to a creative collective work. (Conversation, Reggio Emilia, September 20, 2015)

In a sense, many of them are still living in keeping with their artistic action along those principles, coming to terms with reality.

What could not have lasted in their work was the primacy accorded to life rather than art, the recognition of the irreducible element of life, rediscovered and understood in details through works of art as experience—like the 1992 *Safety Concert* by Saito Takako, whose score on a match box reads: "Take one or more at a time and strike them, if does not light it, say 'Bo.' When all the matches are striked, a concert is over." The Japanese artists corresponded totally to Maciunas's vision that the artist "must demonstrate [his] own dispensability, he must demonstrate [the] selfsufficiency of the audience, he must demonstrate that anything can substitute [for] art and anyone can do it . . . [and it] must have no commodity or institutional value" (Maciunas 1965). We find a similar view expressed in Franz Kafka's last short story, "Josefine, die Sängerin oder Das Volk der Mäuse" (Josephine the Songstress, or the Mouse Folk).[13] It begins: "Josephine is the name of our songstress. Those who have never heard her sing simply haven't experienced the power of song" (Lundberg 2009, 227). But very soon we are told that "Josephine doesn't sing but just whistles, and indeed, as it seems to me, that her whistling barely exceeds the bounds of the ordinary" (228). Finally, the significance of Josephine's singing is revealed:

> Even if it were to be nothing more than our everyday whistling, still there's this oddity of how she presents herself. . . . Cracking pecans doesn't entail any particular artistry, none whatsoever, hence nobody would be so daring as to

gather up an audience and then for his performance that he would shell a pound of pecans. But, all the same, if one were to do just this and if one's performance were to be a great success, well then, obviously it couldn't possibly simply be a matter of cracking nuts! Or maybe it does have something to do with nut-cracking but it suddenly has become apparent that there's more to cracking nuts than meets the eye, that we've been overlooking something because we just happen to be so good at it and that only now its innermost essence has been put up on display. (229)

Although Umberto Eco does not mention any Fluxus artists in his groundbreaking 1962 text *The Open Work*, his analysis shows how the open work responds to an existential necessity:

> It is impossible to stand up to the "flux of existence" by opposing it to an ideal human standard of measurement. What results is not an irrational, obtuse, metaphysical datum: it is the world of modified nature, of man-made work. We now see this man-made world as if it existed independently of our labor, as if it had evolved according to its own laws. This world that we have created can now turn us into its tools, but it can also provide us with the elements necessary to establish the parameters for a new human standard of measurement. The flux of existence would remain essentially unaltered and hostile to us if we lived in its midst without speaking of it. But as soon as we start speaking of it, be it only to record its distortions, we judge it, we alienate ourselves to it, and thus we take the first step toward repossessing it. (Eco 1989, 150–151)

It is precisely this process of repossessing the world and life that is always present in the work of Fluxus artists, especially the work of its Japanese members; they mediated a twofold world, caught between tradition and westernization, whose inhabitants lives had been diminished by the war and defeat and the triumph of consumerism. Half a century later, their poetic thought is current. They speak to us. In conclusion, may I suggest that you,

> Mettez cette feuille de papier contre votre
> oreille et frottez avec l'index.[14]

NOTES

1. Ono Yōko, post on instagram@yokoonoofficial, viewed Febrary 4, 2015.
2. The word is a contraction of "underground," and defines the countercultural theater movement of the 1960s. See Eckersall (2007).
3. In the Preface to the edited English version of *The Society of the Spectacle* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2014) by Debord, Ken Knabb quotes the motto from *The Joy of Revolution*.

4. An interesting discussion of the question is the one by Cuauhtémoc Medina, "The 'Kulturbolschewiken' 1: Fluxus, the Abolition of Art, the Soviet Union, and 'Pure Amusement'," Medina 2005.

5. He said so in 1960 in an interview published in *Kinema Junpō*, quoted in Standish (2011, 20). Yoshida Yoshishige (b. 1933), one of Japan's most influential filmmakers, created films unparalleled for their formal sophistication, philosophical depth, and beauty. Taking aim at Japan's harshly competitive corporate culture, *Blood is Dry* (1960) is a formally daring, cogent film whose withering critique of corporate capitalism and the alienation of the work force is still pertinent.

6. As part of her 2010 exhibition in Berlin that was called "Das Gift," she photographed the participants who had been asked to give a smile as a present.

7. These theories, which were developed in experimental economics, show that the behavior of individuals is driven by reasons other than a purely rational desire for gain. Experiments regularly fail to support the game theory prediction of noncooperative behavior in small-group strategic interactions and in large-group public good environments as being more efficient. In different types of experiments subjects frequently achieve more efficient social outcomes (e.g., they collect more money from the experimenter) than noncooperative game theory predicts. Many subjects in these experiments exhibit reciprocity even in single-play games (Hoffman, McCabe, and Smith 1998).

8. The piece is not listed in the program, but was performed as the last piece, as Nishiyama Teruō who attended the event noted in his scrapbook, which I consulted at the Keiō Art Center Archives in Tokyo. It consisted of a series of unrelated actions performed by Shiomi, Ay-O, Akiyama, and artist Yamaguchi Katsuhiro around a water tank placed on a table. For a description, see Yoshimoto (2005, 160–161).

9. Consulted at the Keiō Art Center Archive.

10. Seen on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_k50VOR1-Y4 (June 12, 2014).

11. The project and organization of the loft concert series were long attributed solely to LaMonte Young, and only after several years of bitter dispute did the key role played by Ono become clear (Yoshimoto 2005, 85–86).

12. See for example her *Magic Boat*, 1964, on the Fondazione Bonotto website at http://www.fondazionebonotto.org/en/collection/fluxus/saitotakako/1764.html (seen on 12/5/2014).

13. The story is included in the collection *Ein Hungerkünstler* (A Hunger Artist), published by Verlag Die Schmiede shortly after Kafka's death.

14. Kosugi Takehisa, *Piece Musicale*, mimeograph on white paper; Fondazione Bonotto, at http://www.fondazionebonotto.org/fluxus/kosugitakehisa/edition/fxm029812.html (last viewed April 18, 2015).

Appendix

Chronological List of Japanese Fluxus's Activities

(In parenthesis the most representative of related events happening in the arts and international Fluxus)

1958 Kosugi Takehisa and Mizuno Shūkō, students of musicology in the Department of Music at Tokyo University of the Arts (Geidai), begin musical improvisations. Shiomi Chieko (who had not yet changed her name to Mieko), also a student of musicology, experiments with painting, surprising the public with her expressive freedom.

1959 (In April at Sōgetsu the Culture Club, founded in January, begins meeting, focusing on cinema and the arts in general; during the four months following its third meeting, the club would hold a monthly discussion on Japanese tradition—dance, art, music, aesthetics).

- 11 Group Ongaku, whose members are all involved in rehearsals of *Pierrot Lunaire*, starts meeting to experiment with instruments and sounds.

1960

- In August Group Ongaku participates in Nijū seiki buyō no kai (20th Century Dance)
- From December to June 1961 Chamber Street Loft Series: Jennings, Ichiyanagi, Corner, Flynt et al.
- 4/4–9 Neo Dadaism Organizers' first exhibition

1961

- 1/7–8 Concert by Ichiyanagi at the New York Chamber Street Loft Series
- 6/14–7/30 Performances in New York at AG [Maciuna's] Gallery (Ichiyanagi, Ono et al.)

- 4/3 Concert of Contemporary Japanese Music & Poetry at the Village Gate in New York (Ichiyanagi, Mayuzumi, Ono)
- 8/25–27 Ōsaka, Ichiyanagi presents "American Avant-garde Music" at the 20th Century Music Laboratory
- 9/15 Group Ongaku rents the Sōgetsu Hall for its *Concert of sound* objet *and music improvisation* [sic]
- 10 Group Ongaku participates in *Anti-music and Anti-dance* at Nijūseki buyō no kai
- 11/30 At the 10th Sōgetsu Concert Series (SCS), Ichiyanagi presents his *Return Concert*; Group Ongaku, Takemitsu, Takahashi, Mayuzumi et al. participate

1962 (Shiomi returns to Okayama; the population of Tokyo reaches 10 million).

In January Yamaguchi Katsuhiro, Dick Higgins and Ono Yōko hold an event at the Living Theatre, New York using the name Fluxus
- 1 Publication of *An Anthology of Chance Operations* by LaMonte Young and Jackson MacLow
- 2/3 Tone gives a personal concert at Minami Gallery in Nihonbashi, and Ichiyanagi and Group Ongaku participate
- 2/7 Ichiyanagi and Group Ongaku' *Night Concert* at Fūgetsudō, Shinjuku

(in March Kosugi is awarded a degree in musicology by Geidai)
- 3/2–16 XIV Yomiuri Independant Exhibition at Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Ueno
- 3/3 Ono Yōko returns to Japan, settling in Tokyo
- 4 Ichiyanagi, Takahashi, Takemitsu and Mayuzumi present their scores at Tokyo Gallery
- 4/16–26 Concert *4 Composers*: Ichiyanagi, Takahashi, Takemitsu and Mayuzumi. Ono Yōko takes part
- 5/24 15th SCS, *Works by Yōko Ono*
- 6/9 The series of European Fluxus Concerts starts in Wiesbaden, Germany. All of the Japanese Fluxus artists and sympathizers are present in the program
- 6/1–5 *Event with no title* at the Muramatsu Gallery in Ginza, Tokyo – participants include Kosugi, Takeda Akimichi and Tone (former members of Group Ongaku)
- 7/24 16th SCS, Takahashi Yūji et al. for *Dance Activity I*
- 8 Kosugi takes part in the second Recital of the Kuni Chiya Dance Institute
- 8/15 Akasegawa and friends hold *Hansen kinen bansankai "Geijutsu minus geijutsu"* (Anniversary dinner commemorating Japan's defeat [in World War II] "Art minus art" – referred to as the "dinner"). Kosugi and Tone et al. participate

- 8/25 Neo Dada presents *Something Happens*—first use of "happening"; Ichiyanagi, Kosugi, Ryūguchi, Tone among the eighty participants
- 9/26 Ono participates in the Sapporo Contemporary Music festival
- 10 Poetry and jazz events at Honryū Temple, Ikebukuro with the participation of Allen Ginsberg, Takemitsu: *Vocalism Ai*, poet Tanikawa Shuntarō and jazz musicians
- 10/5 NHK Educational "Musician Coming to Japan Series" n. 5: John Cage + David Tudor, Ichiyanagi, Ono, Kosugi, and Mayuzumi
- 10/9–10 17th SCS, Evening of Cage/Evening of Tudor; Ichiyanagi, Ono et al. participate, in the small hall at Tokyo Bunka Kaikan (performance repeated on September 12th in Kyoto, on the 17th in Ōsaka as the 18th SCS)
- 10/18 The Yamanote Line Event: the Hi Red Center artists (Akasegawa, Takamatsu and Nakanishi) painted their faces or wore masks and exhibited works on the Yamanote Line of the Tokyo underground; they also stretched a rope from the Ueno Metro Station to Ueno Park, where the Tokyo University of the Arts is located
- 10/23–24 at Sōgetsu Hall as 19th SCS, John Cage and David Tudor Event (Ono participates, Tudor "plays" *Incidental Music* by Brecht with beans)
- 11 Shirokane Festival held at Meijigakuin University. Presentation by Un-beat Group; lecture by Cage
- 11 Formation of Hi-Red Center Group
- 11/10–20 International Exhibition of New Scores (Cage, Young, Paik) at Minami Gallery.
- 11/13 Concert by Cage with Ichiyanagi and Mayuzumi at Minami Gallery
- 11/14–16 Kosugi, Tone and others take part in the Hero Big Assembly in Osaka
- 11/22 Show of the League of Criminals at Waseda University's campus (Nakanishi, Kosugi et al.).

[between December 1962 and the early months of 1963 a number of events were presented by Un-beat Group]

1963 The Akasegawa 1000-yen-note incident begins. (In February Bauhaus exhibition held at Sōgetsu)

- 3/2–15 XV Yomiuri Independant Exhibition, Hi Red Center, Akasegawa, Takamatsu, Kazakura, Kosugi and Tone participate (see fig. 1)
- 5 Festival at Tokyo University, Kosugi participates
- 5/7–12 Hi Red Center at Daiichi Gallery in Shinjuku
- 5 28/29 Hi Red Center "Planned Goods Presentation Ceremony"
- 5/26 New Directions First Concert, 20th SCS, presents Ichiyanagi and Takahashi
- 5 Akasegawa participates in a television program on performance art

- 6 Kosugi's *Anima 1–2* is published in the 8th issue of *Keishō* (Shape)
- 6/13–19 (Nagoya, Zero Jigen performed a tea ceremony with sounds entitled "Red Ceremony")
- 7/3 21st SCS, 2nd New Direction Concert
- 7/7–13 Works by members of Hi Red Center exhibited at Naika Gallery, Shinbashi; nothing was on display but titles in English were written on objects and fixtures in the gallery
- 7/13 Akasegawa, wearing heavy make-up, appears on a NET television program "What does the murderer seek?" and burns a thousand-yen bill
- 8 Ono Yōko's *Grapefruit* is published
- 8/5 Hi Red Center give a performance in Jinbōchō at Bijutsu Shuppansha (Art Publisher); each of the three performers wore a pair of underpants over his head, covering his mouth, ears and eyes. The three were connected to each other by strings tied to their feet, and used their feet to pull on the strings, moving towards each other and stopping when they sensed that they were about to collide
- 8/15 Special issue of the review *Red Balloon* by the Criminals League includes Kosugi's *Ear – Drum & Anima 1* and photographs of work by Takamatsu and Akasegawa; the magazine is confiscated by the police
- 8/27–9/1 Mizuno participates in the Zero Jigen Exhibition in Nagoya
- 10/12 New Directions 3rd Concert as 22nd SCS; works by Ichiyanagi, Boulez, Brown, Takemitsu, Kosugi and Takahashi –Akiyama, Kazakura et al. participate
- 10/14–19 Akasegawa, Nam June Paik, Kosugi and Tone participate among others in an exhibition at Naika Gallery, Shinbashi
- 10/20–11/9 Mizuno participates in the Zero Jigen Exhibition in Nagoya
- 10/21–26 Naika Gallery holds the exhibition "For the detection of fingerprints" by Nam June Paik, using Paik's *tanka* on the invitation card
- 11/3 Kosugi appears in an NHK educational program, performing *Anima 2*; Takamatsu and Nakanishi are among the participants
- Kosugi's *Organic Music*, in October at Sōgetsu is broadcast by NHK
- 12/1–7 Kubota Shigeko exhibition at Naika Gallery "First Love, Second Love . . ."
- 12/3–5 *Sweet 16*, a performance festival is held at Sōgetsu Hall: forty performers, including Akasegawa, Kazakura, Kosugi (*Theatre Music*, *Malika 5*: "Watch a flower until . . ."), Kubota, Shiomi, Tone, Mizuno participate
- 12/19 23rd SCS, New Directions 4th concert
- 12/21 (Zero Jigen *Fly* event, inspired by Sartre's *Les mouches* (1943), crawling on the floor)

1964 (Cancellation of the upcoming sixteenth Yomiuri Independent Exhibition)

(in January there is an Insanity Nonsense exhibition in Nagoya)
- 1/26–7 Hi Red Center *Shelter Event* (see chapter 1, p. 10)
- 1/30 Bridgestone Art Gallery hosts a public discussion entitled "Anti-art. Yes or No?", Ichiyanagi participates
- 2/1–4 Hi Red Center continue the *Thousand-Yen Bill Incident*
- 2/5 Announcement of suspension of the Yomiuri Independant Exhibition
- 3/13, 4/2 Ono Yōko's *Touch Poem* at Naika Gallery

(in April the Parliament removes legal restrictions on freedom to travel abroad. At Naika Gallery there is a personal exhibition of Hataraki Tadashi of Kyūshū-ha with many everyday objects)
- 4 NHK Electronic Music Studio opens
- 4/8 24th SCS, 5th concert by New Direction
- 4/12 Hi Red Center, *Prophecy Event*: "Special report! Who is using communication satellites?"
- 4/23 Shiomi, Kosugi, Takemitsu, Ichiyanagi and Yuasa are present at the "Symposium of the Avant-Garde. A Fluxus Festival" in Honolulu organized by Fred Lieberman
- 4/25 Ono Yōko's *Fly* is performed at Naika Gallery; she is not there and the piece is done by attendees
- 5/12–16 Hi Red Center *Closing Gallery Event* at Naika Gallery
- 5/23 Collective Music performed at Sōgetsu Hall with Akasegawa, Tōno, Ichiyanagi, Kosugi, Takemitsu, Yuasa participating. Kosugi premieres his work *To W,* attaching objects he finds in the gallery to the gallery walls
- 5/24 Ono Yōko at Naika Gallery, "From 9 p.m. to 11 a.m.", known as *Morning Piece*—on 31st at Ono's flat
- 5/29 Nam Jun Paik at Sōgetsu Hall, with La Monte Young, Ichiyanagi, Ono, Takemitsu, Hi Red Center, Kosugi, Tone, Shiomi. et al. (originally scheduled to be held on March 27th but postponed because Paik was recovering from pneumonia)
- 6/7, 14, 21 Ono's *Three Old Pieces* (each for day)
- 6/17–22 "Off Museum" event (in opposition to the Metropolitan Art Museum's Independant Exhibition), at Tsubaki Modern and Contemporary Gallery, Shinjuku; Akasegawa, Kubota, Kosugi, Tone participate
- 6/20–7/3 Metropolitan Art Museum Independant Exhibition (from the 20th to the 25th an alternative Independent Exhibition is held in Himeji)

(Zero Jigen's Tokyo debut; in the following month's issue of *Geijutsu Shinchō* an advertisment appears and the second event follows with the *Masturbation Machine*, then a third event in same month)
- 6/27 Fluxus Concert at Carnegie Hall in New York (Akiyama, Ay-O et al.)
- 7/2 Shiomi and Kubota go to NewYork
- 7/3 Ono Yōko presents *Distillation Event* and the following day holds an event to present her book *Grapefruit*

- 7/20 Ono Yōko at Yamaichi Hall in Kyoto, "Concert of Contemporary American Music—Insound and Instructure," with Anthony Cox et al. (premiere of *Cut Piece*)
- 7/21 Ono Yōko at Nanzen Temple, Kyoto, "From Evening to Dawn"
- 7/22 Ono Yōko "Symposium! French Cancan," Kyoto
- 8/11 Sayonara Concert by Ono Yōko at Sōgetsu Hall: "Strip Show"; *Cut Piece*; on the18th Ono returns to New York
- 8/30 In New York Action Against Cultural Imperialism (Maciunas, Ay-O, Saito, Kubota et al.)

(in August Chiaki Nagano directs the film *Aru wakamono tachi*, mostly on "Off Museum")

- 9/18–11/3 Perpetual Fluxus Festival in New York (Ay-O, Shiomi et al.)

10/10 Hi Red Center's *Dropping Event* performed (on the same day the Tokyo Olympics opens)

- 10/12–17 Tone Yasunao's *Investigation Event* and Hi Red Center's *Cleaning Event* with Ichiyanagi, Ono, Takeda and Kosugi participating
- 10/16 Tone announces Hi Red Center and Group Ongaku have become Hi Group
- 11/4 25th SCS, New Direction 6th concert for string quartet—works by Mamiya, Schoenberg, Ichiyanagi and Xenakis
- 11/6 (Merce Cunningham Company at Sōgetsu Art Center with music by Cage)
- 11/10–11 (the Merce Cunningham Dance Company at Sankei Hall—music by Cage, Ichiyanagi)
- 11/20 Modern Dance Workshop with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company at Sōgetsu Art Center; Kosugi and his group play *Anima 7*, with each performer doing something very slowly
- 11/17 (John Cage and David Tudor at Sōgetsu Art Center with Ichiyanagi as their assistant)
- 11/24–5 (The Merce Cunnigham Dance Company performs at Sankei Hall, Sōgetsu)
- 11/27 (Concert by Cage and Tudor—on 28th encounter with Robert Rauschenberg)
- 11–12 Monday Night Letters, begun in 1959, continues in New York (Ay-O, Paik, Shiomi et al.).

1965 (Protests against the war in Vietnam). In August there is an important Independent Art Festival, with almost all the Fluxus artists present, the main exhibition event after Yomiuri IE. Kosugi moves to the United States.

- 3/21 Concert by Ono at Carnegie Recital Hall
- 6/27–7/18 Perpetual Fluxfest is held in New York (Ono, Kubota et al.)
- 9/6–14 Akiyama, Ichiyanagi, Yamaguchi, Takeda, Shiomi, Takemitsu,

Tone, et al. organize and participate in FluxWeek, at Crystal Gallery in Ginza; see chapter 2, p. 35.

1966 (Zero Jigen remains active; the *Thousand-Yen Bill Incident* trial continues)

In February and April concerts "Tender Music" and "Toward More Sensible Boredom" with music by Kosugi held in New York

- 5/1, 2, 4 (Ichiyanagi and Takemitsu organize "Orchestral Space" at Nissei Hall)
- 11/11–16 "From Space to Environment," a multiple arts exhibition of paintings, sculpture, design, music, photography and architecture is held on the 8th floor of the Matsuya department store in Ginza. All together thirty-eight people participate, including Akiyama, Ichiyanagi, Ryūguchi, Yamaguchi et al.
- 11/14 Shiomi, Takemitsu, Jasper Johns et al. take part in the happening "From Space to Environment" held at Sōgetsu Hall
- 11/28–12/10 Ay-O exhibition and happening "Rainbow Environment n. 4"
- 12/14–5 The Bio Code Process (the use of computer-based systems for expressing different structured spaces) is held at Sōgetsu Hall. Shiomi, Tone and Mizuno, among others are present
- 12/18 "Sightseeing Bus Happening," a Fluxus event with performances and and exhibition of Fluxus works is presented in Tokyo, with Akiyama, Shiomi, Yamaguchi, Ryūguchi et al. participating

1967 (Zero Jigen still active; the Yamate Line event is held on February 11)

- 1/29 "Hopscotch," an event with sound is presented in connection with an *angura* film by Kanasaka Kenji; Tone, Yamashita et al. participate
- 5/1 The Bio Code Process is presented in Kyoto
- 5/ The first "Intermedia" event is presented at Runami Gallery, Ginza from May 23rd to May 28th; Akasegawa and Tone participate in the happening
- 5 ("Electronic music for 12 players," a multimedia event, with musique concrete is performed in Fukuoka)
- 10 Kosugi is in Europe where he visits Fluxus artists, returning to the United States in December
- 11/23 (The Japanese premiere of Takemitsu's *November Steps* is the first "Cross Talk" concert. Held at Asahi Hall in Yurakuchō, Tokyo, organizers include Akiyama, Reynolds and Yuasa)
- 12/25 Flux-Christmas-Meal Event in New York (Ay-O, Saito et al.)

1968 (Many Japanese Fluxus artists interested and involved in *angura* and movie scenes. In June an important exhibition on Dada, and the three

Orchestral Space 68 concerts are organized in Tokyo by Ichiyanagi and Takemitsu. Music tapes start to be widely used)

- 4/10 Expose 1968 opens at Sōgetsu Hall, organized by Awazu Kiyoshi. The program includes Symposium I: *Nanika itte kure, ima sagasu* (Say Something, I'm Trying); subtitle "Changed? Something (contemporary disguise)." Shiomi, Ichiyanagi, Tone et al. participate; Geoffrey Hendricks decorates the room in which it is held
- 4/15 Expose 1968 hosts Symposium II: *Nanika*. . . , "We're all mad Pierrots" with sounds produced by Akiyama
- 4/20 Expose 1968 hosts Symposium III: *Nanik*a . . . , "Ecstasy and violence"; Ijima, Teshigahara, Ishidō, and Takahashi discuss from within wooden boxes
- 4/25 Expose 1968 hosts Symposium IV: *Nanika* . . . , "Recommendation of evaporation" with virtual and real images
- 4/30 Expose 1968 hosts Symposiums V: *Nanika* . . . ; "The power of constructing the future"
- 6/5 First Orchestral Space 68 (chamber music) concert held. Shiomi, Tone, Kosugi play
- 7/17–19 Expose 1968 hosts last Symposium: "Disguise, or the incredible adventure of contemporary art" with music by Ichiyanagi
- 12/31 New Year's Eve Flux-Fest in New York (Ay-O, Saito et al.).

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About the Author

Musicologist and scholar in musical aesthetics, **Luciana Galliano** combines a thorough knowledge of music theory and ethnomusicology with a prevailing competence in Asian contemporary music. She has taught for nearly twenty years on different musicological subjects at Ca' Foscari University of Venice and after her last position as a Research Fellow at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies is now working as an independent scholar. She lived for some six years in Japan thanks to several scholarships (Ministry of Education; International Research Center for Japanese Studies; Japan Foundation), researching modern and traditional Japanese and Asian music. She has contributed for years (1993–1999) to the magazine *Ongaku Gendai* as a correspondent from Italy. She collaborated with Luciano Berio to the background researches for his 1993–1994 Norton Lectures. She participated at the foundation of AIAM (International Academy for Arts and Media) in 1996. She has widely published—among books *The Music of Jōji Yuasa*, Cambridge SP 2012 (forthcoming in Japanese by Artes Publ., Tokyo); *Music Facing Up to Silence. Writings on Tōru Takemitsu*, Pavia University Press 2010; *Power, Beauty, and Meaning. Eight Studies on Chinese Music*, Olschki 2005; *Yōgaku: Japanese Music in Twentieth Century*, Scarecrow Press 2002—and essaies on the major international musicological magazines.

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"By highlighting the significance of musicality to Japanese Fluxus, Luciana Galliano's book brings fresh perspectives grounded in historical music expertise and a very welcome intervention to existing narratives about Fluxus in Japan. It also productively decenters the cartography of experimentalism in the twentieth century that assumes a de facto 'Western' center by foregrounding the figuration of Japanese aesthetic categories in the experimental practices of the artists and musicians in her study."
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"*Japan Fluxus* reveals the historical significance of the Fluxus movement in a multidimensional way by elaborating the development of the international movement in Japan and the roles played by Japanese artists."
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"George Maciunas once said 'Fluxus is Zen.' This book by Galliano unravels the depths of the global movement called Fluxus from Japan's unique aspects."
—TOSHIE KAKINUMA, Kyoto City University of Arts

Fluxus was a pivotal movement in redefining art's role and the artist's identity in the contemporary world, and its aesthetics—as well as many of its gimmicks—have become so deeply embedded in our social setting that we now no longer realize where they originally came into being. Fluxus has been described as the most radical and experimental art movement of the 1960s, challenging conventional thinking on art and culture. It had a central role in the birth of such key contemporary art forms as concept art, installation, performance art, intermedia, and video. The amount of Fluxus-related scholarly activity has increased since 2009, when New York's Museum of Modern Art acquired the world's largest collection of Fluxus works, the Lila and Gilbert Silverman Collection. This in turn led to a series of exhibitions, first at MoMA and subsequently at other institutions worldwide.

Focusing on Japanese artists involved in Fluxus, *Japan Fluxus* proposes a new understanding of this movement which, in spite of its anti-academicism, its aversion to authorial identity, and the ephemeral character of its output, is "the best documented and best cross-indexed art movement in history," according to Nam June Paik. This book presents postwar Japanese radical avant-garde and the related and highly refined discourse and debate behind it, enlightening crucial, if less known, aspects of (local) Fluxus history and theory.

LUCIANA GALLIANO is a musicologist and independent scholar in musical aesthetics.

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