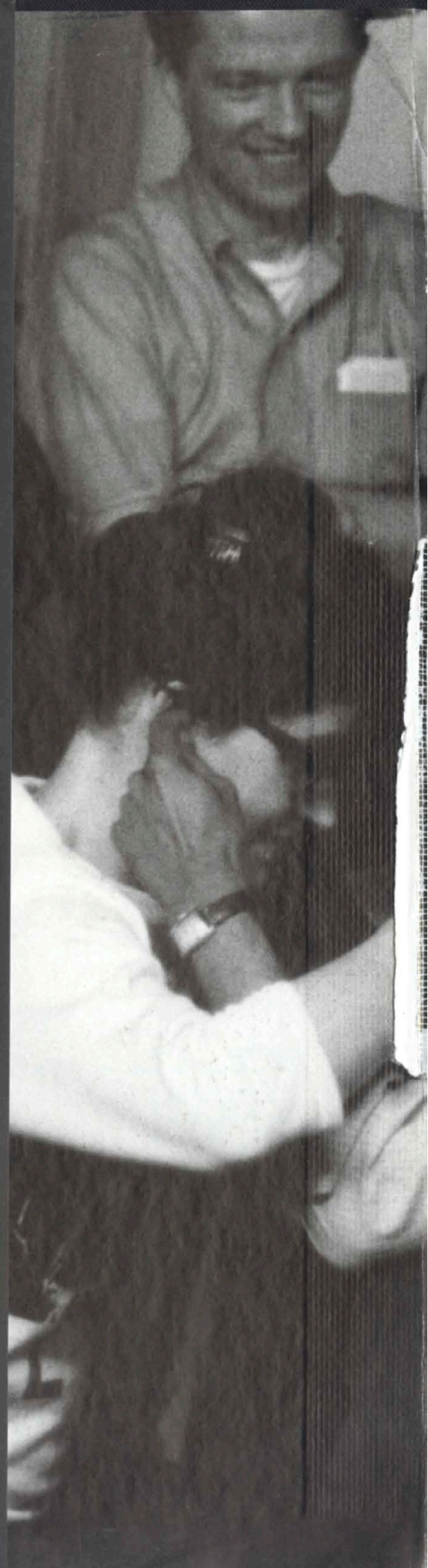


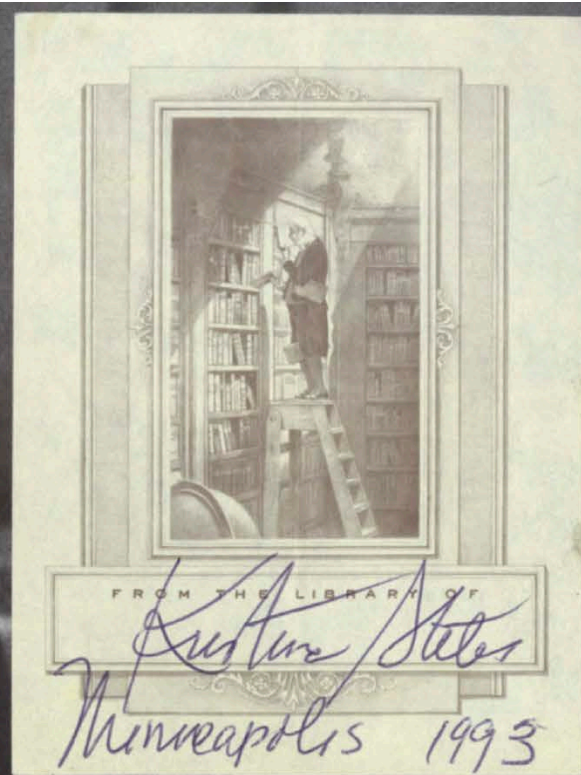


LM: A PUBLICATION
CALLED ...

GM: **FLUXUS,**
AND THAT'S IT,
THAT WAS GOING
TO BE LIKE A
BOOK, WITH
A TITLE,
THAT'S ALL.

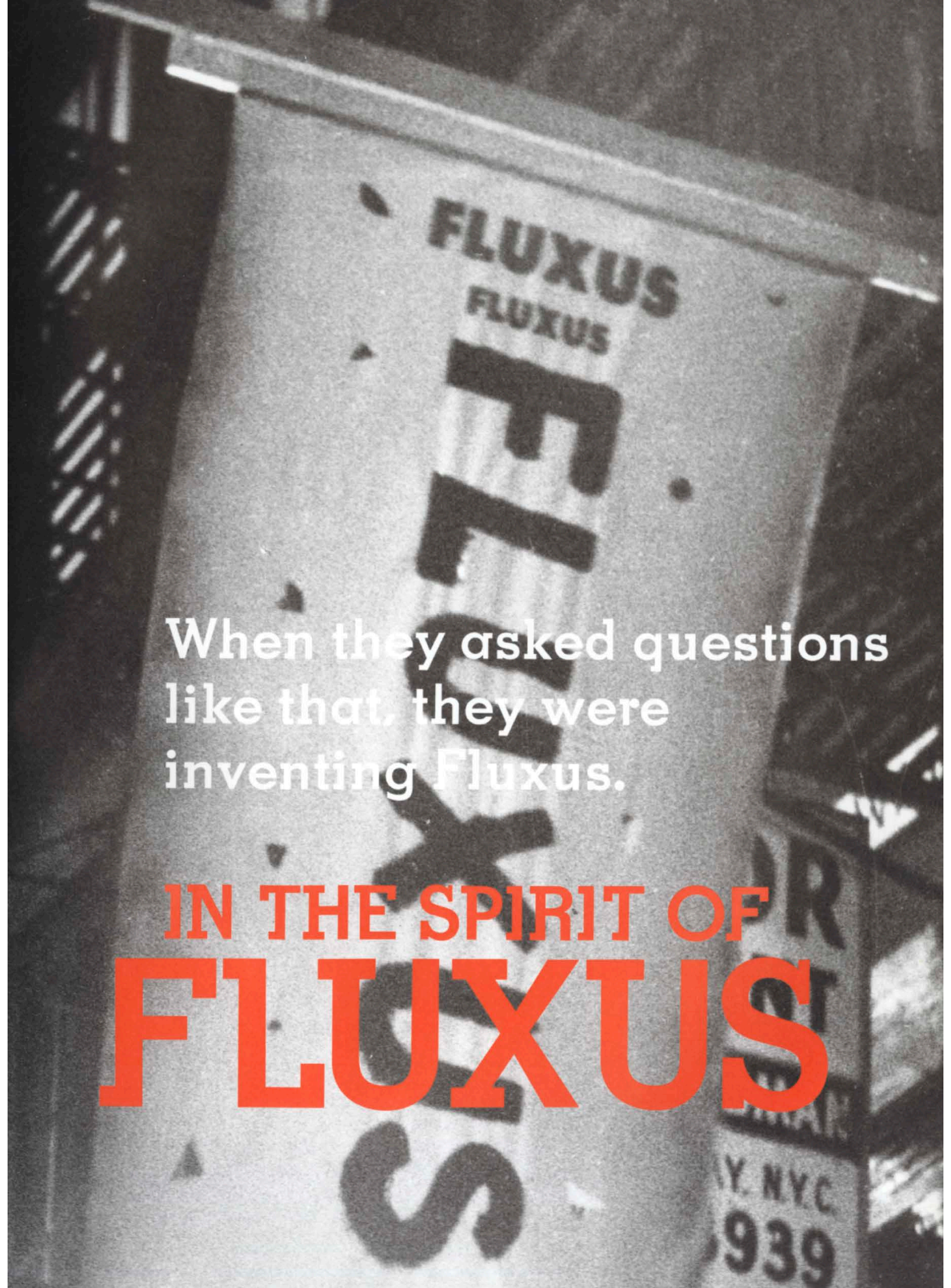
Long long ago, back when the world was young — that is, sometime around the year 1958 — a lot of artists and composers and other people who wanted to do beautiful things began to look at the world around them in a new way (for them).





They said: "Hey!—coffee cups can be more beautiful than fancy sculptures. A kiss in the morning can be more dramatic than a drama by Mr. Fancypants. The sloshing of my foot in my wet boot sounds more beautiful than fancy organ music."

And when they saw that, it turned their minds on. And they began to ask questions. One question was: "Why does everything I see that's beautiful like cups and kisses and sloshing feet have to be made into just a part of something fancier and bigger? Why can't I just use it for its own sake?"



When they asked questions
like that, they were
inventing Fluxus.

IN THE SPIRIT OF
FLUXUS

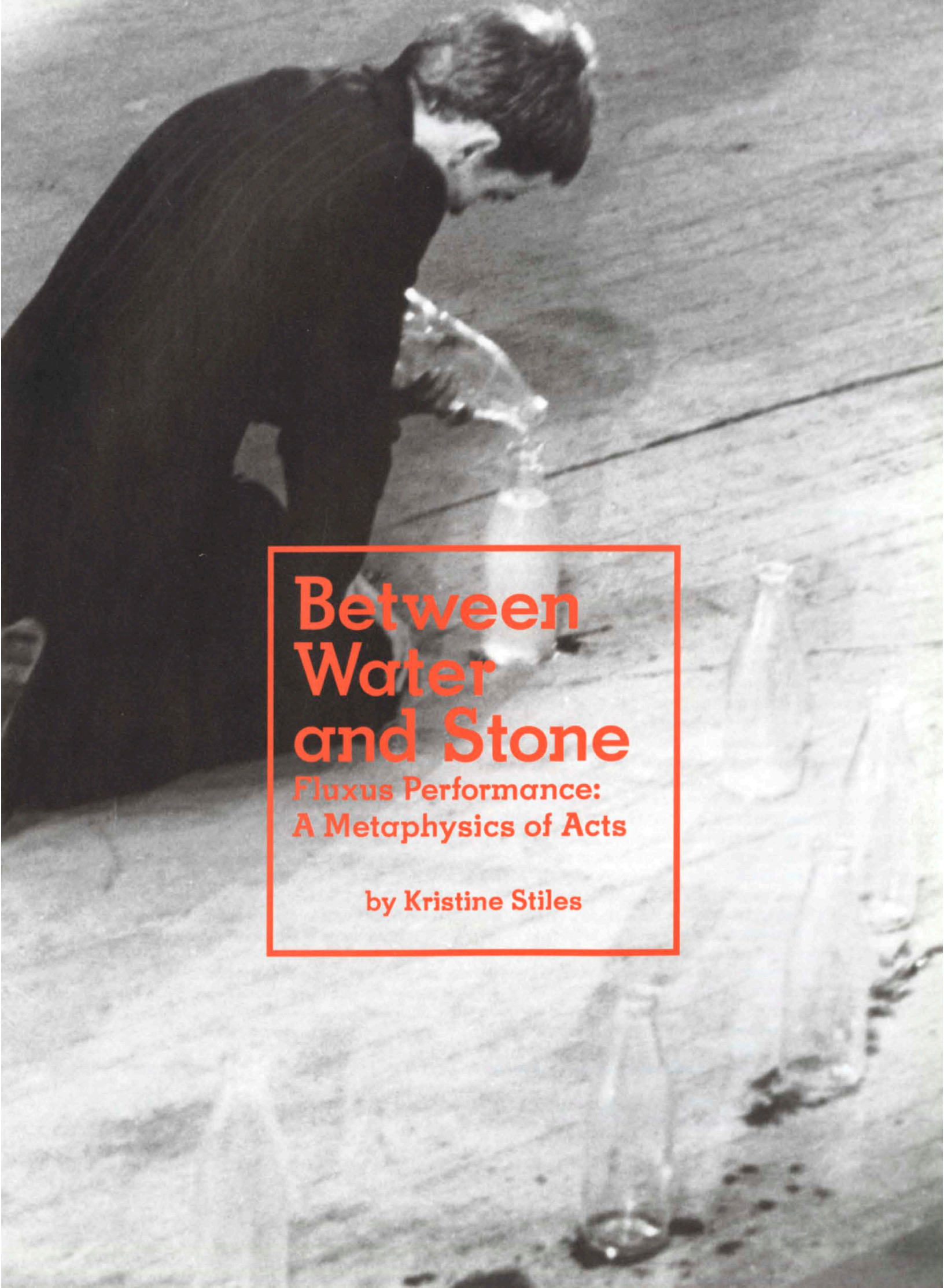
IN THE SPIRIT OF FLUXUS

Published on the occasion of the exhibition
In the Spirit of Fluxus, organized
by Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss

Essays by Simon Anderson, Elizabeth Armstrong,
Andreas Huyssen, Bruce Jenkins, Douglas Kahn,
Owen F. Smith, and Kristine Stiles

Walker
Art
Center
Minneapolis





Between Water and Stone

Fluxus Performance:
A Metaphysics of Acts

by Kristine Stiles

Prologue

Bengt af Klintberg, the Swedish folklorist and Fluxus artist, located the place of his cultural interests *mellan vatten och sten*, between water and stone.¹ Without naming the interstice itself, af Klintberg's phrase refers to that dynamic and elusive, interactive site where the boundaries of phenomena and things become fluid. This is the interval that is at once a connection—a caesura yet a continuum—where oppositions change, flow, fuse, part, pass, move on, and reassemble. The “between” that might appear to be a hiatus separating antithetical states represents, too, the threshold where action and its object meet. Between water and stone is the site of flux.

A Performance

Carefully groomed and dressed in a business suit, Tomas Schmit stationed himself in a circle of bottles, all empty save one that he had filled with water before beginning the event. Selecting a random position in the circle, Schmit methodically proceeded to pour the contents of the full bottle into the empty bottle to its right. This action—pouring the contents of the full into the empty container clockwise—was to continue until the water completely spilled or evaporated (pp. 62–63).

Performed for the 1963 Fluxus Festival in Amsterdam, the actions that constitute *Zyklus für Wassereimer [oder Flaschen]* (*Cycle for Water-rhymes [or Bottles]*) (1962) are direct and simple, subtle and conceptually sophisticated. The score permits the performer between ten and thirty bottles or buckets (*eimer*).² Its duration depends upon the speed and precision with which the artist undertakes the process of pouring, a procedure either quickly resolved or enduring for long periods. The task may, but does not have to, depend upon skill. It is the kind of quiet action that a thoughtful child might perform as a means to study the operation of things.

The German word *zyklus* represents a course, not only in the sense of the course of the actions and the course the water takes, but also as in a sequence of lectures—here on the subject of rhyming. Schmit's “course,” however, makes use of an unconventional pedagogy, one that belongs more to the lessons of music and poetry, where the structure of rhyme summons the memory of epic rites, ballads, lyrics, sonnets, and odes. The visual and audio demonstrations of *Zyklus* begin with a series of repetitions of actions and gestures that result in sounds—object lessons that recall the functions of rhyme in language. Rhyme also marks meter or measure, the beat and number of music and sound. So *Zyklus* may be a lecture that engages the performer and viewer in a special method for rhyming rhythms, and its transformations unfold along a line of analogies that slip between body, action, image, language, sound—merging all of these with objects, in this case water.

The concrete interactions between objects, materials, and processes in *Zyklus* may lead to meditations on binary divisions that include, but are not limited to, fullness/emptiness, creation/destruction, mind/body, birth/death. Since in German *zyklus* also refers to the menstrual cycle, a uniquely female condition here referenced by a male, Schmit's action may suggest a biological function: the ovum/spermatozoon dyad and its transition to zygote (genetic sequencing back into unity), which ends the cycle. Here, pouring may indicate both creative and procreative processes that cycle wholistic

systems and resolve apparent sexual division. From the biological cycle to the historical, *Zyklus* suggests another duality as well: considerations of order, change, and accident situate time in *Zyklus* as serial, linear, and potentially narrative, but simultaneously as cyclical, something that doubles back into itself in difference—coexisting aspects of time that Stephen Jay Gould, considering the problem of deep time in geology, has referred to as “time's arrow” and “time's cycle.”³

Speculating on the nature of existence, the artist who performs *Zyklus* undertakes the careful exploration of human labor as a concrete condition that determines meaning. While Schmit's score leaves the construction of labor and its significance open to a mechanics of *doing*, at the same time, *doing* emphasizes the concrete condition of *being*. This *doing*, because it has a temporal dimension, equally calls into question the relationship of being to *becoming*, in and through time, and positions ontological speculation in the pragmatic activities of labor. *Doing* both exhibits and stabilizes the unstable relationship between objects and the human states of becoming and being. Metaphysical questions circle in *Zyklus* in the mundane conditions of the piece itself, in the actual flow and change among human action, bottles, and water.

D. T. Suzuki, the influential translator of Zen Buddhism during the 1950s and John Cage's spiritual teacher, has described a characteristic feature of Zen methodology, the *mondo* (literally, “question and answer”): it is “short, abrupt, and not at all serial” and reveals “unexpectedly consequential thought . . . concealed under a most trifling matter-of-fact kind of statement.”⁴ He has also explained the related concept of *prajna* as “immediacy, absence of deliberation, no allowance for an intervening proposition, no passing from premises to conclusions. *Prajna* is pure act, pure experience.”⁵ *Zyklus*, likened to these Zen concepts, then, is not only a contemplation on philosophical attitudes but on sensory experience as well—“the activity,” as the philosopher Henri Lefebvre has suggested, “that fashions the object, that recognizes it, and itself in it.”⁶

Schmit's *Zyklus*, it seems, offers a tentative merger of the binary divisions and seriality of Western epistemology with the non-Western principles of mutuality and unity. It may be understood as a visual *mondo* in which questions of being (static objects) and becoming (acting subjects) unfold in a question/answer paradigm that occurs on the ordinary stage of life, where a man undertakes an extraordinarily meaningless task by quietly pouring water into and out of a bottle.

(PRECEDING PAGE) TOMAS SCHMIT PERFORMING HIS *ZYKLUS FÜR WASSEREIMER [ODER FLASCHEN]* AT INTERNATIONAAL PROGRAMMA, AMSTERDAM (1963). PHOTO © DORINE VAN DER KLEI, COURTESY THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

The Performative Conditions of Fluxus

The first Fluxus festivals and concerts in Wiesbaden, Düsseldorf, Wuppertal, Copenhagen, and Paris in 1962 established Fluxus as an historical movement closely allied with the traditions of twentieth-century avant-garde performance in the visual arts. Fluxus originated in the context of performance and the nature of its being—the ontology of Fluxus—is performative.⁷ In its most elemental form, a Fluxus performance may be a simple, single-focused action performed by one person. But it also may embrace collaborative presentations requiring the simultaneous orchestration of numerous people in action. From the mid-1960s on, Fluxus festivals expanded to include group games (mock Olympics), collective banquets and travel, as well as the celebration of both profane and sacred ceremonies: weddings, a divorce, funerals, and a mass. From the simple event to collective activities, Fluxus performance stresses interaction between the material and mental worlds, and its actions negotiate degrees of human freedom in relations between the private and the social worlds—directions that recall philosophical descriptions of the phenomenological character of the body as an instrument *acting* in the world.⁸

Fluxus actions may be physical, mental, or linguistic; they may be solitary or collective acts; and they may be single moments or community exchanges. But whether conceptual, corporeal, or verbal, private or public, simple or complex, Fluxus performances often center around the manipulation and use of objects in the enunciation of auditory and visual experience. The condensation of behavioral signals into simple gestures that are produced in the interchange between action and object enhance the visual character of these performances, and in so doing, engage codes of visual representation that communicate in highly condensed, simultaneous, and multiple modes rather than in linear narrative. In this way, the simple, gestural act can serve to communicate complex messages, while collective Fluxus performances and festivals compound the basic unit of expression into complex structures of intersecting events.

Fluxus events constitute “concerts” of the quotidian, the music of *action* animating *things*. Indeed, objects in Fluxus performances assume a distinctly performative character, and the body, in addition to its role as subject, is itself presented as an object. Together, subject and object create a changing and interrelated perceptual field for the investigation of the interchange between actions, language, objects, and sounds. Fluxus performances require both performers and viewers to consider the function of thought in the ways in which the body interacts with things: they draw attention to the behavioral processes that relate thinking and doing, and compel both performers and viewers to confront and then, perhaps, revise conditions of being. Such revisions—the results of the reconfiguration of common bodily actions—may give rise to alternative procedures and patterns for the reconstruction of thought. Fluxus events, then, can provide unique models for the rediscovery of the event-value of both actions and objects in the formation of perception and knowledge. For these reasons, Fluxus performances must be contemplated within a wider structure of social and collective practices.

Increasing attention by the art market and the institutions of art history to the objects, publications, and material ephemera of Fluxus threatens to erode its performative legacy and to erase the critical social dimension of the Fluxus enterprise. So care must be taken that Fluxus is not transformed historically from a radical

process and presentational art into a traditional static and re-presentational art. If Fluxus is divested of the attributes that obtain in the interactive conditions of performance, its social and, thus, cultural significance will be lost. Fluxus performances existed in social space and their resonance continues in that lived space. Any consideration of them not only must account for this aspect of their “being” but must preserve it from any reductionism that might seek an objective stratification and static representation of things. It is thus with a “jeweler’s eye” that I have selected individual Fluxus performances for examination—not because these events should be elevated to masterworks—but because each in its own way offers a multifaceted crystal through which to consider the ways Fluxus actions contribute to lived space and to the reconstruction of that space.

Fluxus performances situate the body in the center of knowledge as the principal means by which to interrogate the very conditions in which individuals interact with things and thereby produce social meanings. Each Fluxus action thus contains within itself a “history” that is both *of* and *for* the body, *of* and *for* society, for as Lefebvre has noted, “the whole of [social] space proceeds from the body.”⁹ I am particularly eager to secure Fluxus performances in this broad context so that the many possible theoretical interpretations they suggest may be grounded in material and historical conditions. For as Lefebvre has also argued, “The body is establishing itself firmly, as base and foundation, *beyond philosophy*, beyond discourse, and beyond the theory of discourse” [in large measure because] “Western philosophy . . . *betrayed* the body; it has actively participated in the great process of metaphorization that has *abandoned* the body; and it has *denied* the body.”¹⁰

Fluxus performance posits the body, in phenomenological terms, as emergent with the world. In so doing, it suggests a nascent paradigm for social praxis (discussed later in this essay) that both compels a reevaluation of the human situation and provides revisionist forms for reevaluating intersubjective connections that enable us to rethink and, thereby, reenact the social world. It is too soon to name this other paradigm, and I want to be cautious to join it neither wholly to the modernist practices that preceded and accompanied Fluxus, nor to those tempting constituent elements of postmodernism whose theoretical condition it may very well have anticipated. Most especially I want to separate it from the postmodernism that is theorized in terms of a cynical loss of faith in creative invention, political self-consciousness, “pornography of the visual,” and “simulated” experience.¹¹ Far from negative, Fluxus offers a deep, rich, and responsible engagement with the social world of acts and things, a commitment that is best communicated in its performative practices, which endow highly sophisticated investigations with an innocent and joyful sense of rediscovery.

The very word *Fluxus* situates this movement correctly in a transitional space between emergent epistemological formations. Its formal apparatus has been identified by Dick Higgins as “intermedia.”¹² The developing paradigm to which Fluxus performance contributes, then, is one in flux and between media—“between water and stone.” Scholarly work on the interdisciplinary practices included in Fluxus performance is in its nascency. The sections of this essay attempt to fill this gap by locating these actions “between” a broad field of interrelated disciplines, intellectual sources, diverse subject matter, and rich cultural practices that extend from the scientific to the spiritual.

Scored Events

MUSIC WHILE YOU WORK, 1962

Provide record of any music and put a glue spot on 5 to 10th groove so stylus will not pass this point. Performer performs useful work like sweeping floor while record is playing, as soon as stylus is caught in same groove repeating over and over, performer rushes to record player sets stylus to 1st groove, goes back to work until stylus gets caught again—ad infinitum.

Arthur Koepcke

VOICE PIECE FOR LA MONTE YOUNG, 1963

Ask if La Monte Young is in the audience, then exit.

Emmett Williams

These two scores represent typical Fluxus notations for either simple or complex actions. The methods Fluxus artists used for "scoring" behavior reflect a debt to John Cage's experiments with the codes of musical composition. But while the technique of scoring performances for actions was appropriated from Cage, it was George Brecht who introduced the term *event* in the fall of 1959. His terminology was adopted rapidly, and with the first Fluxus festivals in Germany, Fluxus actions were known for the artist's realization of an "event score."

Brecht, like La Monte Young and Yoko Ono, was certainly not alone in the late 1950s to use such notational methods. He had begun to send his event scores through the mail to friends in the early 1960s. These consisted of cards with short texts or lists of words, such as *Three Aqueous Events* (1961), which is representative for its economy and austerity:

THREE AQUEOUS EVENTS

- ice
- water
- steam

Brecht has written that the word *event* described his interest in "the total, multi-sensory experience" that could emerge from a "situation," the "event" being the smallest unit of a "situation."¹³ He noted that he wanted to get the "maximum meaning with a minimal image, that is, the achievement of an art of multiple implications, through simple, even austere, means," and he understood his art to "reflect fundamental aspects of contemporary vision, by examining it in terms of space-time, inseparability of observer-observed, indeterminacy, physical and conceptual multi-dimensionality, relativity, and field theory, etc."¹⁴

Like many artists later associated with Fluxus, Brecht was interested in chance, and in the early 1950s he began to investigate chance operations as a means for obtaining non-self-referential patterns and forms. His long essay *Chance-Imagery* (1957) discusses the formation of images resulting from chance in nature and relates these images to the "physical act of creating an image out of real materials or to the formation of an image in the mind, say by abstraction

from a more complex system."¹⁵ For methodology, Brecht suggested the use of coin tossing derived from the Chinese *Book of Changes, I Ching* (which artists such as Hans Arp had employed early in the twentieth century to create visual solutions outside of conventional artistic control) as a means to arrive at chance formations. In his essay Brecht defined chance; explored its origins in statistics, science, and philosophy; considered the problem of "randomness"; and located the artistic use of chance in Dada, Surrealism, and the "sacred disorder" achieved by Jackson Pollock. In an "After-note" added to the 1966 publication of this essay, however, Brecht, having "only recently met John Cage," stated "that the most important implication of chance lay in [Cage's] work rather than in Pollock's."¹⁶

Cage's status as mentor to Fluxus is legendary and his interpretation of "Composition as Process" (the title of his three-part lecture of 1958) was a pivotal element in the renovation of musical scoring.¹⁷ Cage's attention to the performative elements of making sound had a revolutionary impact on the ways in which artists conceptualized performance behavior as visual signification. In this regard, Cage's use of the *I Ching* was instrumental, as it offered a method based in action for arriving at the visual representation of change. Adaptation of the performative methods of the *I Ching* to contemporary practice produced, in effect, a convergence of Eastern philosophy and Western phenomenology that allowed the artist to stress behavioral processes as the critical elements that precede the objective state of art as a completed "thing." Considering the nature of object and process, Cage, for example, said:

You say: the real, the world as it is. But it is not, it becomes! It moves, it changes! . . . You are getting closer to this reality when you say . . . it "presents itself": that means that it is not there, existing as an object. The world, the real is not an object. It is a process.¹⁸

Some critics have argued that Cage's position represents either an "aesthetics of denial" in its rejection of the object, or an "aesthetics of indifference" to the ideological implication of acts.¹⁹ Because of the close association of Fluxus to Cage's methodological practices, the same criticisms might be leveled against Fluxus performance. But both assessments fail to grasp the social and political implications of Cage's position or his intense engagement with the problems of behavior that affect the production of images and objects. The critic Jacques Attali has suggested that musical composition, in fact, offers a special model for the reconstitution of society and notes that new compositional practices "may be the essential element in a strategy for the emergence of a new society."²⁰ The old rules of composition, he explains, demanded the same kind of repetition and representation required in the regimentation of social life; but acts of composition that permit the composer to take "pleasure in the instruments, the tools of communication" because she or he values "use-time as live" might liberate composition from its role as the mere producer of musical objects for economic exchange.²¹ Music that involves the artist and the listener in the actual process of composition—in the creation of pure sound, or noise—then may, in Attali's words, "foretoken *evolution on the basis of behavior* in the human world."²² Radical compositional techniques such as those exemplified in the event score not only announce such an "evolution on the basis of behavior," but offer alternative structures for enactment both to the performer and to the viewer-receiver of the text.

Fluxus scoring methods are predominantly textual in character and are distinguished by clarity of language, economy, and simplicity of words. The score is the agent that engages the reader-performer in the theater of the act. Due largely to their conceptual format, these

text-scores leave performance open to as many complex or simple means of realization as respondents can imagine. Scores may be performed in the mind as a thought, or in the body with a physical action. They may be performed in public or private, by an individual or collective. Furthermore, mere reception and reading of a score may constitute performance and, in this sense, Fluxus events have been described as "language happenings."²³ Fluxus performances are to behavior what the ordinary-language philosophy of Wittgenstein was to language: they investigate the connection of abstract contemplation to concrete activity.

The French Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé observed that the text, or book, "replaces all theatres."²⁴ In his last poem, *Un Coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (1895), he graphically displayed the text in a visual form that externalized the temporal conditions of the narrative and engaged the reader actively in a spatial interpretation. The spacio-temporal, performative "form" pioneered by Mallarmé initiated a critical intervention into the linear text that is, in part, a cornerstone of the movement to engage the viewer or reader in the active construction of a work of art. According to recent theory, the "open work" seeks to destabilize authorial power, a strategy aimed at deconstructing the instrumentality of art. In 1957, Marcel Duchamp offered a theoretical account of these aims when he stated that the conditions of the "creative act" require that no work of art is finished until completed by the spectator.²⁵ Many Fluxus textual scores are descriptive instructions for actions; others are practical initiations, invitations to unlimited, or "open," interpretation that plunge the reader into a conceptual performance of the text. They are interactive in a way that anticipated aspects of Conceptual Art in the late 1960s and 1970s and academic theories of "reader-response" popular in the 1980s.²⁶

When Fluxus artists perform a score, they enact one of many potential realizations that begin with an examination of the elementary phenomenology of actions, image-objects, and words. In 1962, Ben Vautier, for example, filmed a series of events in the streets of Nice (above), some of which he had written scores for as early as 1960. Holding up placards of word-images, he undertook gestures and actions that corresponded to the textual signs. While writing on a wall, Vautier inscribed: "Ben écrit sur les murs" (Ben is writing on walls). After painting a sign reading "Regardez Ben va faire un geste" (Look, Ben is going to make a gesture), he made a deep knee bend, pasted the poster to a wall, wiggled his knees, and raised his hand. Vautier presented actions as literal, object(ive) visual forms and words as visual significations. His body provided the locus for the mutual contingency and transmission of thought to deed.

Vautier's events position the body as the key to visual information for the ways in which it condenses various kinds of sign systems into an image and an action capable of illustrating differences between word-representations, image-representations, and body-presentations. Vautier acknowledged the paradoxical displacements between body-actions and concepts in a manner analogous to René Magritte's investigation of the relationship between painting and poetry in his *peinture-poésie*. But Vautier extended Magritte's visual discourse on the fusions, juxtapositions, ambiguities, and essential estrangement of objects and words by showing how both are inextricably bound to the productions of the body.



BEN VAUTIER PERFORMING HIS *REGARDEZ MOI CELA SUFFIT*, NICE (CIRCA 1962).

By situating himself physically at the signifying center of verbal and visual communication, Vautier commented on how artists function as intermediaries between viewer and viewed as they point to things in the world and negotiate their meanings through symbolic productions. But in calling attention to himself, Vautier also isolated the problem of ego with respect to the social reception of art. His actual presence illustrated the interconnection between careerism, artistic signature, the economies of art, and the art historical market for personalities—all written in corporeal textuality. This production of presence must equally be understood as the production of self, in which, as Julia Kristeva has observed in another context, the self "fulfills itself as freedom—a process of liberation *through and against the norm*."²⁷ Vautier's insistence on the visual presence of language has reinforced the textual dimension of Fluxus scoring methods and continually advanced the interconnection between thought, perception, action, and experience in the formation of meaning-producing signs, which is critical if the self is to be considered an instrument for reform in the world. Confrontation with and consideration of this complex apparatus is the aesthetic reward. "Show them Truth first," Gandhi said, "and they will see Beauty afterwards."²⁸

"What Ism Fluxism?"

In the context of such categories as Happenings, Body Art, Live Art, and other forms, "Fluxus" has come to signify a type of performance art.²⁹ But the term *performance art* is wholly inadequate to the complexity of Fluxus events and subsumes them linguistically in the category of "performing arts" where they are associated with entertainment and are depoliticized and disarmed.³⁰ In the early 1960s, Fluxus was just one of many manifestations of the artistic subculture on the periphery of painting and sculpture. Because the number of artists creating performance was small, albeit international, this avant-garde tended to work fluidly across sectarian lines. The artists included pioneers of Happenings, poets, musicians and composers, filmmakers, photographers, traditional painters and sculptors, and individuals trained in fields outside of the visual arts such as Robert Filliou, who was an economist. This community was multicultural, multinational, multiracial, and included more women than most avant-gardes before it.

Germinating in New York, Fluxus performance actually convened in the milieu of the "Darmstadt Circle," the new music enclave that emerged around the German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen and the artist Mary Bauermeister (in whose studio many Fluxus artists met and performed), and around the group ZERO, founded by Otto Piene and Heinz Mack in 1957. The Darmstadt Circle and ZERO were already emphasizing performative aspects of music and visual art, and their activities preceded the inaugural events of Fluxus in West Germany by several years. Piene and Mack had organized enormously successful ZERO festivals and exhibitions of European artists working with movement, light, the body, and language systems, and they had published three issues of their journal *ZERO* (1958–1961). Each issue contained articles that directly or indirectly implicated the body in action. *ZERO* 3 (1961), for example, carried numerous performance-oriented theories,

including Yves Klein's "Truth becomes Reality," Piero Manzoni's "Immediate Projects," and Daniel Spoerri's "Spoerri's Autotheater."³¹ Jean Tinguely's manifesto "Static" related the concerns of kinetic sculpture to public performance, while Arman's essay "The Realism of Accumulations" and Spoerri's "Trap Pictures" took up the problem of the body's use of objects. There was also an illustration of Klein's "leap into the void" (1960) (below), accompanied by his article "The Theater of the Void," and photographs of Manzoni's drawing-action *A Line 7,200 Meters Long* (1960) and Tinguely's event *Homage to New York* (1960).

A year after *ZERO* ceased publication, Wolf Vostell began to publish *dé-coll/age: Bulletin Aktuellen Ideen* (1962–1969), a comprehensive periodical of original artists' writings that Vostell used to bolster the wide range of international performance that was taking place at the time, including activities such as those advertised on a 1964 poster for the Festival of Neuen Kunst in Aachen, West Germany: "actions, agit pop, dé-coll/age happening, events, anti art, l'autrisme, art total, reFluxus." The artists creating these distinct types of performance, many of whom performed in the first Fluxus festivals, understood them, despite their differences, to form a similar impulse, research, and direction in the visual arts.

It was during this period that George Maciunas, the self-appointed chairman of Fluxus, began to obsessively chart the genealogical connection of Fluxus performance to every modernist avant-garde movement from Futurism to Action Painting. This effort to situate Fluxus historically, as well as to legitimize it, was prompted in part by the heady intensity and profusion of visual art performance styles that emerged just prior to and simultaneous with Fluxus during this period, and in part by increased access in the 1950s to information about early twentieth-century movements that included performance. Robert Motherwell's *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* had been published in 1951, and Robert Lebel's *Marcel Duchamp* appeared in 1959. In addition, the Kunstverein für Rhineland und Westfalen launched the exhibition *Dada: Documents of a Movement* in Düsseldorf in September 1959. This show traveled to Frankfurt and Amsterdam, where enormous crowds saw hundreds of pictures, objects, and literary works produced between 1916 and 1922 in the Dada centers of Zurich, New York, Cologne, Hannover, Berlin, and Paris.

Despite the plurality of the historic moment in which Fluxus arose, however, Maciunas tended to define Fluxus performance in terms of the names and events that appeared on his own "official" charts, publications, and programs. These publications, which reveal his clever and successful strategy to market, promote, and control the identity of Fluxus, can be viewed primarily as a part of Maciunas' own quixotic and idiosyncratic artistic production, his art historical dogma. But the social and cultural boundaries of Fluxus performance extend far beyond the art historical ambitions of Maciunas, and in his best moments, he knew this. In 1963 he wrote to Tomas Schmit that Fluxus concerts serve as an "educational means to convert the audiences to such non-art experiences in their daily lives," and he advised George Brecht that "one's life would belong in the category of 'readymade' . . . event."³² Maciunas knew also that performance is a social medium and thus collective and steeped in ideology. It was especially so during the formative years of Fluxus, when Fluxus performance was only a fledgling series of "concerts" in which a diverse body of artists participated. These festivals were recognizable as closely connected to larger shifts in the visual arts away from the production of objects and toward process and action in real time.



YVES KLEIN, *THE PAINTER OF SPACE HURLS HIMSELF INTO THE VOID*, NEAR PARIS (1960). PHOTO © 1960 HARRY SHUNK.



JOSEPH BEUYS PERFORMING HIS *SIBERIAN SYMPHONY, 1ST MOVEMENT* AT FESTUM FLUXORUM, DÜSSELDORF (1963). PHOTO © MANFRED LEVE.

Both Joseph Beuys, who openly acknowledged that his beliefs about the political and social dimension of performance originated in the context of the general politics of action that developed in Fluxus and the performance practices of the late 1950s and early 1960s, and Wolf Vostell, whose *dé-coll/age* happenings mediate between Fluxus and surrounding practices, are interesting cases to consider when examining the boundaries of Fluxus performance and the limitations of Maciunas' exclusionary model. Beuys himself stated that his "Fluxus activities began in 1962 when I spoke with Nam June Paik . . . and met with Maciunas"³³ and he remembered performing his first action, *Composition for Two Musicians*, during the Festum Fluxorum at the Staatliche Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf in 1963.³⁴ This simple, single-action event in which Beuys stepped forward, wound up a musical toy with two mechanical musicians, and watched them play until the toy wound down, represented the kind of minimal event that eventually would be favored in Fluxus performance. The second night of the festival, however, Beuys performed the first movement of his *Siberian Symphony*, a complex ritual action in which many of the basic symbols of his celebrated performances of the next twenty years were already present: a chalkboard, dead hare, a piano, electrical wire, etc. (above). His action, Beuys stated, was intended as "a contextual reference to expression, to birth and death."³⁵ Beuys' name ceased appearing on "official" Maciunas-authored programs soon after this performance. Nevertheless, as late as 1966, programs such as that printed for a series of performances organized at the René Block Galerie in Berlin identified Beuys as "Fluxus."³⁶

Whether or not Beuys' performances were, in fact, "Fluxus" (a question that is still debated), they clearly exhibited the fused attributes of many of the artists' events associated with Fluxus, and he always acknowledged that his credos—"thinking and spoken forms" constitute "SOCIAL SCULPTURE" and "sculpture as an evolutionary process" means "everyone is an artist"—were indebted to the milieu and practices of artists associated with Fluxus.³⁷ He knew well that the collective feature of Fluxus performances constituted an ideological effort to realize social goals and, in retrospect, it could be argued that Beuys was the most successful disseminator of such attitudes.

Maciunas had written at some length about these values in letters to Schmit and Vostell as early as 1962,³⁸ and by January of 1964, he had defined the aims of Fluxus as overtly "social (not aesthetic)," compared Fluxus to the Russian avant-garde LEF group, and (in a letter to Schmit) insisted that Fluxus have a "pedagogic function" and provide a means for the "step by step elimination of the Fine Arts . . . to redirect the use of materials and human ability into socially constructive purposes." Fluxus, he expounded, "is against art as a medium for the artist's ego . . . and tends therefore towards the spirit of the collective, to anonymity and ANTI-INDIVIDUALISM."³⁹ The unpublished writings of other Fluxus artists attest to the fact that they were equally concerned with social goals and that their anarchist, socialist,

communist, and generally leftist ideology was matched by actions intended to change society.⁴⁰ Beuys' pedagogical and real-time political actions, his formulation of the Organization for Direct Democracy and the Free International University (1972), reflect his effort to press the direction of art practice toward the very "spirit of the collective" that Maciunas envisioned the responsible path for art to be.

Wolf Vostell provides another problematic example of the Fluxus-associated artist, for the loosely connected events that characterize his *dé-coll/age* happenings may appear difficult to reconcile with the strict, spare codes of what came to be associated with Fluxus scores. Vostell has often stated that he arrived at his concept of *dé-coll/age* in Paris, in 1954, when he noticed the term used in the newspaper *Le Figaro* to describe the simultaneous take off and crash of an airliner. He divided the word into syllables to emphasize both the difference and continuity of creative and destructive processes (*coll* for collage, or construction, and *dé* for disassembly, or deconstruction). Vostell and artists such as Gustav Metzger, Rafael Ortiz, and Milan Knížák were exploring, simultaneously, the interdependence of destruction and creation in the dialectic that structures social institutions and political formations. Vostell's *dé-coll/age*, and the related Fluxus events that he formulated around that concept, integrated the destructive aspects of technology with the reconstructive potential of imagination.

Moreover, in general scope and complexity, Vostell's *dé-coll/age* events, like many of Higgins' scores, tend to resemble Allan Kaprow's seven-point definition of the Happening:

- a. The line between art and life should be kept as fluid, and perhaps indistinct as possible.
- b. Therefore, the source of themes, materials, actions, and the relationships between them are to be derived from any place or period *except* from the arts, their derivatives, and their milieu.
- c. The performance of a Happening should take place over several widely spaced, sometimes moving and changing locales.
- d. Time, which follows closely on space considerations, should be variable and discontinuous.
- e. Happenings should be performed once only.
- f. It follows that audiences should be eliminated entirely.
- g. The composition of a Happening proceeds exactly as in *Assemblage* and *Environments*, that is, it is evolved as a collage of events in certain spans of time and in certain spaces.⁴¹

Certainly, neither all Vostell's *dé-coll/age* events nor all Happenings conformed to Kaprow's definition. Many Happenings were repeated, and Kaprow's own theory and practice are deeply indebted to the very art traditions he sought to excoriate as a "source for themes, materials, and actions." But, in general, their polymorphic character stood in marked contrast to the carefully performed, self-consciously art historical, repeatedly presented, although constantly changing, scored performances of Fluxus artists. As Beuys pointed out, the general lack of a participatory role for the audience was another essential element that differentiated Fluxus from Happenings. He noted (somewhat incorrectly) that Vostell was the "only one who used this American concept [of participation] with Fluxus."⁴² Vostell's *dé-coll/age*, then, can be understood as mediating in word and deed between the Fluxus single event and the polymorphic scope of Happenings. Jackson Mac Low understood this and stated as much in a 1963 letter to Vostell, pointing out that the *dé-coll/age* principle had, in common with the impulse of many Fluxus events,

important analogies with disciplines such as those of Buddhism, Vedanta & Smkhya Yoga which strip away the relatively illusory world of "form" and "name"—of phenomena—in order to see the "really real." . . . While you do not strip away everything (else what wd [*sic*] there be to perceive?)—you strip away enough to show us an "in-between" reality, hidden by the ordinary surfaces of things. (Mac Low's emphasis)⁴³

Mac Low's point is exemplified in Vostell's score for *Yellow Pages or an Action Page* (1966) (opposite), which presents performers with a page from the New York *Yellow Pages* and advises them to: "Take this page as an instruction plan with you and during one month buy the quantities of groceries indicated in the *lebensmittelkarte* [ration card] at the designated grocers. Try to subsist that month with these comestibles only. . . ." ⁴⁴ A complicated piece, scored to take place over a one-month period, Vostell asks participants to live as German citizens did during World War II. Such a sustained experience requires participants to enter into both the physiological conditions and mental spaces of the average German citizen. Vostell, a German Jew who spent a nomadic childhood during World War II fleeing with his family from place to place, offered no comment on either guilt or victimization in this action. Rather he constructed a private performance for the reconstruction of collective experience, an intimate reconnection to community. Vostell organizes this community at the very periphery of bodily need—daily food rationing—and outside of any social structures that might identify a "German" who eats (particularly a World War II German citizen) from any other citizen who eats. *Yellow Pages* . . . asks performers to consider how the constructive/destructive cycle determines not only the physical realities of the private body, but how these material conditions are linked to and reflect historical events experienced in the social body.

Consideration of Fluxus in the context of such social and aesthetic models (through which Fluxus as a cultural entity and its performance must be understood) renders moot narrow arguments about the definition of Fluxus according to membership, charts, and selected events. Fluxus performance should be identified by the social and political values, qualities, and aesthetics these artists shared. The problem of what a Fluxus performance is, then, might best be approached through the answer to the question "What is Fluxism?" offered by the Fluxus participant, "administrator" (as Maciunas once described her), and archivist Barbara Moore:

Fluxus meant fairly specific things at specific times and people knew enough about what it stood for to associate with or disassociate from it.⁴⁵

Moore's answer identifies the chameleon-like fluidity of Fluxus, which prevents the stabilization of either the "what" or the "who" of this loose association. What Moore correctly implies is that at any particular historical moment there is a certain "something" that artists were attracted to or repelled from in Fluxus. The performances I have selected to discuss convey something about this "something." So, what is Fluxism? Fluxus performance is neither personalities, nor lists, nor programs. Like Fluxus anything, it is a voluntary association that emphasizes certain qualities, values, and social practices in the world.

Fluxus Performance and Humor

Allan Kaprow was one of the artists who initially responded to the Fluxus "something" and then distanced himself from it. In a 1964 radio broadcast he shared with George Brecht entitled "Happenings and Events," Kaprow revealed his skepticism:

The group, with few exceptions, that associates itself with Fluxus is irresponsible. It is my impression that many people just simply goof-off . . . [and] its effect is to say . . . "You guys are doing important things, but look, we are even more important doing unimportant things."⁴⁶

Kaprow's lack of appreciation at the time for one of the principal virtues of Fluxus is instructive. "Goofing-off" is a quality that Fluxus artists certainly honed in performance, and while Kaprow had meant the term to be disparaging, there are positive qualities to goofing-off.

Goofing-off requires developing a fine-tuned sense of what it means to pause long enough and distance oneself far enough from worldly objects and events to recognize their illusory dimension and thereby reinvest the world with wonder. In order to really goof-off well, the instrumental sense of purpose deeply ingrained in Western ego and epistemology must be abandoned. Although they seldom identified with Beat Generation poets, Fluxus artists' ability to goof-off might find support in works like Jack Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums* (1958),⁴⁷ in which narratives of Beat Generation activities and insights are mixed with contemplations on dharma-nature (substance, principle, and truth). Robert Filliou's manifesto "GOOD-FOR-NOTHING-GOOD-AT-EVERYTHING," published in his *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, restates in Fluxus-style humor the concept of a dharma:

I create because I know how.
I know how good-for-nothing I am, that is.
Art as communication, is the contact between the good-for-nothing in one and the good-for-nothing in others.
Art, as creation, is easy in the same sense as being god is easy. God is your perfect good-for-nothing.
The world of creation being the good-for-nothing world, it belongs to anyone with creativeness, that is to say anyone claiming his natural birth gift: good-for-nothingness.⁴⁸

Filliou's humor reflects his legendary lack of pretentiousness, ability to empathize, sense of discovery, and gentle compassion for human fallibility, a self-forgiveness and acceptance of others that represents the best in the reciprocal acts of teaching and learning fundamental to Fluxus performance.

Filliou's creative "good-for-nothingness" relates to an aspect of goofing-off that was, and remains, a structural part of Henry Flynt's aesthetic theory. Coining the term *veramusement* (a combination of the Latin *veritas* and English *amusement*) and later, in 1963, *brend* to name his theory of pure subjective enjoyment unrestrained by convention, objective standards, or intersubjective value, Flynt proposed an art that affirmed an individual's "just-likings":

You just like it as you do it. . . . These . . . should be referred to as your just-likings. . . . These just-likings are your "brend."⁴⁹

While Flynt was absolutely earnest in his articulation of *brend*, the very term, employed in the service of aesthetics, is hilarious. Particularly in a society thoroughly indoctrinated with prescribed cultural values, the idea of affirming personal idiosyncrasies, that could include goofing-off, seems irresponsible and ridiculous—but liberating.

Flynt made the following recommendations for ways to arrive at one's individual *brend*:

Consider the whole of your life, what you already do, all your doings. Now please *exclude* everything which is naturally physiologically necessary (or harmful) such as breathing and sleeping (or breaking an arm). From what remains *exclude* everything which is *for the satisfaction of a social demand*, a very large area which includes foremost your job, but also care of children, being polite, voting, your haircut, and much else. From what remains *exclude* everything which is an agency, a "*means*," another very large area which overlaps with others to be excluded. From what remains, *exclude* everything which involves competition. In what remains *concentrate on everything done entirely because you just like it as you do it.* (Flynt's emphasis)⁵⁰

Flynt asserted "just-likings" as themselves defensible and performable cultural forms, and he devised activities through which to heighten them.⁵¹ His own *brend* consisted of studying, writing, lecturing, and engaging in political activities that sought to aestheticize personal and intimate performance practices. All of these activities became, in effect, his art: its principal artistic materials were concepts and language utilized in the performative context of lecture-forums, and it represented individual research valued as a quality for itself.

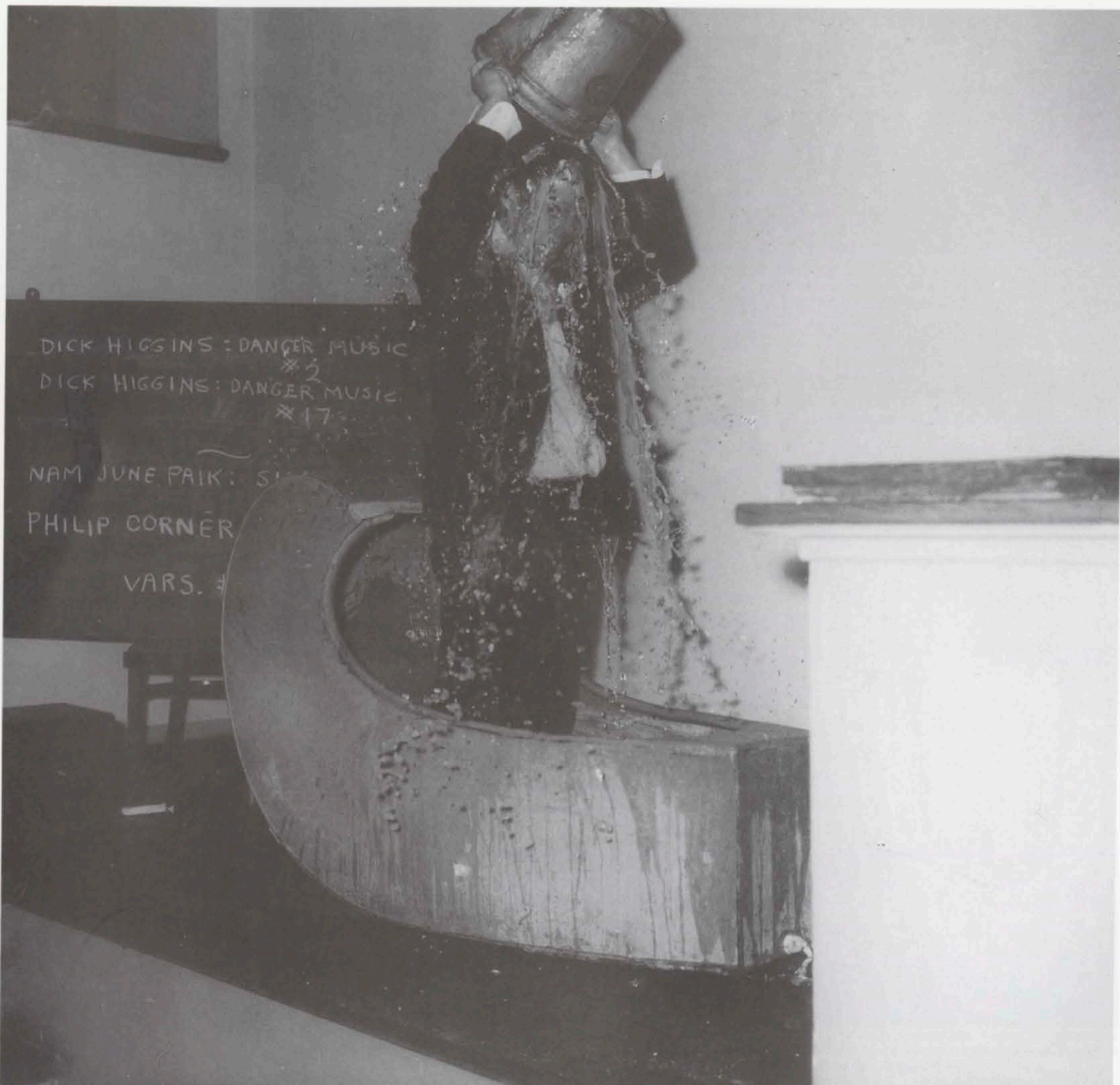
I have lingered long on the earnest values of goofing-off because the ability to balance self-abandon and self-awareness in self-oriented activity is part of the ontology of Fluxus performance. Such a delicate tension holds the potential to increase personal growth and at the same time recognizes that the self belongs to institutions and phenomena larger than that self. But another quality of goofing-off that is equally apparent in Fluxus performance—indeed, one of its salient features—is that particular brand of Fluxus humor reflected in the quirky, funny quality of these performances. The impulse to laugh *at* Fluxus represents the artists' ability to invite laughter *with* them. The performances are full of the unadulterated foolery, abandon, nonsense, and unmitigated silliness that distinguishes human intelligence and endows the entity "Fluxus" with its overriding quality of humanity; for these events merely exaggerate the conceptual paradoxes and contradictory behaviors that guide and determine life.

Fluxus humor can be unpredictable, has the appearance of chaos, is unpretentious and nonconformist, and often very dry. "There's Music—and Eggs—in the Air!," Richard O'Regan's review of one of the first Fluxus concerts, offers a marvelous sense of a Fluxus festival of events:

The opening work that night was "Danger Music No. 2" by a New Yorker, Dick Higgins [opposite]. Higgins entered and took a bow. He sat himself beside a bucket. His wife, Alison Knowles, appeared with a pair of scissors. She began to cut his hair. Higgins looked content. After 15 minutes, the audience grew restless. Paper airplanes circled from the back row. Conversation took over. "I'm sure I don't know what it is all about or what it is supposed to mean," commented one of Germany's well-known abstract painters. "I tell you Higgins is performing a rare work," said Emmett Williams, a parttime performer and composer of this Very New Music living in Germany. "He could play a Chopin etude every night. But Higgins can't give another performance like this for six months, until his hair grows back." "But there is no music," we protested naively. "Is this parody or protest?" "You have to understand," said George Maciunas, the American promoter of the festival, "that in new music the audible and the visible overlap. This is what is called action music."⁵²



ALISON KNOWLES AND DICK HIGGINS PERFORMING HIGGINS' *DANGER MUSIC NUMBER TWO* AT FLUXUS INTERNATIONALE FESTSPIELE NEUESTER MUSIK, WIESBADEN (1962). PHOTO HARTMUT REKORT, © ARCHIV SOHM, STAATSGALERIE STUTTGART.



NAM JUNE PAIK PERFORMING HIS *SIMPLE* AT FLUXUS INTERNATIONALE FESTSPIELE NEUESTER MUSIK, WIESBADEN (1962). PHOTO HARTMUT REKORT, © ARCHIV SOHM, STAATSGALERIE STUTTGART.



BEN VAUTIER BRUSHING HIS TEETH AFTER EATING HIS *MYSTERY FOOD* AT FLUXUS FESTIVAL OF TOTAL ART AND COMPORMENT, NICE (1963). PHOTO ATELIER 35, PHILIPPE FRANÇOIS. COURTESY THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

Photographs of Fluxus events capture the momentary incongruity and contradiction of the performances that is their hallmark. The synchronic presentation of information in a photographic representation, as in painting, overrides any sense of developmental sequence and narrative description expected from action and delivers the essentially visual aspect of a Fluxus performance. A man in a business suit pours water over his head (Nam June Paik, *Simple*, 1962) (opposite); a man, also dressed in formal attire, nails down the keys of a piano (George Maciunas, *Piano Piece No. 13 for Nam June Paik* [a.k.a. *Carpenter's Piano Piece*], 1964) (p. 121); a woman wearing glasses and dressed in the most conventional conservative street-wear—a white blouse, modest skirt, flat shoes, dark stockings—parodies burlesque by methodically taking off pair after pair of her underpants before an audience (Alison Knowles in Nam June Paik's *Serenade for Alison*, 1962); a man in a suit, overcoat, and bowler hat brushes his teeth after eating food at a table set up on the sidewalk (Ben Vautier, *Mystery Food*, 1963) (above).

These events all signify through discord, but it is a dissonance neither of violence nor threat—although both of these can be found within the ranks of Fluxus performance as well. The pleasurable aspect of the inharmonious derives from the way Fluxus events depart from convention. Performers appear oblivious to the inappropriate use of the body or its objects, to their own apparent ineptitude, and to the incongruity and jumbling of seemingly unconventional behaviors. This ostensible inability to do or to get things right is the

source of amusement and release. It is also the vehicle by which the deepest pleasure and enormous sense of gratification is communicated. For these odd physical manifestations and peculiar mental constructions stretch and unfetter the imagination.

Fluxus humor resides in these states of the unfit. So it was appropriate that Fluxus-associated artists Daniel Spoerri and Robert Filliou organized an event in London from late October to early November 1962 called the Festival of Misfits. The handbill to the exhibition described the "Misfits" according to each artist's caricatured identity: Arthur Koepcke was a "German professional revolutionist," Benjamin Patterson a "captured alive Negro," Emmett Williams "the Pole with the elephant memory," Spoerri simply a "Romanian adventurer," Ben Vautier "God's broker," Filliou a "one-eyed good-for-nothing Huguenot," Per Olof Ultvedt "the red-faced strongman from Sweden," Robin Page a "Yukon lumberjack," and Gustav Metzger an "escaped Jew."⁵³ Metzger eventually was disinvited and excluded. As Robin Page explained, "Metzger was so misfit, he misfit the Misfits."⁵⁴ Metzger's travesty? He had proposed to exhibit two copies (front and back) of the *Daily Express*, a London newspaper, each consecutive day of the show. This proposal to hang the daily newspapers would have placed the Misfits in an important relationship to actual world events (on opening day of the festival the front page announced "Kennedy: We Bar Ships of All Nations Ferrying Arms to Castro CUBA BLOCK-ADE") and confronted the Fluxus context with politics in real time.



BEN VAUTIER PERFORMING HIS LIVING SCULPTURE AT FESTIVAL OF MISFITS, LONDON (1962). PHOTO COURTESY BEN VAUTIER.

Robin Page's actions were notorious at the Festival of Misfits—and overflowing with Fluxus humor. He turned a corner of Victor Musgrave's Gallery One into a *Suicide Room* filled with all the knives, razor blades, and poisons normally found in the home. There the public was encouraged to interact and a sign read: "Kill yourself or else stop beefing and get on and enjoy life." Page also performed *Block Guitar Piece*, in which he kicked a guitar off the stage at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, down the aisle and out of the building, around the block—with his audience in pursuit—and returned to kick what remained of the instrument back onto the stage. In part, this action reflects destructive tendencies in performances such as Paik's *One for Violin Solo* (circa 1962), Philip Corner's *Piano Activities* (circa 1962), and in Metzger's 1959 theory of "Auto-Destructive Art," in which Page had a keen interest. Together with Metzger's lectures on Auto-Destructive Art during this period, such performances directly anticipated the ritual destruction of musical instruments that was institutionalized at the frenzied climax of rock 'n' roll performances by The Who several years later.⁵⁵ But Page's action was also the bawdy, macho act of a "lumberjack"—a class-bound action that clashed with the aristocratic pretense of "fine art," delicate instruments, and their inherited practices and origins in Baroque salons. Such undermining of class distinctions was often a source of Fluxus humor, especially the Fluxus custom of "dressing up"—bowler hat and business suit for men, dress clothing for women—to perform acts completely antithetical to the class-bound significations of traditional musical performance.⁵⁶

During the Misfits festival, Vautier lived in the window of Gallery One for a week (opposite). There he presented himself on the stage of life, aided and amused by everyday objects: a bed, table, chair, a gas cooker (for heating food), a television set, a hand-drill, teddy bear, and such treasures as two blue glass eyes. Vautier presented himself as the absolute aesthetic object for contemplation. In self-display, he displaced the common and framed the extraordinary that remains latent in the undisclosed ordinary. Exhibition, display, framing, viewed/viewer, and relations of subjects and objects—all of these institutional elements that delimit "art" were present in his performance. Vautier exhibited himself at the very nexus of re-presentation and presentation, the usual and the unusual, both sites of Fluxus humor and action.

Vautier's self-exhibition, or exhibitionist self, underscores one of the important aspects of humor in Fluxus performances: the rehabilitative capacity of laughter, especially laughter at the self, which distinguishes humor as a special category of philosophical theory concerned with the emotions and thoughts. The humorous quality of Fluxus events was central to Maciunas' thinking when he included gags and vaudeville as sources for Fluxus. But associations with slapstick and jokes have led to misunderstandings about Fluxus humor when the serious social commentary, psychological consequences, and political potential for self-empowerment inherent in humor are overlooked. Freud, for example, theorized that humor was an essential element in the release of psychic energies associated with freeing the imagination of inhibitions. From Plato to Aristotle, Descartes, and Hobbes, humor has been philosophically attributed to betraying and undermining hegemony and power relations. Descartes related the physiological aspects of humor to three of the six emotions (wonder, hatred, and joy among love, desire, and sadness) he considered basic to human character. Hutcheson, Kant,

and Schopenhauer all argued that humor resides in the inappropriate association of things and in incongruity. Kierkegaard understood humor to mark "the boundary between the ethical and religious spheres [which] is the last stage of existential awareness before faith."⁵⁷

At its best, the humor in Fluxus performance is of an entirely different order than either the self-satisfied satire, irony, and parody characteristic of modernism or the self-aggrandizing superiority and cynical pastiche claimed for postmodernism. Filled with the marvel of a sense of discovery and release, Fluxus humor escorts freedoms: the freedom to play and goof-off, the freedom to value that play as an aesthetic habit (one's *brend*), the freedom to abandon reason and aesthetics and to just be.

Race, Gender, and Sex in Fluxus Events

Questions of gender and sexuality figure prominently in Fluxus actions, and race—a subject that often had been ignored in the visual arts until recently—is considered. These issues emerged out of the artists' direct personal and social experiences as much as they equally reflected the growing internationality of the period, the nascent feminist movement, the sexual revolution of the 1960s, and most of all the civil rights movement. Strong proto-feminist elements appear particularly frequently in the performances of Japanese women associated with Fluxus and, in the case of Yoko Ono, these feminist aspects are sometimes interlaced with commentary on race and class.⁵⁸ Although Fluxus artists did not always fully accept such content in the context of Fluxus performance (Shigeko Kubota remembers that her colleagues hated her performance *Vagina Painting* [1965] and Yoko Ono has explained that she was rejected because her work was "too animalistic"),⁵⁹ it nevertheless was there and was presented often.

Henry Flynt (who, it is significant to note, has always claimed not to have been a part of Fluxus)⁶⁰ overtly acknowledged political issues in his work. Flynt's rejection of European-derived "Serious Culture" (a term Maciunas often borrowed) and his *brend* theory had been motivated in large measure by the American civil rights movement, which provided, as he explained, a positive example for "the affirmation of otherwise despised identities."⁶¹ Flynt's adaptation of methods for self-affirmation from American blacks may be traced to an adolescent experience he had when Helen Lefkowitz, a girl he admired, described him as a "creep." This experience prompted him to study and later to lecture on the "positive creep values" individuals develop when involuntarily consigned to sexual isolation as social misfits.⁶²

In addition, the picket demonstrations Flynt waged against "Serious Culture" constituted a kind of social performance, also modeled on civil rights demonstrations of the time. On February 27, 1963, accompanied by his Harvard friend, the musician and later film- and videomaker Tony Conrad, and by the filmmaker Jack Smith, Flynt picketed outside of the Museum of Modern Art, Philharmonic Hall at Lincoln Center, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where the *Mona Lisa* was then being exhibited to record crowds. The three artists carried signs bearing the slogans: DEMOLISH SERIOUS CULTURE! DESTROY ART! DEMOLISH ART MUSEUMS! The following evening at Walter De Maria's loft, Flynt delivered the fifth in his series of lectures "From 'Culture' to Veramusement," in which he railed about the human "suffering caused by serious-cultural snobbery" while he stood before a large picture of the Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky (p. 78). The audience was ushered into the room by first stepping on a print of the *Mona Lisa* that served as a doormat.



HENRY FLYNT GIVING A LECTURE, NEW YORK CITY (1963). PHOTO DIANE WAKOSKI, COURTESY HENRY FLYNT.

Flynt's commitment to civil rights and to the variety of cultures traditionally excluded from "Serious Culture" more directly inspired his picket protest on April 29, 1964, of Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Originale*, a performance then being presented in New York City at Town Hall in which many artists associated with Fluxus and Happenings participated. In a leaflet-poster, Flynt called on the public to "Fight Musical Decoration of Fascism!" Denouncing a 1958 Harvard lecture by Stockhausen in which he claimed the composer had "contemptuously dismissed 'jazz' as 'primitive . . . barbaric . . . beat and a few single chords,'" Flynt explained:

By the time he made that fascist-like attack on Afro-American music, Stockhausen was a well-known symbol of contempt and disdain for every kind of workers', farmers', or non-European music, whether the music of Black Americans, East European peasants, Indians, or even most of the music that West German workers themselves like.⁶³

Prior to this action, Maciunas had issued a *Fluxus News-Policy Newsletter No. 6* (April 6, 1963) that proposed "propaganda actions"—disruptive performances to take place in New York City from May through November that would clog transportation systems with "break downs" on bridge and tunnel entries, that would confuse communication systems, disrupt public concerts, interfere with museums, theaters, galleries and, in general, cause social and institutional disruptions. Together with Flynt's activities, these proposals caused the most serious breach in Fluxus interpersonal relations. Mac Low and Brecht especially, and later Higgins, rejected such activities as socially irresponsible. This confrontation strongly helped to determine the subsequent ideological and political orientation of Fluxus performance, which seldom thereafter would be aimed at direct intervention.

Flynt's activities were stridently political and overtly committed to exposing and denouncing all forms of cultural imperialism. But the political content of a performance such as Benjamin Patterson's *First Symphony* (first performed in 1964 at George Maciunas' loft on Canal Street), although certainly suggested, is more oblique:

FIRST SYMPHONY

One at a time members of audience are questioned, "DO YOU TRUST ME?" and are divided left and right, yes and no. the room is darkened. freshly ground coffee is scattered throughout the room.⁶⁴

Patterson recalls that when the can of vacuum-packed Maxwell House coffee "was opened on stage in the dark . . . it made a predictable 'pop'—a sound familiar to many people (male and female) at that time thru military experience or 'civil rights' marches (it is the sound of opening the container of a smoke, percussion or tear-gas grenade)." According to Patterson, "My idea for having this audible 'POP' was to heighten anxiety."

Significantly in his "first" symphony, Patterson seemed to confront his predominantly white, avant-garde audience with its veneer of sophistication, that gloss that thinly cloaks deep and unresolved racial conflicts. In polling his viewers' "trust," he then perhaps incriminated those with *and* those without confidence in him by covering the space with the color brown (scattered coffee grounds), a metaphorical stain that might be understood as the taint of race that conditions and shapes the social exchange of blacks worldwide. Although never directly stated, Patterson seems to have suggested that whether belief is offered or deferred, the lives and hopes of those without white-colored skins, for whom white society offers neither recognition nor responsibility, remain negated, a negation signified in the scattered brown granules (individuals?).

Ultimately, of course, the participants in Patterson's piece experienced relief in realizing that they were being "threaten[ed] with nothing more than the wonderful smell of rich, freshly ground coffee." Responding to my interpretation, Patterson has suggested that the intention of the piece may well have been "just an experiment," explaining that he "often employed the methods of psychological, sociological and linguistic sciences" in his works of the period:

I must admit that I do not remember being so consciously aware of . . . racial implications when I made this work. Of course, I knew I was a Negro (the terminology in those days) and quite a bit about racism and how it was affecting my life. But, consciously, I really did not understand how deeply racism affected my work. Obviously, subconsciously a lot was happening.

While issues of race found both overt and covert expression, issues of feminism figured prominently in much of the work produced by women associated with Fluxus. Kate Millett, for example, who collaborated briefly with Fluxus while working on her 1969 book *Sexual Politics*, designed a prototype for disposable, or "throw-away," dinnerware that in its rejection of women's traditional housework added a feminist component and anticipated Judy Chicago's more celebrated *Dinner Party*.⁶⁵ On a more substantive level, Millett's art at this time addressed issues of women's entrapment, abuse, violence, and pain, which she metaphorically represented in cages, sculptural environments that portrayed images of victimization, imprisonment, and suffering. Alison Knowles' *Glove to Be Worn While Examining* (early 1960s) has the uncomfortable innuendo of an anal probe or an anticipated visit to the gynecologist, while her *Child Art Piece* (1962) reflects tender parental concern for nurture:

Two parents enter with their child, and they decide a procedure which they will do with the child, such as bathing, eating, playing with toys, and they continue until the procedure is finished.⁶⁶

Yoko Ono also used the theme of the child in several works. Her *City Piece* (1961) calls for the performer to "walk all over the city with an empty baby carriage" and her score for *Film No. 8, Woman* (1968) focuses on "pregnancy and delivery."

Ono's book *Grapefruit* (1964) contains numerous scores written throughout the 1950s and early 1960s for music, painting, events, poetry, objects, film, and dance (which formed the basis for her later collaborations with husband John Lennon, although she has seldom, until recently, received the credit). These texts refer to performances of an intimate physiological and psychological nature. Scores like *Pulse Piece* (1963) and *Beat Piece* (1963) emphasize the heart and circulatory system, and *Body Sound Tape Piece* (1964) focuses on the sound of various emotions at different ages in human development. The most eloquent performance of *Beat Piece* occurred in 1968 when she and Lennon recorded the heartbeat of the fetus that Ono miscarried while Lennon camped at her bedside on the hospital floor. This beat could be heard later on their album *Music No. 2: Life with the Lions* (1969).

The acute attention to multisensuality of Ono and other women artists associated with Fluxus ushers viewer-participants into the personal territories of their own anatomy and focuses on the intimate senses of touch and smell. Such works anticipate themes of 1970s essentialist feminism, as well as 1980s post-structuralism, as they prefigure French feminist Luce Irigaray's argument that women's multiple sexualized zones create a plurality based on the primacy of *touch*.⁶⁷ Ono's *Touch Piece* (1961), for example, reads simply "Touch." The game pieces in Takako Saito's *Smell Chess* (1965) attend to the intimate sensory aspects of the body and serve to heighten sensitivity to olfactory capacities: her game becomes a sort of cerebral erotics. Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi's *Mirror* (1963) requires the performer to:

Stand on the sandy beach with your back to the sea. Hold a mirror in front of your face and look into it. Step back to the sea and enter into the water.⁶⁸

Shiomi's work recalls Simone de Beauvoir's analysis of woman in *The Second Sex* (1949) as a self-observer who mirrors cultural formations while simultaneously maintaining the view of her own private experience. As an observer of both conditions, she is witness to her own plurality.

The intense physicality associated with pleasure in these works may also be expressed as a psychological drive to materialize pain, to find a believing witness for pain, and to heal. Ono's *Conversation Piece* (1962) poignantly reveals such aims:

Bandage any part of your body. If people ask about it, make a story and tell. If people do not ask about it, draw their attention to it and tell. If people forget about it, remind them of it and keep telling. Do not talk about anything else.⁶⁹



YOKO ONO PERFORMING HER *CUT PIECE*, KYOTO, JAPAN (1964). PHOTO COURTESY LENONO PHOTO ARCHIVE.



In this action Ono caused the bandage to become a presence that, together with her speech acts, signified the wounds of psycho-physical pain. It anticipates feminist theorists who have speculated on the role of speaking and listening in women's constructions of knowledge,⁷⁰ and in its impulse to narrate invisible interior suffering, it is central to repossessing and sharing the "body as an historical text," the phrase used by Mae G. Henderson in her perceptive analysis of Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*.⁷¹ Auto-analytic and autobiographical, *Conversation Piece* transforms private knowledge into public voice through the significations of an object.

Ono's performance of *Cut Piece* (circa 1964) (left), in which she sat motionless on the stage after inviting the audience to come up and cut away her clothing, brought the theme of physical and emotional pain into the actual interplay of human intersubjectivity. The performance opens itself to a number of interpretations. It may be read as a discourse on passivity and aggression, on the presentation of the self as a victim connected to the reciprocity between abuse and self-denigration, or on the relinquishment of power required in the sado-masochistic exchange. It vividly demonstrates, as well, the potential for objectification of the "other" in the militarization of feeling that dislocates compassion from acts of brutality. It also comments on the condition of art and becomes that denouement of the relationship between exhibitionism and scopis desires that disrobes the imagined self-referential edifice of art and reveals it to be an interactive exchange between beholder and object. *Cut Piece* visualizes and enacts the responsibility that viewers must take in aesthetic experience.

Ono later extended her concerns beyond the sphere of body-actions into self-conscious political activism when she collaborated with Lennon in highly publicized media-events. The *Bed-In* piece that the couple performed on their honeymoon in March 1969, when they moved into the Amsterdam Hilton and conducted interviews ten hours a day "to protest against any form of violence," coalesced themes of sex, race, class, and gender. The *Bed-In* subverted both conventional and radical politics by fusing the public art-event (the ubiquitous 1960s "Be-In") with the private events of the human body. By extending the "telling" and "touching" that were both implicit and explicit in Ono's earlier art from the arena of nuptial intercourse to public discourse, the couple permitted themselves to be seen but, more important, to be heard as part of the international pacifist movement promoting "peace and love." The *Bed-In* also defied racism and classism in the couple's presentation of an aristocratic, Asian woman in bed with a working-class, European man; and it confronted sexism with the representation of a marriage of equality.

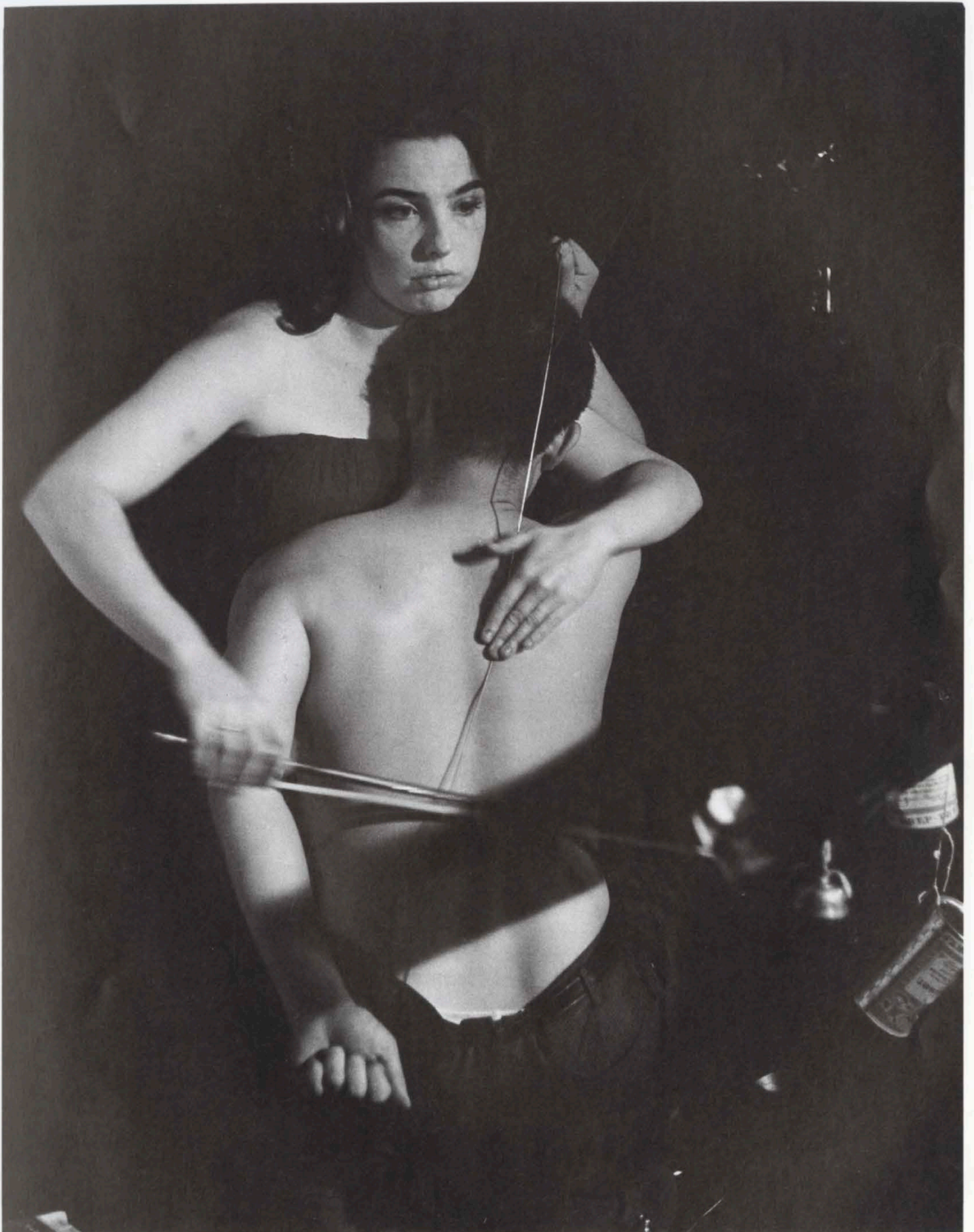


SHIGEKO KUBOTA PERFORMING HER *VAGINA PAINTING* AT PERPETUAL FLUXFEST, NEW YORK CITY (1965). PHOTO GEORGE MACIUNAS, COURTESY THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

Shigeko Kubota's *Vagina Painting* (above), however, was the most aggressively proto-feminist performance of Fluxus, although she would not have described it as such at the time. On July 4, 1965, during the Perpetual Fluxfest in New York City, Kubota placed paper on the floor and, squatting over it, began to paint with a brush that she had earlier fastened to her underpants. Moving over the paper, she dipped the brush in red paint to produce an eloquent gestural image that exaggerated female sexual attributes and bodily functions and redefined Action Painting according to the codes of female anatomy. Kubota performed *Vagina Painting* exactly one year after she arrived in New York. The direct reference to menstrual cycles seems to compare the procreation/creation continuum lodged in the interiority of woman with the temporal cycles of change and growth she experienced in her own art and life after moving from Japan to the United States. Her artistic progeny may be accessed in the

action-text of metaphorical blood through which she objectified the immaterial creative biological center of woman and in the concrete image it manifested of her artistic powers. For, as the literary theorist Elaine Scarry has proposed in *The Body in Pain*, "To have material form is to have self-substantiating form."⁷²

Kubota's *Vagina Painting* must be understood as an historically daring rejection of the female as muse.⁷³ In this action, she recovers woman as the source of her own artistic inspiration, as the gender able to produce both actual life and representational form.⁷⁴ Kubota's event also posits female bodies as the nexus of art and of life, their material synthesis. Her action gives new and rather poignant, if not psychological, meaning to the desire expressed by so many male artists of her generation "to act in the gap between" art and life, as Robert Rauschenberg so succinctly imagined it.⁷⁵



NAM JUNE PAIK AND CHARLOTTE MOORMAN PERFORMING JOHN CAGE'S "26'1.1499" FOR A STRING PLAYER AT CAFE AU GOGO, NEW YORK CITY (1965). PHOTO © 1965 PETER MOORE.



GEORGE MACIUNAS AND BILLIE HUTCHING PERFORMING *BLACK & WHITE* AT THEIR FLUXUS WEDDING, NEW YORK CITY (1978). PHOTOS © 1978 PETER MOORE.

Perhaps more than any male artist associated with Fluxus, Nam June Paik created unabashedly erotic and uninhibited sexual actions. Many of his works flaunt sexuality as passionate, ridiculous, often sexist, and always politically loaded. In 1962 he composed *Young Penis Symphony*, which (in anticipation of an Orwellian world) was "expected to premiere about 1984 A.D."⁷⁶ A vaudeville-like spectacle of phallic size, strength, and power, the score called for "ten young men" to stand unseen behind "a huge piece of white paper stretched across the stage mouth, from the ceiling to the floor and from the left to the right." Then, one after the other, each man was instructed to "stick his penis out through the paper to the audience." A metaphoric fellatio, intermingling the oral with the visual eroticism that is part of the voyeuristic/exhibitionistic exchange, the audience would be subjected to a physicality that violates scopisic desires. Paik seemed to analogize the dominance of patriarchal models of political order to the aggressive and destructive character of world culture.

Paik's legendary collaborations with the avant-garde musician Charlotte Moorman (prefigured by scores Paik had written in the early 1960s to be performed by a woman)⁷⁷ are the most aggressive assertions of the eroticism of bodies—an eroticism that often included the willing objectification of both Moorman and Paik's

bodies. These performances presented the body as the interstice negotiating shifting states of subjectivity and objectivity, as the body became both a performing set of behaviors and an object with presence. The collaborations with Moorman realized Paik's aim to move "Towards a New Ontology of Music," the title of his 1962 manifesto that called for music to be invested with the existential value of bodies.⁷⁸ In *26' 1.1499" for a String Player*, performed in 1965 at the Cafe Au GoGo in New York City, the pair interpreted a score by Cage. Moorman held Paik's body as though it were a cello while playing a string stretched over his nude back (p. 83). In Paik's *Opera Sextronique* (1966), performed at the New York Film-Makers' Cinematheque on February 9, 1967, Moorman progressively stripped during her performance and was arrested for exposing her breasts. She was subsequently tried and found guilty of "indecent exposure," although her sentence was suspended. Paik, however, was found not guilty when the judge reasoned it to be impossible to create "pornographic music"! Paik and Moorman's actions are extraordinary demonstrations of the role the body plays in structuring not only the meaning and presence of objects, but the juridical and institutional practices that control, manage, and litigate that body.

Paik was not the only Fluxus artist to create works that featured the woman as object. Patterson's *Whipped Cream Piece (Lick Piece)*, first performed during the Fluxus Concerts held at the Fluxhall/Fluxshop, New York City, in 1964, calls for covering a body with whipped cream (the artist Lette Eisenhauer volunteered) and for any number of people,

male or female, to lick it off. In the context of artists' powerful assault on conventional sexual mores in the 1960s, the score suggests the pleasures of mutual erotic consent and emphasizes the tactile, oral, and erogenous conditions of all bodies. However, from a contemporary perspective, Patterson's performance suggests sexist overtones, as does Robert Watts' *Branded Woman's Thigh*, mentioned in a 1962 letter to Maciunas. While Watts' idea for cow brands on a woman's thigh was never realized—to my knowledge—his image of the potential mark functions as the indexical signifier of woman's subjugation and was the most potentially violent and abusive of all Fluxus body-actions.⁷⁹

With performance objects like his gendered underwear imprinted with representations of sexually explicit male and female genitals, Watts cloaked sexuality and permitted a free play of gender identities. Wearers were encouraged to allow sexuality to remain ambiguous by wearing its representation—a representation that may as well be of the sexual "other." Throughout Fluxus there is a persistent rejection of conventional sexuality, and the monolithic heterosexual values of the dominant culture demanded by social and religious institutions are often mocked—never so flagrantly and humorously, however, as in the cross-dressing at Maciunas and Billie Hutching's wedding in 1976 (opposite). In each of these instances, wearers and viewers are reminded of the ways in which clothes contribute to the social constructions of gender, despite sexual affinities and attitudes supported by the corporeal and psychological body beneath them. Watts' gendered clothing supplies the meta-discourse for the revealing/concealing dimension of clothing, confounds voyeuristic and exhibitionist conventions, and contributes to the play between *presenting* and *re-presenting* that is a fundamental tension in all Fluxus performance.

Despite the very explicit examples that have been discussed here, however, usually when issues of sex, race, class, or violence appeared in Fluxus performance they were of a sublimated kind that contrasts starkly with the overtly hedonistic qualities found in other performance practices that coexisted, overlapped, and sometimes interlocked with Fluxus in the 1960s. The performances of Al Hansen, Carolee Schneemann, Rafael Ortiz, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Viennese Actionism, John Latham, Mark Boyle, and Gustav Metzger more openly addressed some or all of the issues related to sexuality, destruction, violence, and politics. These artists frequently intermingled with Fluxus artists in the early 1960s: Lebel associated with Filliou, Patterson, Paik, Moorman, Williams, and Vautier (who appeared in Lebel's *Festivals of Free Expression*); Higgins, whose own work often dealt with danger and violence, published Hansen's *A Primer of Happenings & Time/Space Art* in 1965, the same year that Vostell and Jürgen Becker brought out *Happenings: Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme: Eine Dokumentation*. Yet despite these associations, and despite the fact that themes of violence and sex were present in Fluxus performances, they were predominantly latent in the realization of most Fluxus practices. By the beginning of the 1970s, the ascetic restraint found in some of the work of Brecht, Young, Knowles, and Maciunas had shaped the Fluxus identity to such an extent that a clear separation existed between Fluxus and such artists as Lebel, Schneemann, and Hansen.⁸⁰ While Vostell's stridently political, erotic engagement in the creation/destruction dialectic often drew criticism, he maintained a position between the two extremes. Nonetheless, the "something" that characterizes Fluxus performance must include its concerns, no matter how restrained or sublimated, for gender, sex, race, danger, and violence.

Objects and Affective Presence

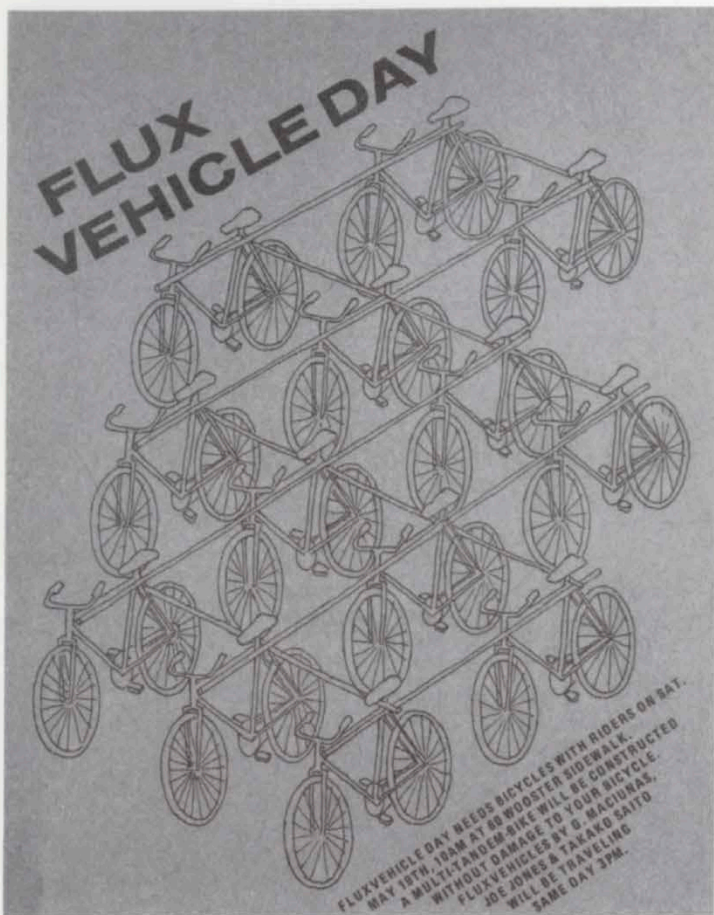
Objects motivate behavior in Fluxus performances and, conversely, behavior endows objects with a performative "presence." Brecht chose the title *Toward Events* for his 1959 exhibition of objects at the Reuben Gallery in New York City, where his show immediately followed Kaprow's *18 Happenings in Six Parts*. But while Kaprow's *Happenings* highlighted aspects of change in space and time, Brecht concentrated on the performative character of both objects and actions. For, as he observed years later, "every object is an event . . . and every event has an object-like quality."⁸¹ Brecht's exploration of the object as an event linked aesthetic questions to philosophical examinations of the relationship between the "object-in-itself" and the acting "subject-in-world," and stressed the shared event-qualities of both acts and objects. In this way, Brecht's events situate Fluxus performance in a discourse about the nature of art objects, whether of a presentational and performative or re-presentational and static form.

The interstice between object and subject is performance. The anthropologist Robert Plant Armstrong, in his discussion of the difference between normal objects and "works of affective presence," points out that it is this behavioral element that links the two. All societies attribute unique qualities to selected objects (stones, mounds of earth, etc.) because "peoples' behavior toward them argues that they are something more."⁸² In Western culture such objects are associated with the abstract concept of "art." As Armstrong argues: "Behavioral evidence as a criterion of classification helps us more markedly in our attempts to fit such phenomena into the schemes of human existence than centuries of attempts to 'define art.'"⁸³

The nontraditional and often apparently nonsensical nature of Fluxus performance action casts into stark perspective the problem of the nature of "art." For example, in Western culture the violin is a culturally valued object and a symbol of everything for which "art" stands. In the social consensus, it has "affective presence"—and its destruction is received with dismay. So why, then, did Fluxus offer up Nam June Paik's performance *One for Violin Solo* (circa 1962) (p. 118), in which a violin is ceremoniously lifted and then destroyed, as a work of art and accord it value? On this question Armstrong is instructive:

If [objects] are of the nature of person—which is what our behavior toward them argues—they are also of the nature of a thing. . . . But they are also subjects, being treated as human subjects are treated. And such works exist in a state of tension between these two poles: being subject and being object. It is perhaps in the energy of such interplay that a fundamental "power"—or energy—of the work of affecting presence is to be found.⁸⁴

So is Paik's *One for Violin Solo* a work of art? Yes. It constitutes "art" for the way in which Paik draws attention to what Armstrong calls the "'who-ness' or 'what-ness'" of the violin and *not* because of "the excellence of its execution, morality, or expression . . . its 'principles' of 'beauty' or 'harmony' or 'virtue' or 'rhythm' or 'symmetry'" — the states of "art" traditionally valued by aestheticians.⁸⁵ Paik shows us "the aesthetic dualism" of the object, how it "sometimes *is* and at other times *is not*" an affective presence.⁸⁶ Finally, Paik's performance visualizes how oppressive elite cultural "art" objects may be when their affective presence is over-determined against the value of human presence. Fluxus performances in general resoundingly support human presence and enactment over the *in-itselfness* of objects or the "affective presence" of fine art.



GEORGE MACIUNAS, POSTER FOR *FLUX VEHICLE DAY* (1973). OFFSET ON PAPER, 11 x 8 1/2". COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER.

An argument may be constructed to suggest that Fluxus events achieve the condition of "art" precisely because of the ways in which they underscore the reciprocity between perception and behavior and demonstrate how culture endows objects with "affective presence." The score for Alison Knowles' *Performance Piece #8* (1965) vividly makes this point:

Divide a variety of objects into two groups. Each group is labeled "everything." These groups may include several people. There is a third division of the stage empty of objects labeled "nothing." Each of the objects is "something." One performer combines and activates the objects as follows for any desired duration of time:

1. something with everything
2. something with nothing
3. something with something
4. everything with everything
5. everything with nothing
6. nothing with nothing⁸⁷

Knowles asks the performer to categorize in terms of difference—everything, something, and nothing—and thereby ironically demonstrates how behavior and perception arbitrarily endow objects with evaluative labels that suggest plenitude and perfection (everything).

relative value (something), or a paucity of value (nothing). Such a performance may be perceived as a visual meta-discourse on the nature of art. It suggests that since objects achieve their status as "art" through behavioral attitudes, affections, needs, superstitions, and desires, so too may performance be valued for the same qualities. Once this supposition is entertained, then it follows that behavior itself eventually must come under consideration for its aesthetic attributes, and this amounts to nothing less than a move to value behavior in the social world aesthetically. Such a trajectory has serious implications for social conduct in the world.

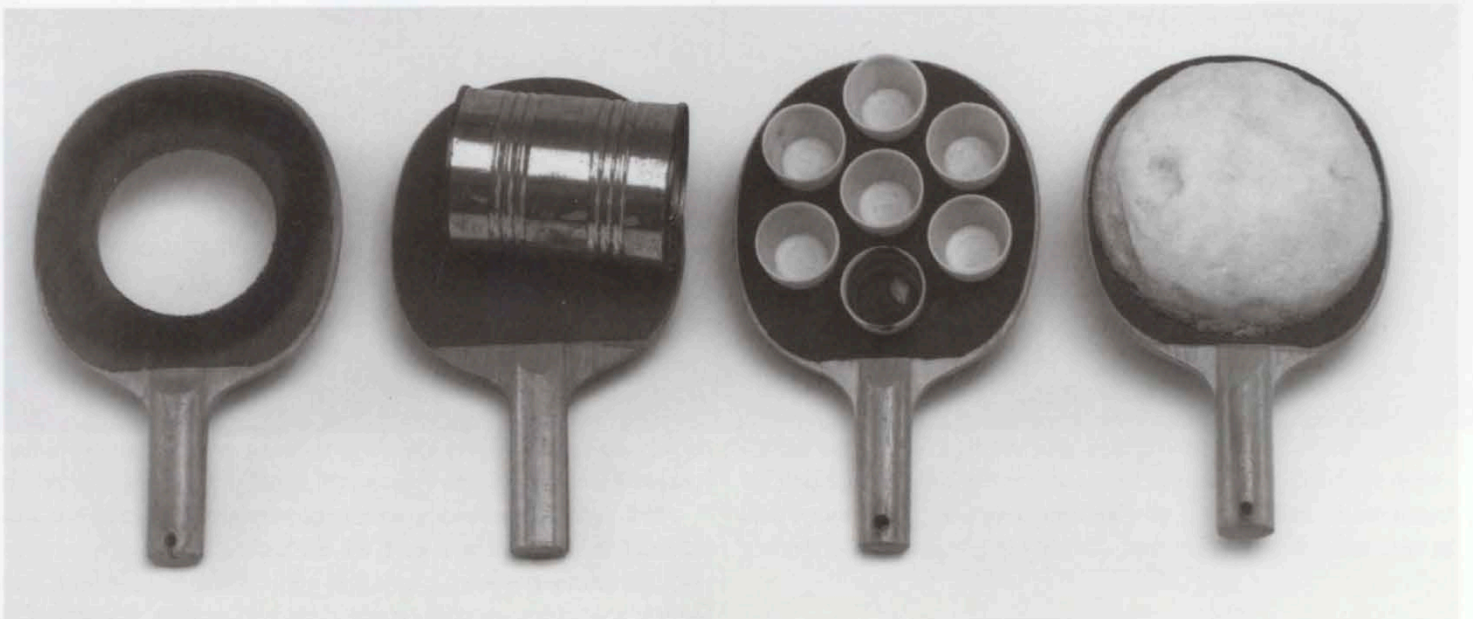
Fluxus events explore the image-making process that creates purposes and use for things, experiences for thought, and alternative behavioral performances; and every Fluxus object provides valuable insights into the performative relations it maintains with the body. Geoffrey Hendricks' many "cloud" works are a case in point. His concept for a *Cloud Hat* (1973), for example, connects the head-covering function of a hat with the canopy of the sky. It operates at the visual interstice between body and world, concept and thing, and indicates the interchangeability of subjective and objective states: clouds on the hat suggest clouds in the head, a metaphor for dreams, the unconscious, and imagination. It is not surprising that John Lennon used a cloud painting by Hendricks for the cover of his album *Imagine*, whose work promotes alternative social practices and urges reimagining and reevaluating divisive economic, political, and social institutions.

Maciunas' many versions of the generic Ping-Pong paddle (convex and concave, corrugated, multi-faceted, hole-in-the-center, leaded, and soft) (opposite, bottom) exhibit the importance of altering objects to redefine behavioral patterns. While in formal aesthetic terms Maciunas' paddles qualify as Duchampian assisted readymades, this formal feature is of far less significance than the ways in which they perplex the user and confound the body, requiring its realignment with conceptually implausible behavior as they upset physical and mental connections and conventions. Maciunas' changes to the common paddle preserve its recognizability, but insist that players reconsider the new demands of the game, the skills it once required, and the patterns the player once performed. In short, players must re-perform, must learn to reinvent mind/body orientations, abilities, and actions. Such objects force the user to *rethink* the body, its actions, and its objects. Similarly, Maciunas' *Multicycle* (1966) (left), a 100-seater or 20-seater bicycle, also required new skills involving body balance, timing, rhythm, coordination, and cooperation with other riding bodies.⁸⁸ As it organizes its athletes into a collective performance that challenges individuals to work as a group or fail in their event, it sets the metaphorical stage for participation and shifts individuation to aggregate or collective action.

Masks were occasionally worn in Fluxus events for the same purpose. In 1963, Wim T. Schippers, Willem de Ridder, and Tomas Schmit appeared masked in smiling grins to perform de Ridders' *Laughing* (1961) in Amsterdam (opposite, top). The representation or image of an emotive mood was literally strapped on to the performer to shift the codes of bodily communication and override the physical experience of the body—suggesting that a "smile" may be "worn" and that emotions wear the mask of the body cover. Maciunas also resorted to masks to conflate identities, as with his *Yoko Ono Mask* or *John Lennon Mask* (1970), which permit the performer to acquire the persona and celebrated aura of a popular cultural hero or heroine: when I wear a Yoko Ono or John Lennon mask, I am the Yoko or John in me.



PERFORMANCE OF WILLEM DE RIDDER'S *LAUGHING AT* INTERNATIONAAL PROGRAMMA, AMSTERDAM (1963). PHOTO DORINE VAN DER KLEI. COURTESY THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.



GEORGE MACIUNAS, FOUR ALTERED PING-PONG RACKETS (LEFT TO RIGHT): *HOLE IN CENTER RACKET*, *CAN OF WATER RACKET*, *CONCAVE RACKET*, *CONVEX RACKET*, COMMERCIAL PING-PONG RACKETS WITH MIXED MEDIA, VARIOUS DIMENSIONS. THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.



A RESIDUAL OBJECT FROM A PERFORMANCE OF ALISON KNOWLES' *IDENTICAL LUNCH*, BARTON, VERMONT (1967). PHOTO COURTESY ALISON KNOWLES.

The performative aspects of objects in Fluxus reinforce consciousness of body enactments and raise questions both about the cultural status and use of objects and, by extension, the status and function of human behavior. Furthermore, since art objects are coveted and endowed with an economic value and with ritual and class status, the performative element required by objects in a Fluxus event provides information about how human action itself is classed, socially prescribed, and valued. Such themes then invoke meditation on how both objects and acts relate to political and ideological constructions that structure social ceremonies, institutions, and practices.

Alison Knowles' extended event *Identical Lunch* acts out such considerations. In 1969, Knowles shared a Chelsea art studio space in New York City with Philip Corner. During this period she engaged in a "noonday meditation . . . eating the same lunch at the same time at the same place each day."⁸⁹ Knowles remembers that Corner "midwifed if not actually preconceived" her meditation into a performance score that, together, they began to investigate methodically: "The Identical Lunch: a tunafish sandwich on wheat toast with lettuce and butter, no mayo and a large glass of buttermilk or a cup of soup" (opposite). Corner realized that the set of objects and their uses that Knowles had isolated could function as components of an action that might be undertaken in private or public performances, alone or with others. Corner, in fact, became "so obsessed" with performing the score that Knowles decided to abandon her habit for a time, but not before various individuals undertook the performance of the *Identical Lunch* at Riss Food, a diner advertising "Home Cooking" located on Eighth Avenue between Twenty-second and Twenty-third streets, just up the street from Knowles' studio.

Knowles' *Journal of the Identical Lunch* (1971), which recorded these various performances, reveals individual variations in the process of eating and the conditions that surround it—variations that expose the impossibility of an "identical" lunch. For despite the attempted repetition of elements, chance determines the composition. One of the greatest variables in the score was the kind of soup served to different performers. Lynn Lonidier, for example, was served a "homemade clear" soup with a few vegetables "dangling in it."⁹⁰ Vernon Hinkle's soup was "peppery" clam chowder. Dick Higgins forgot to order soup altogether, a lapse of memory that not only momentarily unveiled the heterogeneity of these performances but raised the specter of economics (the cost of the soup should have been subtracted from the price of Higgins' lunch). Participants in the *Identical Lunch* almost uniformly reported that Riss Food charged seventy-five cents for this lunch in 1969. But variations exist, and the cost of the "special" affected the fluctuating price of the bill, as did "extras" added by an eater, tips, and mistakes in addition. In all its permutations, *Identical Lunch* requires the reader-performer to compare a series of variables that range from urban economics, issues of inflation, the quality and status of the restaurant, the class of its clientele, the ethics of exchange, and so forth.

Identical Lunch is about the body that eats. Motion (mastication, drinking, and swallowing) and sound (chewing, crunching, nibbling, gnawing, gulping, champing, sipping, lapping, and other mandibular functions) determine its formal structural elements, along with such

companion acts as the disgorgement of food and the excretory functions of salivating, sweating, urinating, and discharging excrement. The body that eats and drinks is alive. It is nourished, gains sustenance, and survives. The profundity of the *Identical Lunch* is sustained by the simplicity with which edible organic matter ("a tunafish sandwich on wheat toast . . .") signifies the primary nurturing action of life.

This eating and drinking body, however, quickly seeks pleasure in nurture—a pleasure that social privilege provides. Thus the body that eats is classed and gendered with dietetic entertainments, amusements, and obsessions that range from gluttony to anorexia. Degrees of excess and limitation shape the permission accorded the body. Where it eats, what it eats, with whom it eats, how much is allowed to be eaten, eating and its relationship to seduction and clothing—all these elements, and more, relate to the body as an eating figure.

This body, or figure, is also a thinking, feeling, desiring, and determining personality who exists in relation to acts, and individual peculiarities and habits of consumption resonate when individual performers particularize conditions of personality, ego, and place. Vernon Hinkle, for example, enjoys description (his sandwich is "thick at its bulging middle and tapers to 1½ inches at each of three remaining corners") and problem-solving (he provides an elaborate solution to the problem of tuna "squishing" out the sides of his sandwich). Dick Higgins, on the other hand, must secure himself existentially before eating. He locates himself historically: date (March 14, 1969), time (12:40 PM), street address on and from which he departed for Riss Foods (238 West 22nd Street in New York City); meticulously describes his dress ("black Italian shoes, black socks, underpants decorated with tiny black and white or black, white, green or blue geometric patterns . . . and a beat-up brown overcoat with a synthetic fur lining"); and provides a careful assessment of personal traits (size, color of eyes and hair, shape of glasses, and "pale complexion") that offers a picture of his intellectual concerns. We know that he carried with him the *Saturday Review* (March 15, 1969) and a "Late City" edition (March 14th, 1969) of the *New York Post*. The notation that he "jaywalks" even suggests his attitudes regarding rules and laws.

Corner, in contrast, focuses his action on a detailed account of relationships. He recalls the conditions that "Mrs. Higgins" established for his performance, notes his deviation from her instructions (he substituted rye toast for whole wheat), and promises that "When I eat with Miss Knowles, I will revert to the whole wheat." Corner is preoccupied with identifying the artist by both her married name and her maiden name, and so establishes the gender and social relations implicit in his "identical lunch": it assumes the intonation of a sexual encounter since it is "Mrs. Higgins" who gives the instructions but "Miss Knowles" with whom Corner will "eat"—wry or whole as this may be.

Identical Lunch offers a model of activities by Fluxus artists for the ways in which they negotiate the content and processes of life and infiltrate the social fabric with the ethos of Fluxus. It examines sameness, unity, and homogeneity—all aspects of individual identity unmitigated by the social—and simultaneously the foils of

opposition, counterpoint, and heterogeneity that are characteristic of the communal. Information is gained in a Fluxus performance by flipping the normative conditions of acts and things: knowledge is acquired through inversion. *Identical Lunch* is the diachronic advance of an individual through a set of complex, overlapping, simultaneous, planned, and chance events set in motion by an object (a tuna fish sandwich). Through this object we may account for social relationships. The sandwich, as it were, provides the lens through which multiple acts may be viewed and offers insight into the labyrinthine constructions of knowledge that commence on the basic level of bodily need and are transformed into desire.

Each Fluxus performance provides an archaeology of events and behaviors that concern the ways value is formulated from actions and objects. But, as discussed earlier in this essay, the performative aspect of Fluxus objects is de-emphasized when they are considered in the context of fine art, where they become—in the most reductive terms—objects reinvested with the materialist conditions of power, but bereft of their human and behavioral dimension. Fluxus events seem to caution that such transformations are dangerous. For once invested with “affective presence,” objects culturally determined to be “art” achieve a subjectivity that has the capacity to compete with and override human subjectivity in terms of value.

The Voluntary Association or Community of Fluxus

From the late 1960s on, as Fluxus evolved, transformed, and endured, Maciunas' abiding social interests increasingly shaped the group identity of Fluxus. He rallied artists into broader social projects and more elaborate collective activities that enlarged the behavioral implications of the monomorphic, single-structured event he had earlier conceived as the basis of Fluxus performance activity. In 1970, for example, a New Year's Eve Flux-Feast subtitled *Food & Drink Event* instructed participants to contribute “either a food or drink of your own invention.” The entries included such items as “Flux Eggs” (emptied egg shells filled with such delicacies as shaving cream, dead bugs, and bad smells) by Maciunas; “Turkey with concrete filling” by Knížák; “Urine Colors” (a “food with invisible drug giving color to the urine of the person eating it”) attributed to Watts; and a “Black Meal” constructed from “black drink (coffee), black beans, black meat & sauce” by Bici Hendricks. Another 1970 group effort, the Flux-Mass, contained an elaborate series of sacrilegious rituals including a “baptism” and an “offertory, canon, breaking of the bread, and communion”—this last requiring the distribution of “laxative & blue urine cookies” to the congregation. Different, but related, projects included Maciunas' elaborate plans for a collective sailing trip (1975), a “Caravan/Expedition to Circumvent the World” (1975), and the purchase of a “farm” complex or “village” in the Berkshires town of New Marlborough (1976). Maciunas intended the farm to emulate the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College, and he hoped it would become “a think-tank and training ground for the future avant-garde.”⁹¹

Although this last project was never realized, as early as 1966, Maciunas (joined later by Watts) had begun to establish Fluxus cooperative studio buildings and, by 1967, had acquired property at 80 Wooster Street in New York City.⁹² Maciunas invited the filmmaker and fellow Lithuanian artist Jonas Mekas to move the Film-Makers' Cinematheque there, where it remained on the ground floor for several years before being reincorporated as the Anthology Film Archives (which returned to 80 Wooster for a number of years after 1974). Reporting on these developments in the Sunday *New York Times*, June 16, 1968, Grace Glueck wrote:

With little assistance from foundations or government agencies, F.C.I. [Fluxus Cooperatives, Inc.] has already set up four co-ops, in the light manufacturing district between Houston and Canal Streets. Scouted by Maciunas, the buildings are bought with members' own money. But Fluxhouse obtains mortgages, performs legal and architectural services, does renovation work and (if members want) manages the buildings.⁹³

While these real estate ventures provided numerous artists with an affordable place to live and own cooperatively, they also caused economic problems, litigation, and interpersonal strife. Nevertheless, they did contribute to the development of an initial alternative to the uptown gallery scene and the eventual transformation of SoHo into the district of the New York avant-garde. They must be considered, retrospectively, as concrete interventions into the economies of New York real estate and business, and they prefigured divergent artistic projects of the 1970s that located social critique and the interrelations between economic, business, and cultural institutions at the center of artistic practice.

These projects represent the logical extension of Maciunas' sociological program for performance, which had begun in monomorphic body events, progressed to more complex language and object-events, and expanded into social, political, and economic exchanges. Maciunas' notes are instructive for the way in which he charted the intersection between the semiotic and existential functions of behavior in visual art (via the French gestural painter Georges Mathieu)⁹⁴ and behavioral processes in the production of sound (via Cage), and then broadened both into the construction of collective activities, or communities.

But the ways in which Fluxus performance expanded beyond the single-focused “event” into more complex rituals and social practices extended beyond the activities of Maciunas, and the tendency became especially marked with progressive generations of artists who came to affect the organizational structure of Fluxus. With the addition to its ranks of artists such as Ken Friedman in the mid-1960s, for example, the scope of Fluxus performance activity expanded to include what might be described as a strategy for intervention into the structures through and by which history itself is written—for much of Friedman's activity consists purely in the theoretical articulation of Fluxus, its promotion, and its perpetuation. These activities must be understood as performance themselves. As an indefatigable apologist for and artist of Fluxus, Friedman processes Fluxus values in the syntax of interactive social relations. Some of these values are reflected in the “criteria” for Fluxus character drawn up by Higgins and elaborated by Friedman: “globalism, unity of art and life, intermedia, experimentalism (research orientation), chance, playfulness, simplicity and parsimony, implicativeness, exemplativism, specificity, presence in time, and musicality.”⁹⁵ Friedman's pedagogical predecessors, of course, include Eric Andersen, who traveled through



GUESTS AT THE BANQUET IN GEORGE MACIUNAS' HONOR, NEW YORK CITY (1976). PHOTO © 1976 PETER MOORE.

Eastern Europe and Russia in the mid-1960s; Willem de Ridder, with his multifarious organizing, writing, and archival work; and Bazon Brock, Henning Christiansen, and Joseph Beuys, whose teaching and writing activities all altered the course of Fluxus histories.

If I may theorize Fluxus performance in this way, then the scope of Fluxus performance might be extended also to include the activities of the "family of Fluxus" (above)—those individuals who function as special collectors (Hanns Sohm, René Block, Gino Di Maggio, Jean Brown, and Gilbert and Lila Silverman), archivists (Sohm, Brown, Block, Jon Hendricks, and Barbara Moore), historians (Moore, Block, Hendricks, Peter Frank), photographers (Sohm, Peter Moore), gallerists (Block, Emily Harvey, Christel Schüppenhauer), and other Fluxus-identified persons whose performances constitute the institutionalization of their own activities. In this sense, such individuals perform in ways the sociologist Erving Goffman (whose theories, it is significant to note, emerged in the late 1950s, precisely during the period when such performative practices as Fluxus and Happenings began to take shape) has described as the "presentation of self in everyday life."⁹⁶

There is something curiously ironic about considering such activities as aesthetic acts. For the cultural institutionalization of Fluxus is the very construction by which it is transformed into a traditional, re-presentational medium. Nevertheless, these activities—which range from individual performances to collective festivals and ceremonies, and even to institutional support (Fluxus photographer, librarian, archivist, etc.)—represent a kind of anthropological Fluxus infrastructure, a collectivity that is comparable to the formation of kinships and clans. As such, it has significant social ramifications.

Indeed, the Fluxus clan was defined and reinforced partly by numerous marital kinship relations—Alison Knowles and Dick Higgins; Robert and Marianne Filliou; Geoffrey and Bici (Forbes) Hendricks; Yoko Ono and three successive mates: Toshi Ichiyanagi, Anthony Cox, and John Lennon; Nam June Paik and Shigeko Kubota; Barbara and Peter Moore; and Geoffrey and Jon Hendricks are brothers. Collective performances marked Maciunas' marriage to Billie Hutching in 1978, and the divorce and dissolution of the joint property of Bici and Geoffrey Hendricks in June 1971. As such, Fluxus aesthetic practices, social structure, and institutional identity form a collective self-consciousness and territoriality that I want to interpret as performative.⁹⁷ The unusual configuration of intimate kinships has contributed to the clan-like structure of Fluxus and has heightened significantly the durability of this artistic movement. Equally, the collective configuration of Fluxus that occurs in the context of Fluxus performance functions as a binder holding together not only artists united through kinship, but those more loosely associated artists scattered internationally around the world. In this sense Fluxus serves as a kind of *lingua franca* among artists, or as a voluntary association, a group that appears particularly in urban populations as a response to the breakdown of traditional structures and as a force for cohesion in an environment in which individuals are often otherwise disassociated.

In his 1956 study of "The Kalela Dance," a ritual performed in the Copperbelt of Northern Rhodesia, the anthropologist J. Clyde Mitchell pointed out that dances like the *kalela* evolved in urban contexts as alternative cultural rituals for social interaction among people from different backgrounds and places of origin.⁹⁸ These dances exhibit how "tribalism," as distinct from "tribal structure," is "a category of day-to-day social intercourse [that] provides a mechanism whereby social relationships among strangers may be organized in what, of necessity, must be a fluid social situation."⁹⁹ If one could compare the function of the *kalela* dance to the function of Fluxus performance, it is possible to understand the latter as an aesthetic response related to urban conditions and needs. In "voluntary associations," groups of mutually identified, voluntarily associated peoples compensate for the disruption of tradition as their performative rituals reinforce unity. The identity of Fluxus might be similarly understood as a loose and international voluntary association, and its performances serve a social purpose much in the way the *kalela* dance served to associate uprooted peoples.

Fluxus Performance, a Model for Social Praxis

Just as the voluntary association provides a meeting ground for the shared values of the loosely associated artists who comprise Fluxus, its aesthetic territory is that equally hybrid space Higgins had defined in his essay "Intermedia" (1965) and later, more succinctly, in his manifesto-like "Statement on Intermedia" of August 3, 1966, which Vostell published in *dé-coll/age*.¹⁰⁰ There, Higgins described a "dialectic between media" that had emerged in the mid-1950s to conjoin formalism, new social institutions, growing literacy, and new technologies. He traced the origins of intermedia to modernist formal experiments with "basic images," which had resulted in "pure abstraction." But that formalism, he observed, was mired in "merely puristic points of reference," whose lack of a social imperative rendered abstraction "arbitrary and only useful as critical tools." In order to reengage art in historical conditions, it had to involve the concrete material conditions of life—the body and its languages, processes, objects; and social, political, and cultural institutions and practices. Maciunas, too, had focused on the "concrete" when he used the term as a synonym for the single-focused, minimal action-event, the "monomorphic" performance he associated with Fluxus actions.¹⁰¹ His unpublished notes and many charts attest to his attempts to develop a vocabulary capable of citing the connection between the aims of Fluxus and modernism.

In retrospect, I think it is possible to theorize the contingencies Higgins and Maciunas sought to articulate by tracing the circuitous route from pure abstraction to intermedia in the historiography of the term *concrete*. In this way, it might be shown how central intermedia and performance art are to the history of twentieth-century painting and sculpture, however marginalized many have attempted to make them.

The "basic images" to which Higgins referred were none other than the "pure abstractions" for which Wassily Kandinsky and Kasimir Malevich had used the term *non-objective*. This new term was needed in order to differentiate the pure forms of mental constructs (products of the "nature" of imagination) from the nonrecognizable images abstracted

from "nature." Locating the source of non-objective forms in the "concrete" nature of the mind/body nexus, several artists acknowledged human imagination as the origin of art: Theo van Doesburg wrote "Manifesto of Concrete Art" in 1930; Kandinsky followed with "Concrete Art" in 1938; and Hans Arp commented in 1942 that:

Nothing is less abstract than Abstract art [which] is why Van Doesburg and Kandinsky have suggested that Abstract art should be called Concrete art. . . . Concrete art wishes to transform the world.¹⁰²

After World War II, Max Bill, Eugen Gomringer, Oyvind Fahlström, and the Noigandres group from Brazil all adapted the term *concrete* to describe poetry and poetry-performances that emphasized the material visual and aural aspects of language.¹⁰³ In 1954, interpreting and expanding upon the existential aspect of Jackson Pollock's Action Painting, Georges Mathieu's performances demonstrated how the production of a calligraphic image in Action Painting provided a concrete, signifying enactment of individual character, emotion, and thought.¹⁰⁴ Maciunas recognized how Mathieu's theory and practice connected the body as a producer of signs to the development of human character.¹⁰⁵

Higgins shifted the location of concrete, "basic images" from traditional, non-objective and abstract painting and sculpture to a new site "between" (inter) media, where presentational forms might respond better to historical conditions. He thus seemed to acknowledge that formal shifts carry the primary signifying codes communicating content in art and, operating dialectically between media, intermedia might then synthesize the two concerns central to modernism—its formal and social projects.¹⁰⁶ His charge that this social dimension of art had been lost in the criticism of "merely puristic points" appeared just one year before Michael Fried's much debated article "Art and Objecthood," in which Fried constructed a complex defense of formalism, denouncing "situational" art as "theatrical" or "anti-art."¹⁰⁷ While the very term *intermedia* is itself formalist, Higgins also pointed out how the cultural impact of mass media and advanced technology rendered formalism alone insufficient to respond to the changed conditions of everyday life. He exhorted artists to seek alternative forms in "the intermedial approach":

Does it not stand to reason, therefore, that having discovered the intermedia (which was, perhaps, only possible through approaching them by formal, even abstract means), the central problem is now not only the new formal one of learning to use them, but the new and more social one of what to use them for?

Because of their use of the body as the primary signifying material of performance, artists after 1945 were able to integrate modernist visual research on the representation of time, the movement of bodies through space, kinetic rhythms, process, and change, with the urgent imperative for art to operate in real time and be connected to concrete social and political conditions necessitated by the Holocaust, the atomic bomb, and the escalation of the Cold War, with their combined ontological threat of total annihilation.¹⁰⁸ Yves Klein, indebted to his friend Mathieu, realized this trajectory of concrete, non-objective art by collapsing his monochrome painting into the use of the human body as a "living brush" in 1959. The traces left by real life, he theorized, "constituted evidence, terrible evidence (in the shadows of Hiroshima) of hope for the permanence (though immaterial) of the flesh." For it was not the technological power of "rockets, Sputniks, and missiles" Klein valued, but the "affective atmosphere of the flesh itself . . . [as a] powerful yet pacific force of . . . sensitivity."¹⁰⁹

Earlier, Mondrian had outlined this kind of an extension of art into the environment in his article "Home-Street-City" (1926), which called for the artist's studio practice to extend out from domestic and work spaces into community practices.¹¹⁰ Oskar Schlemmer's essay "Stage" (1927) and his Bauhaus course on "Man" identified everything in the human organism, from the blood and circulatory system to its position "between earth and the stars," as proper materials for art: "We shall observe the appearance of the human figure as an event and recognize that . . . each gesture and each movement is drawn into the sphere of significance."¹¹¹ Kaprow summarized the fifty years of modernist research that had anticipated Happenings in this way:

The pieces of paper curled up off the canvas, were removed from the surface to exist in their own, became more solid as they grew into other materials and reaching out into the room they filled it entirely. Suddenly, there were jungles, crowded streets, littered alleys, dream spaces . . . people moving.¹¹²

Pioneers of performance such as Claes Oldenburg theorized the social import of direct enactment and emphasized the necessity for empathic connection:

I am for an art that is political-erotic-mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum . . . for an art that embroils itself with the everyday crap & still comes out on top. I am for an art that imitates the human, that is comic, if necessary, or violent. . . . I am for the art of conversation between the sidewalk and a blind man's metal stick.¹¹³

Carolee Schneemann, on the other hand, identified the sensate needs of communal exchange:

I assume the senses crave sources of maximum information. . . . If a performance work is an extension of the formal-metaphorical activity possible within a painting or construction, the viewers' sorting of responses and interpretation of the forms of performance will still be equilibrated with all their visual experiences. . . . The body is in the eye.¹¹⁴

By introducing presentational means, the artist equally introduced bodily action as a component of aesthetics. But consideration of human action in the context of art also offered a revolutionary means by which artists might directly interact with, intervene in, and resist what Higgins described as the "dangerous forces at work in our world." Such live art provided an effective means to work constructively for "what we really care about and love or hate as the new subject matter in our work." Thus, the aims of "concrete" art to "transform the world," as Arp stated it, were empowered in performance by locating art in concrete human imagination, experience, and body action in the lived world. In these extraordinary ways, artists' performance collapsed modernist avant-garde aims into a remarkably unified theory, practice, and praxis. But if Fluxus performance contributed to the restoration of a social and political discourse to art, as I believe it has, it was not through conventional activism nor partisan rhetoric superficially identified as "political." Fluxus performance—as all performance art—operates by infiltration and by offering alternative perspectives about the nature of identity, use, exchange, and what Beuys described as "ability value."¹¹⁵

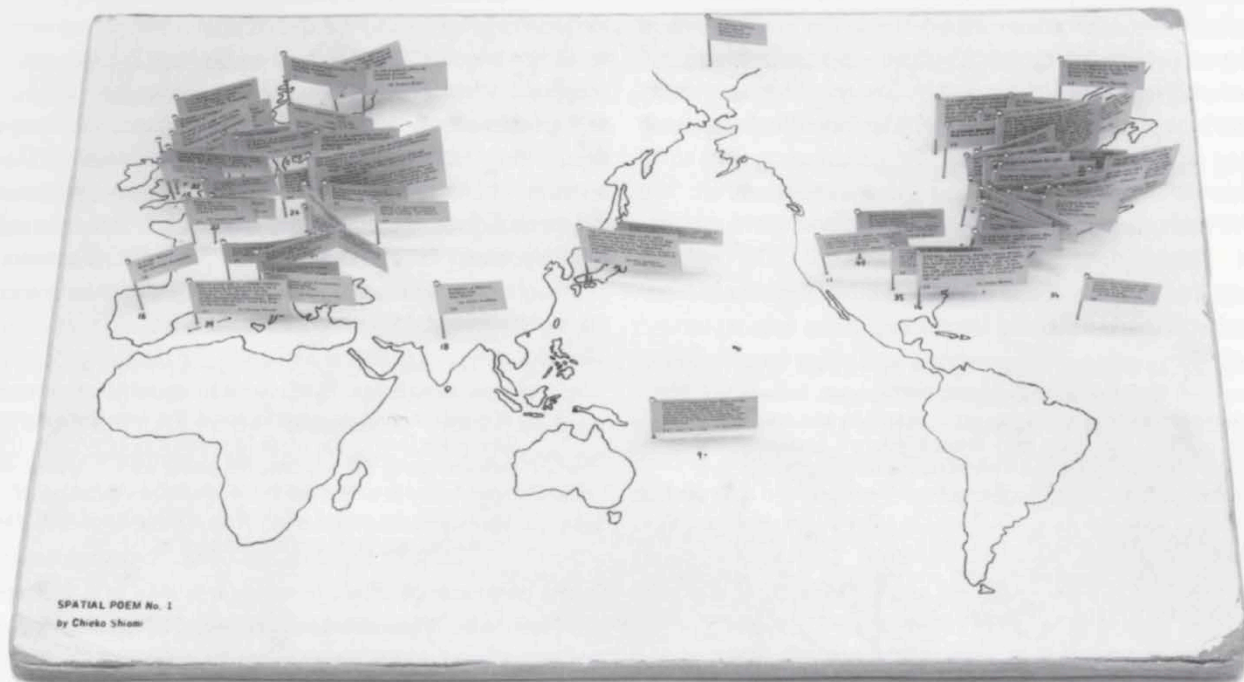
As discussed earlier in this essay, a deeply polarized debate formed in Fluxus around the question of whether performative actions should be aimed at direct cultural intervention and aggressive agitprop activities (as Maciunas, Flynt, and Schmit argued in 1963) or, as Brecht later articulated in a 1979 interview, in accordance with long-term paradigm shifts.¹¹⁶ Brecht's kind of view ultimately prevailed¹¹⁷ and, with it, a notion of change that requires reform in ways of thinking—what Brecht described as the necessity for a new "history of mind."¹¹⁸ Such a history would indicate complex, interrelated, and uneven transitions of thought and points of exchange or anomalies where thinking alters ways of being and doing. As Brecht cautioned:

It's not always productive to consider things in terms of form. Some things have to be taken as individual members of a galaxy, or as points on a spiral, the form that's important is the form of the whole to which they contribute. This helps to clarify the way different artists work. . . . What we need today is a new synthesis of all the forces we're in touch with, no matter where they come from, a new synthesis that can be nourishing for all of us.¹¹⁹

Fluxus performance offers precisely this kind of a synthesis and, as such, might be considered a special kind of social praxis, a mode of action in the world that contributes to radical shifts currently occurring in epistemologies.

The word *praxis* derives from the Greek "action" or "doing" and refers to acts, courses of action, interaction, or the exercise of practicing an art, science, or skill. Praxis also implies the therapeutic practice of a specific system or agency. It includes actions in public or political life, and acts aimed at the recovery of something. Nuanced meanings of the word suggest that praxis has the capacity to redress and rehabilitate: praxis is restorative. The distinction between poiesis (the making or production of things) and praxis (affective, rehabilitative action in the public sphere) has been inscribed historically both as language and as institutional practice. This inscription that divides works of art from social action persists in the way creative activity is valued against social doing. What is pertinent here is that Fluxus performances function both as individual works of art *and* as actions of the human body capable of demonstrating the multifarious modes in which consciousness constitutes its objects. Fluxus events collapse poiesis and praxis into a new historical paradigm that the term *intermedia* marks. The principal material of this praxis is the body and its site is the social world.

I have offered extensive interpretations of Schmit's *Zyklus* and Knowles and Corner's *Identical Lunch* for the ways in which they demonstrate how an individual action and a collective ritual might extend and perpetuate into larger social configurations those values and practices shared by the individual artists who voluntarily associated with Fluxus. If these associations and collective practices are conceptualized as praxis, then Fluxus performance might be defined as the production of self as value and the labor of that performance as a meaning-producing event. Fluxus performance becomes, then, a sort of metaphysics of the dynamics of social exchange and human action that extends from the infra to the supra—from the personal to the political, from the regional to the international.



MIEKO (CHIEKO) SHIOMI, *SPATIAL POEM NO. 1* (1965). MAP ON FIBERBOARD, MASKING TAPE, PINS, OFFSET ON CARDS, 11 7/8 x 18 1/2 x 3 3/8. THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi's extended text-object-action *Spatial Poem*, begun in 1965, marks out the terrain of this enterprise. The piece consists of nine separately scored "global events" which, for a decade, she and dozens of artists around the world realized.¹²⁰ Shiomi would send a letter to potential participants, inviting them to do an event, document their action, thought, or word in some way, and send her the documentation. The responses were then charted onto a map of the world as sightings that located the participants geographically (above). *Spatial Poem No. 8*, "Wind Event," is typical of these instructions:

Make wind or disturb the movement of the natural wind which surrounds this globe. Please tell me what kind of apparatus you used and how you performed this event. Your reports will be recorded in the world map. Performance Period October 7–27, 1974. Reports should preferably be written in English and within about three hundred words. Please add to your report the date and time of your performance.¹²¹

One of the artists who participated on two different occasions in Shiomi's *Spatial Poem* was the Lithuanian musicologist Vytautas Landsbergis, now president of that country, who responded to *Spatial Poem No. 3* in the following way:

Falling Event. Various things were let fall: Vytautas Landsbergis caught a pike at the lake of Aisetas, cleaned its entrails and threw them into a pit towards the center of the earth. Then he cut the pike into pieces and let them fall onto a frying pan. July 31, 1966.¹²²

The previous year, Maciunas, a boyhood friend of Landsbergis, had contacted the musicologist for some performance ideas. The first score Landsbergis provided was for *A Sewer's Hymn*:

The performer walks on stage, pulls out from a bag a dozen licey rats and throws them at the public! / this would be work for people animals and the public. / Do not take this as a joke, these are chance ideas which could in thousands, come to a head, in Fluxus spirit.

While avoiding the temptation to draw overblown parallels between the historic events that brought Landsbergis to the presidency of Lithuania and the "Fluxus spirit," one may nonetheless want to ponder the question of whether this spirit resides in the political values and actions of Landsbergis the political leader as much as they did in Landsbergis the musicologist and artist. And, if so, what does this mean for the developing policies and practices of a nascent democracy?

The spirit of Fluxus performance resides in its demonstration of how the body is the meaning-constructing agent of sentience and knowledge. It is the source for the manipulation of objects, social systems, and institutions, as well as the invention, reinvention, and interrogation of language.¹²³ Fluxus performances are about the action-structure of things and events as defined both by and through language and the body. Fluxus praxis consists of posing questions in the forum of these performances as they interrogate individual and social meanings and present the body as an object of subjectivity in direct association with other forms of subjectivity. Visual aesthetics traditionally have been restricted to representational codes alone—the conventions of poesis that perpetuated the aesthetic distance claimed for works of art. Fluxus actions and events extend poesis into praxis by linking corporeal and ontological significations to actual social and political situations.

When a body of statements, norms, and coherent models coalesce in a social practice, Michel Foucault holds, then that body of knowledge functions as a "threshold" of epistemology, the formation of which is "neither regular nor homogeneous."¹²⁴ Fluxus artists explored behavioral presentations, objects, enunciations, concepts, and sets of choices as alternative means to contribute to knowledge and "the rebuilding of foundations." The kinds of actions they proposed, in their consistent challenge of social controls, have inobtrusively contributed to the exposure and dismantling of rigid, arbitrary, and relative social formations and univocal morality.

Foucault argued that the ramblings of the "mad" are paradoxically "credited with strange powers of . . . predicting the future, or revealing . . . what the wise were unable to perceive." Such ramblings are permitted free expression, if "only in a symbolic sense, in the theatre" where such a figure may step "forward, unarmed and reconciled, playing his role: that of masked truth."¹²⁵ Fluxus performance, with its codex of meaning-producing enactments, archaeological territories, and lessons in perception for the reevaluation of changing social relations, provided that "masked truth" that has "predicted the future" and contributed to the current paradigm shift. Higgins' intermedia, as the space "between" media, points equally to current researches in genetic engineering, the intersection of nature and machines in the cyborg-body, virtual realities, and the endo- and nano-technology of the next century. Fluxus performance, in fact, represents a parallel cultural phenomenon, akin in its unprecedented implications for aesthetic social reform to the development of such new technologies, as well as to the transformations in world politics brought about by the end of the Cold War. Whether cultural, social, scientific, or political, each implies radical changes in epistemological paradigms called for in the post-1945 period.

During the very period in which Fluxus emerged, Mircea Eliade, the Romanian phenomenologist of religion, expressed a similar sense of need for urgent change when he wrote that his work in the history of religion and ethnology represented "a way to open the Western mind and to introduce a new planetary humanism" different from "the detachment and indifference with which nineteenth-century naturalists studied insects"—one that emphasized changing "*the procedure itself*."¹²⁶ At its best, Fluxus performances alter the "procedures" of Western cultural practices and behaviors by requiring action to move through signifying events that are able to demonstrate how work is connected to life, and how labor is the process through which meaning and, thus, values are constructed and then lived in voluntary associations that form community. Fluxus performances teach how process is a part of content and content is the form of process; they present models of how the meaning of content is determined by the processes in which the substance of that content was formed, and by the ways it is received. Equally, process is determined by the ways in which content is identified, categorized, and codified. Process and content are aspects of the same phenomenon, which is the act of constructing meaning. Constructing, reconstructing, and examining the nature of meaning is the trust and the responsibility of the artist, a trust that Fluxus-associated artists have maintained. Their aesthetic practices and performances—residing between water and stone—remain valuable models for the ethical and intellectual reconstruction of the lived world.

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Notes

This essay is dedicated to the memory of Robert Filliou, one of my most valued teachers. I want to thank Hanns Sohm for his vision and early commitment to Fluxus in the establishment of the first Fluxus archive and for his generosity and merry hospitality while I lived and worked at his home on several occasions before the Archiv moved to the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart. I also want to thank the artist Jon Hendricks, curator of the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit, for his thorough and constructive criticism; David Castriota, Karen Davidson, Sherman Fleming, Rob Jensen, Jill Meredith, Kathy O'Dell, and Julie Walker for their thoughtful comments on early versions of the text; and Valerie Hillings, who tirelessly helped me with revisions. I am also indebted to Janet Jenkins, whose patient editing helped unravel labyrinthine layers of my thought. Finally I want to thank Elizabeth Armstrong for her enduring belief in my work.

1 Bengt af Klintberg as quoted by Dick Higgins in "Publisher's Foreword," in Benjamin Patterson, Philip Corner, Alison Knowles, Tomas Schmit, *The Four Suits* (New York: Something Else Press, 1965), p. xi. Conceptually, Duchamp's "infrathin" and "inframince" resemble the space to which af Klintberg refers when he identifies the "between" water and stone. See *Marcel Duchamp, Notes*, trans. Paul Matisse (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983).

2 Tomas Schmit, *Zyklus für Wassereimer [oder Flaschen]*, in Jürgen Becker and Wolf Vostell, eds., *Happenings: Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme: Eine Dokumentation* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1965), p. 246. See also Jon Hendricks, ed., *Fluxus Codex* (Detroit and New York: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1988), p. 462.

3 Stephen Jay Gould, *Time's Arrow Time's Cycle: Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Geological Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987). Gould points out that "tension and multiplicity have pervaded . . . Western views of time" and that "something deep in our tradition requires, for intelligibility itself, both the arrow of historical uniqueness and the cycle of timeless immanence—and nature says yes to both" (p. 200).

4 Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Studies in Zen*, ed. Christmas Humphreys (New York: A Delta Book, 1955), pp. 165, 167. As early as 1957, George Brecht, in his essay *Chance-Imagery*, self-published as a pamphlet in 1959 and later republished (New York: Something Else Press [Great Bear Pamphlet, no. 3], 1966), quoted the Romanian poet Tristan Tzara's observations on the relationship between modern art and Eastern philosophy: "Dada is not at all modern. It is more in the nature of a return to an almost Buddhist religion of indifference" (p. 5). For Tzara's text, see "Lecture on Dada" (1922); repr. in Robert Motherwell, ed., *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1951), p. 247.

5 Suzuki, supra, note 4, p. 87.

6 Henri Lefebvre, *The Sociology of Marx*, trans. Norbert Guterman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 33.

7 I will use the word *performative* throughout this essay as the adjectival form of *performance* (as is becoming the practice). The term, coined by the philosopher J. L. Austin in his lecture series and subsequent book *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), refers to a class of expressions that are not descriptive and have no truth value, but rather in their very utterance, *do* something (I bet . . . , I promise . . .). In a similar way, the "meaning" of many Fluxus events resides precisely in the act of their performance, and thus the use of the term with respect to Fluxus is close to the Austinian sense.

8 One of the social dimensions of performance art that distinguishes it from other visual art practices is the question of "copresence"—the relationship of subject to subject in the interchange of information. The intersubjective aspect of performance art, I think, is one of the critical qualities that establishes the fundamentally political and philosophical condition of this medium. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty emphasized *inter*-subjectivity as differentiated from Sartre's "subjectivity" as a means to situate his philosophical inquiry in a social discourse over the question of copresence. See Albert Rabil, Jr., *Merleau-Ponty: Existentialist of the Social World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 31.

9 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, England and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991), p. 405.

10 Ibid, p. 407.

11 See especially Fredric Jameson's opening remarks in his *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1990), p. 1. See also Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991); Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," *Art & Text* 11 (September 1983), repr. in idem, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss and Paul Patton (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983); and idem, *L'échange symbolique et la mort* ("L'ordre des simulacres") (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

12 Dick Higgins, "Intermedia" (1965), *Something Else Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (February 1966); repr. in *foew&ombwhnw* (New York: Something Else Press, 1969), pp. 11–29. The next year, Higgins produced a manifesto on the same topic, entitled "Statement on Intermedia," *dé-call/age* 6 (July 1967), unpaginated; reproduced in this book on pp. 172–173. See also idem, "The five essential myths of Postmodernism," *Journal of Art* 1, no. 6 (June–July 1989), pp. 10–11.

13 George Brecht, "The Origin of Events" (1970), in Hanns Sohm, ed., *happening & fluxus*, exh. cat. (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1970), unpaginated.

14 Idem, "Project in Multiple Dimensions" (1957–1958), in Henry Martin, *An Introduction to George Brecht's Book of the Tumbler on Fire* (Milan: Multhipla, 1978), p. 126.

15 Ibid.

16 Brecht, supra, note 4, p. 15. See also Patrick Hughes and George Brecht, *Vicious Circles and Infinity: An Anthology of Paradoxes* (New York: Doubleday, 1975; repr. Penguin Books, 1980).

17 Cage had been invited by Dr. Wolfgang Steinecke, Director of the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik at Darmstadt, to discuss his "Music of Changes," and the resulting "Composition as Process" lectures consisted of "I. Changes, II. Indeterminacy, III. Communication." See Cage, *Silence* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), pp. 18–55. For a discussion of the impact of these lectures on Fluxus artists, see p. 148 of Andreas Huyssen's essay in this book.

18 John Cage and David Charles, *For the Birds* (Boston and London: Marion Boyars, 1981), p. 80.

19 See Moira Roth, "The Aesthetics of Indifference," *Artforum* 10, no. 3 (November 1977), pp. 46–53; and Nick Kaye, "The Aesthetics of Denial," in *Mediamatic* 4, no. 4 (Summer 1990), pp. 199–211. Roth argues that Cage, Johns, and Rauschenberg maintained a politically neutral position during the Cold War which she equated with an "aesthetic of indifference." Kaye argues that Cage, George Brecht, and others associated with Fluxus "denied the object" and thus "blur[red] the definition and parameters of the work," thereby "postponing its completion" (p. 210).

20 Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 133.

21 Ibid, p. 135.

22 Ibid, p. 136.

23 See Ronald Gross and George Quasha, eds., *Open Poetry: Four Anthologies of Expanded Poems* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), p. 385. See also the editors' comments on Benjamin Patterson's *Methods & Processes*, in which Patterson attempted to "structure specific environments for conditioning . . . micro-environments composed of instructions."

The action-music-performance events staged by the Spanish ZAJ group—artists who sometimes associated with Fluxus—intersect with the history and development of concrete poetry and have an affinity and overlap with performance art and Fluxus. ZAJ was formed in July 1964 by Juan Hidalgo, Walter Marchetti, and Ramone Barce, who were joined later by the composer Tomas Marco and the poet Jose Luis Castillejo. Attention to the combination of word as sound and image realized in action structured the formal elements of ZAJ's "action-music." The title ZAJ was chosen for the way *Z* and *J* are particular to the Spanish language while the open vowel *A* is used internationally. See ZAJ, "EL 'ZAZ'? Quiere Usted Tocar con mi?" and Rodrigo Royo, "La Musica de Espacial," both in *SP* [Madrid], February 20, 1966; "Musica de accion," *SP*, December 15, 1966; unpublished correspondence between Hidalgo and Higgins, March 30, 1966, and April 4, 1966, in Higgins Letter Archives, Archiv Sohm; and Richard Kostelanetz, "The Discovery of Alternative Theater: Notes on Art Performances in New York City in the 1960s and 1970s," *Perspectives of New Music* 27, no. 1 (Winter 1989), p. 171.

24 Stéphane Mallarmé, *Oeuvres complètes*, (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1961), p. 334.

25 Duchamp posited the active involvement of the viewer as the resolution of all art in his lecture "The Creative Act" (1957), in Gregory Battcock, ed., *The New Art* (New York: Dutton, 1973), pp. 23–26.

26 See Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); and idem, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979). See also Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980); and *L'Art conceptuel: une perspective* (Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 1989).

27 Julia Kristeva, "Giotto's Joy," in Norman Bryson, ed., *Calligram: Essays in New Art History from France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 32.

- 28 Homer A. Jack, ed., *The Gandhi Reader: A Source Book of His Life and Writings* (New York: Grove Press, 1956), p. 181.
- 29 For an etymology of the term *performance art*, see Bruce Barber, "Indexing: Conditionalism and Its Heretical Equivalents," in AA Bronson and Peggy Gale, eds., *Performance by Artists* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1979), pp. 183–204.
- 30 Many artists creating live actions, particularly Europeans, vehemently rejected the term *performance art*. British artists Stuart Brisley and Leslie Haslam argued in a tract entitled "Anti-Performance Art" (in *Arte Inglese Oggi 1960–1976* [London, 1976]) that the term is inadequate, since the act of making art is itself performative; moreover, the term inappropriately connotes theater, not visual art. See also Hugh Adams, "Editorial: Against a Definitive Statement on British Performance Art," in the special issue on performance of *Studio International* 192, no. 982 (July–August 1976), p. 3.
- 31 See *ZERO* 3 (1961) for these and all the following cited texts; repr. in *ZERO* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1973), pp. 51–330.
- 32 See Maciunas' unpublished letter to Tomas Schmit, November 8, 1963, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart; and his unpublished letter to George Brecht, circa mid-January 1963, The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit.
- 33 Joseph Beuys quoted in Gotz Adriani, Winfried Konnertz, and Karin Thomas, *Joseph Beuys: Life and Works*, trans. Patricia Lech (New York: Barron's, 1979), p. 77. In telephone conversations with the author, Jon Hendricks has questioned the veracity of Beuys' recollection concerning the time he actually became involved in Fluxus.
- 34 Jon Hendricks has advised me that in the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection there are handwritten notes by Maciunas and Schmit that seem to suggest that Beuys' performance of *Two Musicians* may not have been the first of his Fluxus actions and actually may have taken place off-stage. Hendricks has also pointed out that Beuys retired to the audience after his actions and proceeded to shine a hand-held spotlight on the other Fluxus performers throughout the following events. For Hendricks, this action appears to have been aggressive and would serve to separate Beuys from the collective spirit to which Maciunas in his most altruistic moments claimed to subscribe.
- 35 *Supra*, note 33, p. 92.
- 36 See playbill and poster announcements in Sohm, ed., *supra*, note 13.
- 37 See Beuys' statement in the "Introduction" to Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1979), p. 7.
- 38 See Maciunas' letters quoted in *supra*, note 33, pp. 82–85.
- 39 Maciunas as quoted in Tisdall, *supra*, note 37, p. 84.
- 40 See unpublished letters by Fluxus artists, particularly Dick Higgins' correspondence in the Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart; and Maciunas' unpublished letters and notes in the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit.
- 41 Allan Kaprow, *Assemblage, Environments, and Happenings* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1966), pp. 188–198.
- 42 *Supra*, note 33, p. 82. Indeed, a number of Fluxus actions required participation from the audience, but not in the same all-encompassing manner as Happenings.
- 43 Jackson Mac Low, letter to Wolf Vostell, June 12, 1963, in the Vostell Fluxus and Happening Archive, Malpartida de Cacares, Spain.
- 44 Wolf Vostell, *Yellow Pages or an Action Page, Vaseline sTREet* (Fluxus newspaper no. 8, 1966).
- 45 Barbara Moore first posed this question as the title of her broadside, "What Is Fluxism" (New York: Bound & Unbound, 1991), p. 1.
- 46 Allan Kaprow, in a 1964 discussion with George Brecht entitled "Happenings and Events," broadcast by WBAI Radio, New York; repr. in Sohm, ed., *supra*, note 13.
- 47 Certain Fluxus attitudes resemble similar interests of Beat Generation poets. Nevertheless, Dick Higgins disassociated Fluxus concerns from those of the Beats: "The Allen Ginsbergs told how they wanted to be God while the unions shut my generation out. . . . To concentrate on A-bombs and peace movements is surely worth while but not so much to the point as recognizing the economic basis of our conflict with the East, and then working for peace through economic means. . . . We are not non-participants, like the beats were: we are arming to take to the barricades." See Higgins, *Jefferson's Birthday/Postface* (New York: Something Else Press, 1964), p. 13. In many ways this statement represents rhetorical posturing, a means of marking out Fluxus intellectual and creative territory.
- 48 Robert Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performance Arts* (Cologne: Verlag Gebr. Koenig, 1970), pp. 79–80.
- 49 Henry Flynt, "Down With Art" (Fluxus Press Pamphlet, 1968); repr. in idem, *Blueprint for a Higher Civilization*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Multhipla Edizioni, 1975), pp. 64–65.
- 50 Idem, "From 'Culture' to 'Brend'" (1959–1963), unpublished ms., Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, p. 35.
- 51 See idem, "Exercise Awareness States" (April–July 1961), original ms. read at the AG Gallery in New York City on July 15, 1961. A copy of this unpublished material was sent by Flynt to the author in a letter of October 1, 1989. These "activities" are similar to the "Mock Risk Games" published in Flynt, *Blueprint*, *supra*, note 49, pp. 153–159. Such techniques for self-discovery became routine aspects of performance art in the 1970s, as Allan Kaprow's conversion of the polymorphous Happening into private experiential "Activities" during that decade attests.
- 52 Richard O'Regan, "There's Music—and Eggs—in the Air!," *Stars and Stripes*, Sunday, October 21, 1962, p. 33.
- 53 See a handbill for the exhibition repr. in Sohm, ed., *supra*, note 13.
- 54 Robin Page in an unpublished interview with the author, May 26, 1982, Munich. Responding to my inquiry about Metzger's exclusion, Filliou answered: "I do not recall the details of actualization of the Misfits' Fair. In London, I thought I had simply minded [my] own contribution. Those were wild years, tho, and I blush to the top of my ears when some of the uncouth things I said or did at times come to my mind or are brought back to me. In contrast, I do remember Gustav Metzger as a quiet, thoughtful man. I am sorry if I ever said anything that was offensive to him" (unpublished letter of Robert Filliou to the author, July 28, 1986).
- 55 Metzger had been invited by the artist Roy Ascott to lecture in December 1962 at the Ealing School of Art on "Auto-destructive art auto-creative art: The struggle for the machine arts of the future." Peter Townshend, then an art student at Ealing, was present for Metzger's lecture and, by 1964, had begun to incorporate the destruction of instruments into the end of The Who's concerts. Townshend has cited Metzger's lecture at Ealing as the catalyst and inspiration for his destruction actions. See *The Who* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), pp. 6–7. For documentation on Metzger and destruction art see Kristine Stiles, "The Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS): The Radical Cultural Project of Event-Structured Art" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1987).
- 56 When Milan Křížák used musical instruments and other objects in unconventional ways in the streets of Prague in 1962, however, his metaphoric demonstrations of the hypocrisy of class-symbols used in Communist state-imposed culture for the repression of the "people" yielded little humor. In Eastern European countries like Czechoslovakia and Romania, where laws required the registration of typewriters as a means to control *samizdat* publications (self-published political tracts and censored works of art, literature, philosophy, and political science), actions like Křížák's became highly charged and personally dangerous political protest.
- 57 John Morreall, ed., *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 83. In this paragraph, I have paraphrased Morreall's excellent summaries of various philosophers' views on humor that appear in the individual introductions to the chapter entitled "Traditional Theories of Laughter and Humor," pp. 10–117.
- 58 Yoko Ono and John Lennon were concerned with these issues in their coauthored "Woman is the Nigger of the World" (1972, recorded on the albums *Sometime in New York City* and *Shaved Fish*). Their lyrics acknowledged the repression of women and the psychological and social state of denigration shared by women and blacks.
- 59 Kubota in a telephone conversation with the author, June 12, 1991; and Yoko Ono, in Melody Sumner, Kathleen Burch, and Michael Sumner, eds., *The guests go in to supper: John Cage, Robert Ashley, Yoko Ono, Laurie Anderson, Charles Amirkhanian, Michael Peppe, K. Atchley* (Oakland and San Francisco: Burning Books, 1986), p. 174.
- 60 Flynt has continued to insist, despite the fact that Maciunas was the only person willing to "publish my work at the time," that he never was "Fluxus." See this author's unpublished interview with Flynt, September 22, 1989; and, more recently, Flynt's "Mutations of the Vanguard: Pre-Fluxus, During Fluxus, Late Fluxus" (1990), parts of which appear under the same title in Gino Di Maggio, ed., *Ubi Fluxus ibi motus 1990–1962*, exh. cat. (Milan: Nuove edizioni Gabriele Mazzotta, in association with the Venice Biennale, 1990), pp. 99–128.
- 61 Henry Flynt, unpublished interview with the author, September 22, 1989.
- 62 Flynt spoke on this subject at Harvard in May 1962 in a lecture entitled "The Important Significance of the Creep Personality." Flynt's conclusions regarding the "creep" personality and its relationship to the formation of authentic aesthetic experiences formed the cornerstone for his later aesthetic theory of *brend*. See his "Creep," in Flynt, *Blueprint*, *supra*, note 49, pp. 182–186; and Kristine Stiles, "Creep and Brend: Henry Flynt's Utopian 'Blueprint for a Higher Civilization'" (Paper delivered at the College Art Association Annual Meeting, February 15, 1990).

63 Henry Flynt, "Fight Musical Decoration of Fascism!," handbill-poster, The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit; repr. in Hendricks, ed., supra, note 2, p. 250. See also Flynt's handbill-poster "Picket Stockhausen Concert!" (p.169 in this book); its long informative text very clearly sets forth Flynt's position on racial politics. Flynt did not abandon his politics after this protest, but he did realize that: "The 'Originale' demonstration had shown that hectoring Stockhausen could not communicate my cultural politics to the public." See Flynt, in Di Maggio, ed., supra, note 60, p. 115. Flynt followed these activities by writing, often under a pen name, for various radical publications.

64 This score for *First Symphony* was provided in an unpublished letter of Ben Patterson to Elizabeth Armstrong, April 22, 1992. All following Patterson quotes are derived from this letter.

65 See Hendricks, ed., supra, note 2, p. 404.

66 Ibid, p. 300.

67 Luce Irigaray, "Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un," *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1977); trans. in Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds., *New French Feminism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), p. 103.

68 This score was published in the first Fluxus newspaper, *cc V TRE* (January 1964).

69 Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit*, 2nd edn. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), unpaginated.

70 "Unlike the eye, the ear operates by registering nearby subtle change. Unlike the eye, the ear requires closeness between subject and object. Unlike seeing, speaking and listening suggest dialogue and interaction" (Mary Field Belenky et al., eds., *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* [New York: Basic Books, 1986], p. 18). See also Kristine Stiles, "Unbosoming Lennon: The Politics of Yoko Ono's Experience," *Art Criticism* 7, no. 2 (1992), pp. 21–52.

71 Mae G. Henderson, "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Re-Membering the Body as Historical Text," in Holinar Spellers, ed., *Comparative American Identities* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 63–64.

72 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 117. Kubota has continued her gendered and sexual discourse in her subsequent video installation work. In *Video Poem* (1968–1976), Kubota encased a nineteen-inch monitor with a single-channel, color-synthesized tape of *Self-Portrait* in a nylon bag with zippered openings to create a sculptural form resembling the vaginal cavity. A poem accompanying this work and reflecting *Vagina Painting* appears as "Video Poem" (1968–1969) in "Duchampiana," *Tracks: A journal of artists' writings* 3, no. 3 (Fall 1977), p. 63; and in Mary Jane Jacob, ed., *Shigeo Kubota: Video Sculpture*, exh. cat. (New York: American Museum of the Moving Image, 1991), p. 18.

73 Historically consigned to the passive position of the mythic "muse," the female in Western culture has served as the creative inspiration for man, stimulating his imagination and redirecting his sexual drive into productive channels that provided his salvation in the creation of music, poetry, and visual art. The male Surrealists' obsession with the muse is legendary. Writing about the ways women artists of the Surrealist movement were utilized "to make the whole psychosexual field of human experience available to the [male] artist," Whitney Chadwick has observed that "the muse, an externalized source of creative energy and a personification of the female Other, is a peculiarly male invention" (Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* [Boston: A New York Graphic Society Book and Little, Brown, 1985], p. 66).

74 In her *Interior Scroll* (1975) Carolee Schneemann made concrete the metaphorical connection between procreation and creation suggested in Kubota's *Vagina Painting*. See Schneemann, *More Than Meat Joy: Complete Performance Works & Selected Writings*, Bruce McPherson, ed. (New Paltz, N.Y.: Documentext, 1979), pp. 234–239.

75 Robert Rauschenberg, "An incentive to paint . . ." in *Sixteen Americans*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1959); repr. in Dore Ashton, ed., *Twentieth-Century Artists on Art* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), p. 243.

76 Nam June Paik, *Danger Music for Dick Higgins* (1962). This score is repr. in *Nam June Paik: Werke 1946–1976, Musik–Fluxus–Video*, exh. cat. (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1976), p. 47, as are many other early scores such as *Serenade for Alison*, which first appeared in *dé-coll'age 3* (1962).

77 Anticipating Kubota's *Vagina Painting*, Paik's *Chronicle of a Beautiful Paintress* (1962), dedicated to Alison Knowles, calls for a woman to stain the flags of selected world nations "with your own monthly blood" and afterwards to "expose them and yourself in a beautiful gallery."

78 Nam June Paik, "Towards a New Ontology of Music," in Sohm, ed., supra, note 13.

79 The Austrian artist Valie Export, removed from Fluxus, yet related, infused a feminist critique of the sadistic titillation implied in the idea of branding a woman's thigh when she imprinted an erotic symbol—a tattooed garter, sign of woman's bondage—on her thigh in an action entitled *Body-sign action* (1970). See *Valie Export* (Vienna: Dokumentations-Ausstellung des österreichischen Beitrags zur Biennale Venedig und Galerie in der Staatsoper, 1980), p. 46. Watts' piece, as well as Export's, anticipates the body tattooing and violation of punk, with its rejection of the Judeo-Christian veneration of the body.

80 Schneemann's position vis à vis Fluxus, like that of Hansen, Lebel, and others, is very complicated. Their exclusion from the context of Fluxus is, on the one hand, arbitrary and distorts the history of the period during which live, performative art developed. Schneemann, in conversation with the author, July 9, 1992, eloquently depicted this context: "Fluxus is my group: we all came up together and we lived inside each other's pockets for fifteen years. We used to be very precious to each other in the early days." Certainly such performances as her *Glass Environment for Sound and Motion* (1962) at the Living Theater, in which Dick Higgins, Philip Corner, La Monte Young, and others participated, locate her development in the milieu of Fluxus. On the other hand, it is very clear that her work differed dramatically from the direction charted by Maciunas, and her report (in a letter to the author, June 11, 1992) that "Maciunas sent an excommunication directive in regard to my work? 65? 66?" is not surprising when one considers the unprecedented direction her art took with *Chromelidon* (1963), and *Eye Body* (1963) (see Schneemann, supra, note 74, pp. 37–46, 52–53). Kubota and Ono were familiar with the radical way in which Schneemann used her body, and these actions, as well as her legendary *Meat Joy* (performed in Paris, London, and New York in 1964), charted a new direction that anticipated not only the so-called 1960s sexual revolution, but feminism and certainly Kubota and Ono's feminist performance directions.

Neat histories of art and the space limitations of exhibitions and publications often, and must, gloss over these kinds of problematic, uneven fits, and this essay is no exception—with a few exceptions! However, it would be historically negligent and art historically false to pretend that while Schneemann, Hansen, Lebel, and others may not have been close to the center of Fluxus, their important incursions into and around its fluctuating core did not contribute greatly to making Fluxus what it is. As Lebel wrote in a letter to the author, August 3, 1991: "I have heard about a "Spirit of Fluxus" show. . . . Is it the same old bureaucratic lie pretending that Orthodox Fluxus invented "IT" all (that Gutai or Happenings to Dada never occurred) that it was a purely "Amerika Uber Alles" movement (excluding Asia, Latin America & Europe)?"

81 Michael Nyman, "George Brecht Interview with Michael Nyman," *Studio International* 192, no. 984 (November–December 1976), p. 257. Brecht's statement echoes the central problem of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*: "We must discover the origin of the object at the very center of our experience; we must describe the emergence of being and we must understand how, paradoxically, there is for us an in-itself (John F. Bannan, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty* [New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967], p. 59).

82 Robert Plant Armstrong, *The Powers of Presence: Consciousness, Myth, and Affecting Presence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), p. 3. (In *Chance-Imagery* [supra, note 4, p. 3] Brecht speaks of the "affective image" in connection with art.)

83 Ibid, p. 5.

84 Ibid, pp. 5–6.

85 Ibid, p. 7.

86 Ibid, p. 13.

87 Alison Knowles, score for *Performance Piece #8*, as presented in Patterson et al., supra note 1, p. 35.

88 See Maciunas' discussion of *Multicycle* in letters to Ben Vautier, January 10, 1966, and to Milan Knížák, circa January 1967, cited in Hendricks, ed., supra, note 2, p. 367. The object was finally made in 1969.

89 Alison Knowles, "Introduction" to Philip Corner, *The Identical Lunch: Philip Corner Performances of a Score by Alison Knowles* (San Francisco: Nova Broadcast Press, 1973), p. 1. All following quotes in this paragraph are from Corner's text. My comments on *Identical Lunch* first appeared in my essay "Tuna and Other Fishy Thoughts on Fluxus Events," in Cornelia Lauf and Susan Haggood, eds., *FluxAttitudes*, exh. cat. (Ghent: Imschoot Uitgevers, 1991), pp. 25–34.

90 Alison Knowles, *Journal of the Identical Lunch* (San Francisco: Nova Broadcast Press, 1971), p. 2. All following quotes are from Knowles' book.

91 George Maciunas, "Prospectus for New Marlborough Centre for the Arts," (n.d., circa 1976), in Jon Hendricks, ed., *Fluxus etc./Addenda I: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, exh. cat. (New York: Ink &, 1983), p. 287. Such collective excursions and long-distance travel had been imagined and proposed by Maciunas since the early 1960s.

92 For an early publication on Maciunas' enterprise, see *Loft Building Co-Operative Newsletter, No. 1* (1966), in Hendricks, ed., supra, note 91, p. 170. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit, contains many unpublished and unresearched documents on Maciunas and Watts' real estate ventures. I believe that when these documents are carefully examined, it will be possible to expand greatly our understanding of both the political and social performative dimension of Fluxus.

93 Grace Glueck, "Art Notes," *New York Times*, Sunday, June 16, 1968; repr. in Hendricks, ed., supra, note 91, p. 196.

- 94 While the event and its relation to a score is deeply rooted in Cagean concepts, Fluxus performance also drew upon the existential elements in Action Painting that Maciunas identified in the theory and practice of Mathieu. Maciunas, whose unpublished notes reveal a great interest in Mathieu, was intrigued by the painter's theory that the calligraphic gesture signifies complex emotions and thoughts, and thus is a sign for individual character. See Maciunas' unpublished notes in the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection. I am particularly grateful to Jon Hendricks for drawing my attention to the significance of these notes, which include a thorough record of reviews of Mathieu's work through November 1958 (suggesting that Maciunas' study of Mathieu took place in 1959).
- Maciunas once referred to Mathieu's 1954 painting-performance *Battle of Bouvines* as the "first Happening," acknowledging its priority to American Happenings ("Transcript of the Videotaped Interview with George Maciunas by Larry Miller, March 24, 1978," in Hendricks, ed., supra, note 91, p. 26). In this interview, Maciunas also claims that "Georges Mathieu [went] to Japan and did this action and started off the Gutai Group. Georges Mathieu was instrumental in starting the Gutai Group" (p. 12). This claim is absolutely unfounded. The Gutai were formed in 1954 by Jiro Joshihara and had their first exhibition in 1955. At that time, Mathieu's work was unknown to them as it was, itself, in the formative stages. Mathieu did travel to Japan, but not until 1957, when he was welcomed with great enthusiasm as a kindred spirit.
- 95 See Ken Friedman's "Fluxus & Co" pamphlet (New York: Emily Harvey Gallery), p. 3.
- 96 In theorizing the nature of interaction ritual, Goffman referred to "all the activity of an individual" as "interaction situation" and suggested that such activity may be so identified when it occurs during a period marked by the individual's "continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers" (Erving Goffman, "Performances," in Richard Schechner and Mady Schuman, eds., *Ritual, Play, and Performance: Readings in the Social Sciences/Theatre* [New York: Seabury Press, 1976], p. 91). See also idem, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1959); and idem, *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face-to-Face Behavior* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967).
- 97 I am thinking about a "collective self" in the manner defined by Edward Shils: "By collective self, I do not mean something outside individual minds; it is in the minds of individuals, but it is different from the individual's self. When an individual says 'we,' he or she does not mean 'I.' That is a fundamental datum. Without paying heed to it, the phenomenon of solidarity, the phenomenon of collective action, would be impossible. Yet, if solidarity did not exist, if collective action did not exist, society would not exist" (Shils, "Comments" on Craig Calhoun's "Indirect Relationships and Imagined Communities: Large-Scale Social Integration and the Transformation of Everyday Life," in Pierre Bourdieu and James S. Coleman, eds., *Social Theory for a Changing Society* [Boulder: Westview Press and New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1991], p. 130).
- 98 J. Clyde Mitchell, "The Kalela Dance," *The Rhodes-Livstone Papers* 27 (1956), pp. 1-2. I am grateful to my colleague William M. O'Barr, Duke University Department of Sociology and Cultural Anthropology, who suggested the parallel between the urban performative practices of Fluxus that I had been describing to him and the formative conditions for the development of the *kalela* dance. On voluntary associations, see also Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills' chapter on "Collective Behavior" in *Character and Social Structure: The Psychology of Social Institutions* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1953), pp. 427-455.
- 99 Ibid., pp. 30-31.
- 100 Supra, note 12. See also Higgins' *Horizons: The Poetics and Theory of the Intermedia* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984).
- 101 "Interview with Maciunas," supra, note 94, pp. 21-23.
- 102 Van Doesburg, "Comments on the basis of concrete painting," *Art Concret* (April 1930), pp. 2-4; repr. in Joost Baljeu, *Theo van Doesburg* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 181-182. See also Wassily Kandinsky, "Concrete Art" (1938), and Hans Arp, "Abstract Art, Concrete Art" (circa 1942), both in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 347-349 and pp. 390-391.
- 103 See Mary Ellen Solt, ed., *Concrete Poetry: A World View* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968). This valuable book contains many of the first manifestos of concrete poetry.
- 104 See Georges Mathieu, "Toward a New Convergence of Art, Thought and Science," *Art International* 4, no. 2 (May 1960), pp. 26-47. See also idem, *Au dela de la Tachisme* (Paris: René Julliard, 1963).
- 105 See remarks on Maciunas' interest in Mathieu in note 94.
- 106 Thomas Crow is particularly instructive on the double articulation of modernism in his "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Serge Guilbaut, and David Solkin, eds., *Modernism and Modernity: The Vancouver Conference Papers* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), p. 257.
- 107 Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (June 1967); repr. in Gregory Battcock, ed., *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968), pp. 116-147. Fried attacked any art that "includes the beholder . . . in a situation" and rejected all "theatricality" as a denigration of art into "the condition of theatre" (p. 125). A passage paradoxically praising Anthony Caro's sculpture is important not only because it betrays the internal contradiction in Fried's argument, but also because it reveals his deep aversion to the *actual* body and his neo-Platonic insistence upon resemblance: objects must merely re-present the "innumerable ways and moods [the body] makes meaning" rather than present that body as the concrete self-evidential material in which meaning constantly shifts.
- During the mid-1960s, Donald Judd and Robert Morris' writings and objects clearly moved sculpture in the direction of "intermedia." See Judd's influential essay "Specific Objects," in *Complete Writings 1959-1975* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975), p. 181; and Morris' five-part series "Notes on Sculpture," which appeared in issues of *Artforum* between 1966 and 1968. The debt Morris' work owes to Fluxus has yet to be examined, in part because he suppressed his involvement with Fluxus (see his unpublished letter of April 4, 1964, to Hanns Sohm, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart).
- 108 See Kristine Stiles, "Survival Ethos and Destruction Art," *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 14, no. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 74-102.
- 109 Yves Klein, "Truth Becomes Reality," in *Yves Klein 1928-1962: A Retrospective*, exh. cat. (Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University and New York: The Arts Publisher, 1982), pp. 230-231.
- 110 Piet Mondrian, "Home Street City" (1926); repr. in *Mondrian*, exh. cat. (New York: Pace Gallery, 1970), pp. 11-14.
- 111 Oskar Schlemmer, "Bühne" [Stage] (originally delivered March 16, 1927 in Dessau, Germany), *Bauhaus Journal* 3 (1927); excerpts repr. in Hans M. Wingler, *The Bauhaus: Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Chicago* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984), pp. 473-474.
- 112 Supra, note 41, p. 165. It is important to note, as Kathy O'Dell reminded me, that Kaprow received his Master's degree in 1952 for a thesis written on Mondrian.
- 113 Claes Oldenburg, "I am for an Art . . ." (1960), *Store Days* (New York: Something Else Press, 1967); repr. in John Russell and Suzi Gablik, *Pop Art Redefined* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), p. 97.
- 114 Carolee Schneemann, "Diary Notes from The Notebooks 1958-1963," in Schneemann, supra, note 74, pp. 9, 13.
- 115 See a coauthored statement by Beuys and his former student Johannes Stutgen that discusses "ability value" in connection to the organization of political alternatives in Beuys' theory of "Money as the Bloodstream of Society," which was physically demonstrated in his Documenta 6 installation *Honey Pump* (1977) (Tisdall, supra, note 37, pp. 254 and 264).
- 116 Henry Martin, *Part One: Never change anything. Let changes fall in. Part Two: Never say never. A Conversation with George Brecht* (Milan: Exit Edizioni, 1979), pp. 36-37.
- 117 A letter from Maciunas to Emmett Williams of June 25, 1963 (The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit) reveals how critical Maciunas felt Brecht's role was to the very identity of Fluxus. "Bad news!" Maciunas wrote, "George Brecht wants out of Fluxus, thinks Fluxus getting too aggressive (this Newsletter No. 6). So we will have to compromise, find a mid-point between Flynt, Paik and Brecht (if a mid-way can be found!). It would be very bad without Brecht. He is the best man in New York (I think)."
- 118 Supra, note 116, p. 40.
- 119 Ibid., pp. 41, 46.
- 120 Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi, *Spatial Poem* (Osaka, Japan: Mieko Shiomi, 1976).
- 121 Partial text of the letter Shiomi sent to potential participants. See unpublished documents relating to this project in the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit.
- 122 On Landsbergis' involvement with Fluxus actions see Nam June Paik, "2 x mini giants," *Artforum* 29, no. 6 (March 1991), pp. 90-91. This and subsequent quotes related to Landsbergis are from this article. Vaclav Havel was also involved in Happenings in the 1960s. See Havel, *Letters to Olga: June 1979-September 1982*, trans. Paul Wilson (New York: Henry Holt, 1989), especially his comments on the "social nature of theater" in a letter of December 19, 1981 (pp. 260-262).
- 123 References to the mechanistic or "tool" aspect of the body in performance are outlined in Willoughby Sharp, "Body Works," *Avalanche* 1 (Fall 1970), pp. 14-17.
- 124 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Harper Colophon, 1972), pp. 186-187. Although Foucault speaks of a "body of knowledge," it is important to note Lefebvre's critique (supra, note 9) that this formation identifies an epistemological space that has no reference to actual lived space and the experience of that space, whether in the body itself or its surrounding institutions and activities.
- 125 Ibid., p. 217.
- 126 Mircea Eliade, *Journal II: 1957-1969*, trans. Fred H. Johnson, Jr. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. xii.