GUEST EDITORS Ken Friedman
Owen F. Smith

VISIBLE
SPECIAL ISSUE
PART 2
40.1

AFTER FLUXUS
FLUXUS

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Contents

Abstract

Legacy involves difficulties, for those who inherit and for those who do not. The history that is a gift and a burden when it involves art is equally problematic when it involves the Fluxus intermedia forms that hover between art and life. This article explores the challenging questions of Fluxus legacy: the right to participate in a discourse network, canon formation, literature development, the work and feelings of younger artists toward a heritage that some demand and others reject. These issues particularly vex the Fluxus legacy. An invisible college of artists, composers, designers and architects created Fluxus. It functioned as a laboratory of experimental ideas. The Fluxus challenge to art and the art world took place on political and economic grounds and involved artistic means and philosophical principle. The shift of Fluxus discourse from outsider status to historical standing is bound up with and transformed in meaning by the institutions that collect, preserve and interpret historical artifacts and documents. These artifacts and documents once tried to tell different versions of the Fluxus story to a relatively uninterested world. Today, they tell a complex and often misunderstood story to a world that seems to be interested in Fluxus for precisely wrong reasons, a situation that defeats Fluxus with the trappings of success. This article explores the dialectical and hermeneutical work of recovery, to address the challenge of legacy by examining its many aspects.

The Dialectics of

Norwegian School of Management and
University of Maine Orono
Visible Language 40.1
Friedman and Smith, 4–11

Rhode Island School of Design
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

KEN FRIEDMAN AND OWEN SMITH

Legacy

The question of legacy is always beset with difficulties. Whether legacies involve art, politics or medieval duchies, groups of artists or family firms, the same questions emerge.

Who inherits? Who has the right to inherit? What is the heritage? What rights does legacy confer? What obligations does legacy entail?

The word "legacy" suggests the questions. Going back to a Middle English word meaning both the office of a legate and a bequest, the word came from older Anglo-French and Latin words meaning legate, deputy or emissary, and the Latin verb legare meant to deputize, to send as emissary or to bequeath.

A legacy is a bequest. In legal terms, a legacy is the gift of money or property bequeathed by a will. Donors transmit legal legacies through a will or testament, often bound with conditions or a contract. Few bequests come without obligations, and most legacies imply responsibilities. For those who bequeath it, a legacy entails deputation and it transmits wishes.

In the larger sense of the word, a legacy is something transmitted by ancestors or predecessors on one side, and something received from them on the other. In another large sense, a legacy is any transmission we receive from the past. Such gifts always come with the responsibilities of "ownership" and a necessity to continue the viability of the property or lineage.

This is the second of two special issues of *Visible Language.* Both address the problem of legacy, each in a different way.

In the first issue — *Fluxus and Legacy*[1] — four art historians addressed the question of legacy in historical context. One must place the historians in context as well, since two of them — Bertrand Clavez and Owen Smith[2] — practice art. The third is Ina Blom, who has also been a music critic. Hannah Higgins[3] is the fourth. She was a rock musician and she took an active part in Fluxus exhibitions and concerts. Moreover, Higgins is a "Fluxkid," the daughter of two Fluxus artists, and her contribution brought together seven of her fellow Fluxkids, each of whom shared his or her reflections on a life in Fluxus and a role in the Fluxus legacy. The fifth author, Ken Friedman, works as a scholar for his "day job." He, too, lives a second life as an artist active in Fluxus since the 1960s.

This is the second special issue of *Visible Language* to address the Fluxus legacy — here, we explore the way that several artists see the Fluxus legacy and their role in it. Perhaps, from another perspective, we explore the way that several younger artists see the Fluxus legacy in their lives and work.

Ann Klefstad addresses two issues. One is the question of legacy in Fluxus, and the difficult relationship between the artists long known as Fluxus artists and younger artists who consciously work in the tradition that these Fluxus artists established. The other is the question of how these artists themselves see and pursue their work. Lisa Moren addresses the same problematic in a completely different way. Assembling a composition of event scores, old and new, she creates a conversation across generations of artists and among bodies of work. Celia Pearce addresses a body of work rather than a legacy, considering the heritage of games in the current digital world, a heritage that goes back to Duchamp, moving into the contemporary art world via Fluxus before taking a radical new turn that often bears no relationship to what might once have been seen as its roots. A legacy is a past and future joined, and they are joined in a conversation. To highlight some contemporary views on this interaction, we requested twelve artists who have described their work in terms of a Fluxus legacy to consider the relationship between their work and the work and ideas historically associated with Fluxus. This segment presents a statement or response and a selection of works. While this collection is intended as a reference to forms and directions that Fluxus has inspired, our selection is neither comprehensive nor intended to serve as a guide limiting other possibilities. The last contributions to this issue are a bibliographic essay by Ken Friedman on one of the key repositories of that conversation, the literature of Fluxus. The essay and the selected bibliography by Friedman and Owen Smith that follow allow each reader to enter the conversation, as he or she will.

The larger Fluxus conversation raises puzzling challenges. There is wide agreement that Fluxus poses (or posed) a challenge to the art world and to its practices. This leads to a conflict between the work itself and an attempt to

1 **Friedman, Ken and Owen** Smith, editors. 2005. Fluxus and Legacy. *Visible Language,* 39.3.

2 **Smith, Owen. 1999.** *Fluxus: the History of an Attitude.* San Diego: San Diego State University Press.

3 **Higgins, Hannah. 2002.** *Fluxus Experience.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

preserve the work in the institutions designated by society to preserve such artifacts—museums, libraries, special collections, foundations. This conflict is exacerbated by the tendency of private collectors, gallerists and their markets to follow the museums in collecting. There follows with this a second difficulty: the perpetual struggle of artists to make a living while creating, a struggle that leads people to seek the support and temptations of the market while avoiding the market forces that tempt and occasionally support them.

There are apparently no exemptions to the function of the art markets. Those who study the sociology and economics of art in an effort to find better ways to further the ideas and issues embodied in works of art are generally disappointed. The art market and arts institutions have a reasonable logic. This logic is difficult to escape. The fact that this logic often subverts the energy of the work is a separate and distinct problem. One can escape at a price: the price requires distance from the art world whose institutions and institutional culture form a well structured whole. This distance means, in turn, that the work of those who escape takes place outside a culture that cannot, in turn, focus on or receive the ideas and issues contained in the work, let alone embrace it or be influenced by it at a fundamental cultural level.

These issues and problems constitute a secon set of dialectical tensions, compounding and compounded by the dialectics of legacy. When it comes to Fluxus, the story becomes a labyrinth. We will enter the maze more deeply in the future.

This special issue reminds us of a conversation we had one afternoon long ago, in the run-up to *The Fluxus Reader.*[4] We concluded that every viable conversation on Fluxus is both a beginning and a summation. Back in the 1980s, George Brecht wrote, "Fluxus has fluxed." A few years later, Emmett Williams said, "Fluxus has not yet begun." They were both right.

4 Friedman, Ken, editor. 1998. *The Fluxus Reader.* London: Academy Press, John Wiley and Sons.

Those who believe that Fluxus involves ideas and attitudes more than objects feel that there is a future Fluxus that intersects with and moves beyond the Fluxus of artifacts and objects. This question is the focus of our two issues of *Visible Language,* first *Fluxus and Legacy* and now *Fluxus after Fluxus.*

People today are attracted to Fluxus because it is perceived as open, inviting and fun. It gives permission and it is permissive. Nevertheless, this permission carries a responsibility with it. That responsibility is at the core of debates surrounding the Fluxus legacy. What is given? What are the resulting responsibilities?

The question of legacy highlights the different stresses and fault lines in the struggle to take command and possession over a Fluxus that is either (or both) a proposal and a process, or—now—an unwilling stakeholder in an art market that Fluxus never intended to enter.

The fault lines involve more than protagonists of one view or another, adherents of one kind of work or another. Now these issues involve a demand,

a claim over the entire history, the right to interpret the meaning of a body of work and a network of bodies of work. Others seek to establish monetary or talismanic value for one body of objects or another. They seem to discount, discredit or disenfranchise the other possibilities of Fluxus. That makes no sense in a laboratory, let alone a laboratory of ideas and social practice.

Nevertheless, those who seek to maintain a living tradition also make problematic demands. Ann Klefstad probes some of these questions in discussing the notion of canonicity. The concept of a canon is one of the deepest and most problematic concepts in the conversation of any living process. Once a canon is sealed, the closure this entails effectively seals the living transmission of a process or tradition. From the moment of closure on, the legacy involves a backward look to a remembered past rather than existential engagement with a potential and growing future. Another issue comes into play as well. This is the normative force of any canon within a community. Canon becomes doctrine. Doctrine becomes dogma. Finally, dogma becomes a driving force demanding an orthodox response. In canonical communities, canon often develops into a system built on authority. We wonder, in a profound sense, whether one can even speak of a Fluxus canon if we are to speak of a genuine Fluxus legacy.

The undecided, open quality of Fluxus often seems to bother the young more than it irritates the old, and some artists in recent years have attempted to enter the canon, sealing it with their entry while claiming a living heritage. This presents an odd dilemma, and there is a self-serving quality to this position. While arguing for inclusion of current work in the canon, they neglect the history of others who have worked over the four decades since Fluxus was born. Many younger artists in the Fluxus ambit demand recognition for an individual current history without acknowledging the equally deserving histories of many others, past and present. The dialectical tension for many artists who demand entry to the canon is generally a tension between the immediate demands of their work and the history of the 1960s, rather than a demand for attention to the three hundred or so artists who have been part of the Fluxus circle in different ways since 1962.[5]

Another tension involves the effort to speak for George Maciunas, claiming his work, conflating all of Fluxus to his specific body of work and interpreting his legacy as an attempt to define and interpret all of Fluxus.

Still another problem has two faces, if not more. This problem involves an issue that Bertrand Clavez took up in his contribution to the first of our two special issues. Clavez described the problematic nature of a legacy that is so common yet so commonly misunderstood that many artists who work in traditions established by Fluxus never think of their work in relation to Fluxus.[6] Fluxus established an early program of research and practice in rela-

5 Friedman, Ken with James Lewes. 1992. "Fluxus: Global Community, Human Dimensions." In Milman, Estera, guest editor. Fluxus: A Conceptual Country. *Visible Language*, 26.1&2, 154–179.

6 Clavez, Bertrand. 2005. "Fluxus—reference or paradigm for young contemporary artists?" *Visible Language*, 39.3, 234–249.

tion to many themes that are now central to contemporary art. For many reasons, however, these probes were neglected at the time, often deliberately ignored as coming from outsiders to the art world. Despite the fact that the ideas had outsider status in the late 1950s and early 1960s, they were seminal to conceptual art, process art and the wide range of artistic ideas that Dick Higgins labeled intermedia—a range of art practices that have become the background heritage of much contemporary art.

These ideas and issues shaped the context of much art practice today despite the fact that those who first theorized and developed this kind of work received little credit at the time. In many cases, influential works vanished from the history of art while the works they influenced were acknowledged as important. Many of these later works were also important and original contributions. In most fields, seminal thinkers and creators make original contributions to a developing conversation that are original while remaining related to contributions before and after.

This is how science works, this is how philosophy works and this is how thinking and theory develop in many fields. This is also the case in art, but market forces and special interests govern the documentation of the conversation to a greater degree than is the case in other fields. Confusion on the nature of creativity and originality impels many artists to claim to have developed their work without any influence, to disavow influences or else to acknowledge only specific high status influences while neglecting others. For many reasons, the early gaps in attention surrounding Fluxus were reinforced by market forces, shaping a hole in cultural history often rendered visible by its gravitational force on the world around it rather than by any direct account.

At the same time that visible and acknowledged artists share a legacy they don't acknowledge, the artists who do acknowledge Fluxus have their own problems. Outsider status is but one of these. Another is the fact that much of the frame around Fluxus is now shaped by people who seek to control the legacy for reasons governed more by special interests than philosophical inquiry. This leads us to many paradoxes. While Robert Filliou notably criticized the idea that there is any distinction between good art and bad, many who use Filliou's contribution in an attempt to discuss Fluxus use their reading of Filliou's ideas to discriminate against some work as good and some as bad. Filliou's open agenda becomes a form of special pleading. Filliou is permitted his vision because he is Filliou, while others may not use the Filliou philosophy simply because they are not Filliou.

Then there is the paradox of the missing conversation: artists who claim the Fluxus legacy while arguing against history. They want to share the Fluxus conversation, or at least to share in the Fluxus aura, without acknowledging any other speakers, past or present.

This is a difficult labyrinth indeed.

For us, the most interesting bodies of work involve networks of conversation within and across generations. These bodies of work tend to be the most difficult, often eccentric, frequently involving works that cannot be framed as art—let alone as historical art. That is the quality that made Fluxus so interesting and difficult in the 1960s and why Fluxus artists were so often labeled as misfits.

To understand this conversation requires a critical hermeneutic that opens shafts in past, present and future, rather than declaring a canon.

Debates on the past, present and even the future of Fluxus make clear that Fluxus matters to many people. It is even clearer that it matters to different people for very different reasons. These different concerns often obscure a key aspect of Fluxus. This is the fact that there was never one single version of Fluxus. From the first, Fluxus involved difference, divergence and variability, and most (if not all) of the Fluxus artists openly celebrated these qualities.

The flux that is part of the Fluxus name is no different now than it has ever been. What has changed is the fact that time and change have conspired to impose an historical frame around Fluxus. What is different now as contrasted with the past is the way that this frame has become a measure of the Fluxus's existence and even a measure of its nature. It is particularly a measure of Fluxus's continued existence as anything other than a period of history. Nevertheless, this view is blind to the realities of Fluxus. The historical has had good effects along with bad effects, and some of the bad effects have been very bad indeed.

Nevertheless, Fluxus has a history and a philosophical view. Despite this, it is neither a style nor a movement. There were many Fluxuses and there still are. Fluxus means many things to many people. That is how it should be.

We end where Fluxus begins. In 1975, Don Boyd became director of Fluxus West. When he took on the title, he took with it the right to develop the work of Fluxus West as he deemed fit. He did many of the things the previous director did, but his life circumstances made it difficult for him to travel as much, so he was not able to work across as wide a geographic territory. What also differed is that even though he worked remotely (and sometimes visited with) other members of the original group, most did not consider him a Fluxus artist in the same sense that they consider each other to be Fluxus artists. He has been even more remote from the normative art world than Fluxus artists. Despite their sometimes-in, sometimes-out status, many of the original Fluxus artists have had options that Don did not have. Quite clearly, the ability to reject the art world from a position of voluntary rejection bestowed an insider standing and cognitive authority on many, however conflicted they may be about their involvement in a social and economic world they question. The fact that Don Boyd had no similar standing in comparison with the others is a difference any anthropologist would immediately note in studying this network of human beings in its larger landscape. Some might argue that this difference influenced not merely the

response of a larger world toward Don and his work, but the response and relations of others within the Fluxus community, both artists and those who work with them in curatorial and publishing roles. This made no difference to Don.

For thirty years, Don Boyd has been sharing Fluxus work and actions for the best and most simple of reasons: he loves the work and the ideas this body of work conveys, he respects the artists and their achievement. He participates in a living tradition. This is Fluxus after Fluxus.

Emmett Williams says, "Fluxus has not yet begun." This may well be true. If Fluxus is ever to begin, Don Boyd and those like him will be responsible. It is difficult to know whether it will be art, but it will be, above all else, a human contribution. We dedicate this issue of *Visible Language* to his generous achievement.

Authors Note

KEN FRIEDMAN IS PROFESSOR OF LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC Design at the Norwegian School of Management and at Denmark's Design School. Friedman's research concentrates on organization, culture and design in the knowledge economy. He has worked with intermedia and concept art since 1966 when Dick Higgins and George Maciunas enrolled him in Fluxus. He also worked as director of Fluxus West and manager of Something Else Press. In 1998, he edited *The Fluxus Reader* for Academy Press.

OWEN SMITH IS PROFESSOR OF ART HISTORY AND DIGITAL Art at the University of Maine in Orono, and director of the New Media Program. As a specialist in alternative art forms, he has an interest in all aspects of Fluxus. In 1998, San Diego State University Press published his book, *Fluxus: the History of an Attitude*, the first comprehensive monograph on the history of Fluxus. In 2002, he co-edited a special issue of *Performance Research* devoted to Fluxus. He is also an artist whose work has been exhibited widely. Smith's art can be seen on line at http://www.ofsmith.com

A MODERN CHUSHINGURA (OR) LOYAL TO FLUXUS

All living Fluxus artists gather in the garden of the Museum of Modern Art. They commit ritual suicide together by seppuku (hara-kiri).

KEN FRIEDMAN
1981

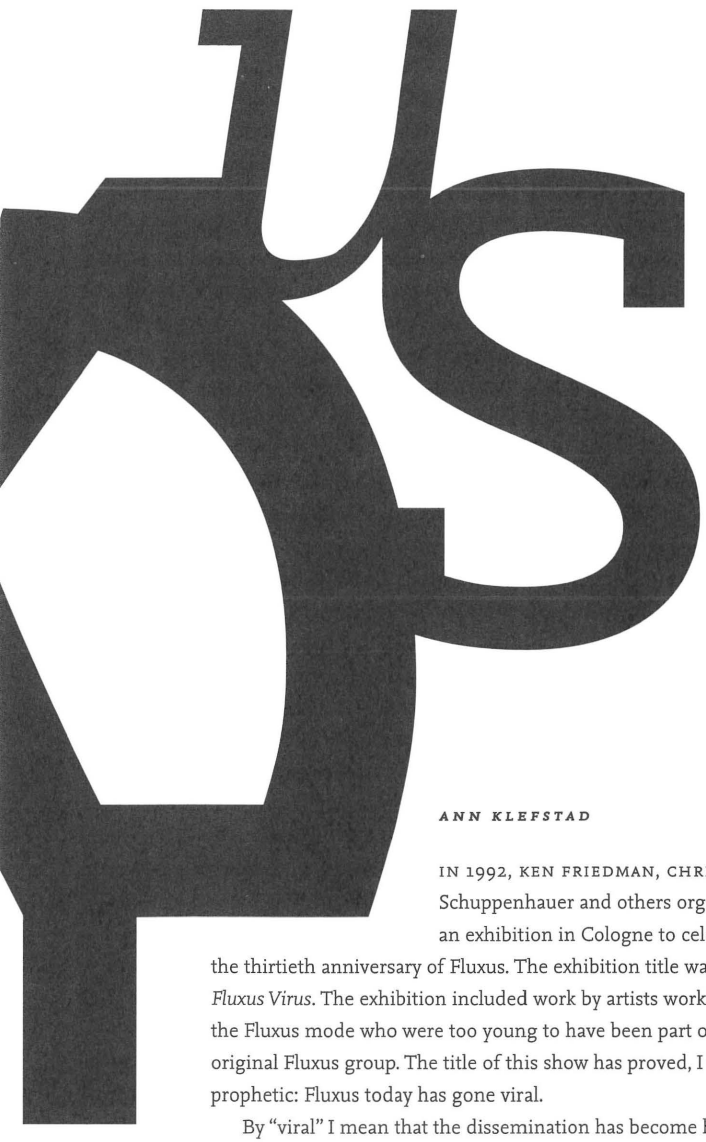
Only Ken Friedman was willing to perform this event. The others declined.

Abstract

A brief survey of current Fluxus-based practices and their relation to historical Fluxus opens an essay that examines current Fluxus-based practice. The author focuses on artists active in Fluxlist, an Internet discussion list that serves as a central locus of current Fluxus activity. Klefstad moves on to discuss the contentious problem of canonicity in Fluxus, reflecting on the changing role of the art canon in an era of artistic innovation. In such a time, the author contends, critical categories can no longer be the basis of canon construction. Instead, collectors and arts institutions create the canon and the rise in economic value of selected artifacts determines their canonical status. At the same time, the exclusive—and exclusionary—nature of the canon helps to establish and reinforce economic value. A complex network of economic and political dynamics points to a central question that asks how such anti-canonical groups such as Fluxus can relate to the possibility of such a canon. Klefstad concludes by proposing that the continuing spirit of Fluxus is found in the actions of those excluded from the canon.

WHAT HAS CREATED

Duluth, Minnesota
Visible Language 40.1
Klefstad, 12–27



ANN KLEFSTAD

IN 1992, KEN FRIEDMAN, CHRISTEL Schuppenhauer and others organized an exhibition in Cologne to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of Fluxus. The exhibition title was *Fluxus Virus*. The exhibition included work by artists working in the Fluxus mode who were too young to have been part of the original Fluxus group. The title of this show has proved, I think, prophetic: Fluxus today has gone viral.

By "viral" I mean that the dissemination has become horizontal and not vertical; spread by Web and acquaintance. This spread is not unlike that of the original group, but it is different in one significant way. In contrast to the implicit and explicit ideals

of Fluxus in the 1960s, the era of its first flowering, today's dissemination is shaped by a now existent history of Fluxus with associated realities of followers and acolytes and even the development of a canonical Fluxus.

In fact, the very notion of a Fluxus canon has caused some bitterness within the large and loose group who now pursue Fluxus-style actions. Allen Bukoff, a maker of Fluxus works and events and the keeper of Fluxus Midwest, which in the past consisted largely in a well-maintained internet archive of Fluxus works and provided an important source of Fluxus documentation for many younger artists, has felt snubbed by the "original" Fluxus artists. For these artists have seemingly not been willing to admit him into the charmed circle of the canon of historical Fluxus. He sent an embittered letter around the Fluxus community, and replaced his websites, using their domains instead as a place to post his letter of protest against the Fluxus group. Eric Andersen, a member of the "original" Fluxus community though not a founding member, thinks that Ken Friedman, certainly by all accounts historically part of that group as a very young man, is not legitimately a member of Fluxus. He has mounted a campaign to de-canonize Ken in any forum where he can get a hearing. His hounding of Ken has sometimes been carried to great lengths.

Accounts of the interactions surrounding many modernist artist-made groups—attempts to expand a particular canon, explode it, make it irrelevant, pull it together, purify it, etc., are all very familiar, and indeed familiar to Fluxus. Alarms and campaigns such as these alternately enliven and embitter the Fluxus forum known as the Fluxlist. The Fluxlist, a Fluxus-inspired internet mailing list, has become the primary forum for a discussion of, and engagement with, Fluxus today. Such struggles over recognition or control are particularly intractable in the groups that form around the notion of Fluxus; this is in part because ideas of Fluxus vary so much that room for argument is created.

To some Fluxus was a group of people who performed certain actions and produced a certain set of artifacts bounded by a specific time frame. This is the Fluxus enshrined by exhibitions such as *In the Spirit of Fluxus* at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. For the most part this Fluxus can be seen now only in documentation—a few videos and books and papers usually seen in vitrines, unviewable and by virtue of this presentation format with little direct affect on the present day artists and creators. Some books, like the *Fluxus Codex*, can still be purchased for relatively little and owned, read and used. This Fluxus is a movement like any other, with a beginning, middle and an end. I'll not deal with its history here as scholars such as Hannah Higgins and Peter Frank, as well as participants such as Ken Friedman, have covered it far more thoroughly and completely. The definitive source for such history is Owen Smith's *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude.*[1]

The "viral mode" of Fluxus—the world of Fluxpractices, let's call them, Fluxbeliefs or even Fluxplay—spread very widely and still has the power to

1 **See the bibliography of material** included elsewhere in this issue, especially those by Hannah Higgins, Peter Frank and Owen Smith.

infect. This loose set of practices and inclinations has created a kind of vast cloud of Fluxpractitioners around the world. Where I personally came in to this Fluxus context was as one who had heard, in the sixties and seventies, about Fluxus, later read about the actions and ideas that flowed from it, and who had, as a result of these contacts, developed practices that more resembled the habits of the religious than the career-minded gestures of an artist.

The Fluxlist

WITH THE SPREAD OF THE WEB IN THE NINETIES, DICK HIGGINS AND KEN Friedman recognized its potential as a means of establishing associations and exchanges of ideas concerned with Fluxus and associated art forms and practices such as mail art. Such exchanges might be seen as an extension of Robert Filliou's concept of the Eternal Network. Higgins and Friedman originally founded the Fluxlist based on their desire to enable the discussion of the works and ideas of historical Fluxus or what I am describing as the canonical Fluxus artists. Additionally it might be argued that Higgins and Friedman wanted the Fluxus group's existence to be recognized for the remarkable event it had been, and wanted to enable art historians and others to communicate with each other and with Fluxus artists. At first, the Fluxlist did work somewhat this way.

But even in the first year of the Fluxlist's existence, the queries and discussions of original Fluxus dried up and the viral version of Fluxus began to take over: all sorts of random adherents of the mode of thought that was Fluxus came to make up the list membership. More gradually there were no original Fluxus artists in the list membership at all: Dick died, and Ken was harried off the list by a concerted campaign of insult by Eric Andersen. However, the list became its own entity and it fostered many fascinating discussions: on the grounds of making, on the relation of art making and mainstream culture, and on how to conduct a creative life that wasn't called art, to name a few. These long and interesting threads eventually gave birth to the kinds of collective projects that characterized the original Fluxus group—as well as bits and blurbs of the kind of amusing and not amusing detritus that falls into most such internet communities.

One project was the Fluxbox (organized by Owen Smith, one of the editors of this issue), which had no single title, but instead bore a list of 168 names contributed by listmembers, any one of which the recipient could choose as the name for his or her box. It contained 39 small works made by listmembers who had signed on to the project and was organized and administered entirely online.[2] Extra boxes were made and found their way into the collections of various museums. A second Fluxbox was also created a couple of years later.

Another project was the Fluxlist address book, in which all recipients of the book created covers for the books, sent them to Carol Starr (longtime member of the Fluxlist and coordinator of this project), along with their land and email

2 The individual contributions for this project can bee seen on line at http://www.fluxus.org/FLUXLISt/box1/boxfram.html

FIGURE 1 ***Fluxlist Box I.*** By permission of the artist.

addresses and information. The book was compiled and sent out to all who contributed. Mine has Carol Starr's dog on the cover; the cover I contributed was made of duct tape and slide film.[3]

Happy New Ears, the fluxpoetry book compiled by Roger Stevens, was another of the list's projects; it contains writing—concrete poetry, sound poetry and other experiments—by members of the list. Many other online projects have been conducted as well through the domain of the Fluxlist—running word games, John Bennett's ongoing flow of poems, a variety of sound projects, as well as empirical reportage and its consequences.

The Fluxlist today is largely a source of information and exchange feeding off-list projects. Just three examples (among many) of which I know are *The Secret Life of Fluxus: Event Scores*, an exhibition of event scores and their enactments which I curated for the Tweed Museum last fall, and at present, a collection of scores based on Bennett's long-running "bendy dictions" which is currently calling for contributions, as well as an anthology of sound works.

Anthology of Responses: Fluxlist Members

LAST SUMMER, IN PREPARATION FOR THIS ARTICLE, I SENT A REQUEST TO a number of active artists on the Fluxlist for the following: images or descriptions of any works they had done in conscious relation to earlier Fluxus works; images or descriptions of work in the tradition of Fluxus that could have been

3 **The project can be viewed** online at: http://www.fluxlist.com/fluxarchive/fluxaddress/

done with no knowledge of the canonical Fluxus; and a brief account of how they discovered Fluxus and their ideas of what it was. I got back some wonderful writing, not all addressed to these questions. I reproduce some of it here. The range and spread of projects and ideas that operate in the Fluxus mode (that incidentally go far beyond the Fluxlist or anything associated with Fluxus—one sees the spirit in the works of many young artists all over the world) give me the idea that canonicity is exactly what these new Fluxus-type works are erasing. That it is now the viral phase of Fluxus, the thing that alters the flux meme and removes its "replication inhibitor," enabling infinite replication, without permission from the host organism, canonical Fluxus. Fluxus as manifested through the variety of activities associated with the Fluxlist has become, not a school or association of people, but a strategy available to all as originally intended—only its origin story has boundaries any more.

ALAN REVICH, JULY 20, 2005
A COLLECTION OF IDEAS ABOUT FLUXUS

"... it was meant to be a long-lasting idea or tradition with continuing converts and practitioners. That is the way I look at it and that is the way I deal with it."

DON BOYD

"I think what makes Fluxus so dynamic and interesting to me is that there is no definition—I wish people would just accept that. The appealing idea is that Fluxus is inclusive. Artists spend most of their careers being rejected which is why Fluxus is so refreshing ..."

DAWG

"Fluxus is not a moment in history, or an art movement. Fluxus is a way of doing things, a tradition, and a way of life and death."

DICK HIGGINS*

"Fluxus is more valuable as an idea and a potential for social change than as a specific group of people or a collection of objects."

KEN FRIEDMAN*

This is how I see Fluxus as well.

I posted something back in March that works for me and seems to fit:

1) Fluxus makes the mundane magical.
2) Fluxus happens when one feels that life and art must be taken so seriously, that it becomes impossible to take life or art seriously.
3) Ordinary acts and ordinary objects perceived in extraordinary ways.

And I still think Ken Friedman's description of Fluxus is maybe the best one:

globalism,
the unity of art and life,

intermedia,
experimentalism,
chance,
playfulness,
simplicity,
implicativeness,
exemplativism,
specificity,
presence in time, and
musicality.

JOSH RONSEN, JULY 23, 2005
A DEFINITION OF FLUXUS

FLUXUS IS A MULTIMEDIA ART MADE FROM THE CURDLED ACTIVITIES OF various people—most commonly poets but sometimes painters, musicians, dancers, housewives and water skiers. There are hundreds of types of Fluxus. Dada is often used to induce coagulation in the art, although some Fluxus is curdled with ideas from Situationalism or Neoism or with extracts of various species of Pop-Art (sometimes called vegetable art). Dada is an urge traditionally obtained from the stomach lining of rocking horses or from a studio-produced substitute. Pranks and sight-gags are added to Fluxus to reduce the pH, alter texture and develop flavor, and some Fluxus also has politics, either on the outer skin or throughout. The natural color of Fluxus ranges from off-white to yellow. In some parts of the world, such as Wisconsin in the United States, the art is low in sarcasm, making Fluxus a paler yellow than normal. In this case, it is common to add elephant dung as a coloring agent. Some Fluxus is made with the addition of audience participation. As a response to the loss of diversity in mass-produced Fluxus, a cottage industry has grown up around home Fluxus-making in some locations. In many European countries this has historically been the normal means of Fluxus. Different styles and flavors of Fluxus are the results of using different species of fonts and typefaces, different levels of banality, variations in length of Flux Events (very short vs. very long), differing processing treatments (dissembling the seriousness of high art, filming buttocks and other body parts, political protesting, cross dressing) and different breeds of performance art, film, music and other theaters. Other factors include simplicity, the unity of art and life and the addition of chance and playfulness to some Fluxus. Some controversy exists regarding the safety of Fluxus made by the traditional methods of using pure Dada and regarding how Neo-Dada affects flavor. In most Eastern countries, Fluxus is considered a vile substance. Thus, it is rarely found in any Asian museums.

PETER FRANK, JUNE 29, 2005
HOW DID I COME TO KNOW ABOUT FLUXUS?

ON DECEMBER 27, 1963, SOMETIME I BELIEVE VERY EARLY IN THE AFTERnoon, I walked into the Thibaut Gallery at 799 Madison Avenue on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. An exhibition organized by critic Nicolas Calas, called "Hard Center" (parodying the "Hard Edge" geometric painting then the rage), was on view. As I entered, to the left I saw a chess set both of whose teams were white. To the right I espied a chair on which a cane and a rubber ball rested. Further back hung three lead yardsticks, the center one shorter than the outer two. A wooden box with a dowel that slid in and out sat in the middle of the gallery. In the back, a stamp machine dispensed stamps the likes of which I'd never before seen. I was absolutely enchanted. "This isn't art," I thought to myself, "it's better." On the way out of the gallery I dropped my glove on the floor. The receptionist alerted me. "It's okay," I assured her, "it's part of the exhibition."

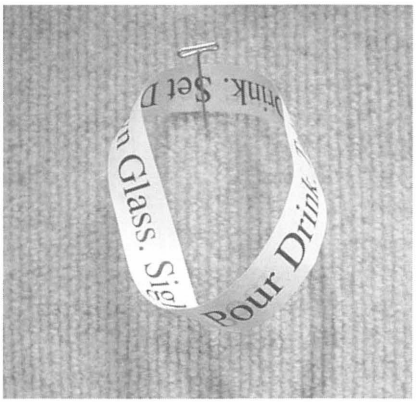
I was thirteen-and-a-half at the time. I immediately went home and started assembling objects like this. I was already familiar with and enthusiastic about Pop art (thru gallery shows and *Time* Magazine and such) and assemblage (through the catalogue to the MOMA show), but the gravidity of these dumb, easy objects—these readymades ready to be re-made—seduced me into putting six empty grape juice cans snugly into a shoebox, or take a toy safe and insert several small objects (including one that I considered an artwork in itself—an artwork as part of an artwork, a curious and highly performative idea, I thought).

The name "Fluxus" may not have been available to me at that time, but I recall that by the following spring I'd seen the Bob Watts stamps several other places—Al Hansen slipped me a sheet of them when he was working as a gopher at Castelli—and seen ads for Yoko Ono's objects and performances, and I believe even sent away for a sampler from PO Box 180, Canal St Station, NY 13 NY (this was a few months before zip codes were introduced).

Thus, I cannot be clear when I first heard or saw the term "Fluxus," but know exactly, almost to the hour, the first time I saw Fluxstuff—and what a revelation that was. My introduction to the Something Else Press and intermedia theory came later, in the spring of 1966—again through the agency of Al Hansen, who took me by the Something Else Gallery and introduced me to Dick and Alison—but that was a welcome expansion on what I knew by then of Fluxus and happenings and the whole world of art-into-life.

ALAN BOWMAN, JULY, 2005
BEFORE I WAS AWARE OF 'FLUXUS'

MY FATHER WAS A VERY FUNNY MAN. QUIET, GENTLE AND SOFT-SPOKEN BUT wickedly sarcastic, he could cut you dead without even appearing to think. If



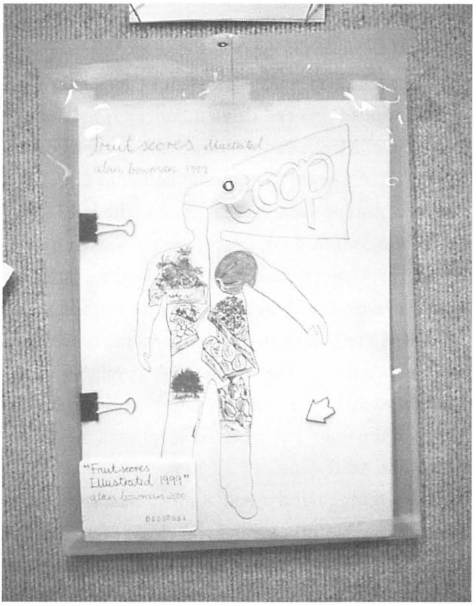


FIGURE 2 ***Mobius Event Score*, Erik Kalstrom.** By permission of the artist.
FIGURE 3 ***Fruitscores Illustrated*, Alan Bowman.** By permission of the artist.

you spent time with him however, a much more interesting factor about his sense of humor became apparent; he was extremely clever with words, he would spot similarities in sound, double meanings, absurdities in the English language, pick up on the errors and arrogance of others and use them to make comments which, for the most part, people often didn't get. He was able to use word play in a most subtle way. The fact that people often didn't realize what he had said, or more often simply didn't understand was often hilarious, having grown up with him my brother and I would latch on immediately and would be crying with laughter at the hapless fool who dared to cross our Dad!

It was this ability to play with the English language, to make slightly surreal observations about a perfectly banal statement, to rearrange quotes and to repeat other people's observations out of context and make them appear perfectly relevant, that initially put me on the path towards my discovery of Fluxus. I only wish I had inherited his way with words.

From the age of ten I wanted to be an artist, urged on by my teachers I worked hard to achieve this goal, to pass my exams and go to art school! Because that's what artists did, they went to art school and wore groovy clothes, black ones like the existentialists in Tony Hancock's 'The Rebel' and then became rock stars like the Beatles and The Stones and got really cute

devoted, blonde girlfriends and lived very groovy lives indeed.

So at eighteen I got my first office job and a brunette.

I stayed in office jobs for a good while too, interspersed with a time as a telephone operator, laborer, carpet fitter, painter and decorator, gardener and picker up of golf balls. It was in the office however where the initial ideas for much of the way in which I work surfaced.

Driven by tedium I would draw; I began to play with the photocopier, then the rubber stamps and other items from the stationary cupboard, then documents and eventually colleagues. I suppose that this is where my fascination for finding something special in the mundane, the everyday comes from.

With a sense of humor akin to my father's and a fascination for subtle jokes inspired by his, often overlooked, linguistic interventions I began to make pieces in the office space. A false document inserted into a huge civil archive, a tiny message of warning on the ceiling legible only when standing on piled furniture.

From there it all began I suppose.

CRISPIN WEBB, JUNE 26, 2005
HOW DID I COME TO KNOW ABOUT FLUXUS?

WELL I CAN START BY MENTIONING DON BOYD. HE WAS ESSENTIAL TO MY relation to Fluxus and contemporary ideas in art. The first time I heard of Fluxus was from a little thing that Don had put on the board in the hall, I think it was Beuys version of the Fluxus manifesto. This grabbed my attention for some reason so being the curious person I am I went to the library to find out what this fluxus thing was ... I found one book and no real answers so this begun my research and interest in Fluxus. I began meeting with Don and had him look at my contrite freshman painting and started to understand the philosophy behind Fluxus. I heard about Fluxlist through searching on the web and signed up my friend by accident with his campus mail. It was hilarious he got like two hundred emails a day for a while. It was like spam or something. I remember signing up, and not sure what was going on, kind of a mystical experience or nostalgic or something. I was hearing these names I had read about and then I saw Don post something, which freaked me out a little. I just didn't think this was Fluxus, but it was and so began my involvement in dialogue and projects as a group and with individuals from all over the world. I remember reading about George Maciunias and started thinking what would he have done with email technology and I thought a lot more than I'm doing with it right now, so I started emailing a lot and building a network with these people, one that I was involved in, not voyeuristically participating. I wanted it to be real Fluxus... cause so many people were saying things like it's not real it's over 'cause Maciunias is dead. Maybe, but I thought I could use it for something, a model to inform my work and others, it is, and

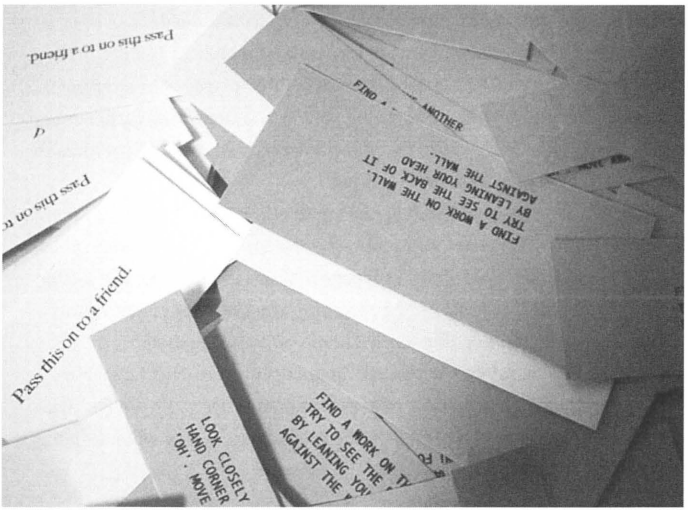


FIGURE 4 ***Printed Scores*, Zoe Marsh.** By permission of the artist.

continues to be, fun.

SOL NTE, JULY, 2005

I'M AFRAID I REALLY DON'T HAVE ANYTHING SUITABLE AS FAR AS FLUXUS influenced works apart from the following:

TRAIN MUSIC

Fill a train carriage with the smell of its destination.
SOL NTE, 1999

Exhibited March 2003 on a small framed card in the manner of George Brecht at "The Art of Music" at The Borough Museum and Art Gallery, Newcastle-Under-Lyme, UK.

As to the relationship of old and new Fluxus I don't really know what I could say. I used to believe there was some relationship, but I think the reality is that Fluxus finished a long time ago, probably with the death of Maciunas. Fluxus is now more an inspiration than anything else, although it is an excellent inspiration.

D. B. CHIROT, JULY 2005
THOUGHTS ON HIS FLUXUS HERITAGE

MAIL ART AND CONCRETE POETRY WERE PART OF FLUXUS AND I'VE DONE THEM.

I think since I work pretty much always with an open-ended finding—that is, the moment—and the accidental—play a very large part and to me this is related to Fluxus—there is some Fluxus I consider more programmatic such

as event scores. Yet even in these, I hope to leave much room for improvisations of the moment.

Something I think of re Fluxus is this: I connect in my mind Fluxus with the ephemeral—and in Baudelaire one finds the first definitions of Modernism as the eternal within the ephemeral (the quote is from *The Painter of Modern Life*). I think Fluxus relates to this interrelationship—for me by tilting much more towards the ephemeral—while recognizing the eternal as in the Eternal Network.

Also in Fluxus another aspect I think of is the relation with Eastern thinking—Zen especially—as I have text translated by Brecht and then done into other versions by Higgins of ancient Zen text—I like that—(his pieces for me have some of the nonsense/play quality which also is in Fluxus—very much).

I see also very much in Fluxus that life/art is explored—the so-called separation of these—investigated—questioned—as I find in Fluxus the celebration of the everyday in all its manifestations. Yet also in a way by framing it, Fluxus still makes art of it—it is very much a, how does one say it, self-reflexive approach. I have always wondered in this sense how truly "free" Fluxus is—by free I mean free of the art/life separation questions—or—it suffices in that it asks the questions.

Also with Fluxus something I deeply appreciate is that it extended through so many media—including the media of the mail art—also very early on with televison via Nam June Paik—there is a sense of using both electronics and handmade acoustical made up instruments—not a separation of these.

Another aspect of Fluxus that I have always liked is that even when making something ephemeral it is not virtual, i.e., to me Fluxus is always something concrete—objects, bodies, etc. It is very much part of the physical world even when it is at its most vanishing—that to me is important especially as now we are ever more into the virtual realms—a recalling us to the physical world.

And as I say, even in its vanishing, the ephemerality is an acknowledgment of the vanishing of things.

Fluxus and Canonicity

A RESULT OF THE FLUXUS CONTINUANCE IN VIRAL FORM IS A PERHAPS inadvertent interrogation of the notion of the canon—any canon. What does it mean when an anti-canonical practice becomes a hypercanonical archive? Does it delegitimize any further productions of those who now cultivate what they once rejected?

There have been battles over the use of the name Fluxus as a canonical designation for two different associated phenomena: the original Fluxus group and their actions; and the ongoing influence of the ideas put forth by that group, which has created many other practitioners and groups of artists who

call themselves (with greater or lesser degrees of conviction) Fluxus as well. This specific struggle relates to the general changing nature of canonicity in the current artworld. The issue is gaining in importance because of certain structural and social changes regarding the role of art in culture.

Has Fluxus escaped the original Fluxus group? What is "Fluxus" if not membership in that group? In the world at large, there seem to be two ideas of Fluxus—let's call them, just for here and now (I'm not interested in the final dispensation of the names) Fluxus and "Fluxus." The first describes the virus that is still active, causing the kinds of actions that Fluxus makers do; the second describes canonical Fluxus.[4]

4 This is the same kind of distinction that led Rene Block to label some works "Fluxist" (viral) in an attempt to distinguish them from Fluxus (canonical) works.

Now, because canonicity is a form of property, negotiable to cultural institutions in return for money, positions, opportunities and status, it cannot be diluted without loss of value. It's a value-concentrating quality or function. The original Fluxus group cannot admit new members to its ranks, then, without diluting or even destroying canonicity and thus damaging the academic or artworld status of its original members, a status they regard themselves as having earned. Fluxus without the quotes, however, which "Fluxus" also used to be, denies the importance or relevance of canonicity. And so the battle is joined.

Many current artists who were never part of the original group and who pursue some sort of Fluxus practice do not want to be known as "Fluxus"—they have a kind of respect for the original historical moment that precludes wanting the rewards that moment creates in the form of canonicity. But many current artists who have given much support to the ideas of Fluxus and who have acted, as they see it, as friends of "Fluxus," resent what they see as the hoarding of value that canonicity represents. They want to see the use value of Fluxus restored by breaching the canonicity of "Fluxus"—sort of like breaking the vitrines of old paper at a "Fluxus" show and handing out the documents to passers-by, thus restoring them to currency and to their Fluxus nature.

The tempest may be teapot-sized to many, but arguments over canonicity will be more and more central to arts practice in this century, as that practice becomes more and more fragmented, marginal and diffuse. Paradoxically, as any culture-wide standard of "greatness" or importance recedes farther and farther into the distance, the economics of the artworld become more and more dependent on the now comparatively arbitrary designation of importance that canonicity represents. David Galenson of the University of Chicago, who writes about which characteristics of artworks most influence their monetary value, has found that innovation is what ensures canonicity, which in turn ensures the artwork's value.[5] In a climate of perpetual innovation, as is now the case, such innovations yield diminishing returns, and few innovations relate back to any coherent issue or critical category. So critics have largely lost their ability to grant canonicity, and canonicity itself becomes more and more

5 From "Life Cycles of Modern Artists," http://mnartists.org, Jan. 7, 2005.

arbitrary, sometimes a mere consequence of the monetary value of works; sometimes a cause of it.

Critics in the past have created canons (such as Abstract Expressionism, for instance). This was based on some underlying category found across the practices of many artists; a category that would be understood as a consequence of a certain historical moment and which would be seen as capable of development. Admission to the canon would be based on an artist's relation to a critical category, his or her establishment of a new step in its development. Art critics are no longer seen as cultural bellwethers—whether because of the elaboration of critical language during the theory wars, or the etiolation of the connection of the artworld to the world of mainstream media during the past couple of decades of hyper-innovation—the role and position of the critic has changed. In a worst-case scenario, it can be argued that people don't even read any art critics, and there are really no art critics of broad stature.

Also, given the seemingly fragmented nature of the artworld, there are no major movements or trends driven by artists that would sweep their participants into canonical status. There is no trend large enough or with enough broad cultural import to create the career of a critic. Hyperinnovation has created a Micronesia of art practices, each island with a standing army of one.

There are now, really, only curators—the ones who curate museum shows, and in particular, the ones who determine who is shown in the international circuit of biennials and fairs. Each of these fairs or institutions act as collection points, concentrators of content. They create the larger entities of meaning that art needs to be broadly intelligible. Curators have a peculiar relation to art in general—they are scholars, preservers, representatives of large institutions, the keepers of the vitrines and the accumulators of value. A good curator is, eventually and finally, a curator who increases the value of his institution's holdings through the exercise of his judgment, his choice, his taste, his erudition. Additionally they seek to keep out of that institution any holdings that might dilute or taint the value of what is preserved in the vaults.

The narrative of the canon is increasingly tautological, and increasingly impossible to breach or influence for any artists or writers outside of the institutional aegis. A canonical artist is an artist whose work holds its economic value, and artists whose innovations are deemed contributory to the academic narratives of art-historically driven institutions are canonical. This likely can't continue forever; in any case, it's a climate in which artists are increasingly concerned with their status in or out of the canon, and the spoils, even as they diminish for most, are increasingly struggled over.

This relationship determines the shape of the artworld, determines who has a career, who is allowed to make art, who is allowed to work, to have an influence, to teach. Especially to teach—the new canonicity cannot be divorced from the nature of the artworld as, increasingly, a small anteroom of

the university or the art school, the disciplinary institution whose impulses are conservative—that is, concerned with conservation of value.

Art then, increasingly, becomes a matter of words and money, those shapeshifting mediators, those transmutors of matter. The old role of art as the permeable membrane between matter and mind, body and thought, is dissolving under the need to yield the appropriate harvest to scholars and their institutions. Its transmission is mediated by specialist knowledge; its role in the culture is increasingly "professionalized," the work made by people with advanced degrees, for consumption by those with advanced degrees, adjudicated by those with advanced degrees. This relationship is not new, but its dominance of the fortunes of the artworld is new. What is also new is that this set of relations has become the final arbiter of the meaning of works that came into being as attempts to subvert this kind of conservation or inflation of value.

Implied in all this, of course, is the necessary intermediary existence of dealer/collector. Their holdings, to acquire value, must pass through the hands of curators and museums, who in turn fund those same curators and institutions and supply them with their holdings. These are the symbiotic halves of the current artworld. When the critic Robert Hughes wrote, "the price of a work of art is an index of pure, irrational desire," he was not living in this decade. The price of a work of art now is an index of its relevance to a highly detailed art-historical narrative that contests with other such narratives in a relatively hermetically sealed institutional world.

In the context of this artworld it can be argued that the effect of touring shows like that of Dick Higgins' work, curated by his daughter Hannah Higgins and supported by her book, established "Fluxus" as a sealed room, the value of whose contents can be reliably expected to rise. The show several years ago at the Walker Art Center (and others) of the *In the Spirit of Fluxus* did similar work: the spirit of Fluxus becomes, in these settings, the corpus of "Fluxus."

Perhaps this is inevitable, but isn't this is exactly the kind of thing that Fluxus originally struggled against? No one can deny the incredible nimbleness of this consumer culture's commodification and cooptation machine, but some younger Fluxus practitioners felt, and feel, betrayed by its operation just exactly here. Do the original artists of Fluxus have to get on board, lay their willing hands on the controls of this machine? Some other younger artists and others who use Fluxus practices to make things see the accumulated value of canonicity to be only the due, and a fairly meager one at that, of the original Fluxus group. After all, why should they be singled out and punished above all other makers, forbidden to take part in the appreciation of their works and days?

But this, in any case, is the battleground on which the term "Fluxus" lies bleeding. It's also clear that the impulse to make work in the manner of Fluxus

is not exclusive to those who were in the original group, or even exclusive to people who have ever heard of the group. It's simply the desire to make, to make thought, to make fun, to make jokes, to make objects, to make questions. The original Fluxus group focused that desire and gave it a name; they eventually ended up being folded into the arms of the insatiable desire of the artworld, with its institutions and collectors, driven by the economic value of innovation. It's up to new people to open the door of the artworld and break the lock on the thing, to ensure that they make good their escape from the disciplinary institution.

Author Note

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Abstract

This project is a collection of scored works in the form of a response poem, a conversation across generations of artists and among bodies of work. The conversation takes place in an assembled composition of old and new event scores. By scoring contemporary art actions as if they were Fluxus event scores, artist Lisa Moren brings unscored art actions into the realm of Fluxus and intermedia, a gesture that walks the line between art and life. This project is titled as an homage to Takehisa Kosugi's Theater Music, the score to which reads: "Keep Walking Intently."

Visible Language 40.1
Moren, 28–45

LISA MOREN

Signatures, Music, Computers, Paranoia, Smells, Danger & the Sky

The quotes and scores assembled in Keep Walking Intently: Scoring Contemporary Art Actions *by Lisa Moren, which have been given graphic form by Margaret Re, are traces of a "movement" in the true sense of the term: Not an art movement with programs and manifestoes, but the sometimes slow and sometimes quick, sometimes precise and sometimes imprecise trajectory of certain ideas or impulses as they have passed from person to person in the course of the last 50 years or so. It is a type of movement that is perhaps best compared to Robert Fillou's* Whispered Art History: *Endlessly repetitive and pointless in terms of content but fascinating in terms of method, which is all about person-to-person contact. In this sense, this assembly of quotes and scores evoke not so much the history of Fluxus and its surroundings as the sentiment of the moment of their reception. They evoke the hushed excitement of the messenger, the immmediate complicity established between the ones who are "getting it," the sense of an expansive yet still secretive network instigated by the "you too" and—a moment later—"who else?". It was a point of contact that was all about contact, reception and dissemination. What did it mean to be interpellated by Fluxus more than 20 years after the fact? Beyond the fact that we are obviously bound to misrecognize the forces that ground personal or generational fascinations, Moren's assembly suggests that Fluxus probably created different types of worlds for different types of words for different types of people. But above all it suggests a strong sense of continuity, an insistent theme that runs through these pieces like the steady drive of La Monte Young's* Draw a straight line and fol-

low it. *For, despite the diversity of approaches, the diversity of Fluxus futures, the assembly reads like a list of some of the favorite things of late modern dreamers: signatures, music, computers, paranoia, smells, danger, sky, tape recorders, gramophones, water, bodies, debris. It seems as if being interpellated by Fluxus means being interpellated by some of the most obvious yet also most elusive aspects of modernity. For this is not simply a list of romantic-sounding "things." The items on this list indicate a preoccupation with wholly new forms of relationships or modes of action—the types of relationships produced by the indifferent noise and intensive materiality of media output rather than by the ordered formality of the arts. Being interpellated by Fluxus meant being called to a life within modern mediascapes. It meant being called not to a poetics of good form but to a hyperawareness of small shifts with unpredictable implications: a world of events.*

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"Sky Billboard" used the sky as a gallery. In 1965, Geoffrey Hendricks placed clouds on a billboard at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street for five months.

When I was a student the Fluxus and practicalist-poetry stuff was the cutting edge and it was a major influence on all of us. I studied film with Paul Sharits and sound with Yasunao Tone and Takahisa Kosugi, who are still 2 of my favorite artists.

Paul Demarinis,
San Francisco, California

UNTITLED (STRANGE BIRD)
Print birds and clouds on billboards in twenty locations in Los Angeles.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, 1993

DANGER MUSIC NO. 29
Get a job for its own sake.

Dick Higgins, 1963

HAPPINESS
Fill out a job application at McDonalds.
Work in the McDonalds kitchen.
If you see someone you know, wink.

Laurie Anderson, 2001

ORANGE EVENT NO. 7
Eat an orange and at the same, listen attentively to sounds of chewing, of sucking, of swallowing and external sounds that may occur.

Bengt af Klintberg, 1963–1965

LEMON
1. Buy a large basket of lemons.
2. Place the lemons.
3. Throw the lemons.

Ken Friedman, 1966

TALKING POPCORN
Listen to popcorn
and try to understand it.
Do not assume the popcorn
speaks English
or any other language.
Bronze its first words.

Nina Katchadourian, 2001

CALIFORNIA LEMON SINGS A SONG
Allow lemons to whisper a song.
Use their acid as a battery.

Motomiya Kaoru, 2000

WHIP CREAM PIECE (LICK PIECE)
Cover shapely female with whipped cream.
Lick.
Topping of chopped nuts and cherries is optional.

Ben Patterson, 1964

LICK AND LATHER
Lick a chocolate bust of yourself.
Lather a soap bust of yourself.

Janine Antoni, 1993-1994

SOLO FOR WIND INSTRUMENTS

1. Any number of wind instruments are manufactured in choclate, ice, or any similar meltable substance. Each is used by one performer.
2. Each performer selects one sound on his instrument and produces it off and on at any time, as slowly as possible, for as long as this is practical.
3. When all the instruments are melted or eaten, the performance is over.

Dick Higgins

FREE RANGE APPLIANCES IN A LIGHT DILL SAUCE

Shine an ordinary flashlight on kitchen appliances, egg beaters, tea pots, etc. Shine until appliances move toward the light.

Rania Ho, 2000

FIVE EVENTS

eating with
between two breaths
sleep
wet hand
several words

George Brecht, 1961

DANGER MUSIC NO. 15 (FOR THE DANCE)

Work with butter and eggs for a time.

Dick Higgins, 1962

ACCOUNTINGS

**Steel tokens,
soot, steel,
glass, wax heads,
live canaries.**

Ann Hamilton, 1992

I can remember being bowled over by the unapologetically playfulness of a Robert Fillou show. My head was pretty much buzzing with ideas throughout that whole show, and there was something about his approach that also made me want to MAKE work. That show kind of put Fluxus on the radar for me.

**Nina Katchadourian
New York, New York**

EXHIBITIONS: MOLD

The hot summer is the best season. At various times one puts old pieces of bread into a number of bread boxes in gay colours. Let them stand with closed lids for some time. Now and then one checks how the mold is developing. At an interesting and beautiful phase, one makes an exhibition. Have a number for each box. Instead of sherry, serve vin rosé.

Bengt af Klintberg, 1963

CULTURE

Ask the participants to tell the last time they were out of breath. Ask them to speak into a substitive petri dish. When the petri dish molds are interesting and beautiful, display them in an exhibition. You may make them interactive with a looping video of yourself holding your breath.

Tiffany Holmes, 2000

DUET FOR BRASS INSTRUMENTS
Rubber gloves are placed over bells
of brass instruments and tucked inside.
Two performers play duet while gloves
emerge from instruments and expand.
Variation may be performed using
inflatable leg.

Joe Jones

AIR EVENT
Inflate a small rubber balloon in one deep
breath and sign your name on the surface
of the balloon. (this is your lung)
You can buy the lungs of other performers
at an auction.

Mieko Shiomi, 1964

WATASHI-CHAN
Make a dress or suit out
of balloons.
When you hear noise,
feel the balloons inflate.
(this is proof that you're living)
When the world is silent
feel the balloon deflate.

Tomoko Ueyama, 2000

WATASHI-CHAN (ALTERNATIVE)
Feel the sounds that exist
surround you.

Tomoko Ueyama, 2000

Hi Red Center made suits out of balloons for performers on the streets of Tokyo in 1963 called "The 6th Mixer Plan."

I think, most singularly, event scores were prescient in the idea, now very commonplace in new media works, of generative and dynamic artworks whose experience is not fixed. I think of Fluxus' recipes for art, their event scores, and how these works really encouraged the idea of chance and the idea of art as the creation of charged circumstance where different levels of interactions and interventions can take place.

Ingrid Bachmann
Montreal, Canada

"Flux Tours" were public tours of curbs and public restrooms, etc. in SoHo performed by Nam June Paik in 1976.

TOUR GUIDE
Give tours of artist-related sites
in lower Manhattan.

Christine Hill, 2000

TWO LONG PERFORMANCES
i. Losing fifty pounds.
ii. Gaining fifty pounds back again.

Dick Higgins, 1967

ONLY YOU
Copyright your genetic code.

Larry Miller, 1989

OMNIPRESENCE
Offer your flesh
as a sculptural medium.

Orlan, 1993

GFP BUNNY
Contest the alleged
supremacy of DNA.

Eduardo Kac, 2000

LOVING CARE
Dip your hair with Loving Care hair dye and mop the floor with it.

Janine Antoni, 1993

DANGER MUSIC NO. 2
(SHAVE YOUR HEAD AS A CONCERT)
Hat, Rags, Paper, Heave, Shave

Dick Higgins, 1961

LA DONNA DELINQENTA
Clean a theater thoroughly
and wash the floors.
Paint the floors.
Pick up the linoleum and wash
the glue with lye.
Oil the floors with linseed oil.

Lyne LaPointe
and Martha Fleming, 1988

AUDIENCE PIECE NO. 4
After the audience is seated, performers proceed to clean the theater very thoroughly: wash floor, vacuum chairs and curtains, white wash stage, change light bulbs, etc.

Ben Vautier, 1964

Fluxus, for me, put the "rules" for making work that could be "important" back into a larger context of creative inquiry. I think it seemed to many of us that these (Fluxus) artists were taking away a certain burden by using fresh, very human-scale gestures, which in retrospect were monumental, but had the grace not to seem so at the time.

Lee Boot
Baltimore, Maryland

THREE ROOM EVENTS
broom
sweeping
broom sweeping

George Brecht, 1961

SOLO FOR VIOLIN, VIOLA, CELLO OR CONTRABASS
polishing

George Brecht, 1962

STREET CLEANING EVENT
Performers are dressed in white coats like the 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.

Hi Red Center, 1964

EVENT FOR AN UNKNOWN PERSON
A love letter on a bicycle carrier.

Bengt af Klintberg, 1967

CANTO 6 (LETTER)
Open an empty envelope with both hands and talk loudly into it. Then close the envelope quickly and post it to anyone whom it may concern.

Bengt af Klintberg, 1965-1966

THE VISITORS GUIDE
Pay a public scribe
to write you a love letter.

Sophie Calle, 1996

HTML BALLET
Create body gestures
for HTML code.
Perform it as a ballet.
Better to perform it live
over the Internet.

Igor Stromajer, 2002

In an "Alphabet Symphony" Emmett Williams performed 26 gestures for each letter of the alphabet in 1962.

Fluxus influenced me before I knew what Fluxus was. The most important being the notion that anything, even the very tiny kernel of an unformed idea, can be considered art. Thus Chinese menus, paperclips, bottlecaps, string, and other oft-neglected detritus of daily life are now collectibles worthy of display in traditional art venues.

Harley Spiller
New York, New York

THRICE SEVEN XIX—
THE WIND
A child shouts into the wind
And the wind
Plasters his words
all over his face.

Dick Higgins, 1969

LOOK
The performer looks at
an object (a piano, for instance)
in as many different ways
as possible.

Ben Vautier, 1964.

GIVER OF NAMES
Study an ordinary
object thoroughly.
Put it on a pedestal
and give it a name.
Make a machine that
will do this for you.

David Rokeby, 1997

PROPOSITION VII
Study an object thoroughly;
one with which you are already familiar.
Present your observations as
a performance.

Alison Knowles, 1965

NUMER PIECE I
Count all the words in the book
instead of reading them.

Yoko Ono, 1961

INSTANT ASCII CAMERA
At a grand terminal offer
instant snapshots similar
to passport photos.
Instead of a photo, give
clients a receipt with
their image in ASCII.

Vuc Cosic, 1999

SCHOLARSHIP
I would like to build a room so that the
more you put in it the emptier it becomes.

Dick Higgins, 1967

1000 HOURS OF STARING
Stare at a piece of paper
for 1000 hours.

Tom Friedman, 1992-1997

BLIND DRAWING (THE SUBWAY DRAWINGS)
Take a seat on the subway.
Place a sketchpad on lap.
Hold a pencil in each hand.
Allow the pencils to skim the paper surface
according to the movements of the train.

William Anastasi, 1988

LINE PIECE
Draw a line. Erase a line.

Yoko Ono, 1964

TO DRAW A LINE
Walk on a tight rope.
Fall.

Janine Antoni, 2003

PIANO ACTIVITIES (PIECE FOR MANY PIANISTS)

The players choose from the following roles:

A role may be changed in the course of the piece, but generally two roles will not be assumed simultaneously by one player.

Not all roles need at all times to be filled.

In fact there are times when a definite limitation should be imposed.

Keyboard Player(s): plays in the orthodox manner, or another manner appropriate or possible.

Pedal Player: crouches underneath to control the pedals, or manipulates dampers by hand.

Players on other parts of piano:

1. **mute strings with fingers and hand. Strike or damp (fingers and hand only).**
2. **pluck or tap with fingers (flesh and nails), knuckles, or with piecetrum (any material).**
3. **scratch or rub with fingers (flesh, nails), or cloth, sandpaper, sticks, glass, metal, rubber.**
4. **drop objects on strings, or other parts of piano, draw chains or bells across strings.**
5. **act on strings with external objects (hammers, drum, sticks, whips).**
6. **strike soundboard, pins, lid, or drag various kinds of objects across them.**
7. **introduce preparations into the strings, lay material (silently) on them, move such objects to different places, or remove them.**

INTERCOURSE — THE FILE CABINET PROJECT
Listen to cabinet drawers
opening and closing.
Create a symphony of cabinets.
You may use the Internet.

Istvan Kantor, 2000.

EVENT FOR THE TWILIGHT
Steep a piano in the water of a pool.
Play some piece of F. Liszt on the piano.
Mieko Shiomi, 1963

The ephemeral nature of many Fluxus works helped me to realize the process was just as important as the physical outcome of a work of art. Also, I was always very struck by the way this process was documented and presented, borrowing from the language of a scientist or archivist.

Lynn Cazabon
Baltimore, Maryland

TWENTY-FIVE ORANGE EVENTS NO. 1 (FOR KERSTIN AURELL)
Try to find out which musical instrument
you would first connect with an orange.
Play it, as long as you like. Or pretend
to play it for the corresponding time.

Begt af Klintberg, 1963-1965

EDISON EFFECT
Edit a phonograph to play
on clay pots. Listen to its music
like some faintly remembered
melody running through
someone's head.

Paul Demarinas, 1989

8. bring objects producing their own noise in contact with parts of the piano (do not allow them to sound independently)

9. act in any way on underside of piano.

To all particpants: Show restraint and extremity in both active and inactive aspects of your participation. Be constant—exaggerate limitations.

Make diverse changes.

Continue surprises at their limit.

Be moderate as well.

Regard others. Ignore or relate to them.

Enhance and destroy or transform their actions.

Philip Corner (circa 1962)

THE CLOUD CLUB
Fill a Mason & Hamlin Symetrigrand piano with concrete. Make sure the piano is made of mother-of-pearl, Honduras mahogany, lacewood, walnut, burl, Chilean laurel marqutal and sterling silver.

Matthew Barney, 2002

"Rope Record" was created by Robert Watts in 1969. A coiled rope record is played with various replacements for a needle: feather, wire, spring, etc.

TAPE PIECE I
Stone Piece
Tape the sound
of the stone aging.

Yoko Ono, 1963

TO TOUCH
Touch an old, gouged
wooden table.
Hear its faint whisperings.

Janet Cardiff, 1993

DANGER MUSIC NO. 14
From a magnetic tape with anything on it, remove a predetermined length of tape. Splice the ends of this length together to form a loop, then insert one side of the loop into a tape recorder, and hook the other side over an insulated nail, hook, pencil or other similar object, to hold the tape and to provide the minimum of slack needed for playing of the loop. Play the loop as long as useful.

Dick Higgins, 1962

TAPE FALL
A reel-to-reel tape player continually plays a recording of trickling water. The player is perched on top of a ladder with the tape cascading onto the ground to form a growing mound of magnetic tape.

Christian Marclay, 1989

Playing his cello while lying on his back in the streets of Prague, Milan Knížák performed his "Street Performances" in 1964.

"Variation for Double Bass" was formed in 1962 by Ben Patterson in Wuppertal.

Fluxus is influential to my work especially concerning audience participation in the poetical experience. Their attitude liberated art from the elitism of the artist's superior subjectivity. My favorite strategy is when they emulate the music score setup as a very open event proposal. Art is not the residue of the creative experience anymore, but its own circumstantial embodiment.

Cyriaco Lopes Periera
Miami, Florida

CELLO
Make a cello that tunes itself. Better yet, allow the cello to play autonomously when the viewer approaches it.

Beatriz de Costa, 2002

MECHANICAL ORCHESTRA
Self-playing, motor-operated reeds, whistles, horns, violins, bells and gongs play predetermined, dynamically variable and continuous tones for a determined length of time.

Joe Jones

Milan Knížák created the series "Destroyed Music" during which he drew on, scratched, broke records and reassembled them.

RECYCLED RECORDS
Break and re-assemble vinyl records. Play them on turntables.

Christian Marclay, 1980–1986

OPERA INSTRUCTION
1. Select some objects which address themselves to your acoustic imagination.
2. Play with them according to a predetermined system.

Eric Andersen, 1961

DRIP MUSIC
For single or multiple performance. A source of dripping water and an empty vessel are arranged so that the water falls into the vessel.

George Brecht, 1959

SOUTH NO. 2 (TO NAM JUNE PAIK)
Pronounce "SOUTH" for a duration
of more than 15 minutes. Pause
for breath is permitted but transition
from pronunciation of one letter
to another should be smooth and slow.

Takehisa Kosugi, 1965

Fluxus reminds me of two things:
1) A friend was complaining, "I hate having to clean all the dust that collects on my window blinds!" and I said, "If they weren't there to collect that dust, it would just be somewhere else ..."
2) "Studying an apple all you want, you'll never know what an orange is."

Doug Holden
Baltimore, Maryland

STAR PIECE
The biggest star—Look at it while you like.
The second biggest star—Obscure it with smoke of a cigarette.
The third biggest star—Shoot it with a gun.
The fourth biggest star—Hold a cat in your arms.
The fifth biggest star—Look at it through a telescope.
The sixth biggest star—When you find it, look at your watch.
The seventh biggest star—Reflect it in the water of a glass and drink it.
The eighth biggest star—Obscure it with flame of a candle.
The ninth biggest star—Draw a deep breath.
The tenth biggest star—Lie down and look at it through a loop in your fingers.
The eleventh biggest star—Read a letter sent to you recently.

Mieko Shiomi, 1963

MOVING PIECE
Take a tape of the sound of the stars moving.
Do not listen to the tape.
Cut it out and give it to the people on the street.
Or you may sell it for a moderate price.

Yoko Ono, 1963

N-CHA(N)T
Network intelligent computers so that they can gravitate toward a common language. Whisper to one of them on any subject. Listen to their conversation transition to that subject. Listen to the smooth gravitation toward one phrase. Listen to the network simultaneously chant in slow unison.

David Rokeby, 2001

SOUND SIGNATURES
Record several friends signing their name. Allow them to choose from marker, chalk, pencil, etc., and paper, slate or cardboard surface. Consider orchestrating signatures for specific instruments.

Robert Racine, 1992

LES RÉSEAUX 5: FROM BABEL
When you see the first star
appear at dusk—place
a looping microwave oven
sound underneath it.
When you see the second star—
place the looping sound
of a pager underneath it.
When you see the third star—
place the looping sound
of a fax machine underneath it.
When you see the fourth star—
place the looping sound
of a door bell underneath it.
When you see the fifth star—
place the sound of a looping
telephone button underneath it.
Repeat with each new star until
a reverse map of the sky is made.
Do this piece in an abandoned
lot, or demolished building site,
or somewhere that looks like
the moon. When the constellation
is complete, walk around the site
to listen to its composition.

Jocelyn Robert, 1994

"Dirty Water" by Ben Vautier were bottles of dirty water sold as perfume in 1962.

TAPE PIECE II
Room Piece
Take the sound of the room breathing
1) at dawn
2) in the morning
3) in the afternoon
4) in the evening
5) before dawn
Bottle the smell of the room
of that particular hour as well.

Yoko Ono, 1963

LES SALLE DE NOEUDS II
Videotape the sound
of a dry river.
Edit the video according
to the missing wave.
Émile Morin and

Jocelyn Robert, 1999

DEMETER FRAGRANCE LIBRARY
Bottle and sell one thousand every day scents
such as Dirt, Tomato, Funeral Home, Waffle, Steam
Room, Crust of Bread, Snow, etc.

Christopher Brosius and Christopher Gable, 1993

ICE TRICK
Pass a one pound piece of ice among the members of the audience while playing a recording of fire sounds or while having a real fire on stage. The piece ends when the block of ice has melted.

Lee Heflin

A MEETING OF FIRE AND ICE
Project a film on a cube of ice.
When the ice melts the film is over.

Suzy Sureck, 1997

MONOCHROME FOR YVES KLEIN, FLUXVERSION I
Performer paints a movie screen with nonreflective black paint while a favorite movie is being shown.

Ben Vautier, 1963

EXHIBITIONS: ICE
Some days after the break-up of ice, one can find large ice sheets floating in the northern creeks of the lakes. Lifted up in the air, these half-melted sheets will often show extraordinary beauty. There are holes in most of them, which makes it possible to hang them on dry spruce branches.
Go up one morning and decorate the forest with ice and let the opening start soon after. There should be a number for each piece of ice. The opening guests are served sherry.

Bengt af Klintberg, 1965

ICICLE AND SNOW PIECES
Sew, ice cubes in the North Pole.
Etch, the forest with spit.
Stain, the snow with burnt spruce branches.
Cage, a tree in a spiral of ice.
Melt, snowballs in the city.

Andy Goldsworthy, 1989-1995

WATER MUSIC

1. Give the water still form.
2. Let the water lose its still form.

Mieko Shiomi, 1964

TEA EVENT, FLUXVERSION 1

Distill tea in a still.

George Brecht, 1961

DRILLING A WELL FOR WATER

Drill a well for water.
Bottle the water.
Or, freeze the water
in the cooling unit of a museum.
Make the museum air
your signature.

Hugh Pocock, 2001

OASIS

Plant a garden in your mouth.
Water it.

Ene-Lüs Semper, 1999

THREE AQUEOUS EVENTS

Ice
Water
Steam

George Brecht, 1961

BALTICA

Measure your tears in minutes
or hours.
Calculate your tears in mililiters
or liters.
Better yet, make a calculator
that will do it.
Put the calculator on the Internet
to count tears everywhere.

Igor Stromajer, 2001

HEAT TRANSFER EVENT

Glasses: one filled with ice water, one with boiling tea, one or more empty glasses. Liquids are transferred from glass to glass until the tea is cooled to drinking temperature.

Ken Friedman, 1970

VERBS

Performers enact different verbs
from a book of verbs.

Ben Vautier, 1963

Media art practice and media culture of the 1990's have been widely influenced by achievements made in previous decades such as conceptual art and Fluxus. I try to fill the gap with the influences of lucid, playful and subversive worldscapes created by Fluxus.

Darko Fritz
Zagreb, Croatia and Amsterdam, Netherlands

SUITE VÉNITIENNE

Follow someone you just met.
Follow them to another city.
Follow them to another country.

Sophie Calle, 1980

My installation work has been greatly influenced by Fluxus attitudes especially a delight in spontaneity and humor. George Maciunas' claim that art "must be simple, amusing, unpretentious, concerned with insignificances" is particularly appropriate when standing in front of my work. Follow the Mouse where I replace a traditional input device with its namesake, a live mouse.

Tiffany Holmes
Chicago, Illinois

SLUMBER
Record your brainwaves while you sleep.

Janine Antoni, 1994

TELEMATIC DREAMING
Send your telepresence in a faraway bed where someone is presumably sleeping.

Paul Sermon, 1992

SLEEP PIECE
Attempt to go to sleep on stage while others are perfroming. If after 10 minutes you are still unable to sleep, stand up and yell "WHY WON'T YOU LET ME SLEEP!"

Jennifer Hong, 2003

SEE YOU IN YOUR DREAMS
Appear in another's dreams.

Larry Miller, 1977

CHOICE
Performers use mirrors to show audience to itself.

Robert Bozzi, 1966

MIRROR PIECE
Stand on a sandy beach with your back to the sea. Hold a mirror in front of your face and look into it. Step back into the sea and enter the water.

Mieko Shiomi, 1963

MIRROR MIXER
Tell a computer intimate events of your life.
Listen to the computer's response.
You may use any software including speech recognition software.

Lisa Moren, 1999

TRANSFORMING MIRRORS
Use the computer to mirror the audience.

David Rokeby, 1998

SEVEN FOREST EVENTS NO. 6
Walk out of your house. Walk to the forest.
Walk into the forest.

Bengt af Klintberg, 1966

FOREST WALK
Listen to a cemetery in Banff.

Janet Cardiff, 1991

My work was influenced by FLUXUS in terms of the concept. Reshaping and restructuring the level of art and society, image and intervention, was the most important.

Marina Grzinic
Ljubljana, Slovenia

TRACKS
Tracks left by:
a stone
clothes (left lying about, hanging up, on someone)
wood (in a tree, on the ground, on a hand, etc.)
rain
wind
an automobile (on us, on a road, etc.)
man (his foot, bare, shod, the tracks left by his activities, etc.)
thoughts (of man, thoughts themselves)
words (on paper, in mouths, etc.)
etc. etc.
We may observe tracks examine them, if possible photograph
them, draw them, paint them, etc., or simply be aware of them.

Milan Knizak, 1971-1978

THEATRE MUSIC
Keep walking intently.

Takehisa Kosugi

EVENT SCORE
Arrange or discover an event.
Score and then realize it.

George Brecht, 1966

VARIOUS WALKS
Walk through the forest.
Walk on planks.
Walk through a library.
Walk through the Canadian Rocky Mountains.
Walk throught the Villa Medici.
Walk through a Cathedral.
Listen to what is no longer there.

Janet Cardiff, 1991-2001

RAINING
Black highway painted black
Rain washes away

Paper men made in bare orchard branches
Rain washes away

Sheets of writing spread over a field
Rain washes away

Naked bodies painted gray
Rain washes away

Bare trees painted red
Rain washes away

Allan Kaprow
For Olga and
Billy Klüver
January 1965

KEEP WALKING INTENTLY
Contemporary art actions as if they were Fluxus event scores.

Lisa Moren, 2004

Abstract

Twelve artists, active in various media, reflect on their relationship to Fluxus. Their comments reveal essential aspects of Fluxus that inspire their own work. The offerings are celebratory, ironic and questioning.

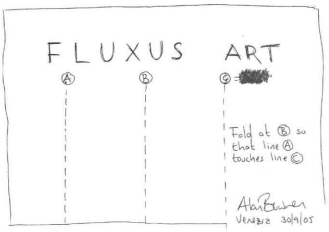


FIGURE 1 ***Fluxart Diagram*, Alan Bowman.** By permission of the artist.

Visible Language 40.1
Various Authors, 44–65

Rhode Island School of Design
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Fluxus & the far end of the Freeform-freakout Organization

ALAN BOWMAN

I CAN NEVER DECIDE JUST WHAT IT IS about the other F-word that has been such a major influence (and a major hindrance) to my work and its development. Having little practical talent I have always had difficulty in expressing my ideas clearly, despite experimenting in many different media. My body of work, for what it is to date, is mainly a collection of half-finished experiments that includes most media from pencil and paper to digital music production. My problem being that I never feel that I have much ability in any of these media, I experiment and play and just see what hap-

pens. My very nature seems to prevent me from becoming proficient in any one area, just as it seems I'm going to master something I tend to change tack or even abandon the project altogether.

For many years I made interventions, in my working environment, usually written pieces and usually in offices. For fifteen years I worked in office environments, my studio space was a desk, my materials store the stationary cupboard. I never looked at what I was doing as art—to stick a tiny "be careful" sign, which could only be read by standing on a chair on a desk, was a natural mode in which I was able to express my ideas. I always had trouble in accepting that I was perhaps more comfortable doing this than I was when trying to draw or paint out my ideas as I had focused on doing throughout my schooling. Fluxus, as I first perceived it, allowed me to accept the fact that what I was doing was actually ok.

Stumbling across Fluxus, and my initial perceptions of it, gave me the go ahead to continue what I had been doing. I felt better that there were others doing similar stuff with a similar humor—and that was it initially.

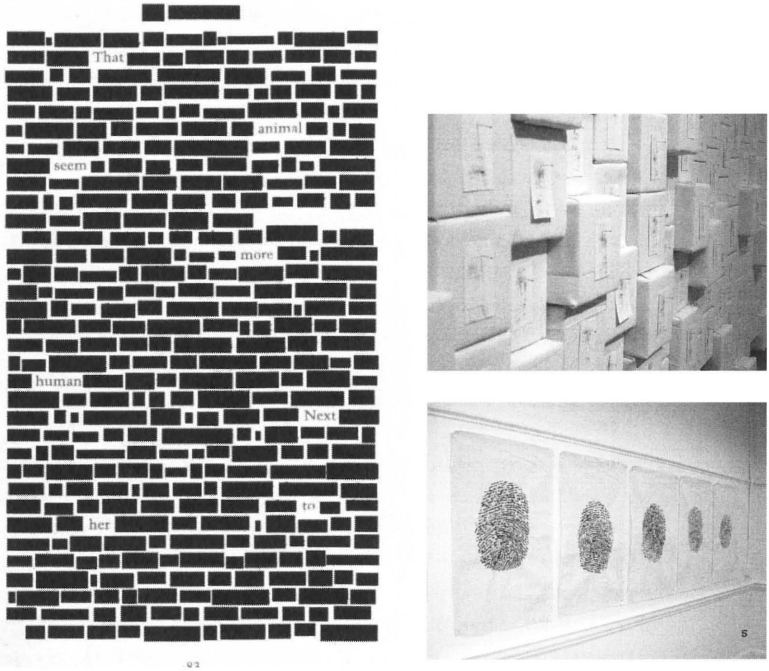
Further reading and particular fascination with the performance and instruction scores marked the biggest change in my work, or rather my level of confidence and conviction. The score format allowed me to share my take on the world without necessarily trying to force my view upon the reader. One of my earliest scores, "Change the Sound of the Sea," invites the reader to do just that, however it makes no suggestion regarding how to do so. Here was one of the first times that I realized that if I regularly visualized one concept in many different ways, then I should allow for an audience to do so too. The score format also allowed me to overcome a severe lack of confidence in myself by allowing me to produce a piece, but leaving its execution up to someone else!

So I suppose the score is the element of Fluxus that has most concretely influenced my work, it is also the most easily published—most of the other things I do never reach the public eye; I'd have to own up to them then! It is the humor, however, an element that I feel is often overlooked, which truly inspired me. Further explanation of this I fear will have to wait for another badly written 500 words.

Evolving Fluxus

BIBIANA PADILLA MALTOS

FROM MY INITIAL EXPERIENCES, COMES A FURTHER DEFINITION OF MY work, separated into three main camps: works which deal directly with language, based fundamentally on the visual poetry I've made; then comes works or activities that deal with the body, with games, with networks, with interaction, based mostly on my discovery and/or relationship to the Fluxus movement. Finally, there comes a series of works that try to coalesce these two, as a



FIGURES 2-4 ***Bibliana Padulla Maltos, Cut off #83 (based on David Matlin's "How the Night is Divided").***
Au Revoir Papillon: 300 Besos de Mariposa (detail #3).
Fingerprints (detail #7). By permission of the artist.

form of development or evolution of everything I've done so far, which could end with a life-long project that revolves around my own death.

One of the fascinating aspects of the Fluxus movements (I state it as a plural, for it is still, I believe, an ongoing and evolving experience, not constricted to a historical period) is its emphasis on community and interaction; the fact that anyone can be part of an aesthetic experience, informed by nature, by chance, by a previously set process of interaction with an everyday activity, leads us towards one of the aspects mentioned at the beginning: the setting up of the common, the domestic, the mundane, to a level that may not be necessarily "art" in the traditional sense, but that it may well be one of the most ecstatic experiences someone may have in his or her immediate future.

I started to do Fluxus performances for festivals, AVTEXTFESt, all pieces were done in the context of the festival, but pointing out that said festival, at least in the first case, was done in a public place that did not "expect" to "see a performance." Much to the surprise of the public, they unconsciously and then consciously, and then forthrightly, became part of the spectacle. This is the

part of Fluxus that interested me the most, the fact that you could allow for a glimpse of what the distinction between art and life can do for the individual, even though that in the process, said individual may or may not be aware of this process.

Because I believe that Fluxus, as a movement, is an open-ended distribution of experiences, pretty much an ongoing, permanent struggle, I do not want to lead us towards a final destination, regarding the characteristics of Fluxus as a movement based on ideas and notions about the world and reality in general. So if I was to describe some other activities I've done, in a way, I can explain the artistic propositions that happened as a consequence of both the experiments in visual poetry and the discovery of the Fluxus experience.

Thirty Years of Fluxing Around

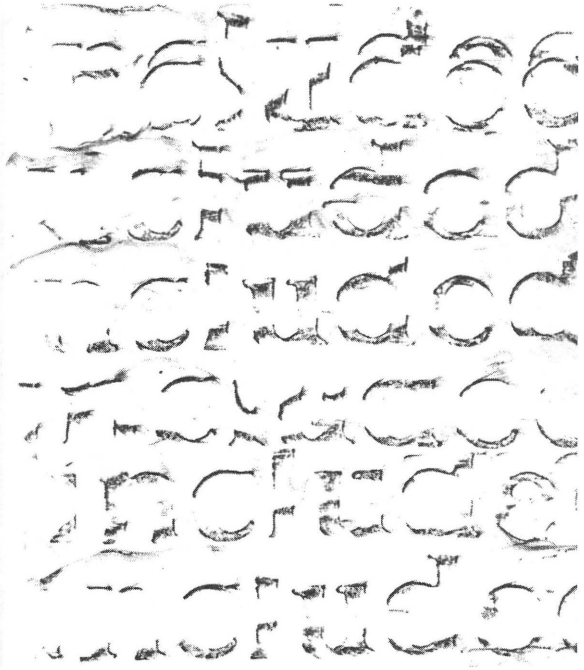
CECIL TOUCHON

THERE ARE THOSE THINGS WHICH ARTISTS OFTEN DO AS THEIR SERIOUS work, and then there are all of the other things they do when they are playing and messing around in the studio or when hanging out with other artists. That range of other things tends to be Fluxus-like in nature—more concept-based, experimental, contemplative, humorous and expressed in a kind of private short hand. When translated into a more public language you have work that may appear unfinished, tentative and with a lot of open-ended and very loose ends. I think of this kind of art making as more conversational than lecture-like in nature, more private, informal, ephemeral and downright immaterial. This kind of art activity is the product of a shared mercurial mind-world where unfettered creativity, lucid imagination and the immediate cognition of a deeply intuitive mind are of the greatest value. I think this is why some like to relate Fluxus to Zen. I think Zen has a strong interest in this same range of mental activity in search of those moments of creative release and intuitive cognition of the spiritual world, a more fluid state that we are normally not cognizant of. Not that I can claim to know anything about Zen or for that matter Fluxus.

A lot of the well-known fluxsters are well known in part because of their interest in performance, theater and experimental music/sound. These things tend to be done live and in public via scheduled performances, festivals and the like.

I am primarily a visual artist. While I have engaged in the occasional performance, they have always been in the form of a personal ritual accomplished for my own internal reasons and have required no one other than myself as their witness with the location usually being my studio or out in nature.

It was never my fortune or misfortune to ever meet up with any Fluxus people in person. I have never been that interested. I have never been very interested in meeting anybody that didn't find his or her way naturally into my life. So anything of mine that could be regarded as Fluxus-like over the



FIGURES 5-6 ***Illumination 5*, David Baptiste Christ. *For Bob Cobbing in the snow.*** By permission of the artist.

years was developed in relative isolation until coming across the Fluxlist gang on the Internet around 1998–99. When I did I was amazed to find a family of people who shared a very strong affinity with my way of seeing the world. I spent a lot of time with Fluxus after that and was especially moved by Ken Friedman's amazingly clear-headed way of looking at things. He may or may not be altogether right in his general ideas—I really couldn't say—but he is definitely clear-headed about them and you have to admire that.

My main like-like activities these last several years are in the realm of collage poetry and collage sound works. I have also been compiling early works that fit the Fluxus profile that go back to as early as 1975 meaning that this year 2005 represents a thirty year mark. Aside from these things, a broader activity has been working to short circuit the idea that an art movement has a beginning, middle and end, usually of a very short duration and involving a very small circle of associates. With the Internet and mass communication I do not believe that movements have such a cut and dried history or that they involve so few people. I notice that things, especially ideas and the influence of objects that contain ideas, live in a continuum and spread like a virus into the minds

of artists all over the world and across many generations. I do not believe historians want to deal with the fact that all art movements are still being played out by whatever artists decide to embody them. This spread across barriers I think is especially notable in Fluxus history with its use of an international mail network and the continued life Fluxus clearly still has on the current generation.

Technology Ephemera & Zen Forevers

DAVID-BAPTISTE CHIROT

THE GREAT JAPANESE HAIKU POET BASHO WROTE THAT THE BASIS OF ART is change in the universe. And the French poet Charles Baudelaire first defined Modernism as a presentation of what is eternal in the ephemeral. To me Fluxus is very much a conjunction of the great Japanese and great French poets' statements. They meet in Robert Filliou's Eternal Network of Mail Art and in the Fluxus use of the most common elements found at hand to create performances, events, scores, sounds and images. In Fluxus, the emphasis on the conjunction of the eternal/ephemeral in a continual state of change has been what most inspires me about it.

I believe that what endures in Fluxus is this spirit of using the most ephemeral, common objects to create a memorable event. Fluxus is a form of tension between the chaotic and the controlled—with more chaotic elements being in Mail Art, with its beautiful embrace of everything being a work of art—to the more controlled aspects of performance directions, scores and scripts.

I also think the Fluxus presents a festival atmosphere, one of celebration, of joy. I think there is also a profound aspect of mysticism with Fluxus—one of open acceptance of the wonder of the moment, and how the moment can in a moment be a deep insight into the eternality of change—an acknowledgement of this. It is a mysticism that comes, I feel in part, from the conjunction of a Western technological use of machines and devices with the Eastern thought of Taoism and Zen. I find this especially expressed in the works of John Cage and Nam June Paik. Along with Dick Higgins, these are the only Fluxus artists (if Cage is considered one) I have met in person and heard and seen perform. (I have some versions of Zen text that were translated by George Brecht, with poetical versions by Dick Higgins.) Nam June Paik especially impressed me with his immense sense of humor. I audited a class he taught at MIT in the late 1970s and he was obsessed with Boston Bruins hockey games on TV. He had banks of TV sets on which endless hours of hockey played, run through a myriad distortions. The flow and controlled chaos of hockey was very much in tune with his thoughts on art. As a sports junky, I thoroughly enjoyed his appreciation and enthusiasm for the game in its visual aspects—the speed, the collisions, the continual strife and bizarre and sublime harmonies of the sport. What I deeply felt in Paik's approach was the

sense of ACTION—action coming from an intense attention—a very Zen like approach in many ways. I also enjoyed his use of the found—beat-up, junked TV sets—the technological as the epitome of the ephemeral—cast off, out of date, thrown away in alleys and replaced with a bigger, newer, more expensive machine—or—a smaller, cheaper one! He had a great sense of humor—one that for me I feel is one of the best aspects of Fluxus.

Space, Process & Shakers...

DAVID COLOGIOVANI

I CAME TO FLUXUS IN THE SPRING OF 2000. I HAD BEEN WORKING ON THE piece "a mile in my shoes" (a collection of around 300 salt shakers stolen from restaurants, diners, hotels, antique shops and homes). In Fluxus we find complete freedom to be ourselves. Art becomes Life; Life becomes Art. With the Event, at times a mundane performance, the boundary between the two is blurred. Alison Knowles (one of the original Fluxus artists) was on the campus of the University of Maine to give a lecture associated with a Dick Higgins retrospective and I had arranged to have tea with her. We talked about our current projects. She was wonderful to talk with. She had a problem with the stealing part of "a mile in my shoes," and when Owen (my professor at the time) took her to a lobster lunch that day he stole the saltshaker for me. I mailed her photos of the shaker as well as observations I experienced while performing her piece "the identical lunch." In turn, she sent me her saltshaker from her kitchen. Two months later I sent her a loaf of bread with her saltshaker baked inside. Years before discovering Fluxus, much of my work could have been considered akin to the Fluxus mode of working. When I finally caught up to it, I felt right at home.

I still don't think I would consider myself a Fluxus artist. I'll leave it to Ay-O, Eric, Henry, Ken, Geoff, Alison, Larry, Yoko, Nam June, Ben, Carolee, Lamonte, Emmett and George to decide if they still are. I've always been one to avoid labels and that's what interests me in Fluxus. They always said that Fluxus wasn't a movement, not even an art form, just a way of life. They successfully erased the boundaries between life and art. I took great pleasure in performing their works and it was only then that I really understood what they were doing. Since then I have been very influenced by the original Fluxus artists and have come to think of them more as my extended family than as merely a group of artists. Fluxus has and will continue to be an important and enjoyable departure point for my art/life work.

I consider my current video experiments to be a manipulation of space and process. I approach video more like a sculptor; the works should be approached as sculpture. Everything needed for the experience is available in a very short amount of time.

Video-sculpture is the process of creating a symbiotic relationship between

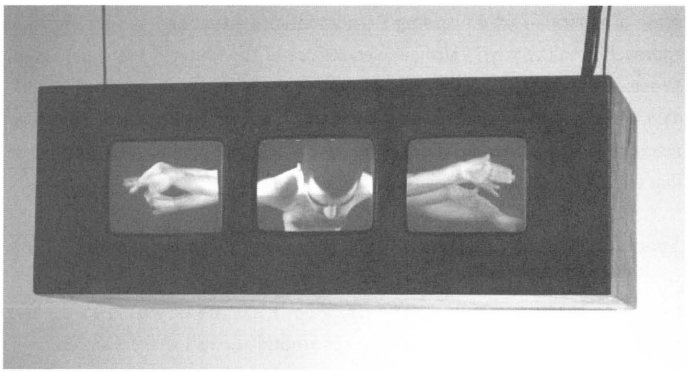


FIGURE 7 *Flying (installation still).* **David Cologiovani.** By permission of the artist.

the object and video; both have equal importance and in most cases one can't exist without the other. The combination of the two mediums creates a physical space for the video. The video and object combined construct an implied space. Water appears to fall from one screen to the other; a drip falls from the top bucket landing on cue in the bottom bucket, filling the void between the screens. The implied space adds wonder to the piece and takes the video away from the singular existence of a screen. Instead of viewing the piece as we do a video (from beginning to end) we begin to approach the piece as we do sculpture. I'm led to believe I should feel water dripping on my hand if I put my hand between the screens.

My approach is minimal and is derived from my experiments with Fluxus—the everyday—and desire to discover a material's limits and exploit its unintended uses. I seek ways to expand and discover my human boundaries, whether physical or emotional. The works incorporate short individual or private performances to explore the event in a way that offers physical and mental space between the viewer and myself. The camera, this space, provides me with that freedom. These works are documentation of my private performance and in essence a document of my life.

A False History of Fluxus

ERYK SALVAGGIO

EVERYTHING I'M GOING TO WRITE HERE IS MORE THAN LIKELY COMPLETELY false. I don't think this is a problem. With Fluxus, I can only talk about the art, as it existed for me, far removed from those ghosts of context and original intention. There is certainly somewhere a "correct" version of Fluxus in theory and practice. Mine are, for certain, based on an overvaluation of certain themes, but I love those themes and I refuse to back down.

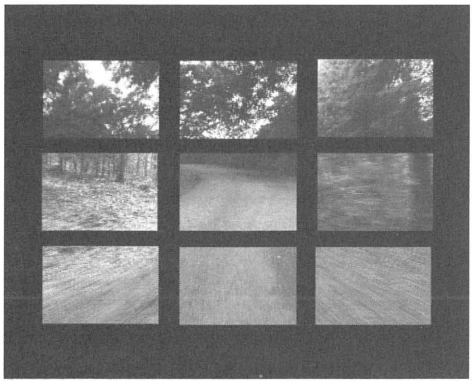


FIGURE 8-9 ***Gift from Alison Knowles. Driving (nine channel video installation),*** **David Cologiovani.**
By permission of the artist..

Fluxus started in different places. For me, it started with John Cage in 1952, performing a piece of music called 4 minutes and 33 seconds. You may have heard of it. It's considered as a novelty by a lot of people, because the composition itself is simply four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence. But to pass it off as a novelty act is to betray the genius that must lurk beneath any work that reinvents spaces that were once full. Cage managed not only to reinvent music and art, but also to empty them—allowing a new kind of understanding of what art can be and the sort of spaces that art could occupy.

If we accept 4'33 as a work of art, then we accept that it can be performed at any time, we begin to appreciate the world in whole new ways. The patter of your shoes on the pavement as you walk through town becomes a drumbeat. The wind in the trees, the clamor of city traffic. He has reorganized our demands of beauty, revealing a meaning unconstrained to the expressions of art.

The performance itself is highly reminiscent of the Buddha's Fluxus event at the top of Vulture Mountain. In front of an assembly of 1200 monks, waiting to hear the Buddha present his wisdom, he sat still for some time. Finally, he plucked a flower. End of sermon.

Everything in the *Fluxus Performance Workbook* has about the same impact. Which brings us to George Maciunas. Maciunas began the Fluxus enterprise in 1963 with a manifesto, which I don't like so much as the manifesto he wrote in 1965. So I'm going to lie and say that the movement started with this one instead:

To establish artist's nonprofessional status in society, he must demonstrate artist's dispensability and inclusiveness, he must demonstrate the self-sufficiency of the audience, he must demonstrate that anything can be art and anyone can do it.

AGE 40.1 VI

To me, Maciunas was advocating a shift in consciousness that Cage spoke of more directly with his chance elements and Buddhism. Maciunas seemed to be rejecting the entire notion that special focus was required for the production of beauty, instead insisting on a special focus for the recognition of it.

An early Fluxus piece, of my own invention:

Magic Cracker Event.

1. Cracker.

2. Eat it.

3. Magic.

I call Fluxus a revelatory art form, an art of subtle psychological liberation. I am no master at decoding a dead man's intentions, but I like to imagine that the entire world was beautiful to Maciunas and that was the end of it. It is a very empowering perspective, because it changes the role of artist from that of a producer to that of an observer, and production shifts to emphasize the presentation of observations. The artist becomes a conduit for a natural kind of clarity and we all become artists. It is a brilliant gesture, in truth or in theory. I prefer to pretend that it's the truth.

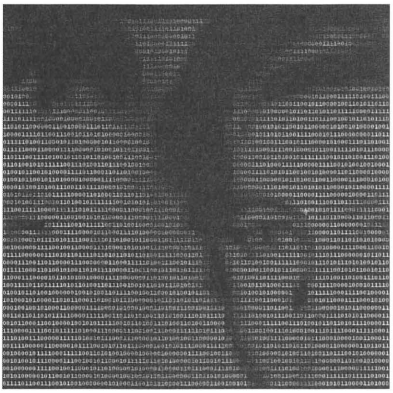
Openness & Interaction

LITSA SPATHI

WHAT STARTED ME OUT AS A FLUXUS ARTIST? WHEN ONE STARTS WITH THE first steps in art one is under the influence of the artists that one admires and has seen. That happens to all and one has to free oneself from that and search for one's own ways of expression. So the focal point for me was also to find a way to express my thoughts, my feelings and my emotions in a form that fits me. The ways that I have chosen brought me to Fluxus, a platform that gives me the broadest basis for combining several things that normally don't go together or aren't brought together.

In 1958 I was born on the Greek island Kephallonia. In 1973 I emigrated to Germany, learned the language, learned about art. In the 90s I founded the Atelier Nobody Press, a communication center that arranged publications, art projects, not only inside Germany but also worldwide. I made artist's books, object books, visual poetry, sometimes also collaborative works—the works could be seen in exhibitions and publications. I see myself as a fluxus-artist that experiences her work as a continuous fluid expression of life. The basis for this dynamic concept is my drawings. Drawing is something I do whenever I get the chance, on whatever medium that is available, wherever I am. Many of these drawings go into the direction of visual poetry.

The drawings and visual poetry sometimes result in concepts, the start of a performance, the building of an installation or they might be a sketch for a large traditionally made painting with acrylics or oil on canvas. One



FIGURES 10-12 ***Portrait of Portsmouth, NH,***
Assassins Screen,
Edie Stil, **Eryk Salvaggio.**
By permission of the artist.

shouldn't be confused by the painting—as they are not a limited piece of art on the wall. They are part of larger conceptual artwork. A nice example is an exhibition for which I was invited by the local government to fill up the city hall with my larger paintings. For the opening of the Genesis exhibition many important people of the city Heidelberg were invited for this happening in the historic city hall downtown. They thought they were just going to see paintings but instead of that they were part of the scenery in which I placed my paintings. I did this performance showing up unexpectedly as an Empress in a shining evening gown, perfectly styled and fitting in with the building making the paintings just mere decorations.

Fluxus and performances are interconnected. Sometimes a performance is just done for pure enjoyment. But there are also those performances that are planned long ahead, prepared in full detail, rehearsed so we have learned the smallest details. A sample of the last sort is some years ago, at the University in Heidelberg, the medical director of the psychosomatic clinic celebrated his 49th birthday. The party took place in one of the official rooms at the clinic. Guests were members of the staff, colleagues of the director, medical specialists, crème de la crème on the subject of Psychoanalyses from Heidelberg and far away. "7 times 7," I called this performance. For the actions, I prepared a special artist book, each page printed on a hand-press by myself. The content: forty-nine perforated coupons for very special hot themes. Seven coupons were for one kiss. Seven more coupons were for one quickie, bread, coffee, bath and change. Every coupon-title brought the thoughts of the audience to a specific direction, causing for a moment wild expectations, which weren't confirmed with the words I spoke. My storyline was always in another direction, an unexpected one, and brought the themes in a different light. With this, the emotions of the public had to follow this line and went from excitement to disillusion.

After ending the performance by handing over the artist book to the director, the audience came to rest and the specialists praised me for achieving with the aid of art all they felt on the sofa of a psychoanalyst.

The Blue Book was a performance done with Robin Crozier from England. I invited him to work with me on two books that went back and forth by mail (December 1995 till July 1996). In them visual poetry was created by me, on which Robin interacted. The final result was a set of two object books of which a printed edition of 200 copies was published by Nobody Press Heidelberg. Later on, this publication was also mentioned in the *Anthology on Visual Poetry*, published in 1998 by Dmitry Bulatov, Koenigsberg. It was also an example of how the copyright-issue can go wrong. There it was mentioned as Robin's publication with copyright by Nobody Press England.

An important part of Fluxus is also play. For an exhibition at the British Council in London, I prepared a contribution that consisted of a painting (the

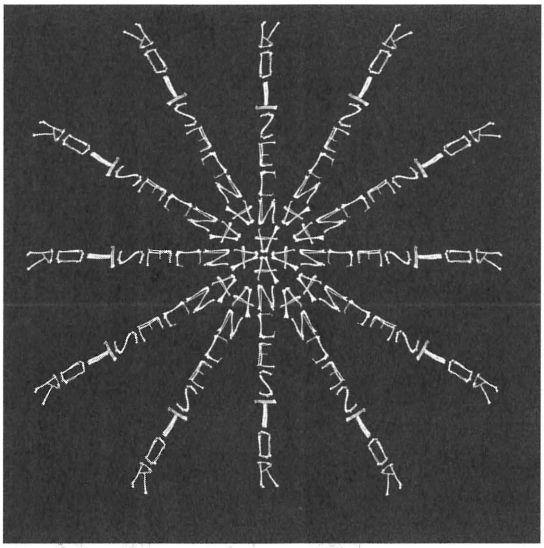


FIGURE 13 ***Ancestor Clock*, mIEKAL aND.** By permission of the artist.

cover and envelope) and an object book (inside this painting). The complete package was sent through the mail, and exhibited at The Hiscox Art Gallery. Neither the curator nor the public dared to open the envelope since it was tied with a thread. Unopened, the package came back to Germany after the exhibition.

As an artist it is for me important that one isn't bound to one specific art-medium. The boundaries become variable. The interaction between the artist and his/her public is very important—this is an aspect of Fluxus I use whenever I create.

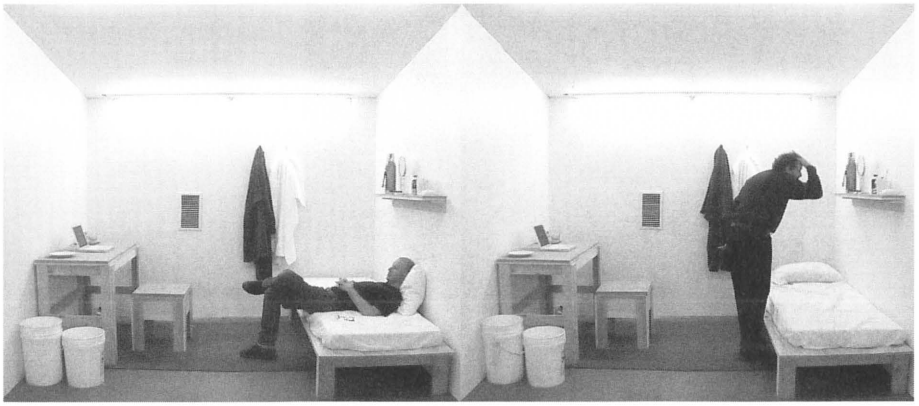
(More views of myself and my art will be published in the book *The Lux Artillery* by Zora von Burden. In that book I also speak of the founding of the Fluxus Heidelberg Center.

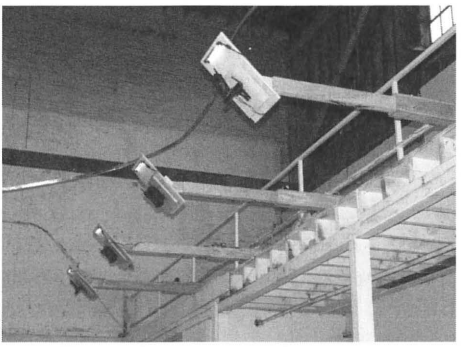
Invisible Fluxus

MIEKAL AND

I CAN'T REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I HEARD ABOUT FLUXUS. FLUXUS AND I were born about the same time (1957). I was not old enough to have heard about their events, so I did not have the possibility of attending. Nam June Paik dragging a violin down Canal Street is an image I've xerolaged countless times.

I was delighted by the possibility that the everyday events happening around me had become the stuff of art that no longer was the museum/gallery epicenter of creativity. Although I take issue with the manner Fluxus is being





FIGURES 14-16 ***1 Year Performance Video (aka samttsieh Update)*** A 2004 Commission of New Radio and Arts, Inc., (aka Ether-Ore) for its Turbulence website (http://www.Turbulence.org/Works/1year/). ***Karaoke DeathMatch 100 (performance still).*** ***Gargoyle (installation view),*** MTAA. By permission of the artist.

historicized, as part of a continuum of innovation beginning with Zaum and early Futurism, it has always been impossible for me to escape an overpowering impulse to experience the obvious, to render new meaning and content from pieces of found objects or texts. Because the influence of recontextualization is pervasive, the work of Fluxus is complete and it can safely disappear into the margins of art history.

There is perfect synaesthesia of the image and the easily imagined sound. Intermedia was soiled bed sheets as far as I was concerned. The moment of play in the decontexualized environment is seductively repeatable. I've washed my hands of movements; they are ultimately historical constructs of ambiguous associations. Influence is mostly holographic, the connectivity both real and imaginary make traditions unavoidable.

Avant Garde is a typestyle, easy to read, a cloak of a complex array of characters. Lifestyle = Performance = Lifestyle. I'm sorry to inform you that Fluxus is not objects in a museum or collectible keepsakes. This in no way lessens the value of your investments, but merely paints a patina of abstraction around the true nature of the Fluxusic commodity. Innovation, stated another way, is the everyday interrupted by unexpected visitors. Assemble a jury of your peers. Ask them to forget that Fluxus ever existed. Now give them a paper, scissors and a yam and tell them to construct a nameless utopia.

Wink

MTAA

TEN STEPS FOR A LIVE DEMONSTRATION OF MTAA'S ARTWORK IN RELATION to the Fluxus concept of "Aktion," or, as we used to say in America during the 60s, "Hey, let's put on a 'Happening!' Groovy!"

The following is a misguided attempt to crossbreed the work of the artist collaborative MTAA (founded 1997) and the historical art movement Fluxus (founded 1961). This will be accomplished by way of an example text-based artwork. This artwork is a script for creating a performance entitled:

> ***Ten steps for a live demonstration of MTAA's artwork in relation to the Fluxus concept of "Aktion," or, as we used to say in America during the 60s, "Hey, let's put on a 'Happening!' Groovy!"***
>
> STEP 1
>
> *Get a space. Some examples: an empty building, old theater, someone's basement, a park, your ex-friend's loft, an airport, a closed amusement park or a generic white gallery. It really doesn't matter what kind of space it is. Just get a location so that people have a place to show up at a prearranged time and date.*
>
> STEP 2
>
> *Get WiFi internet connection in the space. Some people will come to the space physically. Those who cannot come to the space physically can stop by via the Internet.*
>
> STEP 3
>
> *Get a bunch of gray industrial felt, a MIDI trigger player piano, 10 HDTVS, a small horse, 5 laptop computers, 2 digital projectors, a linguist, an electrical engineer (preferably from MIT), one gallon of honey, eight bass guitars, a Game Boy, 10 sheets of 4' x 8' AC plywood, 30 sheets of 4' x 8' cardboard, a contractor box of 1 1/4" course thread drywall screws, a Dewalt 14-volt cordless drill gun, a Dewalt 14 volt-cordless skill saw, a bunch of Christmas lights, a smoke machine, a few digital video cameras, a bunch of cables (so that you can plug in everything to everything), a PA system with a microphone and, of course, a few cases of Budweiser beer.*

STEP 4

Using an obscure and uncool typeface, make an 8.5" x 11" black and white flyer announcing the time, location and URL of the event. Paste up the flyers in hard-to-find locations in the vicinity of the event. Use the flyer layout to make an email announcement. Send the email to Internet lists under misleading subject lines like, "Cool Live Retro 60s Dance Party Tonight. Groovy!"

STEP 5

Recruit 10 performers. Assign materials from the list to each performer. For example: "Okay Bob, you get one gallon of honey, 30 sheets of 4' x 8' cardboard and the linguist."

STEP 6

Bring all the materials and people to the location before the scheduled start time. Arrange the materials and people in the space into a neat pile in the center of the space.

STEP 7

Assign each performer a 15-minute time slot. The time slots should be back-to-back so that the entire performance will take exactly 150 minutes. Inform the performers that once their 15 minutes is at an end, they should stop and leave the space. They should leave whatever material they used in the space. Inform the performers that once a material is placed into the performance, that material is available for use by the following performers. For example, once Bob is done pouring the gallon of honey over the linguist on top of the 30 sheets of cardboard, this mess is available for the next performer to work with or ignore.

STEP 8

After you assign materials and time slots, please read the following instructions to the performers:

> "I don't remember the 60s. I don't remember Fluxus. I know that America was at war then. America is still at war."
>
> "Let's get up. Let's toss some shit together and call it art. Shout. Scream. Drag your fucking body across the floor. We know it's dumb. We know it's all empty gestures. Fluxus was naive and now we're jaded. Let's do this with winks in our eyes and tongues in our cheeks."
>
> "But, for a moment, let's say Fluxus was right. Let's say Fluxus is still right. Let's say random acts have meaning. Let's pretend, for one last second, that a poetic stance can mean anything at all. Let's just pretend. Let's begin now."

STEP 9

Set-up a laptop with a webcam to broadcast the event. Set-up the PA *with the microphone. Open the space 10 minutes before the event but begin the performance 10 minutes late.*

STEP 10

Begin the performance by reading this text. After you read this text, the first performer should begin.

MTAA 12/27/04

Networking Interaction

RUUD JANSSEN

WHEN I ONCE SHOWED MY PORTFOLIO OF THE WORKS I PRODUCED OVER the years to a colleague at the art department of the college I work at, he came to the conclusion that I am constantly looking for new ways in my art. I could only agree. Being an artist with a sideline training in physics, this combination of art and research must have caused that. Working inside the mail-art network since 1980 also brought me in contact with unreachable artists in Eastern Germany, Russia and Japan—also with Fluxus and Fluxus-related artists. In one of my first projects (1983) one of the participants was Ben Vautier.

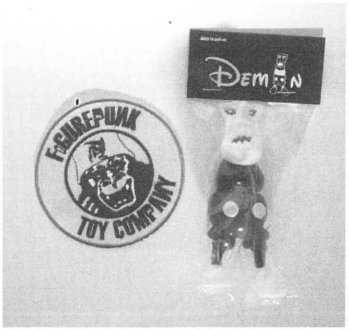
In 1988 I started the imaginary IUOMA (International Union of Mail Artists), a union that is still active. When someone applied he/she automatically becomes a member because he applied, and everybody can claim his/her function in the organization.

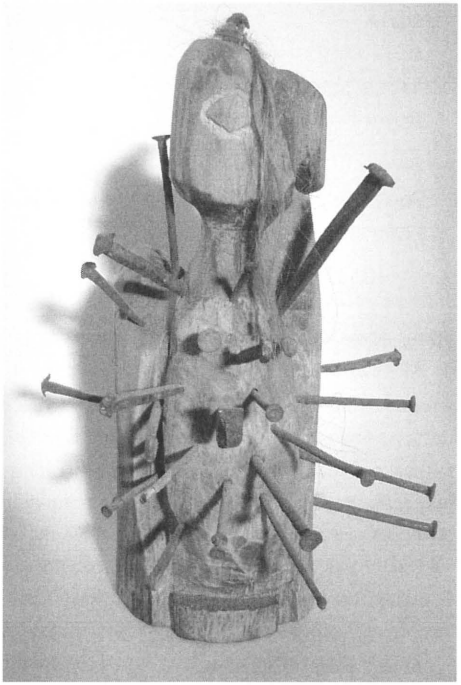
The union has its own domain (www.iuoma.org) and online group for members (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/iuoma/).

The concepts of communications and interaction have always fascinated me.

In the 90s, I started the mail-interview project for which I interviewed simultaneously many artists in all the different communication-forms: letters, faxes, e-mails and personal encounters. The question was sent in one of the communication forms and the interviewed person could choose the form in which to reply.

The whole project is a performance as well. Every day getting answers and sending out questions and making a complete booklet out of each interview. People like Dick Higgins, Ray Johnson, Ken Friedman, Edgardo-Antonio Vigo, Robin Crozier, Jürgen O. Olbrich, etc., were interviewed. Sometime the choice for an answer is quite specific. When the interview with Dick Higgins was in progress the first questions and answers went by mail in which Dick typed all his answers on a computer. The second part of the interview went by e-mail, but when I asked Dick Higgins about how the Internet has changed his Intermedia concept and his art he replied with a traditional six pages handwritten





FIGURES 17-19 ***FIGUREPUNK Products.***
Nemesis Figure.
***Totems of Imagined Lands #5,* Sol Nte.** By permission of the artist.

letter that he sent from Milan, Italy. The time factor is also interesting in these mail-interviews. After the third question to Ray Johnson, I heard of his suicide. Edgardo-Antonio Vigo never got to answer his last question because of his death. Also a lot of artists discovered the Internet and e-mail as a new communication tool in these years and that is why Honoria later used these 2000 plus pages of interview texts for her research for the thesis on the effects of the Internet on an international community of artists who have exchanged art through postal systems for forty years (done in 2002).

The project ended like some Fluxus performances do. It stopped abruptly while many artists were hopping to be invited and included. Unfinished interviews were published too.

Search in art forms has always been very broad. A steady line in all forms has been the painting and drawing. In my student years I painted with oil, later on with acrylic, not only on paper and canvas, but even on the unrealistic medium of CDs. I learned silkscreen printing, then started to paint my outgoing mail, and after getting in contact with Litsa Spathi, we started the Fluxus

Heidelberg Center. All kinds of art forms and communication forms were always interacting in the things I do. Including the influences that computers have brought to our lives and how artists are using them as tools.

In the performances with Litsa Spathi for the Fluxus Heidelberg Center, these new tools—the digital times bring us—are prominently there. Fluxus isn't something of the past but a constantly evolving idea that is quite alive.

Philosophical Poetics

SOL NTE

THE FIRST FLUXUS PIECE I EVER ENCOUNTERED WAS GEORGE BRECHT'S "Drip Music." It is one of those simple scores that capture all the qualities of Fluxus work that inspire me. The score is as follows:

> ***Drip Music***
> *For single or multiple performance.*
> *A source of dripping water and an empty vessel are arranged so that the water falls into the vessel.*
> GEORGE BRECHT 1959

For me there are two particularly engaging ideas here:

The first idea is that the piece is described for single or multiple performances. The musical nature of this instruction is intriguing since pieces are rarely left open as to the number of performers. It is such an open instruction that there is no direction as to whether the performers even need to be in the same space. Multiple performances can be imagined as traditionally orchestral or as a series of geographically isolated performers, whose performance is synchronized through time alone. Ultimately the key to any performance is time, but here there is also no duration. This piece is as easily realized with a stone jar under a waterfall for a century as it is with a guy pouring a jug of water into a bucket for just under a minute. The open nature of the piece even allows for these two performers to actually be part of a multiple performance.

The second idea that captivates me is the openness allowed in the materials that can be used in the performance. One could envisage many sources of water from a tap, to a riot control water cannon, to the squirt of water from a whale's blowhole. Similarly the vessel could be anything from the simplest clay cup to an oil tanker, indeed anything that would hold liquid. This is the beauty of this piece and the Fluxus paradigm in general: openness of expression, openness of materials, openness of realization and the primacy of imagination in the interpretation of an individual's work. The event score in particular can be enjoyed as much by actual physical performance as by being played out purely as a thought experiment alone. It is this philosophical-poetic aspect of Fluxus that has continually attracted and inspired me throughout much of my own artistic practice.

I see my work as a playful exploration of aspects of everyday life, cultural production, creative geographies and intermedial interventions. Much of it is inspired by Fluxus ideas, in particular the creation of work that allows for multiple interpretations and an open approach to artistic media. I attempt to engage with elements of the everyday yet recontextualize them to simultaneously exist as original product and their own re-imagined replica. I employ many different materials in my work, from the simplest works on paper with rubber stamps to actually using manufacturing processes and creating commercial products. I try to employ a performative approach that is perhaps typified by "Drip Music." In making works I often consider myself to be realizing an instruction designed to provoke a certain reconsideration of an existing situation. In doing this I hope to show a simple beauty that I believe exists in the contemplation of any form, in the same way that the Fluxus tradition has largely explored the revelation of a simple beauty of epistemic thought and form in a variety of media.

(MY) FLUXUS EXPERIENCE (2005)

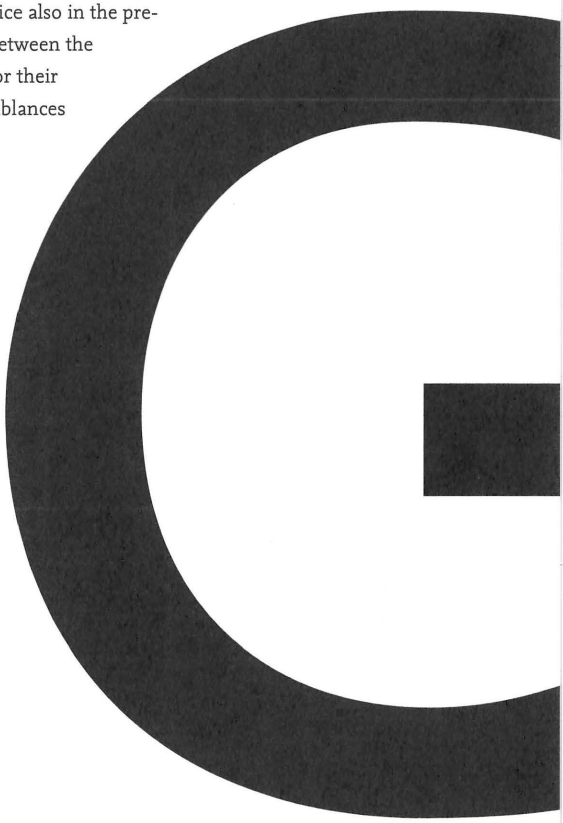
WALTER CIANCIUSI

I READ ABOUT FLUXUS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN JAMES PRITCHETT'S BOOK entitled *The Music of John Cage*. Describing the work o'oo" by Cage, Pritchett underlined features common to the Fluxus culture that would soon (1962) spread. I thought for a very long time that this verbal score really synthesizes all the aims of the following works by Higgins, Brecht & company: that is "to perform a disciplined action." In verbal scores by the Fluxus "school" an everyday action is observed as significant just because of that load of discipline that it carries unconsciously with it. It's the careful observation of those who want to see a work of art in this thing, to highlight paradigms of the action which would otherwise be hidden: a beginning, a duration (even if it might be a century), an end, acoustical consequences, other perceptual consequences, the creation of a matter related to the relation between interpreter and audience. Where there is a lack of discipline in acting we cannot realize a frame that distinguishes one work from another; and so we'd remain trapped in a one and only art-life stream in which the action of an individual is not essential to the evolution of the whole system. On the contrary it's when we affirm our will to observe a determined (accordingly disciplined) event that, decontextualizing, we create. The bombshell for me as a musician was to discover in the incidental sound derived from disciplined actions just summarily described, e.g., "a vase of flowers on(to) a piano," becomes a greater complexity in respect to the one than some hyper-deterministic compositive structures by contemporary European composers like Boulez or Stockhausen. Since then I have preferred a careful observation to the creation de novo. I have renounced Europe and I have become irreparably American in aesthetics and attitudes (the fact that

Maciunas was not a native American is of secondary importance from my point of view). Another interesting aspect for me is the creation, with Fluxus, of a kind of thought network. The artists become molecules of a second level universe that consists in the sharing of some postulates. The Internet is, in some way, a new natural headquarters for Fluxus. It is easier for us today to think of a work of art that records an evolution through continuous (telematic) transits from artist to artist. But that was the practice also in the pre-internet era, through daily epistolary exchanges, between the ones who recognized in Fluxus a common basis for their work: let's think about how easy it is to find resemblances and correspondences between scores of different composers in the Fluxus repertory of the sixties: a musical thought networked.

As a member of the Fluxlist I can say that there is true collaboration between artists that goes far beyond the most utopian hopes of the 1968 revolution. Thanks to this family I have transformed my sentences into shared knowledge.

Last week Ken Friedman sent me one of his recent scores (2003), entitled Centre Piece, that simply recites: "Imagine a life. Live it." Now this is for me a new point of reference: the art not just as the observation of a disciplined action, but moreover as an event close to the aspirations of man, a way of improving our condition.



Abstract

Connections between Fluxus indeterminacy, collaboration and open-endedness are connected to contemporary game art and its creative and sometimes subversive moves. Beginning with Marcel Duchamp's interest in games and continuing to John Cage's interest in chance operations along with various Fluxus artist's conceptions, the author moves through techniques and issues that underpin digital game development and its relation to Fluxus principles. Questions are raised and answered: What is a game? Why game art? Collective action through networks and Open Source strategies are explored. Mods, patches, scores and chance and the ways in which they subvert existing games or integrate the creative capacity of game designer with player are discussed and sometimes shown.

Venice, California
Visible Language 40.1
Pearce, 66–89

Rhode Island School of Design
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

FIGURE 1 **Marcel Duchamp and Raoul de Roussy de Sales, 1925 by Man Ray,** 6" x 9" vintage gelatin silverprint from The Sandor Family Collection.

CELIA PEARCE

The Aesthetics of Play

Prologue: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Gamer

"[What is art?] That little game that men have always played with one another."
MARCEL DUCHAMP

"It can even be argued that much of Duchamp's oeuvre constitutes a series of moves designed to rewrite the rules of the art game."
ANTOINETTE LAFARGE (SHIFT-CTRL)

IN 1922, ANDRÉ BRETON WROTE THE FIRST MAJOR ARTICLE ON the work of Marcel Duchamp for the French review *Littérature.* Breton regarded Duchamp as "the most intelligent man of the 20th Century," but was dismayed to find that the artist spent the majority of his time playing chess. But clearly Duchamp's fascination was more than a mere distraction. Among the last works painted before completing his landmark *Nude Descending a*

Staircase in 1912, Duchamp did a series of studies and paintings attempting to depict the inner processes of the opponents in a chess game. He played with a personal chess set he carved himself by hand, and his close friend and partner in Dada, Man Ray, earned his living for a time by making chess sets. At what was arguably the height of his art career, he "retired" to become a professional chess player. Photographs of Duchamp depict him playing chess more than any other single activity. One of the most famous of these shows him deeply engaged in a chess match with a naked Eve Babitz in the midst of a 1963 retrospective of his work at the Pasadena Museum of Art. The fact that he chose to make this statement in particular at a retrospective is telling.

Was Marcel Duchamp really an artist, or was he in fact what today would be called a "gamer" whose art was merely a hobby, or perhaps even a game itself? The fact is that Duchamp started with painting and ended with games; his later work appears more and more game-like. The following pages will explore phenomenon of games as an art medium, drawing corollaries and contrasts between the Fluxus movement's neo-Dadaist passion for games, and the emerging contemporary practice of digital game based art. In so doing, I hope to demonstrate that the spirit of Fluxus lives on and may in fact be even more at home in the context of cyberspace.

What Is A Game?

I SHALL BEGIN WITH A DISCLAIMER/CONTEXTUALIZATION. I AM a game designer/writer, a sometime artist and an "accidental theorist." Due to a number of recent trends in culture and academia, I can now situate these disparate activities under the general rubric of "game researcher," a role that has remarkably quickly shifted from pariah to *"oeuvre du jour."* The majority of contributors within this issue are well qualified to discuss "art," from the perspective of practice, history or criticism. As will soon be revealed, I have spent a great deal more time thinking about the nature of games, from both theoretical and practical angles, than I have about art.

In 1983, I began working as a game writer and designer in New York City. I was immediately plunged into the role of scribe, writing descriptions of game concepts being developed by a vastly multidisciplinary group of people, none of whom were game designers. I had the intuitive sense that some of these concepts were games, and some were not. But as I had no prior experience in either the design or the study of games, my methodology was con-

fined to: "I don't know what it is, but I'll know it when I see it." Feeling this to be inadequate, especially given my inexperience, I put forth a question to my employer at the time, Edwin Schlossberg (himself somewhat tangentially associated with Fluxus): "What, exactly, is a game?" His characteristic response: "Why don't you find out."

Based on the premise that there must be qualities that all games have in common, I did a systematic study of a wide range of game types and genres: popular board games, strategy games, card games, sports, children's games and the then emerging category of computer games. Having subjected these games to a rigorous analysis, I was able to identify the common features that seem to distinguish games from other sorts of activities.[1]

- ***Parameterized play*** *consisting of* ***rules*** *by which a group of players agree to abide for the duration of the game.*
- ***A goal,*** *sometimes expressed as a series of sub-goals that collectively lead to a meta-goal.*
- ***Obstacles*** *that create challenges to achieving the goal(s).*
- ***Resources,*** *initially provided to players at random or symmetrically, but later more often as rewards for overcoming obstacles.*
- ***Consequences,*** *which come in the form of either* ***rewards*** *(sometimes as resources) or* ***penalties*** *(sometimes obstacles.)*
- ***Information:*** *both known and unknown to the players (individually or en masse); progressive information that is revealed over time; and randomly generated information, such as a dice throw or a dial spin.*

1 **Paraphrase from Pearce, Celia.** 1997. *The Interactive Book: A Guide to the Interactive Revolution.* Indianapolis, IN: Macmillan, 420–425.

Although this description may sound mechanical and reductive, throughout my subsequent two decades as a game designer, artist and theorist, I have found this outline to be consistently useful in discussing the nature of games. The craft of making games, whether they are art games or commercial "mass media" games, can be measured in the designer/artist's ability to create a balance between these parameters. Even experimental art games have an innate understanding of this structure and its function, and so are able to undermine it by subverting, overriding or rendering the game's parameters recursive, redundant, comical/satirical and in some cases, impossible.

Games are first and foremost about play. A game is a dynamic system, a system designed to create what Alan Kay, the original designer of the windows-based computer interface, calls "hard fun." The notion of hard fun is important because it is germane to understanding why an artist might want to engage in games as an art medium.

Why Game Art?

REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE ART MEDIUM IS ANALOG, PERFORMATIVE, digital or mediated in some other way, creating something that is framed as

a game expresses a certain attitude, a particular posture toward not only the work itself but the "audience, and the practice of art-making in general."

The selection of games as an art medium involves suspension of certain artistic prerogatives. In the worlds of John Cage, it requires you as the artist to "give yourself up." This does not mean abdicating either control or even aesthetic direction; indeed the craft of game-making lies in the ability to create a balance, to locate the "sweet spot" between constraints and freedom. The game artist makes a conscious choice to *share* the art-making process, putting at least a part of the creative act in the hands of the player/participant. The prospect of this frightens many artists because they believe if they hand over their creation to the audience, their own "voice" will somehow be compromised. But part of the secret of doing this effectively means knowing the size and shape of space to carve out for the participant(s). As we will see, in many cases, the artist's absence can be more powerful, more palpable, more distinctive, and in some instances, more personal than his or her presence. Sometimes, the artist's silence speaks louder than words. Clearly, we can distinguish a John Cage piece from that of another composer, even though he may have surrendered a certain amount of its implementation to chance or to the creative urges of others.

In creating game art, the artist is making a choice to invite the viewer in as a co-creator of the work. Although it can be said that all art does this, game art does it in a very explicit way. It questions the relationship of art and artist to the viewer/spectator. It asks for the viewer's engagement not only intellectually but literally. Swedish artist Öyvind Fahlström, inventor of the "variable painting" technique, which placed magnets on a surface that were moved according to a set of rules, put it this way:[2]

> *The association of disparate elements to each other thus makes game rules and the work of art will be a game structure. This, among other things, leads to presupposing an active, participating spectator who—whether he is confronted with a static or variable work of art—will find relations which will make him able to 'play' the work, while the elements that he does not relate and in general his individual disposition make for the chance, the uncertainty that, when clashing with the 'rules' create the thrill of a game.*

Game art also fundamentally questions the role and value of the art object. There is deep and tragic irony in going to an exhibition of Fluxus artifacts today. Objects whose entire purpose was to ellicit play exist now only as the corpses of their former selves, trapped in a "Mausoleum" within the object-centric commodity-based world of Art with a capital A.

The FluxKits and FluxGames that emerged out of the 60's and 70's were beautiful objects, but their object-ness represents a state of dormant play. Just as a chess board is a beautiful object, its true value is in its potential energy,

2 **Heon, Laura Steward, editor.** 2001. *Game Show.* (Exhibition Catalog). North Adams, MA: MASS MOCA Publications, 12.

which is actuated when the game is played. It is in the playing that a chessboard comes alive, and the game object becomes a catalyst for play. Duchamp understood play as a process that can require at least as much intense concentration, creativity and skill as making art. Duchamp's *The Chess Players* and *Portrait of Chess Players* (1911), depictions of the inner lives of people playing chess, was an attempt to capture on canvas the dynamic flow of thought and social transactions that occur within the domain of a chess match. In particular, the work was trying to express the notion that you are creating a mental model of the game in your mind that combines your own moves with the anticipated moves of your opponent. "Each becomes the other as he tries to anticipate what his opponent is planning."[3] Will Wright, designer of hit computer games *Sim City* and *The Sims,* describes this process in the classic Chinese board game *Go,* "... both players have a model of what's happening on the board, and over time those models get closer and closer and closer together until the final score."[4]

3 **Cabanne, Pierre. 1997.** *Duchamp & Co.* Paris: Editions Pierre Terrail, 46.

4 **Pearce, Celia. 2002.** "Sims, Battlebots, Cellular Auomata, God, and Go." *Game Studies Journal,* 22, July.

Games as "Low" Culture

GAMES ARE AN OFT-MALIGNED FORM OF POPULAR CULTURE. BOARD GAMES, in spite of their perennial popularity, have never been taken seriously as a creative medium, even though their appeal consistently outlives other media. *Monopoly,* the most popular board game in the world, has sold 200 million copies since it was first published in 1934, five times the measly 40 million copies sold by the most popular book of fiction, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit,* published in 1937. Although *Monopoly's* theme arose out of a particular cultural moment, it still persists as an engaging system for interaction, and its metaphors continue to be relevant. Computer games are perceived as even more lowly than their analog forebears, conjuring up images of bleary-eyed nerds in seedy game arcades endlessly "twitching" their way through "thumb candy" in the form of pixelated alien landscapes or airplane simulators. Nonetheless, Nintendo's *Mario Bros.* games have generated twice the revenue of all five *Star Wars* films combined, even though *Star Wars* has been around a lot longer.

At the same time, games are considered one of the highest orders of computational challenge. In computer science, chess is a long-standing paradigmatic artificial intelligence problem. The task of beating a human at chess is considered the ultimate manifestation of the Turing test, precisely because it involves a dynamic process integrating planning, pattern recognition and anticipatory strategy in a way that appears to be uniquely human. If you imagine the interior of Deep Blue, the chess-playing computer, as Marcel Duchamp's *The Chess Players,* which attempts to depict this interiority, you can begin to get a hint at the complexity of this problem from a computational perspective.

Games are deeply wed to the history of computation precisely because they are procedural, or rule-based, in nature. They are based on elegant mathemat-

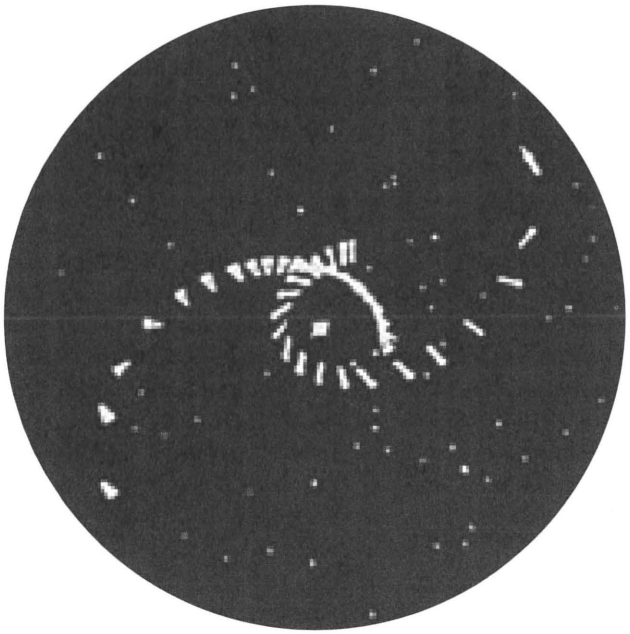


FIGURE 2 ***SpaceWar!*** Created by students at MIT in 1962 is generally credited as the first computer game.

ics and geometries that render not merely objects or visual representations, but dynamic, responsive systems. The only analog medium that is comparable to computational media in this regard is games. Games, whether digital or analog, function precisely the same way computers do: they are derived from a system of rules that sets forth parameters or constraints for dynamic interactions. And in spite of their ill repute, hacking games has been a favorite pastime of some of the brightest computer scientists since day one. *SpaceWar!*, created in 1962 as a game hack by programmers at MIT, is widely regarded to be the first computer game.[5] For them, hacking at play was a compelling technical problem as well as a fun, albeit geeky, hobby.

George Maciunas and the Fluxus artists embraced games for their very lowliness. Games provided a sort of "ludus populi," a play of the people that provided the perfect platform for bringing art to a mass audience. The making of FluxKits and FluxGames was itself a kind of game: create play patterns from found, e.g., "readymade" objects; create kits that can be reproduced easily and sold cheaply. Unfortunately, this utopian strategy did not succeed as hoped, but it did lead to the prolific creation of a wide range of artistic expressions that we enjoy today, if not for the play potential they embody, at least for their cleverness, aesthetic merit and conceptual innovation.

5 **Herz, J.C. 1997.** *Joystick Nation, How Videogames Ate Our Quarters, Won Our Hearts, and Rewired Our Minds.* New York: Little Brown and Company, 3–8.

MODern Art: Digital vs. Analog

"We are not involved in ownership but in use."
— JOHN CAGE

HISTORICALLY, FLUXUS AND VIDEO GAMES CROSS PATHS AROUND 1972, but do not seem to intersect. This was the year that Nolan Bushnell founded Atari Games and released *Pong*, the first big video game hit. In the intervening thirty years, computer games, in the words of videogame historian and journalist J.C. Herz, "ate our quarters, won our hearts, and rewired our minds."[6] Since 1999, they have gone neck-and-neck with film as a mainstream entertainment medium, and are poised to surpass it in the near future. In the process, they have also given rise to a new art genre, one that is being harnessed in much the same way Fluxus art harnessed analog games, but with some interesting new twists.

6 **Herz, J.C.** *Joystick Nation.*

The digital context of contemporary game art presents opportunities that extend the tradition of Maciunas and his band of merrrymakers, with some notable differences. Digital art, by definition, is not a "thing." It does not exist within the "art-as-object" paradigm, but exists as pure "score." With digital art, score means code, and code is at once something and nothing. It does not "exist," except in a conceptual sense, until played. It thus eludes the traditional methods for assigning economic value to art from which Fluxus game art was never entirely able to free itself. The recent flux in the value of Fluxus "works" (and indeed it is debatable whether the objects alone are works at all) bears witness to this controversy: How do we monetize a conceptual readymade object, versus a handcrafted "work of art?" Code is essentially math, rules, procedures. The fact that the art is itself made of pixels and code, purely instructions, pure "score," without an overt physical manifestation, completely reframes the distribution infrastructure, the economic equation and the gatekeeping authority of the art world.

A fundamental obstacle stymied Maciunas' goals and undermined his vision of "ludus populi." Manifest through his FluxShops and mail order enterprises, they demonstrated the production law of supply and demand.[7] Because of the Internet, digital art on the other hand has no such obstacle. Most digital game art is available via the Internet as free downloads, creating a self-propagating distribution infrastructure. You can generate an infinite number of copies at no cost to either the artist or the player, thus rendering the industrial framework of supply and demand irrelevant.

7 **Armstrong, Elizabeth and John** Rothfuss. 1993. *In the Spirit of Fluxus*. (Exhibition Catalog). Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, 33.

Furthermore, the primary crucible for digital game art is a phenomenon known as "Open Source" culture, a natural milieu for exploiting some of the fundamental values of Fluxus. Even within the commercial game industry, there is this spirit of "gift economics," especially around making "the tools of production" available to a mass audience. Open Source culture also has a long-standing tradition of collaboration, collectivism and multiple author-

ships. Maciunas would have embraced Open Source culture as a paradigm, because it overrides some of the challenges he faced in the tension between the seductive powers of artistic individualism and a desire to form collectivist art practices.

The Network and Medium, Venue and Collective

For the uninitiated, Open Source is a communal methodology for software creation which does not have any proprietary ownership, but which a community of programmers can advance collectively in various ways, such as the operating system Linux. "Pure" Open Source philosophy is based on these premises: a) that code belongs to everyone, b) that everyone should have access "under the hood," c) that people should be able to extend a program's functionality and d) that those new features should then be returned to collective ownership so others can use them. Most Open Source systems have a more constrained framework. Some are open on both ends—any applications created with the source code should be open to everyone as well. A more typical schema, popular with the software industry, allows people or entities to "close" the application software at the outgoing end so that products developed can be proprietary. In either case, commercial products made with Open Source programs are generally developed under some kind of licensing agreement that returns some revenue back to the "source," so to speak.

Game companies have a slightly different though surprisingly open model, compared to their counterparts in more traditional media. While software pirating is still a major concern, many PC games today come bundled with game editing tools. Players are free to build their own game levels, create "patches" (small programs that sit within existing games), "skins," (textures that change the appearance of existing games, sort of like digital wallpaper), and even build their own new games from scratch to run on the underlying game "engine" (a piece of software that allows a virtual game world to run on a personal computer in real time.) If these games become popular, they produce more business for the game company, because use of the game *engine* still requires purchase of the game on which it was based. In addition, there are a wide range of Open Source tools, engines and assets (3D models, textures, etc.) that can be downloaded for little or no money off the web. This practice of building off existing consumer game technologies is called "modding," short for "modifying." The products of this practice are referred to as "mods."

The use of consumer grade technologies seats this practice squarely in the center of the lowbrow realm of hijacking popular culture toward artistic aims. But added to the populist flavor shared by Fluxus is the infrastructure of a massive online community of gamers, game artists and Open-Sourcers who frequently and freely exchange code, ideas, tools and cultural contexts, all with the complicity of the game industry.

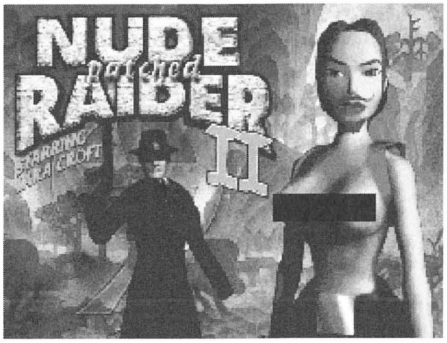
This collectivist ethos is integral to Open Source and game hacker culture, as well as game art practice. It is what I call "autodidactic communalism," the notion of a peer-to-peer model of knowledge exchange, rather than a traditional teacher-to-learner didactic pedagogy. This methodology accelerates the learning process because it revolves around contextualized learning-on-demand ("I only need to know what I need to know to do this task"), collaboration ("I will share this task with another and we will each contribute our knowledge") and lateral co-learning ("When I learn this task I will make this information available to others"). Because computer hacking is such a fast-paced process, much faster than industrial software development, this is a much more efficient means of acquiring and distributing information, knowledge and skills.

Some have described this process as a game unto itself, and given the parameters of "game" set forth earlier, an argument could certainly be made that this is the "meta-game." Both value skills acquisition, and competition and cooperation can often work in concert to achieve individual and collective goals.

Counter-Strike: Anatomy of a Game Mod

A GREAT EXAMPLE OF THE POWER OF THE COLLECTIVE IS THE 1999 FIRST-person shooter (FPS) mod *Counter-Strike*, a complete rebuild of the popular commercial game *Half-Life*. Created by a group of about seventeen geographically disparate modders lead by Minh "Gooseman" Le and "Cliffe," *Counter-Strike* was made available as a free download that took the game world by storm when it surpassed its progenitor *Half-Life* to become the most popular network FPS game. This suited Valve, the publishers of *Half-Life*, just fine since each *Counter-Strike* player had to purchase the original game in order to have access to the engine needed to play. *Counter-Strike* ultimately earned its creators not only cult-status as modders, but also garnered them a number of awards, including the coveted "Best Rookie Studio of the Year" from the International Game Developer's Association. Eventually, Valve offered the team a publishing deal. This constituted a fall from grace in the eyes of some gamers, who now no longer consider it a "mod." *(www.counter-strike.net)*

Revolutionary as it was, *Counter-Strike* is still a very conventional game in a very convention genre, and could just as easily be called "Son of *Half-Life*," both literally and figuratively. In spite of its altered theme (anti-terrorist operations vs. *Half-Life's* "alien experiment gone awry"), the basic play mechanic differs little from the original and follows the tried and true combat simulation genre. And herein lies the challenge of mod-based art. Modding tools for first person shooter games such as *Quake, Unreal* and *Half-Life* (the three most popular commercial modding engines) are biased towards this well-establish game genre. Yet most game artists are not content to frame their work within



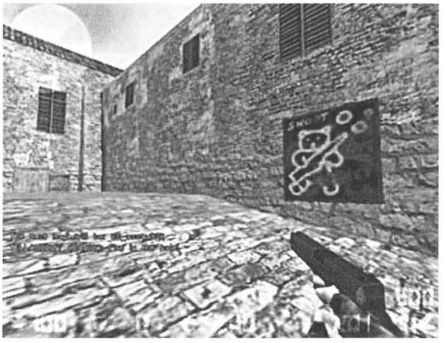


FIGURE 3 **Robert Nideffer's 1999 *Nude Raider Patched* is a patch to a patch and an ironic tribute to Duchamp.** ©Robert Nideffer with permission.

FIGURE 4 ***Velvet-Strike*, anti-war graffiti patch for *Counter-Strike*, by Condon Schleiner et al in 2002.** Copyleft 03.02.02 Anne-Marie Schleiner with permission.

the "status quo" narratives of combat, good vs. evil, human vs. alien, "good guy" vs. "terrorist," wizard vs. dragon, etc. To escape from these themes and structures means that certain biases and genre predilections of the mainstream game industry must be strategically overridden, subverted or, in some cases, exploited.

The Game within the Game: Digital Readymades and Public Interventions

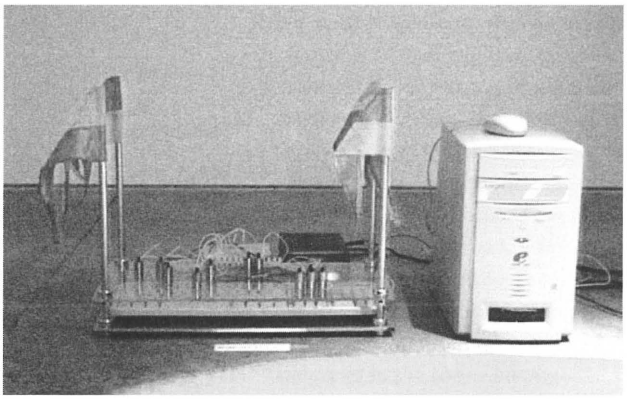
ONE MEANS OF SUBVERTING MAINSTREAM GAME CULTURE IS BY "PATCHing," which makes patches both a cultural intervention and a form of "digital readymade." For the most part, the term "patch" is used to describe a plug-in that sits *on top* of another game, which makes them ideal for interventional strategies. They are frequently used to make strong statements about game culture, media culture and culture in general, and do so in particular because they live inside existing popular culture paradigms. One of the best examples of this is Robert Nideffer's *Tomb Raider I & II Patches* (1999). These are actually patches to a patch, namely *Nude Raider,* which allows you to play Lara Croft, the female protagonist of the popular *Tomb Raider* game series (Eidos), buck naked. *(Nude Raider* is rumored to have been created by the game's developers as a publicity stunt or possibly a means to sell more games, since you have to buy the game to play the patch.) Nideffer's patch bestows the denuded Lara with a moustache and goatee a la Duchamp's infamous L.H.O.O.Q., (1919), which depicted a moustachioed and bearded Mona Lisa. The Nideffer patch serves a triple-threat post-modern statement, paying homage to the ubergamer, while confronting popular art culture and corporate practices, as well as gender representation in games, a popular subject of game hacker art.

Another patch is *Velvet-Strike: Counter-Military Graffiti for CS* (2002, ongoing), organized by Anne-Marie Schleiner through her web site Opensorcery.net, a collection of anti-combat patches for the *Counter-Strike* mod. Much has been made of the prevalence of militaristic themes in computer games, which have flourished in part because they have a core market (mostly males in their teens, twenties and thirties) that finds this play pattern particularly addictive. Each of the *Velvet-Strike* "sprays," which can be submitted by anyone online, transforms a weapon into an artistic tool that shoots graffiti rather than bullets at a targeted surface. The array of sprays includes Brody Condon's *love1, love2, and love2,* showing soldier game characters in homo-erotic embraces, GUI's *"Give Online Peace a Chance"* and an array of images that run the gamut from cute and bizarre, to downright perplexing. Another example of "peacenick" patches are a series of digital peace signs and posters for the top-selling PC game *The Sims,* available at downloadpeace.com.

Interventions into "public" cyberspace are frequently used to call attention to its very virtuality. There is a long tradition of leveraging both text-based and online graphical communities (such as ActiveWorlds and OnLive) as a context for public art and performance. Desktop Theater, lead by Adriene Jenik and Lisa Brenneis, orchestrates improvisational scenarios within the graphical chat world The Palace. The group exploits an interesting feature of public cyberspace—the ability to change identity or persona in mid-stream, switching avatars (player representations) to enhance the drama.

We see analog precursors of this persona-bending in Duchamp's female alter-ego Rrose Selavy, and Maciunas' *John Lennon & Yoko Ono Masks* (April 1970), which were given to participants of a Flux party for Lennon. The masks were meant to honor the couple, while at the same time rendering them anonymous in a sea of clones. A different twist on cloning comes into play in Feng Mengbo's *Q4U* (2001). This *Quake 3* mod replaces all the game characters with models of Mengbo himself, thus everyone in the game is a Mengbo clone shooting at other Mengbo clones.

Another public venue for cyberspace intervention is massively multiplayer online role-playing (mmorpg's.) A number of these games are essentially graphically enhanced variations of text-based "MUD's" (Multi-User Dungeons/Domains) and MOO's (Multi-User Domains Object-Oriented), which were based on the popular "live action" role playing game *Dungeons and Dragons* (TSR.) In games like *EverQuest* (Verant/Sony) and *Ultima Online* (Origin/Electronic Arts) players create and develop fictive personas in an alternative fantasy medieval universe. They are highly engrossing for hundreds of thousands of players, who can log on for forty or fifty hours per week. Artist Eddo Stern's *Summons to Surrender* is an ongoing experiment within the *EverQuest* world. Initially, Stern created a series of autonomous characters, or preprogrammed "bots," disguised as player avatars that perform mechanical, often illogi-



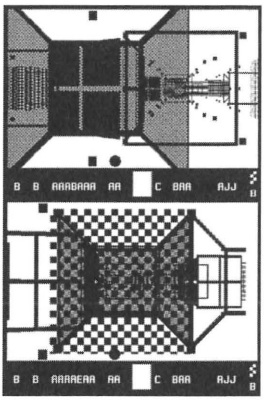


FIGURE 5 **Eddo Stern's *Summons to Surrender* is a massively multiplayer online game. *EverQuest* is played by an automated keyboard.** Photo by Eddo Stern with permission.

FIGURE 6 ***SOD*, by Jodi, 2000, is a crudely-rendered 3D world using the *Castle-Wolfenstein* game engine.**

cal actions. Later, he replaced the software bot with a mechanized keyboard that automatically presses the keys required to perform the preprogrammed actions. The intense piston-like movements of the solenoids on only a couple of keys highlights the mechanistic repetition required of players to interface with these fantastical game worlds. It also confronts the question of identity in cyberspace, in a case where a human-controlled character is technically indistinguishable from a mechanically-generated bot.

Stern has also contributed to the practice of machinima (digital films made in game environments), which we will only touch on here, but also represents a major component of the game art movement. The Israeli-born artist has stirred quite a bit of controversy with *Sheik Attack* a machinima film that documents the history of Israel and Zionism as reenacted within games such as *Civilization*, *Sim City 3000* and combat-based First-Person Shooter and Copter Simulation games.

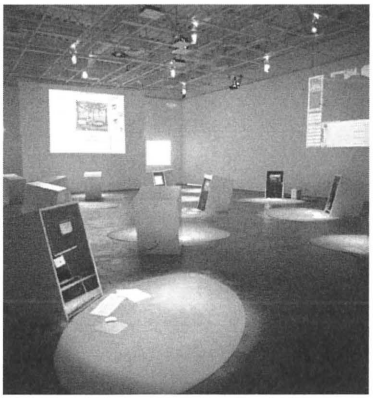
New MODels

ALTHOUGH INTERVENING OR EXPLOITING EXISTING GAMES IS A KEY PRACtice in game art, creating complete ground-up mods, especially with designs that differ dramatically from the source games, is the favored practice of most game artists. Anne-Marie Schleiner's *Cracking the Maze*[8] was one of the first online collections of downloadable game art. Schleiner, like many game artists, frequently straddles all three roles of artist, curator and writer. *Cracking the Maze* introduced a number of game art works that later appeared in gallery and museum shows such as *SHIFT-CTRL* at UC Irvine's Beall Center for

8 **Schleiner, Anne-Marie. 1999.** "Cracking the Maze: Game Plug-Ins and Patches as Hacker Art." Art & Games Issue. *Switch Magazine*. http://www.switch.sjsu.edu/CrackingtheMaze/

See also Huhtamo, Thomas. 1995. *Fluxus*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.

Trippi. Laura. 1999. "Cracking the Maze: Deep Patch." Art & Game Issue. *Switch Magazine*. http://switch.sjsu.edu/CrackingtheMaze/



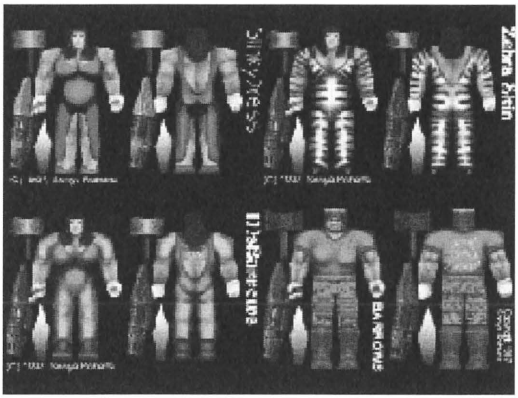


FIGURE 7 **Game Exhibition *Shift+Ctrl* at UC Irvine's Beall Center for Art and Technology, 2000.** Beall Center for Art and Technology with permission.

FIGURE 8 **Female skin pack excerpts from *Cracking the Maze* by Sonya Roberts creates a disturbing form of trans-gendered representation.** ©1999, Sonya Roberts with permission.

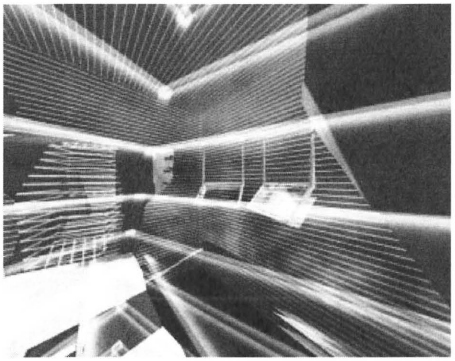
Art & Technology,[9] and *Gameshow* at MASSMOCA. One of these, *SOD*, by Dirk Paesmans and Joan Heemskerk, who work collectively under the moniker jodi, subverts game aesthetics by transforming the *Castle Wolfenstein* engine into an abstracted world of black, white and gray planes. *SOD* confronts game aesthetics by breaking down the illusory convention of 3D, which is the mainstay of mainstream games.

Video games are infamous for their female characters, killer kick-fighters going hand to hand in combat lingerie, or gun-toting babes like Lara Croft who embark on archaeological adventures in hot-pants-and-holster and gravity-defying "silicon" breasts. Needless to say, gender representation is a ripe domain for game hacks, and *Cracking the Maze* feature a few of these. In addition to Nideffer's *Nude Raider* patches, mentioned earlier, Sonya Roberts' *Female Skin Pack Excerpts*, is a series of female texture maps designed for male game character models. This transgendered effect is eerie, and calls to mind examples of renaissance female nudes painted or sculpted from male models. Starrs and Omielewski's *Bio-Tek Kitchen* (also a *Marathon Infinity* mod) has become something of a game-art classic, transmogrifying the shooter game into a kitchen overrun with mutant produce.

9 **Nideffer, Robert. 2000.** "SHIFT CTRL: Mediating the Process of Academic Exhibition." *SHIFT CTRL*. (Online Catalog for Game Art Exhibition). Irvine, CA: Beall Center for Art & Technology. http://www.bealcenter.uci.edu/shift/

Analog Interlude: The Many Faces of Chess and Other Flux Mods

THE PRACTICE OF GAME MODDING OR HACKING OF COURSE PREDATES DIGital art, and is a prevalent motif among Fluxus artists. It is not surprising that Marcel Duchamp's beloved chess was a favored Fluxus mod. The most prolific Fluxus chess modder was perhaps Takako Saito, who explored the



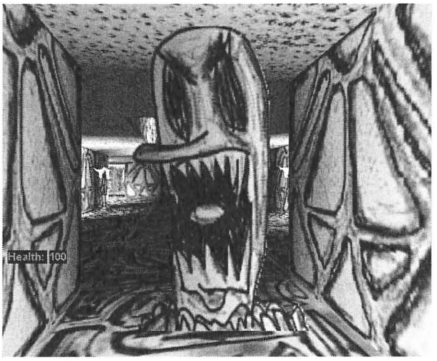


FIGURE 9 ***Quilted Thought Organ*** **by Delire, creates an abstract audio-visual environment reminiscent of the *Fluxlabyrinth*.** Reproduced by permission.

FIGURE 10 **Chiselbrain's *Pencil Whipped* by Lonnie Flickinger, aka Chiselbrain Software 2001,** with permission.

genre to the greatest degree of any of her contemporaries. Between 1961 and 1970, she produced a number of mods that were reproduced and sold under the moniker "FluxChess" through the Flux Mailorder Warehouse (Maciunas, short-lived concept for a decentralized art distribution mechanism). Each is an exquisite twist on both the aesthetics and play mechanic of the game.

Examples such as *Grinder Chess*, featuring red and blue grinder bits placed in an 8x8 grid of peg holes within a wooden box, and *Jewel Chess*, jewels in clear plastic boxes, are beautifully conceived design variations on the classic board game. But other Saito chess mods also introduced new play mechanics and tactile properties. *Liquid Chess* (aka "Smell Chess), consisted of viles of liquid to be identified by smell; *Sound Chess or Weight Chess*, featured in the collective work "Flux Cabinet," consisted of opaque white plastic boxes containing items to be identified by weight or sound when shaking. *Spice Chess* (aka "Smell Chess") appeared in several different iterations and featured corked tubes filled with spices in a rack. These provide a beautifully articulated sense of the aesthetics of play operating on a number of different levels.

An exceptionally notable chess mod was Yoko Ono's *White Chess Set* (1971), in which the opponents' pieces, all white, sit on each side of an all-white board, making the warring factions indistinguishable from one another. This elegantly placed anti-war statement, particularly taken in the context of the Vietnam War, can be seen as culturally analogous to *Velvet-Strike's* post-9/11 "Give Online Peace a Chance" theme. Both pieces also draw attention to the deeply militaristic metaphors embedded in both analog and computer games by conscientiously objecting to their implicit narratives of combat and enmity.

In addition to its political content, *White Chess* can be grouped within the modding category of unplayable games. Of course, the master of the strategically unplayable mod is uberfluxgamer, George Maciunas himself. *The Same Card Flux Deck* (1966–1977), is a deck of cards composed of 52 examples of the same card, all 3s or all aces—one deck consisting of all jokers (essentially a deck of wild cards). This was more of a one-liner than an experiment in play aesthetics. Much more sophisticated and perhaps less glib were his series of modded (or in Flux parlance, "prepared") pairs of *Ping Pong Rackets* (1966–1973). Rather than rendering it unplayable, these added awkward, bizarre, almost slapstick obstacles into the game.

Maciunas' love of dysfunctional play mechanics is perhaps at its height with the *Multicycle,* which Maciunas described in the *Fluxnewsletter,* April 1973 as "16 bicycles connected into one unsteerable vehicle."[10] While bicycles themselves are not games, configuring them in this fashion, thereby adding the challenge of manueverability, turns them into one. It also highlights a really interesting point about collaboration. Clearly collaboration was both Maciunas' passion and perhaps to some extent the bane of his existence. The beauty of this piece is that it simultaneously celebrates and satirizes the benefits and drawbacks of collectivism.

10 **Hendricks, Jon. 1988.** *Fluxus Codex.* New York: Harry Abrams, Inc., 367.

Virtual Realty

DIGITAL GAME ART COMES IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES, AND REMARKABLY (considering how much work it can often be to produce this type of work) "21st Century" game artists are as prolific as their analog forbears. The diverse array of mod-based art games bears testimony to both the versatility of game tools and the cleverness of the artists.

Reality can be dispensed with just as easily as it can be reframed. *Quilted Thought Organ* by Delire (aka Julian Oliver) is a real time audiovisual performance environment that draws you into an abstract world. *qthoth,* as it is also called, bears more resemblance to immersive VR experiments from the 1980's than it does to *Half-Life,* the game from which it was modded, or any "real space" for that matter. The architectonic geometry creates a kind of meditative and abstract suspension of reality, recalling both Russian structuralism and William Gibson's description of an imagined cyberspace from his classic 1984 cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer.*

Lonnie Flickinger's delightfully creepy *Pencil Whipped* (2001), a *Quake* mod that has won accolades from the mainstream game industry and the game art world alike, takes the complete opposite tack. Rather than a computery, architectonic aesthetic, as we see with *qthoth,* the piece subverts the mainstream computer game aesthetic with child-like black and white pencil drawings, a bizarre keyboard layout and hokey, voice-generated sound effects. Although the game uses a more traditional FPS play mechanic, it transforms

a usually high-tech experience into a hand-drawn simulation of a child's nightmare.

Keeping "Score"

THE NOTION OF A "SCORE," OR SET OF INSTRUCTIONS THAT IS OPEN TO A wide range of interpretations, has been a convention in music for centuries, but this sets the stage for a wider range of *un*conventional experimentations in which the score becomes a broader gesture.

Fluxus artists and their contemporaries, even those who were not composers per se, integrated the conceptual notion of score as a framework for performance and conceptual art. George Brecht, Ben Vautier and Yoko Ono are just a few Fluxus artists who took this as a strategy, using the score as a structure for improvisation, as a schema for implementation of an art work, and also for its intrinsic poetry and conceptual merits.

A musical or art score, like a game, can be appreciated "at rest," but its true power is manifest when it is activated by player(s) into a unique event. Here the word "player" has multiple connotations: a musical instrumentalist; a stage actor; a performer; a person engaged with a game; and perhaps, in the derogatory sense, one who manipulates social situations to his advantage. Play in all of these senses involves a certain measure of virtuosity. The "serious" game player, like Duchamp, is always striving to achieve a higher level of skill. This refutes the disdainful impression that play is a form of idleness, triviality or time wasting, as Breton construed in Duchamp's case. Yet clearly Duchamp's obsession with chess was in no way an indication of idleness or laziness, but rather the love of a process that was both playful and challenging.

Virtuosity is integral to the playing of both music and games, especially computer games. In digital game culture, there is less and less of a boundary between virtuosity as a player and virtuosity as a creator. In the dynamic of a play-based artistic domain, there is a fluidity, a continuum between play and creation, and in this way, the "player" of a game or score is also a co-creator or performer of the work. Within game culture itself, play and creation often fuse such that playing the game is a form of consensual performance. In multiplayer role-playing games, such as *Ultima Online* or *EverQuest*, the players are engaged in the ongoing construction of a massive collaborative fiction. In these contexts, it is not that great a leap for players who have achieved particularly high levels of game skill to graduate to being level-builders, skinners, modders, patchers, etc. John Cage describes this as "... wanting to turn each person into an artist ..."[11]

Pieces for "prepared piano," by composer/artists such as Cage and David Tudor demonstrate a musical analog to the digital mod by creating modifications to a piano to constrain or alter its output. Augmenting conventional performance with unusual and inventive obstacles recapitulates earlier examples

11 **Kostelanetz, Richard, editor.** *John Cage, Documentary Monograph in Modern Art.* New York: Praeger Publishers, 29.

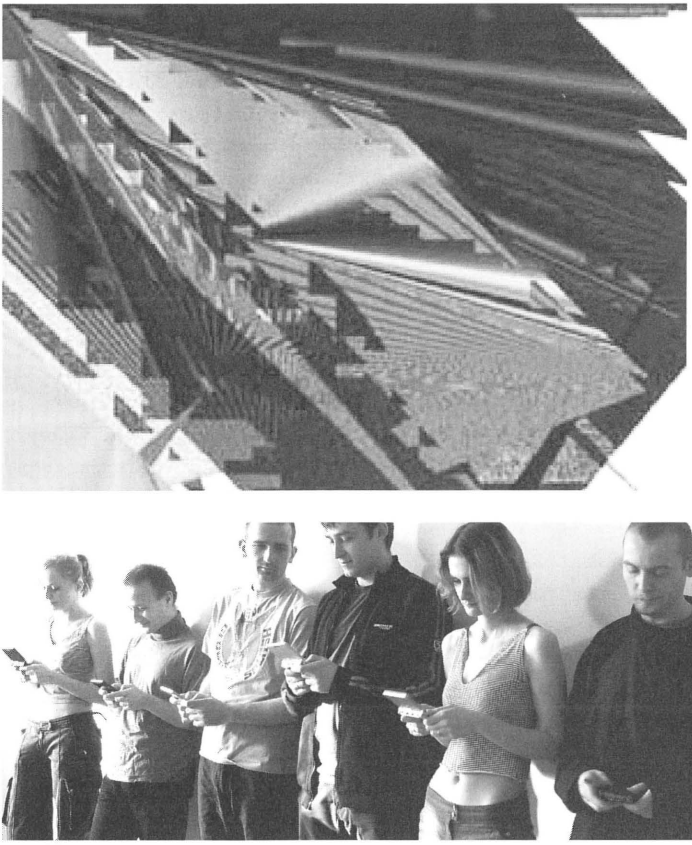


FIGURE 11 ***Max-Miptex*, created by Oliver and Chatterton in 2001, runs software on the wrong graphics driver.** Photo with permission.

FIGURE 12 **Gamboyzz Orchestra play Nintendo Gameboys as musical instruments, creating compositions by playing games.** Photo with permission.

of Maciunas' modifications to sports and transportation vehicles. Nam Jun Paik's integrated game and music in his delightful *Prepared Toy Pianos* (1963) was a series of children's instruments outfitted with extraneous objects and electro-mechanical hacks that caused the keys to activate external devices such as radios and vacuum cleaners. In the collective *FluxLabyrinth* (1976), Paik's *Piano-Activated Door* presages puzzle-based computer games with a door that can only be opened by playing the right combination of keys. This echoed Duchamp's two-way door at 11 Rue Larrey (1927), a door hinged so that it could be shared by two different doorways. These types of modifications have the effect of "gamifying" a process through the integration of obstacles that alter an

activity in a range of ways. Preparation, especially of the sort practiced by Cage and Tudor, call attention to the everyday, especially by using common objects or implements to alter an instrument. Paik's toy piano and door pieces swing these practices to the brink of game art, if not entirely into its camp, especially in the pleasure they derive from the vaudevillian sensibility of Fluxus.

The Gameboyzz Orchestra Project has its own approach to toys and music. The Polish ensemble has toured the world playing Nintendo's Gameboy portable gaming machines as a musical instrument. Part of the group's aim is to celebrate the low tech, and also to reframe the toy as an instrument using special software, including Nanoloop.

Chance Operations: Digital Entropy as an Aesthetic Strategy

THE USE OF CHANCE AND RANDOMNESS AS A CREATIVE MEDIUM IS ANOTHER strategy shared by Fluxus, experimental music and digital game art. We begin to see chance emerge as a component in Duchamp's infamous "roulette experiment," as well as *3 Standard Stoppages* (1913–1914), which involved the use of dropped string to create form for a work. In *Erratum Musicale* (1913), he cut a piece of sheet music into individual notes, placed them in a hat, then drew them out to form a new chance-determined musical composition. The lyrics were pulled from a randomly selected dictionary definition. In true Duchampian fashion, his response to the 1926 breaking of *The Large Glass* (1918) was to glue the broken pieces back together, integrating the resulting spider web pattern into the piece.[12]

12 **Lebel, Robert. 1959.** *Marcel Duchamp.* Paris Trianon Press, 54.

A particularly elegant example of chance-based work with a decidedly "gamey" bent is George Brecht's *Incidental Music—Five Piano Pieces.* In one piece, the performer is instructed to pile a stack of blocks on the piano strings, one by one, as high as possible, to form a tower. The piece is completed when the tower collapses (always at a variable point), scattering the blocks across the piano strings. What is interesting about the game's formulation is the inverted game mechanic: it is at the moment that you "lose" the game that the music itself is created. Thus the resulting work is the outcome of failure. This is philosophically aligned with Cage's notion of giving oneself up, as well as his ideas of un-intentionality. There is most certainly an aspect of Zen philosophy to this approach, wherein the act of creation is precisely the act of letting go.[13]

12 **Lebel,** *Marcel Duchamp,* 27, 31.

In computational game-based art works ideas around chance, failure and letting go of results often takes form through harnessing the inherent unpredictability of computers. While in theory, computers are devices that compute elegant mathematical procedures, in reality they are often unreliable, inconsistent and quickly obsolete, while software is often unstable, incomplete and riddled with "bugs." These inherent failures or glitches in computational media can often lead to unforeseen results that arise out of accidental or deliberate technological anomalies.

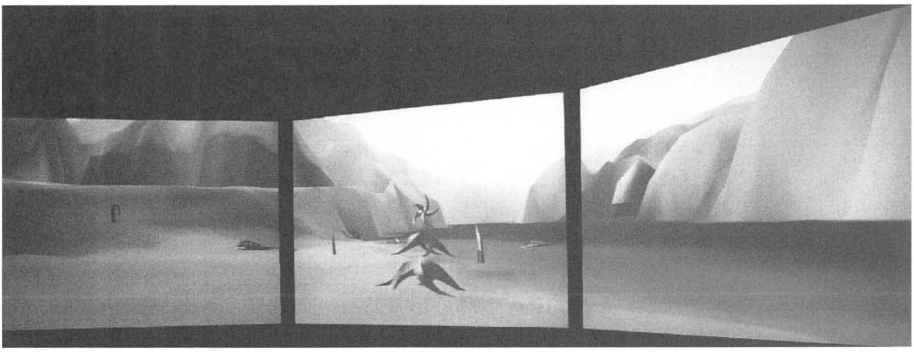


FIGURE 13 **Rebecca Allen's 1998 *Bush Soul* virtual reality installation.** ©Rebecca Allen, with permission.

Max-Miptex, by Julian Oliver (aka Delire) and Chad Chatteron (2001), is described by the artists as "Part hack, part accident." A Kyro II [graphics] card is convinced it's possible to run a Quake II mod on the wrong GL drivers. Textures are split across the rendering, fanning out in an impossible art-nouveau-cum-Kandinsky ovation. During the error, 'Max-Miptex' was returned by the screaming engine. Edited machinima documents the experiment." *(Selectparks.net)* This type of play with the dysfunctional machine, especially when the machine is pushed past its limit, as this one apparently was, can often produce aesthetic results far more interesting than those originally intended.

Aside from cultivating errors, artists can also take advantage of other forms of chance operation that computers are particularly good at. One is the phenomenon of "emergence," that is, unpredictable outcomes that occur as a result of the implementation of a rule-set. A-Life and artificial intelligence are common domains for experiments in emergence, and it is also a major factor in networked digital game environments. A number of digital artists have exploited emergence as a form of chance operation. Whether or not all of this work classifies as "game art" may be debatable, but it certainly has game-like qualities and informs on some of the ways in which computer art and games have merged. Rebecca Allen's installation *Bush Soul* (1998) draws a single player into an alien terrain populated by unusual and highly responsive creatures. The creatures, though not anthropomorphic, have distinct personalities that manifest as transformations, abstracted choreographies and sensual interactions with the landscape itself. The ensuing emergence and its resulting experience arises from the intersection of the creatures, landscape and player.

As we've seen, a common tactic of game artists is inversion. Entropy can be seen as emergence in reverse, a procedural approach to decay rather than regeneration. Procedural entropy can be used as a means of simulating or stimulating computational breakdown. An excellent example is *Gameboy_ultraF_uk*

by Tom Corby and Gavin Bailey (2001), a Free Software GameBoy emulator whose rendering system has been, as *Trigger* curator Rebecca Allen puts it, "pathologically rewritten to degenerate over time." She also adds, with a nod to Fluxus and Dada practices: "The binary, source code, and documentation can be considered as component parts of the work. Rather than written from scratch, the code may be considered a 'readymade,' an artistic intervention has been made."

The New Collectivism

ALTHOUGH DIGITAL GAMES HAVE MANY PARALLELS WITH FLUXUS GAME art and music practices, they also represent what could be considered evolutionary steps to bring some of the tenets of Fluxus to fruition. The Internet provides a broader canvas, so to speak, for populist and collectivist strategies. One of the reasons Fluxus artists embraced games as an art medium is precisely because of their "commonness." Games, associated with popular culture, with (by implication, child's) play, as well as with ease of production and distribution provided a fantastic framework with which to question the preciousness of the art object. The Internet provides a means to supercharge this type of practice. As a rule, digital game art is created with consumer grade (e.g., low-brow) or Open Source game engines, and is downloadable for free via the Internet. Among digital artists, there is a certain amount of ideological discourse about the availability of tools and the perceived elitism of first- and second-generation virtual reality. In contrast to this, the younger generation of game artists use everyday digital tools and media, i.e., games. But game hacker culture has its own flavor of elitism. Access to and proficiency with technological tools are de rigeur for participation. "Nerds rule" is the new social order. But if Bill Gates is to the information age what Henry Ford was to industrial age, then "nerds rule" is as much the rule as it is the exception. We have already seen this David-and-Goliath drama played out on the battlefield of Napster, but any way you dice it, it is still the battle of the nerds.

At the same time, game hacking can also be seen as a game in and of itself. If Marcel Duchamp saw art as the meta-game in which he was engaged, then game artists use the Internet and its various structures of engagement in the same way. Hacking culture can be codified in terms of the game parameters described earlier: the corporate culture of IP (intellectual property), copyright and control of the media is rendered impotent in the face of shrewd hacking tactics. But what is really interesting is that, unlike the music and film industries that have attempted to squelch rebellion by lawyering it to death, the game industry plays back. Embracing and designing for game modding and hacker culture turns out to be a smart business strategy, so the industry has harnessed gift economics as a means of expanding its profits. In a sense, mainstream game designers are also contributing

to the design of this meta-game. As it turns out, most forms of game hacking are good for business, and with a few exceptions, they are not only tolerated but encouraged.

Digital Game Art Goes Mainstream

ANOTHER QUALITY THAT GAME ART SHARES WITH FLUXUS IS ITS ABILITY and desire to remain outside the standards of measurement of the mainstream art world. Anne-Marie Schleiner's 1999's online exhibition *Cracking the Maze* certainly paved the way for web-based as well as exhibition-based distribution of digital game art, followed closely by *SHIFT-CTRL* in 2000 at the Beall Center for Art & Technology at the University of California Irvine. Curated by digital artists Antoinette LaFarge[14] and Robert Nideffer, it was one of the first large-scale *physical* exhibitions devoted entirely to game art and embraced not only consumer game-based works, but significant installations by some of the influential VR artists cited earlier. The inclusion of their work was refreshing and vital in a culture that tends to suffer from historical amnesia.

14 **LaFarge, Antoinette. 2000.** "WINside Out." *SHIFT CTRL.* (Online Catalog for Game Art Exhibition). Irvine, CA: Beall Center for Art & Technology.

Although isolated installation works have appeared in museums over the years, shows focusing on game art practice didn't really hit the mainstream until 2001. This makes perfect sense alongside the concurrent dubbing of computer games as "the medium of the 21st Century," not a particularly prescient revelation considering that computer games had already been well ensconced in popular culture for over 20 years.

The relationship between the gatekeepers of "Art with a capital A" and the sorts of artists we have been discussing has always been an uneasy one. From the moment Duchamp set down an inverted urinal in a museum, Dada to Fluxus to contemporary game artists have never been entirely at home in the hallowed halls of Art. The fact that the first major game art exhibition took place online highlights the perceived obsolescence of museums in the digital age — distribution at every level is no longer the sole domain of the gatekeepers — whether they be music publishers, game distributors or art institutions. We do not need curators to decide which art will be seen and which will not.

MASSMOCA's *Game Show*, curated by Laura Steward Heon, was the 2001 exhibition that most unabashedly (and comprehensively) embraced games in a museum context. In addition to contemporary game art, the exhibition was complemented by two concurrent shows, *Öyvind Fahlström*, organized by the Museu d'Art contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) and *Fluxus Games* from the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus collection, organized by Tara McDowell. *Game Show* successfully eschewed the unfortunate temptation to isolate digital game art as a trendy "new" phenomenon: instead situated it along a historical and contemporary continuum of related art practices.

These pieces are quite at home along side works such as Perry Hoberman's *Cathartic User Interface*, which invites participants to throw soft rubber "porcu-

pine" balls at a wall of computer keyboards on which are projected annoying error messages, such as "The operation has failed. Would you like to try again? It will only fail again." with choices "Again," "& again," "& again," or "Click OK to agree to something you can't possibly understand." Hoberman is another artist with a long history of integrating game-style interactivity into his playful VR and interactive pieces: this piece is perhaps one of the most satisfying send-ups of PC interface aesthetics and culture. *Game Show* also included a number of digital game pieces, such as Jodi's *SOD*, Lonnie Flickinger's *Pencil Whipped,* and Natalie Bookchin's *The Intruder,* to name a few.

A number of the works mentioned earlier also appeared in the 2002 exhibition *Trigger,* curated by Rebecca Cannon at GammaSPACE in Melbourne, Australia.[15] *Trigger* produced an online archive/catalog which provides for downloading the works on exhibit. Cannon, incidentally, is also one of the instigators, along with Julian Oliver, Chad Chatterton and Andrea Blundell, of Selectparks, the most extensive *ongoing* archive of digital game art. Selectparks has been posting games since 2001 and continues to add new works to its archive on a continual basis. (The majority of PC-based digital game artworks mentioned in this article can be found there.)

15 **Cannon, Rebecca. 2002.** *Trigger Online Catalog.* http://www.gammaspace.com.au/trigger/

The addition of a virtual "wing" or online galleries, pioneered by museums like Minneapolis' Walker Art Center' with Adaweb and the Whitney Museum of American Arts with the Whitney Artport, is now becoming a more commonplace feature of museums. Given this, we can anticipate the appearance of more game art within the traditional museum's purview.

Nonetheless, it is likely that, like Fluxus, digital game art will continue to have a certain amount of unease with the constraints of the museum context. This is because the essential mission of the museum is to collect, preserve and display "things"—this is at fundamental odds with the ethos of game art, which is play. Like an excitable child trapped within a starched-and-pressed Sunday suit, these art forms are not meant to sit still on a hard bench, but long to be released onto the streets to explore their potential in action. Digital artists have one great advantage over Fluxus artists, however, in that they have the infinite playground of the Internet as their social, collaborative and creative context.

References

Additional Online Resources

Opensorcery: www.opensorcery.net

Select Parks Game Art Archive: www.selectparks.net

Activeworlds: www.activeworlds.com

OnLive: www.onlive.com

Author Note

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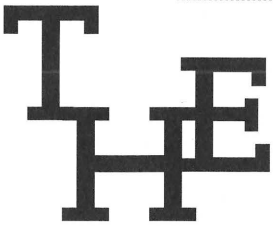
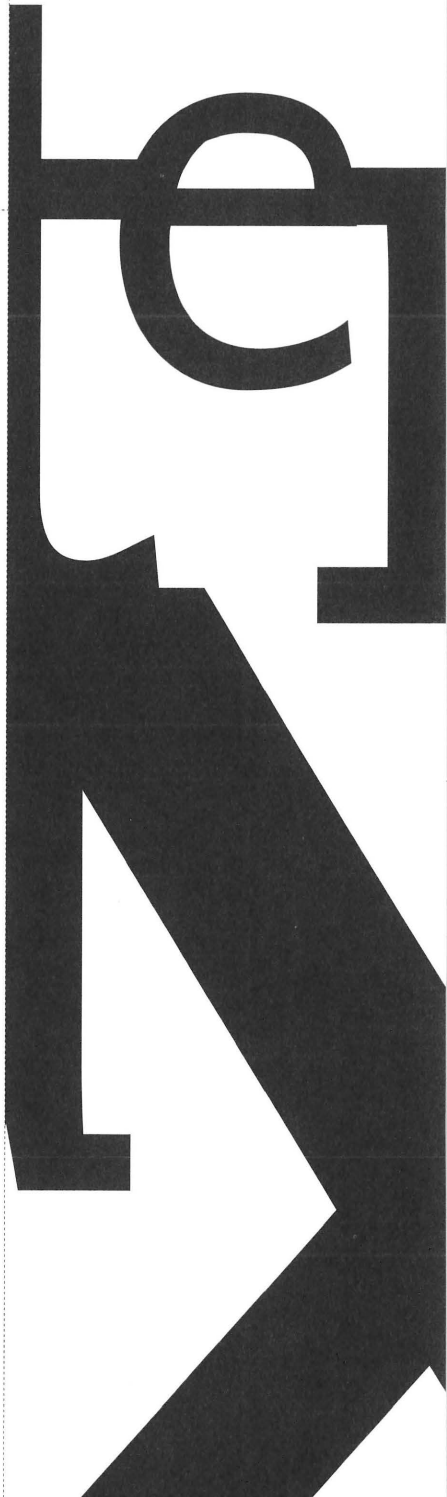


Abstract

The literature of Fluxus documents a conversation on the concepts, media forms and practices developed in an international laboratory of artists, architects, composers, designers and poets. It also documents a dramatic shift in impact and reception. Half a century ago, Fluxus participants did most of their own writing. Today, a far broader conversation includes a wide variety of writers from many fields and disciplines. This article traces a half-century of change and growth from a critical perspective. It addresses problems in the work of early writers, enthusiastic but personal, often flawed by inaccuracies reflecting personal positions while lacking historiographic awareness. It also raises questions and issues that scholars and critics must consider in today's intermedia era. Serious contributions to the literature of Fluxus now join personal reflection, philosophical depth and careful scholarship. The growth of excellent writing and the accessibility of source documents make this a time of renewal and opportunity for the literature of Fluxus. The claims of history require establishing a literary space in which the original Fluxus voices speak while allowing writers the freedom of multiple interpretations.



Norwegian School of Management
Visible Language 40.1
Friedman, 90–112

Rhode Island School of Design
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Nature of Fluxus

KEN FRIEDMAN

"Fluxus is what Fluxus does but no one knows whodunit."
– EMMETT WILLIAMS

The Fluxus Problematic

WHILE FLUXUS IS WHAT FLUXUS does, the question of "who done it" leads to a major set of problems. The lack of consensus regarding who the Fluxus people are or were leads to three problems in historiography and criticism. The first problem involves understanding the community of people known as Fluxus. The second problem involves understanding their actions. A third problem arises as we attempt to learn "who done it" in the first place. Defining Fluxus as a laboratory or social

ecology leads to one kind of historiography. Defining Fluxus as a group of individuals located during a specific moment in time leads to another. Defining Fluxus in terms of a single man and a short list of artists who worked with him only during the times they worked with him leads to yet a third.

Beyond the "who done it," there are major disagreements on what Fluxus is or was. Every artist, curator, critic and historian with an interest in Fluxus has his or her own view. Some adopt positions with serious internal contradictions, giving them several views at once. Despite these challenges, perhaps because of them, the last four and a half decades have seen the creation of a large body of literature on Fluxus.

The term Fluxus was created in the early 1960s for a magazine that never appeared. The name of the magazine — Fluxus — was used for a festival in Wiesbaden in 1962 that was originally planned to help develop and support the magazine. As a result, the group of artists whose work was presented at the Wiesbaden Fluxus festival was called "Fluxus people" by the German press. The name stuck, in great part because the Fluxus people chose to accept the designation as a usable identification.

Despite multiple debates over the "who" of Fluxus, there are ways to catalogue the individuals who populate the Fluxus community. In 1978, I adapted content analysis, a well-known social science research method, to chart the actors in the Fluxus drama. Content analysis begins with documents forming a data set to reveal the significant patterns of a subject field. In this case, the subject field is Fluxus. The documents are a collection of major catalogues, books and membership lists. The data set reveals patterns to answer the question, "Who are or were the actors in Fluxus?"

The analysis begins by listing all artists represented in the exhibitions, books and projects charted in the collection of documents about Fluxus. The names are placed on a simple matrix chart. The books, catalogues and projects are listed chronologically across one axis of the matrix. The artists listed alphabetically along the other. The matrix forms a grid of boxes. Marking each box where an artist is represented in an exhibition, book or project, reveals the names of those who took part in or were represented in Fluxus activities with greater or lesser frequency.

The project examined all major exhibitions and books along with key publications and special documents such as George Maciunas's lists and Jon Hendricks's catalogues. This selection gives a fair consensus of the overall views of the leading participants, scholars and curators. The matrix chart revealed a population of artists who are generally considered part of Fluxus by a broad group of active participants and objective scholars.

Peter Frank and I compiled the first chart in 1982 in writing an historical survey on Fluxus.[1] The chart revealed four populations. The first was a small inner core of central participants noted in almost all documents. The

1 **Friedman, Ken, and Peter** Frank. 1983. "Fluxus." *Art Vivant: Special Report — Fluxus*. Tokyo: New Art Seibu Company, Ltd.; 1983 [special magazine issue devoted to Fluxus]; Frank, Peter and Ken Friedman. 1984. "Fluxus: A Post-Definitive History: Art Where Response Is the Heart of the Matter." *High Performance*, 27, 56-61, 83.

second was a slightly larger outer core of participants whose names occur almost as frequently. The third was a large circle of occasional participants whose names occur with far less frequency than the first two groups. The fourth was an extremely large scattering of people whose names occur once or twice only.

The first two groups are those whom most consider central Fluxus figures. The central core of participants corresponded to what George Maciunas termed "the Fluxcore." Maciunas's Fluxcore was down to a dozen or so people by the end of his life, but the Fluxcore as most see it is comprised of two or three-dozen people. The artists in the second, slightly larger circle are significant Fluxus artists such as Jackson Mac Low and Bengt af Klintberg whose work has been neglected in exhibitions. There are many reasons for this neglect. Distance from major art centers is one. Weak connections to the normative art world are another. The third is the fact that many members of the second circle produce less exhibited work than others in the central core. With every new exhibition or project, however, the artists in the second circle are being given increasing attention. The two groups are therefore beginning to converge. This convergence can be explained by several factors.

A richer historical perspective now helps to explain greater attention to artists by serious scholars with a foundation in historical research methods rather than an eye to art markets. The other reason is the deeper consideration of key Fluxus issues that grows as better scholarship and criticism takes place. This means that key Fluxus participants who were occasionally overlooked in earlier projects are increasingly included in later compilations or exhibitions.

The third group includes the artists, composers, architects or designers in the group that Maciunas termed "Fluxfriends." This group has been relatively stable. It consists of artists who appreciate Fluxus or have friends among the Fluxus artists. Many of them take an active part in Fluxus projects and exhibitions for a year or two and then cease to do so. Some artists who have been considered part of Fluxus at one time or another are later seen as Fluxfriends. These artists include people like John M. Armleder and Dieter Roth.

The fourth, and final, group consists of artists who might generally be considered Fluxfriends whose active participation in Fluxus activities was limited.

In 1992, James Lewes worked with me to compile an updated version of the chart for the article on "The Demographics of Fluxus" published in Estera Milman's special issue of *Visible Language,* Fluxus: a Conceptual Country.[2] The 1992 chart used the combined lists of Fluxus exhibitions, concerts and performances between 1962 and 1991. Lewes identified over three hundred and fifty artists, composers, designers and architects who have been presented as "Fluxus people" over the three decades the chart covered. The vast majority of these three hundred and fifty names occur only once or twice. Three dozen or so comprise the Fluxcore. They are the ones "who done it."

2 **Friedman, Ken with James** Lewes. 1992. "Fluxus: Global Community, Human Dimensions." *Fluxus: A Conceptual Country,* Estera Milman, guest editor. *Visible Language,* 26.1/2, 154-179. [Special issue devoted to Fluxus, also exhibition catalogue.]

While a rough survey recently revealed continuity in a stable Fluxcore, I suspect that a careful review would expand the outer circles.

These three dozen artists, composers, architects and designers in the Fluxcore are—or were—intelligent, opinionated and articulate. As a result, there are quite a few versions of the Fluxus story. While Fluxus is what Fluxus does, everyone who was there has a personal view of what they and their friends did. Thus begins the fascinating problematic involved in understanding the literature of Fluxus.

The First Wave: Fluxus for Itself

NO MATTER WHO TELLS THE STORY, THERE ARE POINTS OF GENERAL AGREEment. Whatever Fluxus is or was and whoever it was that done it, Fluxus participants made interesting, entertaining, and sometimes revolutionary contributions to art, music and design for nearly forty-five years. They have also contributed to architecture, urban planning and film.

The Fluxus circle of artists, composers, designers, filmmakers and architects invented and named concept art, intermedia and video. They were pioneers in developing innovative media such as artist's books, correspondence art, minimal music, structural cinema, conceptual music and several other fields. In its interaction with the larger environment, Fluxus ideas and projects helped to define and shape later art forms, including those that pointedly differ from Fluxus practice. These included conceptual art, the more refined and studious forms of minimalism and dozens of schools of intermedia, multimedia, mail art, bookmaking and others.

Fluxus people were active in expressing their ideas. Some are skilled writers and polemicists, including Joseph Beuys, George Brecht, Robert Filliou, Henry Flynt, Ken Friedman, Bengt af Klintberg, Geoffrey Hendricks, Dick Higgins, Milan Knizak, Jackson Mac Low, Jan Olaf Mallander, Larry Miller, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Tomas Schmit, Daniel Spoerri, Ben Vautier and Emmett Williams. Higgins, Friedman, Mallander and Vautier wrote extensively on art and intermedia, Berner on photography, Af Klintberg on folklore. Jeff Berner, Wolf Vostell and La Monte Young as well as Friedman, Higgins, Mac Low, Maciunas and Williams have edited anthologies, catalogues and collections. Several, including Friedman, Higgins, Mac Low and Williams, worked professionally as editors and publishers.

The first Fluxus book to develop and present an articulate artistic and intellectual position for the artists and composers of the Fluxus group was La Monte Young's *An Anthology.*[3] The book started in plans for the never-published special issue of the magazine *Beatitude East,* finishing as a book edited by La Monte Young, designed by George Maciunas and published by Jackson Mac Low and Young in 1963.

3 Young, La Monte, editor. 1963. *An Anthology.* New York: Jackson Mac Low and La Monte Young; Young, La Monte, editor. 1970. *An Anthology.* Second Edition. New York: Heiner Friedrich.

Dick Higgins's 1964 essay, *Postface,* was the first monograph-length book

about Fluxus.[4] It was also the first of many first-person accounts of life in the Fluxus community. Nearly thirty years later, Emmett Williams published an autobiography, *My Life in Flux - and Vice Versa*.[5] Williams's 1991 book is a richly detailed and highly personal account of the early days of Fluxus as the artist himself saw and experienced things. Written with a master's eye for detail and a bon vivant's ear for a good story, this is an enchanting first-person account of art history in the second half of the twentieth century. In between, Al Hansen, Milan Knizak, Knud Pedersen and others wrote memoirs on their lives and work, including their involvement in Fluxus. Nearly all the key artists have given interviews, while Filliou, Flynt, Geoffrey Hendricks, Klintberg, Mac Low, Schmit and others have written first-person historical essays in various catalogues.

Over the years, we defined Fluxus, presenting our ideas and our history in our own words. Through these writings and discussions, Fluxus artists shaped the first wave of Fluxus literature. Intellectual focus and literary skill were two reasons. The third reason, plain and simple, is that we felt we had to do it.

Forty-five years ago, people did not know how to respond to the ideas or the work. The easiest thing for critics and historians to do was not to respond at all. If Fluxus people wanted to put ideas into play, we had to do it ourselves. We presented the work by organizing our own exhibitions and performances. We presented art and music in published works. We contributed our views of the history and theory of art, music, literature and design by writing essays and books. We published these — as well as our works and those of our colleagues — through our own presses.

Fluxus artist-publishers spanned a broad range of styles. Some were tiny, studio operations like Bici Forbes and Geoffrey Hendricks's Black Thumb Press, or the later Money for Food editions that Hendricks published with Brian Buczak. In Nice, Ben Vautier produced books, pamphlets, broadsides and posters using xerox, mimeograph and multilith offset. Milan Knizak and the Aktual group in Prague produced lavish, hand-made samizdat books with typewriter and carbon paper for text, hand-tipped photographs, hand-made paintings and object-oriented cutouts in paper cloth.

In Germany and New York, the peripatetic Nam June Paik published *Post Music, the Monthly Review of the University of Avant-Garde Hinduism,* combining collages, xerox, objects and some of the most fascinating essays on media of the last three decades. At Fluxus West, my colleagues and I used everything from spirit duplicator and Gestetner mimeo to multilith and huge Xerox collating machines to produce broadsheets, posters, newsletters and even books. These included legitimate books and pirate editions of hard-to-find European intermedia publications. We did not sell the pirate editions of work from other publishers. We distributed those free of charge just to circulate books we felt important to an American market in which no one wanted to buy or sell them.

4 Higgins, Dick. 1964. *Jefferson's Birthday/Postface.* New York: Something Else Press; Higgins, Dick. 1982. Postface. Reprinted in *The Word and Beyond: Four Literary Cosmologists.* New York, The Smith, 7-96.

5 Williams, Emmett. 1991. *My Life in Flux and Vice Versa.* Stuttgart, London and New York: Edition Hansjörg Mayer and Thames & Hudson.

Later, there were publishing cooperatives such as Printed Editions, presenting work by John Cage, Philip Corner, Geoffrey Hendricks, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Jackson Mac Low, Pauline Oliveiros and Jerome Rothenberg. In addition, several artist-based Fluxus publishing groups emerged at different times. The most notable of these was Beau Geste Press, a publisher that grew out of the traveling Fluxshoe projects and exhibitions in the UK.[6]

Along with the host of small presses, coming and going in an eternal state of flux, there were two central Fluxus publishers. The first Fluxus publisher was Fluxus itself, or what was called "Fluxus." Editor-chairman George Maciunas in New York organized this publishing house, a publishing firm that fairly well consisted of Maciunas himself. He handled all editorial functions, all design functions and he managed almost all production and distribution functions personally. Maciunas worked closely with dozens of artists to realize those of their works and ideas that fit his idea of Fluxus.[7] Due to Maciunas's skill as a designer and editor, Fluxus was the one Fluxus publisher that had a conceptually and visually consistent program. As a result, Maciunas's Fluxus publications are sometimes taken to define Fluxus. Fluxus produced a few books, many broadsheets, papers and hundreds of multiples and boxed object editions. Maciunas also funded and subsidized the entire Fluxus publishing program. While it involved the works of dozens of artists, the output was the work of one man, a magnificent campaigner for ideas, who devoted much of his life and work to an idea of what art, music, architecture and design could — and should — be. The aggregate compilation of Maciunas's Fluxus editions and projects is visible in Jon Hendricks's *Fluxus Codex*[8] and this body of work forms the core of the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection.

As magnificent an achievement as George Maciunas's publishing program was, however, it represented only one vision of Fluxus among several. Several other Fluxus perspectives were prominent in Europe and in the United States. These views served as meeting points for many talented, articulate and skillful individuals. The perspectives that became visible in their several forums were less consistent than a forum shaped, edited and funded by one individual. The publications emerging from these forums were broad, fuzzy, ambiguous, intellectually complex and wide in theoretical focus. This pluralist publishing program lacked a sharp, consistent focus and purposely so. It was rooted in the activities of what sociologists describe as an "invisible college."[9] The lack of a sharp program makes it difficult to define this vision of Fluxus. Some see this as a weakness. Others see strength in this approach.

From another perspective, the natural ecology of intermedia and experimental art demanded a complexity and ambiguity visible in the works of this international community of artists. Rather than a museum without walls, Fluxus was a laboratory without boundaries. Many of us described our activities as a form of "research art." (I note this as an historical fact without attempting

6 Mayor, David, editor. 1972. *Fluxshoe.* Cullompton, England: Beau Geste Press; see also: "Free Fluxus Now." 1972. *Art and Artists,* special magazine issue devoted to Fluxus; Anderson, Simon. 1988. *Reflux Action.* Doctoral dissertation. London: Royal College of Art, doctoral dissertation.

7 Smith, Owen. 1991. *George Maciunas and a History of Fluxus (or) the Art Movement that Never Was.* Seattle: University of Washington, doctoral dissertation. See also: Smith, Owen F. 1998. *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude.* San Diego, California: San Diego State University Press.

8 Hendricks, Jon. 1989. *Fluxus Codex.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

9 Key discussions of the invisible college can be found in Price, Derek J. de Solla. 1963. *Little science, big science.* New York: Columbia University Press; Crane, Diane. 1969. "Social structure in a group of scientists: a test of the 'invisible college' hypothesis." *American Sociological Review,* 34, 335-352; Crane, Diane. 1972. *Invisible colleges: diffusion of knowledge in scientific communities.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press: Price, Derek J. de Solla. 1986. *Little science, big science... and beyond.* New York: Columbia University Press.

to define the term "research art" in terms of the present-day discussion on artistic research.) A broad, somewhat chaotic ecology of publishing programs formed an aggregate series of publications making the results of our laboratory available. This was a sharp contrast with the single-minded, pointed vision of Maciunas's publishing program.

In one way, Maciunas's publishing program can be described as the research journal of a specific research program in one department of a larger laboratory. Other departments of the laboratory had their own publishing series and some published across department boundaries. The focused, consistent multiples and newsletters in the Maciunas program supported and reinforced Maciunas's own philosophy. While his philosophy changed and deepened over the years, he never published work that contradicted his vision of Fluxus. In contrast, many other programs published work with which the editor might personally disagree.

As a result, the focused Maciunas program became a central platform for the eventual visibility and influence of Fluxus as an idea. Maciunas's conceptual genius and his uncommon skill as a graphic designer reinforced this development. In this sense, Maciunas's publishing program became what marketing scholars would label a "brand," and they would describe Maciunas's activities as brand building. Design scholars see Maciunas's contribution to developing a profile or corporate identity program for Fluxus. Maciunas studied design and architecture and he worked for many years as a designer in the New York advertising industry. Nevertheless, there was another platform for the eventual visibility and influence of Fluxus. This was not the Fluxus brand or even Fluxus as a specific ideology. Rather, this platform involved a vision of Fluxus as a robust range of ideas developed in a dynamic interactive system. While the broader Fluxus configuration was more influential in reality, it was more complex and harder to understand.

Understanding the broad, influential but ambiguous Fluxus is difficult for scholars that might have been expected to study Fluxus in art history and musicology. The difficulty is understandable. Complex systems are especially incomprehensible to those trained to study the visual or sonic morphology of artifacts, collecting and cataloguing artifacts in categories and types. To understand complex dynamic systems, one must examine social, intellectual and artistic structures to understand the dynamic, interactive systems they produce. (This problem is visible in how long it took art historians and musicologists to begin working with scholarship on Fluxus. An anthropologist who wrote the first doctoral dissertation on Fluxus, Marilyn Ekdahl Ravicz did her dissertation in 1974 at the University of California at Los Angeles in the department of anthropology.[10] It would be fourteen years before the first doctoral dissertation on Fluxus by an art historian would appear when Simon Anderson did his work at the Royal College of Art, and four years more before Owen

10 **Ravicz, Marilyn Ekdahl. 1974.** *Aesthetic Anthropology: Theory and Analysis of Pop and Conceptual Art in America.* Los Angeles: Department of Anthropology, University of California, doctoral dissertation.

Smith would write the first American doctoral study on Fluxus at the University of Washington.[11])

Fluxus was a dynamic, interactive series of systems. The Fluxus publishing program was a way of sharing our ideas and spreading them to the large environment. As important as Maciunas's publishing program was, it was only one of several. Most of the other publishing programs were short-lived. They were often limited in outreach to the micro-ecologies of specific communities. Some were local or regional. Others were international but limited in membership.

Something Else Press was the one important exception. The Press was the one Fluxus publisher to be rooted in the Fluxus ecology while also lodged in a variety of other discourse economies. Something Else Press books were widely distributed and widely available. They were archived and collected around the world. This gave the Press an immediate impact and influence on those who were about to become opinion leaders in the arts in many areas. The archival presence of the Press in museums and libraries also gave it a durability that helped carry the influence of Fluxus forward to artists who would later become interested in the Fluxus vision.

Something Else Press was of decisive importance for Fluxus and intermedia publishing. It was a publishing firm in the old-fashioned sense. Something Else Press produced beautifully designed and well made trade editions of books for sale in bookstores. The books were widely advertised and sold to libraries and individuals. As a result, Something Else Press became the most visible Fluxus publisher in the world. Fluxus produced objects in editions of a few dozen and broadsheets in editions of several hundred. Something Else Press produced challenging and innovative books and publications in large editions ranging from 1,000 to 18,000 copies. Most books ran between 3,000 and 5,000 copies. The books of Something Else Press can be found in thousands of libraries around the world as well as in the archives and museum collections where most Fluxus publications are now housed. This had an important effect on the cultural life of the United States and in Europe, where the Press introduced a new mentality in the arts.

Something Else Press existed for only ten years. This decade was long enough to make a difference. Even though the Press stopped publishing three decades ago, the difference it made is still important.[12]

To our own presses, one must also add the occasional presses made available to us when Fluxus artists were given magazines for special issues or presses for special projects. Fluxus artists were the first regular writers on Fluxus, but they were not the last. The literature of Fluxus developed in six relatively distinct waves. In the second wave, a group of friends who became an important part of the Fluxus community joined us. These were the people that George Maciunas referred to as "Fluxfriends" along with practicing artists who fit that category.

11 **Anderson, Simon. 1988.** *Reflux Action.* London: Royal College of Art, doctoral dissertation; Smith, Owen. 1991. *George Maciunas and a History of Fluxus (or) the Art Movement that Never Was.* Seattle: University of Washington, doctoral dissertation.

12 **Frank, Peter. 1983.** *Something Else Press, an annotated bibliography.* Barrytown, New York: McPherson and Company; Higgins, Dick. 1992. "Two sides of a coin: Fluxus and the Something Else Press." *Visible Language,* 26, 1/2, 143-53.

The Second Wave: Fluxfriends

THE SECOND WAVE DEVELOPED BY THE LATE 1960S AND EARLY 1970S. Writers who were Fluxus friends and enthusiasts typified it; they included critics who saw something interesting and useful in the Fluxus approach to art and music. This group also included a few who arranged projects, catalogues and publications as organizers. They encouraged others to write while writing little themselves.

In this wave, we meet figures such as Thomas Albright, Jill Johnston or Henry Martin. It also included archivists, collectors, curators and gallerists who sometimes wrote or organized catalogues and publications. The most notable among these were René Block, Hermann Braun, Francesco Conz, Tjeerd Deelstra, Jon Hendricks, Judith Hoffberg, Barbara Moore, Knud Pedersen, Clive Phillpot, Harry Ruhé, Jean Sellem and Hanns Sohm.

Fluxus artists also continued to write. This remained a necessity in an environment where there were more artists in Fluxus with something to say than there were critics or scholars who wanted to write about us.

The Third Wave: Early Scholars

THE THIRD WAVE OF WRITING ON FLUXUS BEGAN IN THE 1970S AS TRAINED scholars began to examine Fluxus. Scholars in the arts began to explore Fluxus timidly in papers and articles. The first doctoral research on Fluxus was in the field of anthropology in 1974 (mentioned earlier). During the 1970s, art historians migrated to Fluxus and Fluxus artists from traditional topics in classical and modern art. The first American among them was Peter Frank. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, several more American art historians were at work. These included scholars such as Stephen C. Foster and Estera Milman at the University of Iowa and museum director Jan van der Marck. In addition to art historians, there were scholars from other fields. Scholars in comparative literature such as Georg M. Gugelberger or theater such as Philip Auslander also wrote on Fluxus artists and their work.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the available literature on Fluxus began to expand for many reasons. Growing interest across several disciplines was one reason. Another was the work of one man: Jon Hendricks.

Jon Hendricks: One Man in Three Waves

JON HENDRICKS FORMS A BRIDGE BETWEEN THREE ERAS OF FLUXUS scholarship. He began his work as a Fluxfriend. As a founder and member of the Guerilla Art Action group (GAAG), he was a radical political artist in the 1960s. He was not part of Fluxus, but a friend of many Fluxus artists and the brother of Fluxus artist Geoffrey Hendricks.

Hendricks's writing and research on Fluxus began in the 1970s when he worked as a dealer in rare books and artifacts. His major publications began to

appear in the 1980s after the classically trained art historians had begun their work. Today, he is a curator and archivist and his publications form a central body of material for Fluxus specialists. Hendricks's books, catalogues, monographs and checklists are the largest single source of Fluxus documentation in print. His books represent thousands of pages of historically important source materials in reprint and photographic form, the most important body of reproductions of original Fluxus material available.

Hendricks's collections include *Fluxus Codex,* a fully illustrated catalogue raisonné of George Maciunas's Fluxus multiples and editions. He has also published a nearly complete selection of George Maciunas's original Fluxus newsletters; many of the catalogued holdings in the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection; several important selections of Yoko Ono's event scores and writings; and—scattered through several volumes—the largest available body of Fluxus event scores to date. Hendricks has also edited or co-edited several important museum catalogues, including the elegant 1988 catalogue published by the Museum of Modern Art.[13]

The availability of so much source material made an important difference to the development of interest in Fluxus. Through them, scholars and writers who became interested in Fluxus had the chance to examine images of work that had, for many people, been more a rumor than a fact. Seeing these works or finding copies of the documents that Hendricks made available would previously have required extensive research in an archive or collection.

While Jon Hendricks has had an important career as a curator and an archivist, he comes to history without the foundation in historiography or scholarly research methods that one would expect of an historian. Hendricks approaches his historical writing from an archival rather than a historiographic position. In books such as *What's Fluxus? What's Not? Why?,* for example, he offers assertions and criticism without offering the evidence on which he bases his assertions. He never explains "Why?" In this book, as elsewhere, Hendricks repeats critical claims against those he disagrees with while declining to answer the challenges they offer to his earlier claims. As a result, many historians challenge Hendricks's approach. Others avoid challenging him, despite a quiet disagreement with his views. Given his dominant position in the field and his control of a central archive, younger scholars fear that an open challenge to Hendricks would make their work impossible.

Like Dick Higgins, Emmett Williams, Estera Milman and others, I have had my disagreements with Hendricks. I find it frustrating to write careful replies to mistaken claims when Hendricks argues that he does not have time to look in his own archive to substantiate or refute my reply. This would not be a problem if he did not repeat the mistake in his next book or article. As a scholar, I also find some of Hendricks's critiques far too harsh. Because

13 **Hendricks, Jon, editor.** 1982. *Fluxus, etc.: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection.* Bloomfield Hills, MI: Cranbrook Museum of Art; Hendricks, Jon, editor. 1983. *Fluxus, etc.: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection. Addenda I.* New York: Ink &, 1983; Hendricks, Jon, editor. 1983. *Fluxus, etc.: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection. Addenda TWO.* Pasadena: California Institute of Technology, Baxter Art Gallery, 1983; Phillpot, Clive and Jon Hendricks, editors. 1988. *Fluxus: Selections from the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection.* Clive New York: Museum of Modern Art; Hendricks, Jon. 1989. *Fluxus Codex.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.; Hendricks, Jon. 2002. *What's Fluxus? What's Not! Why.* Detroit, MI: The Gilbert and Lisa Silverman Fluxus Foundation.

Hendricks is not a scholar, he fails to recognize the literal meaning of his words, and he does not understand how scholars would react to similar claims should another scholar offer them.

In one sense, these are serious issues, and it is unfortunate that none of us has been able to engage Jon seriously on these questions. The history of art has often been distorted, at least temporarily, by the fact that a major figure refuses to engage in the debate that forms the life of inquiry. When a scholar controls a major holding with unique access to unique sources and the right to deny this access to others, he is secured against the kinds of scrutiny and argumentation the rest of us face. In a way, this position mistakes control of the physical legacy with the role of the legate. That Jon Hendricks seems to occupy this position is a source of frustration to many. My view is slightly different.

In my view, Jon Hendricks occupies a unique position in Fluxus scholarship, spanning, as I note, three different eras. In one context, he is a central Fluxfriend. He helped to preserve, develop, present and focus on this material when no one else would. In a second context, he is the most important living Fluxus archivist and documentary publisher. Only George Maciunas or Dick Higgins surpass Hendricks's importance as a publisher of central Fluxus source material. The third context is where my occasional disagreements with Hendricks occur. This is where Hendricks, the archivist, shifts from the custodian and presenter of documents to the analyst and interpreter of what those documents mean.

The general rule of scholarship is that all scholars must have equal access to the same body of evidence. If one scholar draws a debatable conclusion, fair argumentation in scholarly debate demands that other scholars must have access to the full original source. This includes access to evidence that the scholar decides not to present or cite. This principle lies at the heart of fair process. In law, a review court declares a mistrial if the prosecution withholds evidence from the defense. A mistrial may also occur if either side fails to give proper advance notice of evidence to be entered to permit the opposing side to prepare a proper argument. In theology, the core principle of the Reformation was that each person must be able to read scripture to reach a valid and reasoned conclusion on doctrine, even on doctrinal issues of faith when they are anchored in scripture. This is a principle in physical and social science, and it is a core principle of history.

Jon Hendricks offers a weak argument against this claiming that it is impossible to grant others full and equal access to the documents he claims support his views. It is one thing for an archivist to claim lack of time and resources make it impossible to grant access to a collection. It is an archivist's job to preserve and guard the physical safety of documents. It is another matter entirely for an historian to claim privileged knowledge based on

unique access to documents that no one else is permitted to investigate, particularly not when asserting claims also involves denying access to contextual documents that may place cited sources in a different light. Scholars see this as special pleading, and it explains why scholars with enough knowledge of Fluxus to understand the deeper historical problems are skeptical to Hendricks's approach, in contrast with those who accept expertise based on unique access without question.

This distinction goes to the heart of the furor that broke out in 1440 when Lorenzo Valla challenged the Donation of Constantine, a document carefully guarded by the Vatican archive as the cornerstone of papal authority over European political life. Authority over text was a key issue in the arguments against Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German. The argument was that the right to examine and interpret documents could only be entrusted to the ordained clergy. In contrast, most of us believe that we should all have the right to examine the evidence on which experts base their claims. It may be, of course, that our expertise is not great enough to decide among viewpoints in many fields. I have no ability, for example, to decide between rival claims in physics or evolutionary biology. In social science or history, I do. Most scholars in the humanities and the social sciences are as capable of interpreting Fluxus documents as Hendricks is or I am. As a result, lack of access to sources of Fluxus documentation raise more questions than expert authority resolves. This is especially the case for those of us trained in advanced research methods and comparative research methodology.

14 Valla, Lorenzo. 1922. *Discourse on the Forgery of the Alleged Donation of Constantine.* Translated with an introduction by Christopher B. Coleman. New Haven: Yale University Press.

This contest involves a clash of two cultures. The culture of democratic debate and scholarly inquiry demands open access to materials. This requires equal argument on equal terms. The culture of control demands restricted access to materials and it privileges ownership over inquiry. This culture accepts secret documents and private decisions as the foundation of privileged argument favoring those who own the archives. Universities and public museums clearly distinguish between these positions by entrusting ownership and preservation functions to the positions of archivist, registrar and librarian, while entrusting research and debate to scholars, scientists, curators and students. This, in fact, is the foundation of democracy and a cornerstone of the Fluxus argument against the restrictive culture of the art market. It is impossible to own the Fluxus idea and denying access to the idea is a contradiction in terms.

Everyone understands the need to guard objects and artifacts. Restricting access to correspondence, papers and documents is another matter entirely.

The Fourth Wave: Fluxus as an Emerging Scholarly Discipline

THE LATE 1980S AND EARLY 1990S SAW THE FOURTH WAVE OF WRITING AND scholarship on Fluxus. Many more art historians and critics began to discover

Fluxus and intermedia. Some chose Fluxus as a major focus for their work.

These included Europeans such as Simon Anderson, associate professor of art history and chairman of the department at the School of the Art Institute, Chicago; Marianne Bech, director the Roskilde Museum of Contemporary Art in Denmark; Ina Blom, associate professor of art history at University of Oslo; Ina Conzen-Meairs, director of Archiv Sohm at Stadtsgalerie Stuttgart; Adrian Glew, archivist-curator at the Tate Gallery in London; Ludo van Halem, an editor at the Dutch magazine *Jonge Holland;* Elizabeth Delin-Hansen, former curator at the National Art Gallery of Denmark, now director of Copenhagen Contemporary Art Center; Thomas Kellein, former director of Archiv Sohm and current director of Kunsthalle Bielefeld; and Adalsteinn Ingolfsson, chief curator of the National Gallery of Iceland.

These also included Americans such as Kathy O'Dell, associate professor of art history and associate dean at the University of Maryland; David Doris, assistant professor of art history at the University of Michigan; Hannah Higgins, associate professor of art history at University of Illinois; Owen Smith, professor of art history at University of Maine; Kristine Stiles, associate professor of art and art history at the University of North Carolina. There were also Asians such as Hong Hee Kim Cheon, the distinguished Korean art critic and curator, and Japan's Keiko Ashino, an editor at the Art Vivant publishing company.

These years were marked by the first significant body of writing by trained scholars specializing in Fluxus. Simon Anderson completed his doctoral dissertation on Fluxus at the Royal College of Art in London. Owen Smith wrote his dissertation at the University of Washington. Ina Blom published her doctoral dissertation at the University of Oslo. David Doris completed his master's work on Fluxus at Hunter College before moving on to doctoral work in African art at Yale University. Hannah Higgins completed her doctoral dissertation at University of Chicago during this period as well as organizing several distinguished exhibitions.

Over the past forty-five years, international interest in Fluxus and intermedia has grown. A large and significant body of literature on Fluxus has grown with it. The thirtieth anniversary of Fluxus in 1992 marked the beginning of what seems to be a fifth wave of research and writing on Fluxus.

The Fifth Wave: Fluxus seen from the outside

THE GROWTH OF FLUXUS WRITING FROM THE WRITING OF THE ARTISTS themselves to the work of independent scholars was characterized by a significant number of overlaps. The distinctions were not always clear between Fluxus artists and their friends; between artists and scholars; between artist-scholars, outside scholars and scholars who make art.

Almost everyone who wrote on Fluxus in the early days was intimately connected to the development of Fluxus, artist or not. Until recently, even those

who came to Fluxus completely from the outside could engage in a dialogue with the artists about whom they wrote, or at least speak with the close friends and colleagues of dead artists.

That era is coming to a close. The youngest members of the classical Fluxus group are in their fifties and the oldest artists are in their late seventies and eighties. Scholars and critics new to Fluxus come as outsiders. Curators and editors now work in great part based on secondary material or a second-hand look at source material. They are not always able to discuss issues and ideas with the artists, composers, designers and architects whose work they present. While careful researchers can find out how the work was presented by talking with people who were there, the amount of research required is inevitably greater. Some people now writing on George Maciunas were not yet in school when he died. People now writing on Joseph Beuys never had the experience of meeting or corresponding with a man who was one of the most communicative and accessible artists in the world. Nevertheless, it is possible to meet, work with and learn from the still-living actors.

Much curatorial research is inevitably seen from the outside simply because curators interpret or reinterpret without necessarily working through the entire historical discourse. Cornelia Lauf and Susan Hapgood's 1991 *Flux-Attitudes* exhibition at The New Museum in New York is a case in point. The curators formed a view of the work based on a radical reinterpretation of the material. While this re-interpretation brought interesting questions to light, it went astray in making historical claims. The work may, indeed, speak for itself, but history must attend to the voices of those "who done it."

Beyond Fluxus: the Intermedia Era

THE ERA WHEN MORE CENTRAL FLUXUS ARTISTS WERE ALIVE, DECISIVELY ended when Dick Higgins died. A new era is opening. This is a time when Fluxus and much like it is being contextualized in the larger frame that Dick Higgins labeled intermedia.

The old era of Fluxus scholarship ended and a new era began with the first major history of Fluxus, Owen Smith's *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude.*[15]

This book locates Fluxus in the context of twentieth century experimental art forms, including intermedia, digital art, mail art, artist books and performance. While scholars took this position in earlier projects — Smith himself among them — this was the first monographic history to focus on the work of artists associated with Fluxus and on Fluxus itself. The book demonstrates a reflective and explicitly philosophical position, bringing an articulate historiographic sensibility and a rich theoretical focus to bear on specific issues and artists, bringing historical inquiry to life by articulating specific topics that shed light on the flow of history. While arguing his own case, Smith invites readers to join a critical debate on what the history means.

15 **Smith, Owen F. 1998.** *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude.* San Diego, California: San Diego State University Press.

As an historian, Owen Smith has had a unique role in the development of scholarship on Fluxus. He began his work on Fluxus in the third wave of scholars, as one of the first trained scholars to work with these issues. At that time, writing and scholarship on Fluxus took three main forms. The first was the writing of the Fluxus artists. While this writing was important and significant, rich thinking by artists who write on their own work leaves corresponding gaps. The second was well-intentioned and enthusiastic writing by collectors and critics. While much of this writing was interesting and some of it was intelligent, it lacked the rich philosophical and historiographic understanding that illuminates art in the work of the best scholars. Worse, yet, much of the writing involved problematic accounts and inaccurate stories repeated indiscriminately by authors who drew on the work of earlier enthusiasts. The third stream was a form of collage, comprised of documentary compilations reproduced in catalogues and collections.

Owen Smith and the other authors in the fourth wave changed this. Smith went to Germany on a DAAD Fellowship to study the original documents and works of the Fluxus artists at Archiv Sohm, the first great Fluxus collection and a center for primary research. He contacted the artists to learn about their own views of their work, and since many still were alive in the 1980s, he developed a unique first-hand perspective to balance his painstaking archival studies. He spoke with enough artists to gain multiple perspectives and to eliminate the necessarily individual perspective and occasional biases of any one artist in favor of a balanced view embracing the entire community. He brought these together into an unparalleled body of careful notes, then he examined them through the lens of historical inquiry. The result was a doctoral dissertation that was the first of its kind in the field of Fluxus and intermedia studies. This dissertation reoriented the field, becoming the pivotal exemplar for the work of nearly all historians and scholars since.

One may reasonably argue that Owen Smith holds this unique role because he had the good fortune to be the first serious scholar to work this field. In a sense, that is true. More important is the fact that Smith undertook pioneering work where other scholars did not. Equally important, his work measures up to the highest international standards of scholarship: even if Dr. Smith had not been the first, his work would be exemplary in quality, consistency and impact.

Equally important, Owen Smith has been generous with the many scholars who look to him for advice and guidance. He always offers information and resources to those who ask. He works in the best scholarly tradition, sharing information and ideas with skeptics and critics as well as with those who accept his views. He continues his own work, deepening his inquiries and plowing new ground. This shift in position and context marked a new era in Fluxus scholarship.

In the years since Smith published his history, significant new scholars have emerged to make important contributions to the new field. These include: Bertrand Clavez, assistant professor of art history at University of Lyon 2; Anna Dezeuze, post-doctoral research fellow at University of Manchester; Craig Dworkin, associate professor of English at the University of Utah; Stephen Perkins, Curator of Art, Lawton Gallery, University of Wisconsin at Green Bay; Julia Robinson, doctoral research fellow in art history at Princeton University; and Craig Saper, professor of English at University of Central Florida. These are a few exemplary names. There are too many to do justice to in a short essay.

The new era of Fluxus scholarship has a second landmark. After working with Fluxus for her 1994 doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago,[16] Hannah Higgins's *Fluxus Experience*[17] moved the field forward into the deep monograph-length consideration of central Fluxus themes and topics. The conceptual strategy of the book points the way to new approaches to Fluxus scholarship by using well-known and less-known facts to develop surprising conclusions. This hermeneutical reading reveals hidden depths in apparently simple Fluxus ideas that reverberate across an unexpected range of topics.

16 **Higgins, Hannah. 1994.** *Enversioning Fluxus.* Chicago: Department of Art History, University of Chicago, doctoral dissertation.

17 **Higgins, Hannah. 2002.** *Fluxus Experience.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

In an important philosophical sense, Higgins recovers the multiplicity of original Fluxus voices that argue Fluxus as experience before it is art. The philosophical and experiential nature of Fluxus enables it to remain a lively presence while art movements come and go. Higgins captures this point in two ways. The first is a philosophical link to John Dewey's pragmatist approach to philosophy and education. The second is the fact that Fluxus has been an educational and philosophical venture from the beginning. Past writers have often neglected the important focus on learning and teaching among Fluxus artists. This book performs a great service by foregrounding a topic that deeply engaged many Fluxus artists, and by using the thematic frame to generate a renewed understanding of the Fluxus conversation through close reading as a central strategy. The close reading of works brings Fluxus history into the kind of mature light that enriches other forms of history and such fields as musicology. She starts with films and optical experiments, ending with globalization and the event as democratic practice.

The core principles of the book is central to the final chapter, "Teaching and Learning as Art Forms: Toward a Fluxus-Inspired Pedagogy." While Ravicz addressed these issues thirty years ago in the first doctoral dissertation on Fluxus, Ravicz was ahead of her time and outside the art world. These themes require a broad interdisciplinary perspective that is only now emerging thanks to the contributions of such scholars as Higgins.

These two books have helped to reorient the field. Deep inquiry refreshes the dialectics of legacy in important ways. What comes next in the field must

respond to Fluxus in the new context established by a new critical historiography and a revitalized hermeneutic narrative.

Renewal and Opportunity

SCHOLARS CAN STILL ASK QUESTIONS OF THE REMAINING FLUXUS ARTists in the few years left. There are questions that ought to be asked and this happens less often than it should. As a result, writers—including art historians—repeat the misunderstandings of ill-informed journalists by copying mistakes that first appeared in decades-old articles. Rather than inquiring how the artists themselves see an installation or a performance, curators represent the artists and the work in line with curatorial theories based on repeated misinterpretations. It would be one thing if the ideas that seem to dominate the debate had ever represented Fluxus, confusing and multidimensional as it was. Instead, many of the current misinterpretations are based on simple mistakes.

Much of what people think they know about Fluxus began in misunderstood ideas and misinformation. For many years, Fluxus activity was a relatively obscure phenomenon. Even Fluxus activity that took place in major art centers and influenced other artists through direct contact or through one or another of the many Fluxus publications remained generally invisible.

In the 1960s and 1970s, there were few collections of source material and all were located at a great distance from anyone who was interested.

To see comprehensive collections of original documents and works, it was necessary to travel to Archive Sohm in Mark Groningen, Germany, to Jean Brown's Shaker Seed House in Tyringham, Massachusetts, to Fluxus West in San Diego, California or to wherever Dick Higgins was living with his library and filing cabinets. These collections were open to scholars. The sad fact is that few scholars consulted these collections, sometimes for lack of funding, more often for lack of interest.

Lacking knowledge of the original sources, many writers passed ideas from article to article without careful investigation and many of those ideas were misinterpreted as facts. As a result, many of the so-called facts about Fluxus are an historian's copy of a critic's discussion of a journalist's account of a misunderstanding uttered by a confused spectator at a festival several years earlier. When mistakes enter the literature of any discipline, they tend to be repeated. Enthusiastic scholars pushing an immature hypothesis often neglect their research. Younger scholars at the undergraduate and beginning graduate level do not yet have the depth of information or the level of skill needed to compare sources and evaluate reliability. This is why it is useful to use these last remaining years to query the artists.

That is also why the work of seasoned scholars who have worked in the archives and studied original sources is essential to future scholarship and to

any future interpretations. There are now hundreds of writers on Fluxus. Of these, only a handful of trained scholars have done serious archival research at the Getty Institute, University of Iowa, Stadtsgalerie Stuttgart, the Tate Gallery or the Silverman Collection.

It is now impossible to do serious scholarly work on Fluxus without reading the work of those scholars who did the early and substantial first-hand research in the archives and consulted the artists. These include Anderson, Blom, Clavez, Conzen-Meairs, Doris, Frank, Hendricks, Hannah Higgins, Kellein, Moss and Smith.

Access to major Fluxus collections is now much easier. The documents once represented in great private collections are now available to scholars. The holdings of Archiv Sohm are now at Stadtsgalerie Stuttgart. The Jean Brown Archive, many of the Dick Higgins papers, and Carolee Schneemann's papers are now at Getty Center for the History of the Arts and Humanities in Los Angeles, California. The Fluxus West papers and collections have been distributed across Europe and the United States. They can be found at Alternative Traditions in Contemporary Art at the University of Iowa, Tate Gallery Archives in London, Henie Onstad Art Center in Norway, Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College, in the Museum of Modern Art's Franklin Furnace Archive Collection, the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art and the Mandeville Department of Special Collections at the University of California at San Diego,

Several documentary collections are partially accessible on the web. These include Alternative Traditions in Contemporary Art at the University of Iowa, the Tate Gallery Archives, the Franklin Furnace Archive at the Museum of Modern Art and the MOMA Library, the Getty Center for the History of the Arts and Humanities, the Mandeville Department of Special Collections at the University of California at San Diego and Artpool in Budapest, Hungary.[18]

One can understand that few people can afford to travel to three or four archives on two continents and stay on site for anywhere from two weeks to several months. What is hard to understand is why so few scholars read the widely available writings of the artists themselves. It is equally odd that so few pick up a telephone or write a letter to query living artists on specific points. It is interesting that the scholars who have done the most serious archival research are also the scholars who query the artists most diligently in correspondence and lengthy interviews. This is a sharp contrast with the majority, many of whom base their understanding of Fluxus on a few myths, entertaining stories and a selection of work by their favorite artists.

This is particularly true of the many views of Fluxus now being put forward in the form of exhibitions. Most curators are too burdened by the press of administrative activities to base their interpretations on first-hand histori-

18 Fluxus documentary collections partially accessible on the World Wide Web:

Alternative Traditions in Contemporary Art at the University of Iowa
http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/spec-coll/atca/intro.htm

Tate Gallery Archives
http://www.tate.org.uk/research/researchservices/archive/

http://www.tate.org.uk/research/researchservices/archive/archive_mayor.htm

Franklin Furnace Archive at the Museum of Modern Art
http://library.moma.org/

MOMA Library
http://library.moma.org/

Getty Center for the History of the Arts and Humanities
http://www.getty.edu/research/

Mandeville Department of Special Collections at the University of California at San Diego
http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/testing/html/mss0128a.html

Artpool in Budapest, Hungary
http://www.artpool.hu/

cal research. As a result, many artistically engaging shows give historically skewed views of Fluxus. It is one thing to present a critical or interpretive view of the art. It is another to offer an interpretation of art as a representation of history. Interpretation is an inevitable aspect of scholarship. Radical interpretations and re-interpretations often pose particularly valuable challenges to received knowledge. Nevertheless, interpretation is not history. As hard as it sometimes is to locate and validate facts, there is a difference between scholarly interpretation and historical fact. An interpretation states, "This is how I view Fluxus, and what I think it means." This is not the same as saying, "This is what the Fluxus people did. This is what they believed and how they saw themselves." The distinction between what an artist intended and the interpretation of the artist's work is often neglected in art historical scholarship and curatorial demonstration.

Multiple Interpretations: Ideas in Flux

FLUXUS PERMITS AND ENCOURAGES MULTIPLE VIEWS AND INTERPRETATIONS. Multiple interpretations are one thing. Statements of fact are another. The purpose of this bibliography is access to facts and to the wide range of viewpoints and interpretations.

Consider, for example, the interpretation linking Fluxus with Zen. Many have compared Fluxus with Zen Buddhism. Until this decade, however, few established a proper scholarly interpretation of the comparison. It was not until 1993 that art historian David Doris made this mundane comparison elegant in his master's thesis and a later contribution to *The Fluxus Reader.*[19] The general comparison between Fluxus and Zen extends to a comparison between the literature of Fluxus and the literature of Zen.

The comparison between Zen and Fluxus practice and is quite understandable. The spare, austere Zen koan is reminiscent of Fluxus event structures. The humanistic, open-ended philosophy of Zen permits multiple understandings and interpretations. At the same time, koan practice is accompanied and surrounded by a massive literature, including the special sleeve-books of koan and replies that students use in their own koan study. We study Zen and Buddhism in general through a massive body of articulate and subtle writings.

In much the same way, scholars must distinguish between the frequently ambiguous and evanescent doings of Fluxus artists, and the literature that describes and reflects on what the doings mean. It is one thing to shape the direct experiential practice. It is another to write the history and philosophy of the practice. Zen Buddhists—monks, scholars and scholarly monks—have always understood the subtle differences between those two positions. That has not yet become clear to many of the scholars and commentators who write on Fluxus.

19 Doris, David T. 1993. *Zen Vaudeville: A Medi(t)ation in the Margins of Fluxus.* New York, New York: Department of Art History, Hunter College, master's thesis; Doris, David T. "Zen Vaudeville: A Medi(t)ation in the Margins of Fluxus." *The Fluxus Reader.* Ken Friedman, editor. London: Academy Press, John Wiley and Sons, 237-253.

Different forms of immediate perception and the interactive engagement form the core of the Fluxus experience. Those who engage in interpretation and historical analysis, however, take on the responsibility of reliable and appropriately subtle accounts of the immediate and interactive. It may not be necessary to engage in history to understand Fluxus. When one does engage in history, historiographic integrity demands the responsible management and representation of facts. The question of historiography has had too little place in discussing Fluxus.

In a special issue of *Visible Language* on Fluxus and Legacy,[20] Owen Smith and I addressed this specific problem.[21] Historiographic awareness and methodological sensitivity involve useful and necessary questions that help us to understand and practice historical inquiry in a skilful way. No work or source speaks for itself. One must subject each source to inquiry. Is the source authentic? What is its authority? What biases and interests does the source entail? Is it intelligible? No author speaks fully for a context or a time. Similar questions help us to understand the authors. Who wrote the text? What was this person like? What theoretical orientation does the text reflect? What or who was the intended audience? Responsible authors must ask and answer these questions rather than assuming that everything is plain on the surface of a document. If that were so, then Benedict XVI would rule Europe. If that were so, of course, we might not be discussing Fluxus at all, unless it might have been the name of a cranky group of dissident theologian-poets, a Kapellmeister here and there with an interest in playing aleatoric hymns, mystery play performers, and shrine carvers.[22]

20 Friedman, Ken, and Owen Smith, editors. 2005. Fluxus and Legacy. *Visible Language*, 39, 3. Special issue.

21 Friedman, Ken, and Owen Smith. 2005. "History, Historiography, Historicism, Legacy." *Visible Language*, 39, 3, 308-317.

22 This might be an idea worth pursuing. In the 1960s and 1970s, I created a series of projects involving shrines. A year or two back, I organized a Fluxconcert with Ben Patterson and Bertrand Clavez at the La Tourette Monastery built by Le Corbusier. For the symposium attending the event, I delivered a paper in which I proposed developing a Fluxus theology.

The Claims of History

IS IT POSSIBLE TO VIEW FLUXUS THROUGH THE LENS OF HISTORY? IT MAY be or it may not. That very question is a central theme in Simon Anderson's research. If it is possible, it is only made possible by distinguishing between what people have said for themselves and what others have said about them; between what each person said for himself and the other evidence that sheds light on situation, context, process and occurrences; between what happened and what people thought about what happened. Even if it is not possible to fully understand Fluxus through the lens of history, however, facts remain facts. Whether or not one can unfold the philosophical position or the practice of Fluxus through analysis, historical reflection adds light and dimension to the discourse surrounding Fluxus. Fluxus has been an experimental forum, a laboratory. This situation implies rigorous thinking combined with empirical research and experience.

The idea of Fluxus as a laboratory, a framework for serious discourse means that a rich body of discourse and dialogue remains to be brought forward. There are four ways to consider these issues. The first allows us to

consider experimental art and intermedia. The second focuses on the projects and history specific to Fluxus. The third requires considering the work and practices of the individual artists. The fourth requires us to consider our response to these first three, reflecting on our own response and reaction to them, and the uses we make of what we learn, know and experience.

The largest and most abstract level involves a body of information and a record of process issues worth harvesting and preserving. Fluxus has been a laboratory for specific projects in art, music, literature, architecture and design, a laboratory for ways of thinking and being. The results deserve examination and reconsideration. That is a task for historical scholarship and historiographic care on one hand, for philosophical inquiry on the other.

On the next level, the dialogue among and between the artists and other colleagues has a continuing value. Approaching Fluxus and Fluxus work as pure personal response or critical reflection often strips significant issues from the living and once-living conversations of history. Doing justice to these conversations and to the lives and practices they represent requires methodological awareness and appropriate care. Whether or not any of us agrees with a specific viewpoint, the viewpoints are there and they have been for nearly five decades. Dealing with this material in a thin way misrepresents Fluxus, the artists who shaped it and it diminishes the practice and outcome of scholarship, reducing it to opinion.

On the most specific level, we each have our own work and viewpoints. We are a group of artists who did what we did in order to be able to say things as we felt it necessary to say them. During the long period in which Fluxus was neglected and overlooked by the art world, by art historians, by curators and by gallerists, we preserved our own voice and vision. It is unfortunate that the growing interest in Fluxus that has brought us to wider recognition now threatens to overwhelm our ideas with shallow distortions and streamlined misrepresentation.

Careless, inappropriate or untruthful representation of serious and subtle ideas distorts what happened, what we said and thought, what we did. From the beginning, we shaped our own vision of Fluxus as artists and we paid a price to maintain an independent vision. Exhibitions, projects and publications should respect that fact. Every curator or scholar has the right to his or her own interpretation. That right must be established by acknowledging our individual interpretations, even if only to disagree with us.

It is amazing that so much writing about Fluxus has been published with so little recourse to what we ourselves have had to say. There is a large body of writing by Fluxus people and much of it is widely available. Filliou, Flynt, Friedman, Higgins, Knizak, Paik, Vautier and Williams have all written extensively. Brecht, Beuys, Christiansen, Klintberg and others have written from

time to time and what they have written has been interesting and valuable. It is difficult to imagine acceptable scholarship in any comparable field being conducted with less recourse to the source material. The source materials must be acknowledged, if only to reject them.

Fluxus history is a laboratory for ideas. That is one of the most interesting issues that Simon Anderson, David Doris, Hannah Higgins, Craig Saper, Owen Smith and others raise in their work. The dialogue of history is a form of experiment, experimentation with ideas, with culture, with values. In other ways, Fluxus scholars from Henry Martin to Kathy O'Dell and Kristine Stiles have said the same thing. Robust experiment demands the ideas and issues be examined and questioned.

If the art history of Fluxus is to measure up to mature historiography in other fields, those who write on Fluxus must address the full scope of Fluxus and the subtle realities that made it what it is. The same is true in film, design, urban planning, musicology and other fields where historians are examining Fluxus and—in Owen Smith's words—playing with difference. Play and interpretation are part of the forum of history. They are one aspect of a conversation on the dialectics of legacy. The requirements of historiography are another.

Author Note

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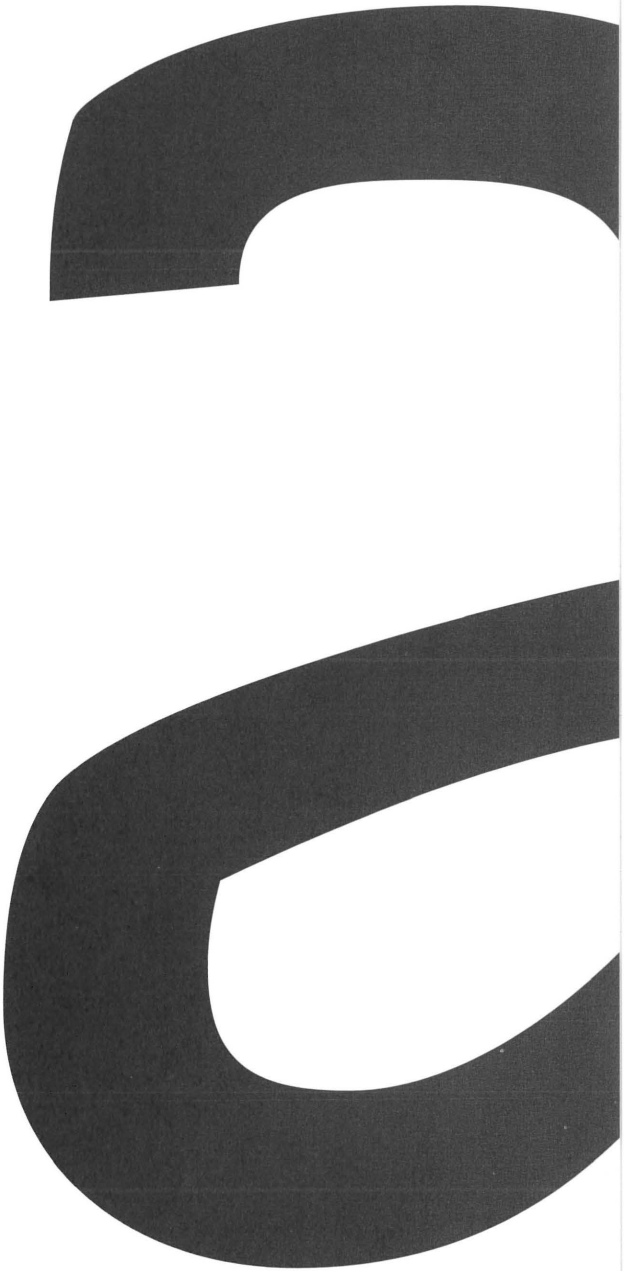

Abstract

This is a highly selective bibliography on Fluxus. A complete bibliography on Fluxus and the Fluxus artists requires hundreds of pages of small print and any selection falls short. Our selection offers a broad overview of articles, books and catalogues. It is a sampler more than a systematic compilation. Those who seek a comprehensive view will find a far richer collection by using the bibliography of bibliographies.

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APPENDIX 1

FLUXUS DOCUMENTATION: MAJOR COLLECTIONS

Readers will find examples of the documents and publications cited in this bibliography in these public and private collections.

Alternative Traditions in Contemporary Art
University Library and University Art Museum
University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa
USA

Archiv Sohm
Stadtsgalerie Stuttgart
Stuttgart, Germany

Archivio Conz
Verona, Italy

Emily Harvey Foundation
New York, New York, and Venice, Italy

Fluxus West Collection
Fluxus West in England Papers
Tate Gallery Archives
The Tate Gallery
London, England

Franklin Furnace Archive
The Museum of Modern Art
New York
USA

The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Foundation
Detroit, Michigan, and New York, New York
USA

Jean Brown Archive
Getty Center for the History of the Arts and Humanities
Los Angeles, California
USA

Library
Walker Art Center
Minneapolis, Minnesota
USA

Artpool
Budapest
Hungary

APPENDIX 2

FLUXUS OBJECTS: MAJOR COLLECTIONS

This is a list of public and private collections with extensive holdings of original Fluxus works and objects by individual Fluxus artists.

These collections also include Fluxus multiples edited, designed and published by George Maciunas; Something Else Press books and multiples edited, designed and published by Dick Higgins; along with multiples and books published by such Fluxus-related publishers as Edition Block, Edition Hundertmark, Vice Versand or Editions Conz.

Alternative Traditions in Contemporary Art
University Library and University Art Museum
University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa
USA

Archiv Sohm
Stadtsgalerie Stuttgart
Stuttgart, Germany

Archivio Conz
Verona, Italy

Emily Harvey Foundation
New York, New York, and Venice, Italy

Fluxus Collection
Henie Onstad Art Center
Høvikodden, Norway

Fluxus Collection
Tate Gallery Archives Collection
The Tate Gallery
London, England

Fluxus Collection
Walker Art Center
Minneapolis, Minnesota
USA

George Maciunas Memorial Collection
The Hood Museum of Art
Dartmouth College
Hanover, New Hampshire
USA

The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Foundation
Detroit, Michigan, and New York, New York
USA

Jean Brown Archive
Getty Center for the History of the Arts and Humanities
Los Angeles, California
USA

Authors Note

KEN FRIEDMAN IS PROFESSOR OF LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC Design at the Norwegian School of Management and at Denmark's Design School. Friedman's research concentrates on organization, culture and design in the knowledge economy. He has worked with intermedia and concept art since 1966 when Dick Higgins and George Maciunas enrolled him in Fluxus. He also worked as director of Fluxus West and manager of Something Else Press. In 1998, he edited *The Fluxus Reader* for Academy Press.

OWEN SMITH IS PROFESSOR OF ART HISTORY AND DIGITAL Art at the University of Maine in Orono, and director of the New Media Program. As a specialist in alternative art forms, he has an interest in all aspects of Fluxus. In 1998, San Diego State University Press published his book, *Fluxus: the History of an Attitude*, the first comprehensive monograph on the history of Fluxus. In 2002, he co-edited a special issue of *Performance Research* devoted to Fluxus. He is also an artist whose work has been exhibited widely. Smith's art can be seen on line at http://www.ofsmith.com

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