

# **The Avant-Garde From Futurism to Fluxus**

J|M|V|A|C

Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center



## Table of Contents

The Prophets of the Avant-Garde .....	10
Kazys Binkis, The Avant-Garde Poet .....	14
Jonas Mekas Timeline .....	28
R. Bruce Elder. Notes Towards a Sketch of Jonas Mekas .....	32
P. Adam Sitney .....	42
Amy Taubin .....	46
Adolf Mekas .....	50
Jonas Mekas, Collection of 40 Films .....	55
Jonas Mekas, Collection of 40 Film Stills .....	58
Jonas Mekas, Zefiro Torna 40 Film Stills .....	65
Mari Dumett .....	89
George Maciunas, Fluxus Manifesto, 1963 .....	116
George Maciunas, Curriculum Vitae .....	126
Julia E. Robinson .....	138
George Maciunas' Charts .....	142
The Historical Past of Fluxus' Future .....	164
Maria Carolina Carrasco .....	218
What the Flow Meant: Maciunas' Corbusier .....	245
Hollis Melton. Notes on Soho and a Reminiscence .....	262
Larry Miller, Flux Labyrinth, 2007 .....	269
Program 1, Early Avant-Garde films .....	282
Program 2, Films on Fluxus .....	283
Program 3, Flux Film Anthology .....	284
Special Film, presented on 16 mm .....	287





Juozas Imbrasas  
Mayor of the City of Vilnius

Today's man no longer knows how to find joy in the new bloom of a violet in the light of the sunrise, nor in the evening's setting of the sun. There is simply no time – the brand new plasma television that one just „has to have“ beckons too temptingly from the store window, and the rental down-payment on the new apartment will soon have to be made. However, art always was and will be the expression, form and content of a different look at our surroundings and a hidden protest against the norm.

Everyday life – is that art? Perhaps art can become everyday life? Where is the boundary that separates these worlds, and where do they merge? Only one thing is clear – everyday life can be art. To look at life differently. To create a different whole from details. And that is – FLUXUS.





Gediminas Kirkilas  
Prime Minister  
Republic of Lithuania

During the last few years, Vilnius has firmly established itself on the cultural map of Europe as a capital city of great creative potential and significant events. This fact is further evidenced by the establishment of the Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center.

I am firmly convinced that the Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center will not only make a strong contribution to the cultural life of the capital and its residents, but will also be of valuable global cultural importance.

The return of the works of two famous Lithuanian artists and leaders of the avant garde - George Maciūnas and Jonas Mekas – serves as a catalyst for Vilnius to become a new 21st century world center of the avant-garde. May their symbolic return serve as an example to all of those artists of Vilnius and Lithuania who are lost throughout the world; may it serve as an example to all those for whom future recognition awaits.. No matter where you may stray to study, create and work and no matter how famous a venue you find for an appreciative audience, Lithuania will always be the place that awaits you the most.

My sincere congratulations to the Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center on its inauguration. Creative ideas, works and the fame of Lithuania's artists will spread from here throughout the world, affirming the long-held truth of „Ars longa, vita brevis.“







Artūras Zuokas  
Chairman of the Board  
Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center

The foremost goal of the Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center is to firmly secure the place of Lithuania and Vilnius on the cultural map of the world. We have begun by returning to Lithuania the works of two artists who pioneered new movements and have long been a part of the world's cultural lexicon. I believe that Vilnius can become the world's capital of the avant-garde and Fluxus. Hundreds of thousands of fans and friends throughout the world accompany the return of Jurgis Maciunas and Jonas Mekas to Lithuania.

We are working to create a world class cultural centre and to that end have invited internationally renowned architects Zaha Hadid, Daniel Libeskind and Massimiliano Fuksas – whose names alone stand as signs of creativity and quality - to create for Lithuania. They need no introduction to art lovers around the world, but they will help those very same lovers of art to discover Lithuania.

We are pleased and proud of the fact that in pursuing our goals, we have partners well-known throughout the entire world and are working with prominent individuals and international art institutions. We also take pride and pleasure in the burgeoning support that we have received and continue to receive from the business and arts communities as well as the general public. They, as we, believe that Vilnius can be Europe's Capital of Culture not only for 2009, but become a constant center of attraction for enthusiasts of the arts. A city in which art is the foundation for bold and innovative new ideas.

## The Prophets of the Avant-Garde

The origins of artistic advances are always composed of certain elements, such as collaboration and innovation, through which a gathering of artists rebel against convention and force the redefinition of art upon historical concretions. Furthermore, exploration of these progressions should engage a study of their catalysts without whom they would never have had the kinetic energy to occur. These embodied foundations deservedly ascend to prophetic postures through their alternative, subversive conceptions and relentless resolutions. Kazys Binkis, Jonas Mekas, and George Maciunas are such prophets, men who were instrumental in igniting persuasions in the constitution and amplification of a perpetually universal artistic movement known as the avant-garde. Binkis helped introduce Lithuania to the vigor of alternative, western practice when he founded the literary movement, The Four Winds. Mekas, often described as “the godfather of American avant-garde film,” has played a profound role in the history of cinema with his novel, diaristic style and his devotion to the preservation, exhibition, and canonization of avant-garde film. George Maciunas conceived of Fluxus as an “incorporated art collective” that sought to destroy the perception of art as either sacred or decadent, protest the pretension and professionalism of art, and subvert the commercial commodity of the art world. He devoted his entire being to a Fluxus lifestyle enlisting others to partake.

It is remarkable how interrelated the legacies of these three men are, being that they are each artistic entities in their own right. Mekas and Maciunas are the heirs to Binkis’ artistic revelation. He was responsible for instigating the modernization of Lithuanian literary standards through contact and eventual adaptation of modern avant-garde ideologies within academic studies in Berlin. This distinctive poet’s own work enveloped conceptions resonating in Italian and Russian Futurism, folkloric and popular Lithuanian traditions, and natural themes melded with an experimental style. Innovation was produced through ecstatic poems that were lyrical and immediate, playful and optimistic and the “literary afternoons” he organized during

which other poets and artists would gather to discuss new trends in art and poetry, domestic and international. Binkis essentially kindled a radical spirit that spawned a dynamic artistic age adorned with a profound legacy eliciting concerns of artistic education and practice. Jonas Mekas is a visual and literary poet. He was born in 1922 in Semeniskiai, a town near Binkis' birthplace. A pivotal moment in his young life occurred when he was sent to labor camp during World War II. After his release he studied philosophy at the University of Mainz and, in 1949, immigrated to Williamsburg, Brooklyn with his brother, Adolfas.

It was in New York with a Bolex 16mm camera and passion for cinema that Mekas became a film institution, publishing the journal **Film Culture**, founding the Anthology Film Archives, and pioneering the "New American Cinema." He rejects the title of "filmmaker" preferring to be called a "filmer." Mekas' films are personal and poignant, cerebral and captivating. His freewheeling shots and trembling camera embody the fragility and attractive vibrancy of a memory. The tangible, yet transient frames grasp and embed a moment in time preserved and lost. His observance of the natural world crafts lyricism that captures the splendor of experience. In the cooperation of incredible tenderness and transforming rhythm, Mekas' camera develops beautiful and hypnotic portraits. His films are often visual diaries, recording events from his own life and the lives of artists and friends such as George Maciunas, John Lennon, Yoko Ono, Andy Warhol, Salvador Dali, Nam June Paik, Shigeo Kubota, Jackie Kennedy, and Allen Ginsberg, among others. Mekas' films were momentously significant to his filmmaking peers and continue to affect contemporary experimental artists. His and Maciunas' iconoclasm liken them to other famous poet-theorists such as Tristan Tzara, author of the Dada manifesto, André Breton, pioneer of the Surrealist movement and automatic writing, and Marinetti, forerunner of Italian Futurism. The steadfast lineage of these and other avant-gardists distinguishes their immense influence upon the perception and adaptation of the world at large.

George Maciunas was an organizing force in the New York avant-garde scene of the 1960's. He was a cornerstone of eccentricity, diligence, and obsessive impulse, connecting artists with varying degrees of Fluxus involvement. Jonas Mekas was an artist in this social milieu and formed a deeply unique relationship with Maciunas sharing meals and mindset. Mekas was not only one of his closest friends; he was also a prominent Fluxus lifeline who devoted a magnitude of funds and energy. In 1962, Maciunas devised feats of compiling a Fluxus anthology, producing various Fluxus publications, and organizing what was to be the first Fluxus festival. Mekas provided funds and moral support to the Fluxus cause that enabled a grateful Maciunas to act on some of his schema. The next year, Mekas supported his friend again, giving him work designing for his journal **Film Culture**. During this period Mekas also provided Maciunas with a free place to live at 80 Wooster Street. Mekas' film, **Zefiro Torna: Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas** is a poetic elegy to Maciunas' exceptional spirit that was so instrumental in bonding the New York avant-garde scene of the 1960s. Fluxus was a multinational organization organized in 1962 that sought to blur any distinctions between life and art, invigorate the critical awareness of "art" within the mundane, and promote a non-art reality grasped by all. It also challenged the structure of imperative manifestations of the avant-garde through reinvigoration within changed cultural/economic circumstance securing the Futurist legacy of rejecting blind inheritance of tradition. Fluxus is epitomized in George Brecht's word event, *exit*, in which the performer is told to do exactly what the sole word in the piece instructs. Maciunas' praise of the piece elucidates why it is so archetypically Fluxus, "It does not require any of us to perform it since it happens daily without any 'special' performance of it...a non personal 'ready made'." Maciunas rejected the notion that a person could be an "artist" as in adopting any other profession. Art wasn't something you could do because it wasn't anything other than existence. The means for conveying this conviction was seriousness meshed with playfulness spurring endless Fluxus publications, concerts, and

events worldwide. One of his greatest achievements was the Fluxhouse Cooperatives, rundown buildings purchased with the help of a new "Experimental Housing Bill" in 1966 and converted into artists' lofts on Wooster Street in Manhattan. Because of dubious legality, the city had not yet cleared the area for residential living and Maciunas never took steps to legalize the co-op or his managerial status. However, these lofts paved the way for the artist boom that occurred in SoHo in the following years. The lofts were just one of the thousands of Fluxus schemes Maciunas fanatically conceived of and initiated, propagating the mass production, distribution, and consumption of avant-garde ends to be unlimited and obtained by all.

Current affirmation of the Fluxus expedition proceeds through an exhibition entitled **Fluxus East**. Represented is an original testimony of the progressive Fluxus motions in the former Eastern Bloc. The echo of Fluxus is documented in an "intermedia" of art involving music, film, photographs, poetry, correspondences, actions, and events. The collective bloc discovers restoration in this interactive exhibition facilitating an enthusiastic encounter with Fluxus incarnate. Though Maciunas and Mekas spent the majority of their lives in America, both artists maintained roots to their home countries. As mentioned before, Binkis was one of Mekas' earliest artistic influences. Maciunas had Lithuanian precursors as well. He printed an announcement for a concert of works by Lithuanian composer and painter Mikalous Ciurlionis, renowned for his musical works as well as his music-inspired paintings. By intertwining these two art forms, Ciurlionis broke down traditional barriers, as Maciunas would later do with Fluxus art and concerts. He also printed a flyer for an evening of Lithuanian poetry hosted by Jonas Mekas at the Film Makers' Cinematheque, one of the Anthology Archives' precursors, featuring visiting poet Violeta Palcinskaite. Mekas' ties with the Lithuanian expatriate art community come forth in his films **Lost, Lost, Lost** and **Zefiro Torno**, which feature footage shot at New York gatherings of Lithuanian expatriates. Maciunas' personal and artistic history

is strongly knitted with that of Lithuania. His best friend from his school days in Kaunas was none other than Vytautas Landsbergis, a former music professor at the Lithuanian conservatory who would later become the first head of Lithuanian parliament after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Landsbergis was somewhat of a Fluxus artist himself, made clear by a correspondence of performance directions that he maintained with Maciunas throughout the 1960s.

Together, Binkis, Mekas, and Maciunas form an avant-garde triumvirate whose influences and works are intriguingly interconnected. Devoted to pushing boundaries, these artists attempted to bring people into a higher state of consciousness about the nature of life itself and shatter all assumptions of what art is and how it is supposed to function within that life. If the "avant-garde" remains elusive as a disembodied concept, it is concretely manifest in Kazys Binkis, Jonas Mekas, and George Maciunas.

Harry Stendhal, Curator



## Kazys Binkis The Avant-Garde Poet

Kazys Binkis was a poet and founder of the Lithuanian literary movement and eponymous journal, *Keturi Vėjai*, or “The Four Winds”. Though scholars often place *Keturi vėjai* under the umbrella of Eastern-European Futurism, Kazys Binkis’ poetry defies such categorization. It is possible to discuss Binkis’ work in the context of other movements, but not to place his poems squarely within any of them. He incorporated the immediacy and dynamism of Italian and Russian Futurism into his work, but exuded an optimistic innocence, and respect for nature not found in either of those movements.

Binkis was born in 1893 in Gudelia, a village in the Biržai district of Lithuania. He was fluent in Russian by the age of nine and at home in the world of classic Russian literature. He attended primary school at Papilys, and later studied to be a schoolteacher at Biržai progymnasium. In 1910, he attended agriculture school in Voronec, but left for lack of money. He then took courses in education at the Lithuanian Committee in Vilnius and later studied literature and philosophy at Berlin University. From a young age, he began to publish prose and poetry in various Lithuanian journals. He published numerous collections of his poetry, including **Eilerasciai (The Poems)** and **100 Pavasariu (One Hundred Springs)**. He also wrote a widely successful play that debuted in 1938, entitled **Atžalynas (The Undergrowth)**.

He also began but never completed a second, more ambitious and experimental play, **Generaline Repeticija (General Repetition)**. In 1922, he co-published the **Keturi vėjai Manifesto, The Prophet of the Four Winds** and two years later, organized the journal *Keturi vėjai*. In addition to himself, the most prominent members of *Keturi vėjai* were Binkis’ fellow poets, most notably Sigitas Šemerys and Juozas Tysliava.

From 1864 to 1905, Lithuania had been subjected to harsh occupation under the Tzar of Russia. Under an extensive

agenda of “Russification,” all texts published domestically were required to be printed in the Cyrillic alphabet. Because of this repression, the Lithuanian literary landscape was not yet ready for “great verbal, phonetic, typographic revolutions as in other countries,” according to Birute Ciplijauskaite in her essay, “Kazys Binkis and the Poetic Traditions of the 1920s.” This may explain why avant-garde movements in Lithuania retained an air of traditionalism and were never as abrasive or as anti-bourgeois as the corresponding movements in other countries. As Ciplijauskaite says, “To create free Lithuanian poetry was their goal.”

Binkis’ poetry was mostly lyrical and he often incorporated nature into his writing (in contrast to the cold, mechanical “naturalness” of Marianetti and the Italian Futurists). His first collection of poems, **Eilerasciai**, includes Lithuanian folklore imagery and popular tradition. He wrote with a lightness and optimism, almost as if he were seeing the world through the eyes of a child. Even when he does employ social criticism and parody, as in his plays and in his second collection of poems, his style is never as bitingly satirical as Vladimir Mayakovsky’s, the Russian poet and playwright who scholars often cite as a major influence of Binkis’. In **100 Pavasariu**, Binkis’ experimental side is more evident. Like the Futurists, he experiments with the creation of new words, though even his more liberal use of this concocted language is interwoven with lines written in standard Lithuanian. This later work also exudes a soaring and ecstatic optimism of a poet “drunk with life.” In comparing Binkis to Spanish poet and playwright Gabriel Garcia Lorca, Ciplijauskaite describes Binkis and Lorca as having similar dispositions: “gay, captivating, the soul of every reunion, full of organizing talents...In both, musical inclination accompanies poetic creation: Lorca is always sitting at the piano; Binkis appears everywhere with a mandolin.”

Though he made a living with his literary work, Binkis was

involved in numerous political and literary organizations throughout his life. At the age of 25 he was elected as a chairman of the Birzai District Council. The next year he became a secretary of the editorial board at the Vilnius-based journal **Liepsna (The Flame)**, where he worked as a journalist at the press bureau. He also worked for the Society of Lithuanian Writers for a number of years.

Despite his relative conservatism by the standards of a continental avant-garde, his modernizing influence on the Lithuanian canon, and the new western ideas he introduced to his country by way of his study in Berlin, are undeniable. In 1922, he held weekly "literary afternoons," when he and fellow intellectuals would meet in his home to discuss new literary trends and read European poetry. It was during these meetings that the attendees' own "modernist" poetry was read and discussed.

And so, if the avant-garde ideas developing in the literature and art of Western Europe and Russia manifested themselves in Lithuania, they were combined with a brand of national tradition in such a way that created something new altogether. "One could say that Binkis' main motive for writing is not 'épater le bourgeois' or to produce a 'slap in the face of the public' [the name of Mayakovsky and his Russian compatriot's manifesto]. His poetry never becomes a mere game, a riddle, or a succession of mathematical signs. There is less stress on the erotic element so abundant in the Italian Futurists, and less evolution toward epic writing, as in the Russians." Keturi vejai did not simply recycle folkloric themes or styles, as previous Lithuanian poets had done. Instead, according to Bronius Vaskelis of the University of Illinois at Chicago, they extracted the cruder, more paradoxical subject matter from peasant folklore and used it to synthesize a truly novel, yet still fundamentally national style.

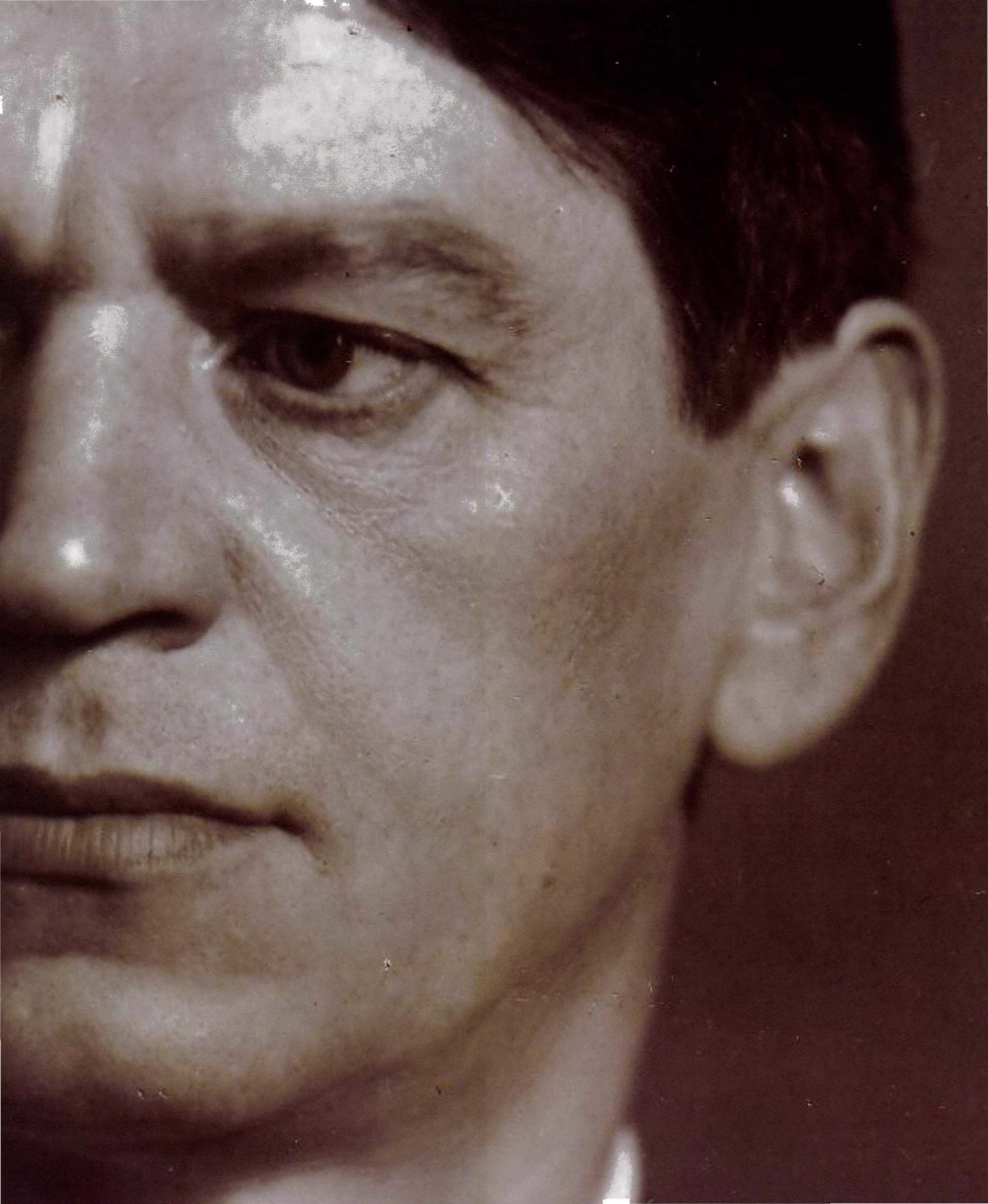
Kazys Binkis died in Kaunas in 1942, but his work continued to influence young Lithuanian writers. According to Jonas

Mekas, upon completing sixth grade, students received a collection of Binkis' writings, "a beautifully printed and designed little 120 page book as a graduation gift." The little book was a combination of "Lithuanian history, culture, past, present, arts, etc.—like you see in guide books published today for tourists. The difference was that it was written specifically for young students and written in the most beautiful literary language of which Binkis was a master," says Mekas. He also has stated that it was a director at his school, who "wrote the first in-depth study of Futurism in Lithuania, it was never published but he gave me the manuscript to read and that's how I got the virus of modernism." Though Keturi vejai never published any literary masterworks, it changed forever the shape of the Lithuanian literary landscape, paving the way for later modernist writers and artists.

Harry Stendhal, Curator



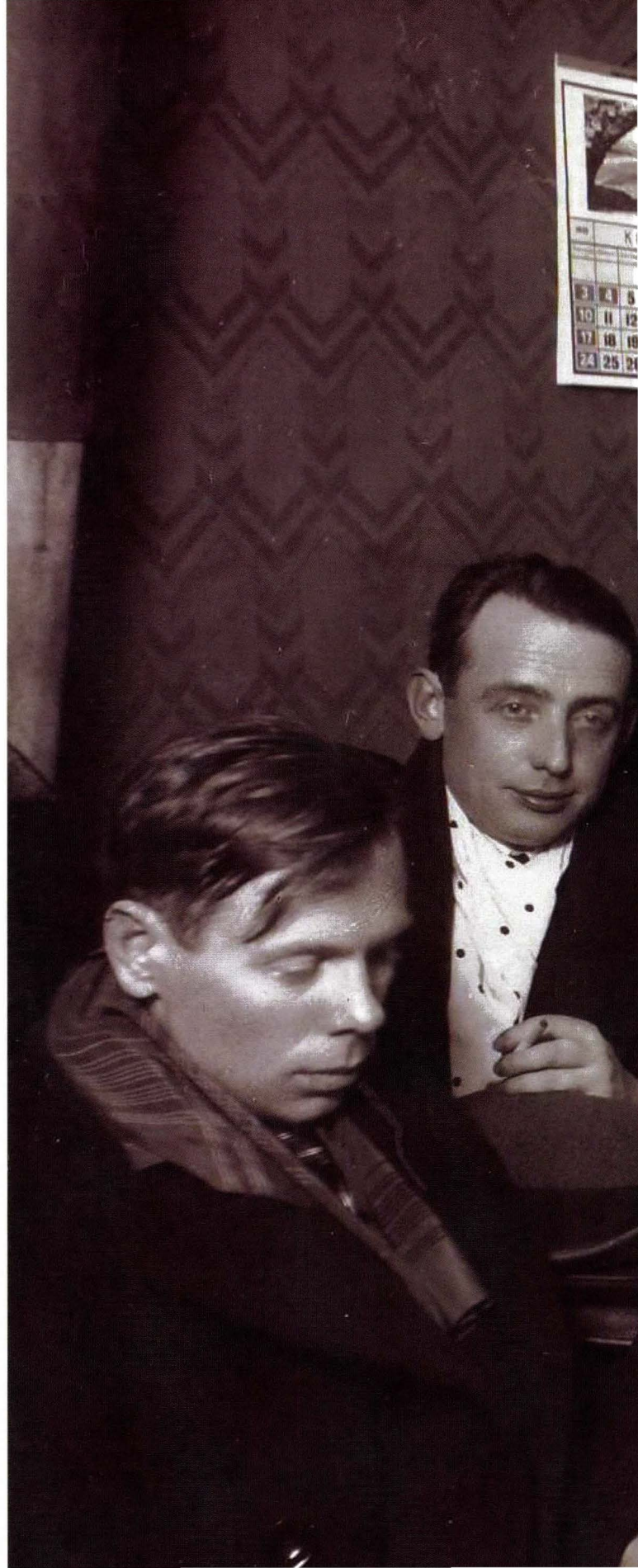




From left to right:

Sitting: J. Brazaitis, T. Tilvytis, A. Braziulis,  
J. Petrėnas, A. Gerutis, K. Binkis;

Standing: H. Kacinskis and A. Gričius. Kaunas, c. 1924





## Spring in Germany

With paws stuck upward, lies Berlin.  
That silly idiot – the moon  
Bridled with cables, broken in,  
Smiles, goon!  
The close-cropped trees along the streets  
Don't know if to unfold.  
But here, indoors, narcissi sweet.  
Begin to smile, all gold,  
Like babes in hungry sleep.  
The crocodiles sleep in the zoo,  
Apes, lions, donkeys too.  
Rich women in their villas sleep –  
They've nothing else to do.  
And the time is almost two.  
The trams and cars have stopped their dance,  
Their dawn-to-dusk quadrille,  
And one after another prance  
To their caves and stand still.  
In places lamps already wink,  
While higher crawls the moon  
Between cathedral towers – just think,  
It's stuck, the old baboon!  
It grins still broader, goofy-face,  
It sighs and blows and then through space  
Warm streams of gentle air begin  
To flow o'er slumbering Berlin.  
It tried to get into the zoo,  
The moon, but then it saw  
Rich women take their clothes off: "Oo-oo!"  
The fool blushed pink with awe,  
And then behind the towers hid  
Its face, flat as a saucepan-lid.

Their heads together fused, professors scold at me:  
He's capable – in certain things – but not too serious.  
But I – wherever I may look, it's springs I see.  
In every pocket I keep springs in endless series.  
You go out – all around boils life's spring flood;

Hearts threatening to overflow all dams,  
Through every body pumping crazy blood;  
No wish in me to age and rot like some *Monsieurs* and some  
*Mesdames*.

Who turn away to dodge the sun's too torried heat  
So that their blooming glasses shouldn't melt,  
And if a dewdrop wets their hair-do, beat retreat  
To haircutters, with razors and tight belts.

But I, even unintentionally, for a joke,  
If I open my mouth or pocket just a bit,  
Springs – such a noisy, squeaking, pushing folk,  
Green, wriggling, jump under the fence from it.

There's nothing anyone can do about it, friends.  
It's like a chronic illness that you catch –  
You can't get rid of it, and there's an end –

Like fingers getting squeezed by a tight latch.

## The Water-Lily

Upon a reed-pond in a meadow,  
Like moonlit snow all pale and gleaming,  
Once bloomed a silver water-lily,  
Upon a reed-pond in a meadow...  
Sunshine or rain, it lay there stilly,  
Speared in with reed-shafts, deeply dreaming,  
Upon a reed-pond in a meadow,  
Like moonlit snow all pale and gleaming.

literary magazine "The Four Winds", 1928,  
No. 4, Kaunas, Lithuania.

# Dėmesio!

## Mes skelbiam savo jubiliejų!

Keturi Vėjai, sulaukę savo ketvirto numerio,  
randa progos apsidairyti aplinkui.

Pradėdami darbą radom:

T y l a.

Tyloje:

Dul - dul - **li-mo-na-das**

Viešpatnūs poetai gaisrininkų  
komandos bokštuos.

**Saulė** (iš degtukų dėžučių skolinta)

**Lelijų kvapas** iš parfumerijos krautuvės

Smulkūs plagiatai

Ir dideli garbės troškimai.

Inteligentijos skonį išsemia:

Verbickaja ir Margeritai.

Valdiškų vietų menininkams trūksta  
**Ir trrragedija.**

Opera ir drama kas vakaras  
lig pat miesto sodo tvoros  
meną skleidžia.

Lietuviška knyga  
estetų krokodiliškose ašarose paplūds.

Kas verkia ir gvoltu rėkia,  
dar daro karjeras,

Kiti  
iš apmaudo  
griežia dantimis

**A**tsigrįžę priekin matom:

Ant jaunų pečių užrioglintas Puntukas—didžiausias Lietuvoje akmuo.  
Su šia našta mes su visais, neskiriant jokių negrų, žengiam į ateitį.

Tarp pirmo ir šio paskutinio žingsnio:

Rodėmės plačiau maždaug kas antri metai.

Užrašom sau  
i aktyvai  
Mes išmokėm „kultūringus“  
žmones puikiai keiktis.

Sujungėm visus krūvon.

Visi krūvoje susicementavo  
K. Vėjų stipria neapykanta.

Teisme mes patikrinom  
savo maršrutą.  
Ir pamatėm: jis tikras.

Mūsų raštus neseniai įvykęs K. V. Teis-  
mas surinko, pasidėjo ant stalo ir manė,  
kad turi visa, kas reikia teisti.

Bet nei Ponai teisėjai ir ekspertai, apsi-  
riko!

Jie teisė ne tuos negausius puslapius,  
bet visur ne tik toje saleje paskleistas  
mūsų bacilas.

**B**acilas,  
kurios sukelia  
nepasitenkinimą trafaretais,  
nusistovėjusiam,  
„ištikimam“ galvojimo būdai  
panieką,  
troškimą ieškoti ir surasti nauja!  
Jaunumo bacilas teisė!

Ši epidemija pasirodė baisi.

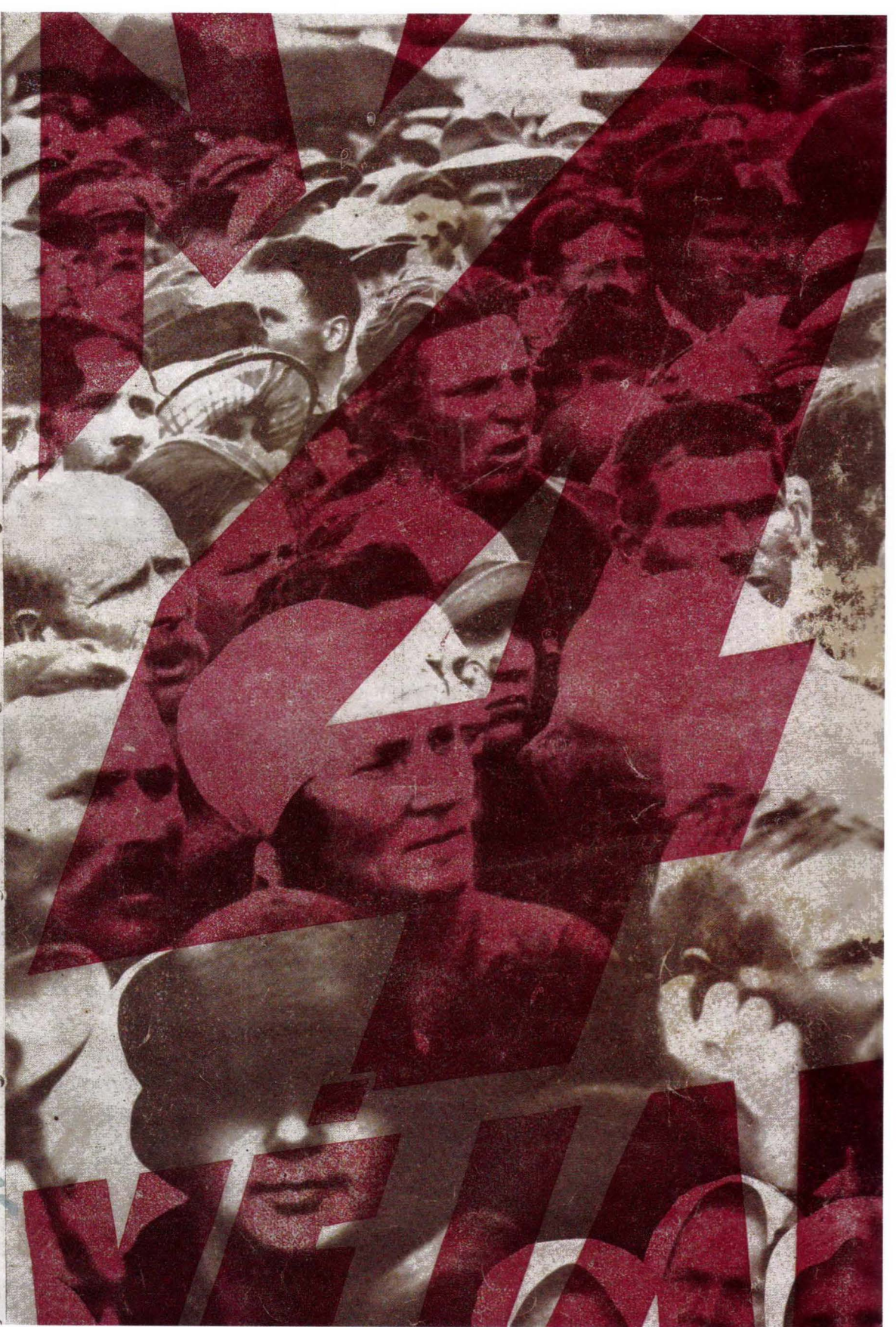




**KAUNAS  
1928-II**

**LE'S QUATRE VENTS**  
REVUE LITTÉRAIRE KAUNAS LITHUANIE

**KAINA  
Lt. 1,50**





Jonas Mekas by Peter Beard, Montauk 1971.



## Jonas Mekas Timeline

1922 Born on Christmas Eve in Semeliskiai, Birzu

1944 Left Lithuania to attend university in Vienna. Train was stopped in Germany and he and his brother, Adolfas Mekas, were imprisoned in a labor camp in Elmshorn, a suburb of Hamburg, for eight months.

1945 The brothers escaped and were detained near the Danish border where they hid on a farm for two months until the end of the war. After the war, Mekas lived in DP camps in Widenbaden and Mainz.

– Saw John Huston's **Treasure of the Sierra Madre** and Chaplin's **The Gold Rush** with U.S. Army troops and was fascinated. Later saw the 1948 film, **The Search** by Fred Zinnemann, a film about displaced persons. Jonas and Adolfas were upset by what they thought was an extremely inaccurate portrayal. Inspired, they began writing scripts of their own and resolved to make them into films as soon as they could acquire a camera.

1946-1948 Studies philosophy at the University of Mainz

1948 Brothers want to go to Israel to join the budding film industry. They are unable to obtain permission to the country because they are not Jewish. Instead they decided to go to Egypt and to walk to Israel, but couldn't get permission to go to Egypt either. They board UN ship with 2,000 other refugees, with the intention to go to Chicago, but end up in New York.

1949 Settles with Adolfas in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Two weeks later, borrows money to rent a Bolex 16-mm camera. Carries it around with him everywhere.

1953 Begins screening his own films and programs of avant-garde films at Gallery East and a film forum series at Carl Fisher Auditorium.

1954 Becomes editor in chief of Film Culture

1958 Begins writing "Movie Culture" column for Village Voice

1959 Mekas helps found the New American Cinema Group, created as a new model of distribution and exhibition for independent film: no selectivity in which films were screened, unlike Cinema 16 and other programs.

Co-founds the Film-Makers' Cooperative (FMC)

1962 Makes **Guns of the Trees**, Beat-inspired story of two couples who struggle to make sense of their changing world in the early 1960's.

1963 Jack Smith's film **Flaming Creatures** censored and excluded from the Knokke-Le Zoute Third International Experimental Film Festival in Belgium, Mekas resigns as a juror.

1964 Mekas arrested on obscenity charges for showing **Flaming Creatures** and Jean Genet's **Chant d'amour**.

1964 He launches a campaign against the censor board, and for the next few years continues to exhibit films at the Film-makers' Cinémathèque, the Jewish Museum, and the Gallery of Modern Art.

Makes **The Brig**, pseudo-documentary play about prison brutality in the Marine Corps, performed at the Living Theater.

1964 Founds Film-Makers' Cinémathèque, which eventually becomes the Anthology Film Archives

1964-1967 The New American Cinema Expositions program which he organized tours Europe and South America.

1966 Receives Guggenheim Fellowship

1967 Encouraged by Gerald O'Grady to exhibit some of his material at the Albright-Knox Gallery in Buffalo, NY. Edits his first "diary film" and entitled it **Diaries, Notes, Sketches, or Walden**.

1970's Teaches film courses at the New School for Social Research and MIT.

1969 Mekas, P. Adams Sitney, and Jerome Hill begin work on Anthology Film Archive.

1970 Film Archives opens as a film museum, screening space, and a library, with Mekas as its director.

1971 Mekas, along with Stan Brakhage, Ken Kelman, Peter Kubelka, James Broughton, and P. Adams Sitney, begin the ambitious Essential Cinema project to establish a canon of important cinematic works.

1971-1972 Makes **Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania**

1974 Marries Hollis Melton

1974 Daughter Oona born

1976 Edits **Lost Lost Lost** in which he retraces his first ten

years in New York

1977 Receives Creative Arts Award from Brandeis University

1978 Edits footage from the "Walden" years to make **In Between**

1978 **Notes for Jerome**, an elegy for his friend and patron of Anthology, Jerome Hill.

1979 Makes **Paradise Not Yet Lost (Oona's Third Year)**, a letter to his daughter and memoir of the family's life in New York and travels in Europe.

1980's Anthology moves from Wooster St. to its current location at the Courthouse on 2nd Avenue. Tremendous fundraising effort to raise funds and rescue films that were being recorded due to the increasing popularity of video.

1981 Son Sebastian born

1985 Makes **He Stands Alone in a Desert Counting the Seconds of His Life**, compilation of footage from 1969-1985 Including family and friends from the film community.

– also edits numerous short dance films: **Cups/Saucers/Dancers/Radio** (1965/1983) and **Erik Hawkins: Excerpts from Here and Now with Watchers/Lucia Dlugoszewski Performs, and Street Songs** (1965/1983).

– Written work from this period includes the translation and editing of his personal diaries, two volumes of poetry, and a compilation of press notes from screenings and his "**Movie Journal**" column, which he stopped writing in 1976.

1987 After working his whole career with his Bolex, he finally buys a Sony video camera.

1989 Receives Mel Novikoff Award at San Francisco Film Festival

1990's Compiles a number of film elegies from older footage: **Scenes from the Life of Andy Warhol** (1990), **Zefiro Torna** or **Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas** (1992), **Happy Birthday to John** (1996), and **Birth of a Nation** (1997), **Song of Avignon** (1998), **Memories of Frankenstein** (1996), a recording of the mid-'60s Living Theater performance of **Frankenstein**.

He completes a film begun by Jerome Hill, **Dr. Carl C. Jung or Lapis Philosophorum** (1950–91) and, in anticipation of a longer film he was working on, he also makes **Quartet Number One** (1991). Mekas' other film projects during this period include *Imperfect 3-Image Films* (1995) and **On My Way to Fujiyama I Met...** (1995). The '90s also saw the beginning of Mekas' video work, including **The Education of Sebastian or Egypt Regained** (1992), (1994), **Scenes from Allen's Last Three Days on Earth as a Spirit** (1997), **Letter from Nowhere – Laiskas is Niekur No. 1** (1997), **Laboratorium** (1999), and two videos of a drumming band in which his wife performed, **Mob of Angels/The Baptism** (1991) and **Mob of Angels at St. Ann** (1992).

1992 Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, Ministry of Culture, France.

1995 Receives Lithuanian National Award

1996 Doctor of Fine Arts, Honoris Causa, Kansas City Art Institute

– Subject of Special Tribute, New York Film Critics Circle Awards

1997 Receives Pier Paolo Pasolini Award in Paris

– Receives International Documentary Film Association Award in Los Angeles

– Receives Governors Award from the Skohegan School of Painting and Sculpture

– Artium Doctoris Honoris Causa, Universitatis Vytauti Magni, Lithuania

1999 Makes **This Side of Paradise**, Kennedy family portrait  
**Notes on Andy's Factory**

2000 **As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty**

**Mozart & Wein and Elvis**, one minute film commissioned by the Viennale Film Festival that revisits footage taken of Mekas's mother 27 years earlier

**Autobiography of a Man Who Carried His Memory in His Eyes**

**Remedy for Melancholy**

2001 **Ein Maerchen**

1966-2001 **Mysteries, Living Theater performance**

2005 **Edits Williamsburg, Brooklyn** from footage taken since 1950

– Installation piece, **Dedication to Leger**, room full of video footage that, when viewed linearly, comprises 24 hours' of footage.

– Jonas Mekas solo exhibition opens at the Maya Stendhal Gallery, New York.

2006 **Celebration of the Small and Personal, and the Times of Bigness**

– Mekas represents Lithuania at the 51st International Art Exhibition Venice Biennial

– Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. holds a lecture entitled "meet the artist" and screens **Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania**.

– The Directors Guild of America awards Anthology Film Archives a DGA Honors recognizing the center's dedication to preserving the art of cinema.

– United States National Film Preservation Board selects **Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania** to be preserved at the Library of Congress' National Film Registry.

2007 Receives Los Angeles Film Critics Association's award for his significant contribution to American film culture.

– www.JonasMekas.com is launched.

– P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center

– Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center is established in Vilnius, Lithuania. Exhibitions to focus on art and film collections by Mekas and his friend, artistic collaborator, and founder of the Fluxus movement, George Maciunas.



## R. Bruce Elder

### Notes Towards a Sketch of Jonas Mekas

In 1944, Jonas Mekas, then a young anarchist poet, and his brother Adolfas fled Lithuania. They were headed for Vienna, where Jonas planned to attend university. Their plan was thwarted when the German military police seized the train they were on and diverted it to Hamburg. The pair were detained until 1945, first in a forced labor camp in Elmshorn, a suburb of Hamburg, and later in a work farm at Flensburg. From 1946-1948, while living in camps for displaced persons in Kassel and Wiesbaden, Jonas studied philosophy at the University of Mainz. He continued to write and brought out, in Tübingen, a volume of prose poems entitled **A Book about Kings and People**; a book of his poems, **Idylls of Seminiškiaj** (1948), and a story in a short-story collection. **Idylls of Seminiškiaj** is a series of bucolic poems that presents concrete details of seasonal change in the country, farming activities, and communal existence, and the beginning of a theme of exile and a longing for home that would mark Mekas' work.

#### First Idyll: Old is rain gushing down shrubstems

Of the yellow fields of barley and oat,  
The herdsman fires in the wet, windy loneliness of autumn,  
Of potato digging time,  
And of the sultry heat of summer,  
The white glare of winter, the din of sleighs on endless roads.  
And about the heavy timber wagons, the boulders in the fallow,  
About the red clay ovens and limestone in the fields;  
And then by lamplight in the evenings, in the autumn fields of grey –  
About the wagonloads for tomorrow's market,  
About the flooded and washed – out October roads,  
And the wet potato digs.  
(Translated by Vyt Bakaitis)

Mekas described the people in the village and their various activities during the four seasons, as factually and prosaically as he could, avoiding what was accepted as poetic Lithuanian



language. As he told Scott MacDonald, he strived to produce "documentary poetry."

The following year, the brothers were transferred to yet another DP camp, this one in Schwäbisch Gmünd. In Heidelberg Jonas "bought, by chance, a book on the theory of cinema" that got him "very excited about the possibilities." Moreover, in the DP camps, he experienced his first urge to make film, in protest against Fred Zinneman's **The Search** [1948], a film about displaced persons which, Jonas and Adolfas felt, grievously misrepresented its subject. Later, when they went to study at the University of Mainz, which was in the French Zone, the brothers saw many French films. Still, the works that interested them the most "the movies that really got us interested in film were not the French productions, but (what is quite extraordinary, given what the two had lived through) the postwar, neorealistic German films. They are not known here—films by Kautner, Josef V. Baky, Liebeneiner, and others." Mekas analyzed the reason these German works appealed to him: "The war had ended, but the realities were still all around. Though the stories these films told were fictional and melodramatic, their visual texture was drab reality, the same as in the post-war Italian films." Mekas, it seems, has always leaned towards reality.

They left from Schwäbisch Gmünd for America, arriving on October 29, 1949. In the first weeks after arriving, Jonas read some writings by Vsevolod Pudovkin and Sergei Eisenstein (whose writings likely reinforced the realist bent of Mekas' thought). He also read writings by Grierson and Rotha and watched British and American documentary films of the '30s and '40s

Life in America was tough for the brothers. Still, two weeks after his arrival, he borrowed the money to buy his first Bolex camera and began to record moments of his life. The first script that the brothers wrote was for a film to be called **Lost Lost Lost**, a documentary on the life of displaced persons. The

desire evident here, to record the everyday, was basic to his poetry and would lie at the heart of his subsequent film work.

The Mekas brothers learned more about nonfiction (documentary and experimental) film at Amos Vogel's pioneering Cinema 16, an organization devoted to exhibiting and distributing non-fiction film. In an article in **Hollywood Quarterly** (Summer, 1950), Amos Vogel described the success that Cinema 16 had experienced and commented on the reasons for it: the article's concluding paragraph asserted that "increasingly, the nonfiction film is coming into its own in the United States." The disasters of war had turned peoples' mind toward reality. The realist film, in one form or another, is a cause that Mekas, too, would champion.

In 1953, too, Mekas began working at Graphic Studios, a commercial photography studio, where he stayed for five or six years. He looked at a lot of still photography and met photographers, great and not-so-great, and artists (e.g., Archipenko) who would drop in. This early exposure to the work of photographers (including art photographers) also would have reinforced Mekas' realist proclivities.

In January, 1955, Mekas put out the first issue of **Film Culture** magazine, which soon established itself as the key forum for discussion of issues around American independent cinema. At first **Film Culture** was devoted to auteurist criticism and featured writers such as Andrew Sarris, Peter Bogdanovich, and Herman G. Weinberg. In the early 1960s, Mekas helped spearhead a collection of independent filmmakers known as the Group, whose members included Robert Frank and Peter Bogdanovich. Radically opposed to "official cinema," the Group declared "We don't want rosy turns, we want them the colour of blood." The Group hoped to create a commercially viable alternative to official cinema. To fulfill film's redemptive potential, the cinema would have to disaffiliate itself from the studio-produced cinema and become radically individual. "The New American Cinema Group proclaimed in its "First

Statement" of 1961 that "the official cinema all over the world is running out of breath. It is morally corrupt, aesthetically obsolete, thematically superficial, temperamentally boring. Even seemingly worthwhile films, those that lay claim to high moral and aesthetic standards, and have been accepted as such by critics and the public alike, reveal the decay of the Product Film." There is no other way to break the frozen cinematic conventions than through a complete derangement of the official cinematic senses," Mekas proposed.

Mekas soon rejected this American auteurism and took up instead what we might characterize as an Emersonian advocacy. He became the spokesperson for a radical, individual, personal, avant-garde cinema. In 1958, Mekas began writing his "Movie Journal" column for the **Village Voice**, spotlighting the newest and most radical filmmakers in New York City, and in the first three of four years of that column, we can see his conviction in the fundamental human importance of consolidating the avant-garde cinema.

In becoming an advocate for what in the "Anti-100 Years of Cinema Manifesto," he called "small forms of cinema, the lyrical form, the poem, the watercolour, étude, sketch, portrait, arabesque, and bagatelle, and little 8mm songs," for "the personal things that bring no money . . . for art which we do for each other, as friends" he had realized what Annette Michelson was to realize so many years later, in her revision of **Film and the Radical Aspiration**, that the relation between the capitalist production system (the studio-system) and the forms cinema adopts is so much more intimate in the United States than it is in Europe. Accordingly the American film artist must develop a more thorough-going strategy of disaffiliation: to bring the cinema back to a vital relation with the life-force of American culture demanded a more complete, more radical formal revision. A panoply of new formal devices would have to be created, to facilitate the expression of the new human being emerging in the New World of post-war America. The new cinema would borrow from the authentic language of

the spirit, the language that speaks of the internal world, the language of poetry. It would be a cinema of metaphor, of resonant, ambiguous imagery, a lyrical cinema, a cinema as intimate as poetry. It would have to be, as Emerson proposed for American poetry, a cinema of personal vision.

Mekas' conception of cinema reflects a poet's spirit, and it is important to realize that Mekas has continued to write, and publish poetry. All told, he has published six books of poetry. In addition to **Idylls**, there is **Flower Talk**, published in Chicago in 1961, which like **Idylls** is an intimate chronicle in quasi-diary form of the turning of the seasons, but also a record of the discovery and progress of first love. **Words Apart**, published in Chicago in 1967, is a poem of percussive line breaks and tentative, half-awkward enjambments, not unlike his films in its staccato style and in troubled interplay between the quotidian and the remembered, between presence and absence. This book was something of turning point in Mekas' poetic development, for it developed the extremely condensed, elliptical, fragmentary, almost paratactical style, and made use of the vernacular and quotidian that his later writings (and films) would rely on. Some of its features resemble those of **Idyll**, however, **Words Apart** presents fragmentary perceptions of reality, in what seems to be an almost random accumulation. As do other poetic sequences Mekas has produced (and as do his diary film) **Words Apart** discovers, as its form evolves, a pattern (that of the turning seasons) that holds these fragments together. Mekas' works generally exhibit a tendency to discover immanent meaning in that which seems to lack meaning, to discover presence is what seems, nearly, a phantasmal absence. **Poetry**, a "collected works," published in Vilnius in 1971, includes some previously unpublished poems and some extended versions of previously published poems. **Reminiscences**, published in New York in 1972 (and in translation in **City Lights Review** in 1987), deals with the poet's experiences in post-war Germany, and, as both his

earlier poems and his films tend to do, finds redemption and meaning in the turning of the seasons. **Datebooks 1970-1982**, published in New York in 1985, radicalizes the fragmentary paratactical form along the lines of his film work, and extends it into a longer, open-form work—even the title, **Datebooks**, suggests its affinity with his films, which are often in diary form. Mekas' most recent book of poetry is **Black Writing on the Gates of Dawn**.

Throughout the early 1960s, Mekas announced his convictions about the importance of a new cinema—a new cinema that would facilitate the expression of a new human being—in **Film Culture**. These pronouncements were increasingly informed by Mekas' filmmaking. Mekas' film work was fuelled by that Emersonian aspiration to develop unalienated modes of experience. Like many, he concluded that the most important condition for forming such modes of experience is the development of the capacity to live with one's immediate condition, to move beyond anticipation and recollection so as to live in "the immediate now."

Mekas' use of autobiography represents an attempt to turn cinema away both from collective fantasy and from depictions of external reality—from that cinema that descends from Méliès' work, and, at the same time, from that cinema that descends from the work of the Lumière brothers. For him, autobiography represents an attempt to undo the deleterious effects of a highly codified system of representation, to reverse the perspective of cinema, so that it points towards the self. Embracing autobiography is an aspect of Mekas' progression towards a radical, Emersonian cinema: while he kept the self out of his earlier, more overtly engaged work to put emphasis on external realities, the isolation he felt forced him to look inward. This sort of diaristic cinema is unprecedented in American avant-garde cinema—the diary work of another Lithuanian-American experimentalist, Marie Menken, would appear just a few years later.

Mekas suggests that being rooted in the self gives the personal cinema its strength and its integrity. Mekas' highest term of praise in his critical writings is "realism." Realism is a term that, in art criticism, is always very slippery, but is unusually so in Mekas' writing. For Mekas seems to mean by "real" those depictions whose veracity is guaranteed by their having been produced by an authentic individual (that is, by an exemplar of Emerson's authentic, self-reliant individual). Thus, Mekas praises Lionel Rigosin's **Come Back Africa** (1960), for "the very amateurism of the cast [that] becomes part of movie's truth and authenticity." A commitment to realism is evident too in his first film project: in the late 1950s, Mekas made a twenty-minute long film, **Grand Street**, on the life of a street in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, populated mainly by immigrants, where he spent a lot of time.

As though to confirm the role of authenticity and the authentic self, Mekas associates a second term of value with "realism"; this second term is spontaneity. An entry in his **Diaries**, from September 5, 1960, praises filmmakers who work through "ignorance and confusion," and who have freed themselves from a "trust in clarity, in pre-planning where everything is predictable." He proposes a similar conception of the value of spontaneity in his 1960 text, **The Cinema of the New Generation**:

The spontaneity of the new American artist is not a conscious or an intellectual process; it is rather his way of life, his whole being; he comes to it rather intuitively, directly.

The new artist neither chooses this spontaneous route himself, nor does he do it consciously; it is . . . the only possible route.

Mekas kept a diary from his boyhood in Lithuania until some time in the 1960s. Here is a characteristic passage, from the time he spent in the Schwäbisch Gmünd DP camp, about three months before leaving for America:

May 17, 1949

8PM

Two drunks are walking along the street.

"Let's go, let's go . . ."

"Where do you want to go?"

"What? It's raining."

"Let's go to the Truman Street, joptvaimat (a Russian curse)."

They have a silent exchange, I can't hear it.

They both walk away.

A woman comes through rain, pressing a large empty plate to her side. Down the corners of buildings noisily run streams of rain water. At the other end of the street—music, boyan.

A man in green pants, his hands in pockets, runs by, his head pulled into his shoulders, wet. A girl runs by. A voice from the window:

"Where are you running? Lost your key?"

The man in the window is whistling, the girl keeps running without acknowledging him and without turning back.

The method adopted in these selections from his diary, of collaging impressions, is exactly the method of Mekas' diary films. Mekas' films evolved towards this form when he put the influence of Grierson and Rotha aside and so came to understand the photographic/cinematographic image as a matrix of self and world. Cage reinforced this new tendency in his film work, as through his influence Mekas came to accept that chance procedures (either the chance processes of accepting what comes to one in filming or the chanced process involved in simply stringing footage together) can produce meanings that transcend those conceived by the limited self and embrace those that arise at the point where self and world meet. This meeting of self and world is reflected in his poetry as well.

In a text from 1966, delivered at the Philadelphia College of Art, Mekas traced the origin of his ideas about the authentic individual and value of spontaneity back to his experience of war:

And then came the war, and I went through horrors more unbelievable than anything I had read in the books, and it all happened right before my eyes—before my eyes the heads of children were smashed with bayonets. . . . Everything that I believed in shook to the foundations—all my idealism, and my faith in the goodness of man and progress of man; all was shattered. Somehow, I managed to keep myself together. But really, I wasn't one piece any longer; I was one thousand painful pieces.

It's really from this, and because of this, that I did what I did. I felt I had to start from the very beginning. I had no faith, no hope left. I had to collect myself again, bit by bit. And I wasn't surprised when, upon my arrival in New York, I found others who felt as I felt. There were poets and filmmakers, and painters—people who were also wailing like one thousand painful pieces. And we felt there was nothing to lose anymore. There was nothing worth keeping from our civilized inheritance. Let's clean ourselves out, we felt. Let's clean out everything that is dragging us down—the whole bag of horrors and lies and egos.

The return to humanity degree zero correlated with a reduction of cinema, an elimination from the cinema of all that is artificial, contrived, false.

In cinema, this search is manifest through abandoning all the existing professional, commercial values, rules, subjects, techniques, pretensions. We said: We don't know what man is; we don't know what cinema is—let's go in any direction to break out of the net that is dragging us down.

The lexis that Mekas used in developing these ideas reflects the poetics of projective verse that Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, Michael McClure, and Allen Ginsberg championed. As in their writings on poetics, in Mekas' writings, artmaking takes on a performative dimension. The artist's sensory involvement in the immediacy of the situation, and his or her unconceptualized response to that situation has paramount

value. The artist's key abilities become the capacity to feel and the spiritual strength and freedom to respond to the "urgencies under hand," as Olson put it. This is what Mekas proposes when he says, "Let us be completely open and listening, ready to move to any direction upon the slightest call, almost like one who is too tired and too weary, whose senses are like a musical string almost with no power of their own, blown and played by the mystical Winds of the Incoming Age, waiting for a slightest motion or call or sign." This tack, of following what "the field" (as poet Robert Duncan terms it) prompts one to do, reflects a longing to apprehend, even to assimilate oneself to, an uncontrolled reality, a longing to fuse art and life.

Autobiography, of course, is an ideal mode for reconciling art and life, as autobiography plays itself out in the space between art and life; its goal, as **Lost, Lost, Lost** (1975) shows, is to form a new consciousness, to bring forth "the new human." Autobiographical film levels the distinction between art and life precisely because it turns the practice of shooting into an event within life. Mekas wrote in the catalogue of the New York Filmmakers' Cooperative:

To keep a film (camera) diary is to react (with your camera) immediately, now, this instant: either you get it now, or you don't get it at all. To go back and shoot it later would mean restaging, be it events or feelings. To get it now, as it happens demands the total mastery of one's tools (in this case, Bolex): it has to register the reality to which I react and also it has to register my state of feeling (and all the memories) as I react. Which also means that I had to do all the structuring (editing) right there, during the shooting, in the camera. All the footage you'll see in the **Diaries** is exactly as it came out from the camera.

The spontaneity that Mekas advocates, the desire to capture experience in its immediacy is a methodological response to the dismembering of reality by the Second World War. The

temporal coincidence of the diaristic recording of the event with the event itself holds out the promise of a way to heal the breach, to overcome division between the self and world war had opened up.

Immediacy thus became the key criterion of value in this new cinema. We can discern the marks of this immediacy in the resultant film's heterogeneous surface. The popular misconception of Mekas' films represents them as being shot off-the-cuff, a frame at a time, resulting in a relentless, extended pixillation. The most evident feature of this caricature is its misrepresentation, for there is extraordinary variety in Mekas' works—to accuse them of being composed a frame at a time, in relentless pixillation, is a little like accusing a poet of composing one word at a time. In Mekas' films, the shifting relations between image and image, sound and silence and the alternation of intertitle and image creates a variegated surface. Mekas' films generally have an episodic character, and Mekas treats each episode differently. The caricature fails to note that Mekas is a camera virtuoso, who plays the camera like a musical instrument, and he constantly generates new riffs. Watch any section of any of Mekas' longer films, and ask yourself, "How is reality being transformed?" If you keep this simple question in mind while watching **Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania** or **He Stands in the Desert** (1986), and keep asking it and answering it, you'll see that Mekas' work possess extraordinary variety. These are extremely heterogeneous films that proceed principally by parataxis. The effect of this parataxis resembles the effect of Ezra Pound's use of that form of construction—it transforms the image into a matrix where subjectivity and objectivity meet. For the images seem, at once, both to belong to the consciousness of their maker, and charged with the emotional valences his mind (or soul) gives them, and autonomous, objective fragments.

Furthermore, these fragments seem to be both of this world and above the world—of the world due to their immediacy,

and above the world, because of the transformations to which Mekas subjects representation. The principal trope Mekas employs is synecdoche, both spatial and temporal synecdoche, and cinematic synecdoche, paradoxically, relates shot-fragments to the world from which they derive, inasmuch as it implies its continuity with that world. At the same time, the trope transforms these fragments by assimilating them to a new relational context, a context in which their meanings are wholly intrinsic. More than that, their fragmentary quality and their isolation one from the next suggest a series of epiphanies, each of which is wholly autonomous, but charged with a fullness of meaning that makes it self-sufficient.

Mekas' magnum opus, the sprawling diary film he has created across decades, is an open-form work, a work whose form emerges in the process of the work's being created. Nothing makes this more evident than the way Mekas portrays his becoming a filmmaker. Artists' autobiography traditionally accorded special privilege to the artists' moment of election, the moment when they are called to assume the artist's vocation. By contrast, part way through **Lost, Lost, Lost**, Mekas comments, casually, that he bought a Bolex. His magnum opus has a non-hierarchical form, a form that accords equal value to all its contents. This is characteristic of open form works.

An open-form is permeable to reality—and so open forms incorporate heterogeneous elements. From moment to moment the work can move in new directions, take on a new shape. This serialized method of composition accords considerable autonomy to each fragment, and this autonomy increases the force with which each fragment asserts itself—and thus adds to the sense of immediacy and presence. This feeling of immediacy is increased by the use of the characteristic features of the home-movie and other spontaneously created cinematic forms, including flash-frames, swish-pans, over- and underexposure, variable focus, lack of establishing shots, jump-cuts, hand-hand camera, abrupt changes of space and time,

unusual camera angles and camera movements, shifting cast of players, etc.

The disjunctiveness of the work, the shifting styles of ironization, and those characteristics that we associate with spontaneous cinema give Mekas' film diaries a quality of immediacy. However, Mekas' diary forms also evoke a sense of pastness, a sense of absence—a sense that memory, not immediate perception, is the faculty that generates his films. Both mournful and celebratory, Mekas' films are intensely personal meditations on memory, time, loss, and recovery. For the voice-over, with its poetic, subjective, vernacular, and tentative formulations—tentative to the poet of allowing interruptions, digressions and reformulations—situates the imagery of the film in the past. As he edits, Mekas constructs his sound-tracks at his editing table—many of these tracks consist of first-person commentaries mixing remembrances with immediate responses to his images that are, by definition, ghosts from the past.

It might seem that the spoken text of Mekas' films belongs to the present and the image belongs to the realm of memory. In fact, in his films, presence and absence cannot be separated according to media. Consider the text he wrote for the Filmmakers' Cooperative catalogue: it stresses the need to be intimate with the camera's operations because the camera "has to register the reality to which I react and also it has to register my state of feeling (and all the memories) as I react." The image itself is a matrix of presence and absence.

There is more: the voice, with its heavy weight of the past—the weary delivery that only increases the words' sensuous weight, the hesitancy that leads him to separate word from word, loaning each successive word its peculiar material force, and by that very discontinuity stressing Mekas' distance from the experiences he recounts—all these features suggest the voice carries the burden of pastness, and acting together with the film's montage transforms the immediacy of experience into a

chronicle assembled by the faculty of memory. A particular strength of Mekas' films develops from this intricate and, at times, paradoxical relation between sound and image.

Autobiography involves the artist's turning his or her gaze upon the self. In literature, it is possible to represent the self by using one of the simplest, most basic signs of our language: the word for the first-person singular. Film, curiously, cannot deal with this being ubiquitous in our consciousness with anything like the simplicity that language does. For, short of depicting oneself shooting by using mirrors or resorting to other mediating contrivances, a film has no way to represent the subject of the enunciation or pronounce its sign.

The perfect coincidence between art and life, seemingly guaranteed by autobiography, is disrupted by the incapacity of film to represent the subject of its enunciation. The only hope for disclosing the transitory states of the filmmaker's subjectivity is to foreground the act of enunciation instead of its subject. Only the filmmaker's power to take an object from the real world and turn it into a self-object can reveal the subject's potency. We believe that we can sense something about the artist's emotional state by examining the quality of the camera-handling, or the use of light, or colour. These are essentially projective methods – and other filmmakers too have found Olson's projective methods attractive. What makes the application of Olson's projective method especially attractive to filmmakers is the fact that, in film, the subject of enunciation can never really be the enunciations' represented subject. That inability creates a need to foreground the act of enunciation. Foregrounding the act of enunciation provides a way for film, a medium that cannot easily represent the enunciating self a means of conveying aspects of the self. But that presence only highlights a central absence of the "I."

Here then is another matrix of presence and absence: the absent subject of the representation is presented by the representation's formulation. This mingling of presence and

absence is a cardinal feature of Mekas' films, reflected in the interplay in his films of perception and memory, actual and ideal, reality as experienced and the reality that the artist longs for.

If only the image could be pure presence. But the image furnished by perception is overlaid by memory, and reshaped by memory. The rendering of images, apprehended in their raw immediacy is a mode of experience Mekas longs for, and sometimes attains, but only fleetingly. Mekas' films acknowledge that the reconstituting and restructuring of the image by memory does not begin with the editing, but only concludes there. This restructuring by memory begins right with the experience itself. Perception only rarely escapes the clutches of memory; the processes that structure memory almost always structure perception itself.

Mekas stressed this immanence of memory in perception when, in a lecture on *Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania* he stated:

In my film diary, I thought . . . I was capturing life, bits of it, as it happens. But I realized very soon that it wasn't that different at all. When I am filming, I am reflecting. I was thinking that I was only reacting to actual reality, I do not have much control over reality at all, and everything is determined by my memory, my past. So that this "direct" filming becomes also a mode of reflection.

Thus, in **Diaries, Notes and Sketches**, the image of New York is shaped by the image of Seminiškiaj, the image of Central Park is shaped by the image of the nearby fields, the image of New York's artistic community reflects the village community of his home. The absence that haunts every image reveals itself, too, in the fact that meaning is not immanent in the image. Mekas stresses this in **Lost, Lost, Lost**, when he says, "Everything is normal, everything is normal. The only thing is, you'll never know what they think. You'll never know

what a displaced person thinks, in the evening and in New York." There is a horrible breach between experience and its representation.

Pure immediacy is impossible, in representation and in experience. The vast purview of Mekas' diary films, the massive heterogeneity of their surface which suggest a form of textual excess, their elliptical manner of self-presentations (that reinforces this massive heterogeneity) suggests the desire to merge the self and reality, to integrate art with the text of life itself.

But resolute presence of reality—of the local, the domestic, the quotidian—exists in tension with a second moment, of absence. This absence arises out of the never fully achieved effort to spiritualize the image or, at least, to turn it into something ideal. We could conceive this tension as one between the Emersonian man and the European, between, on the one hand the self-authenticating, self-reliant man who brings forth the world, in its full presence, through the act of genuine, Adamic perception and the European man, for whom making art is a constant effort at reparation, whose end is to restore the unity that is lost. Mekas negotiates the conflicting visions with remarkable adeptness

Take the more recent **As I was Moving Ahead, Occasionally I saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty**: the work includes portraits of friends, family, and children—but what perhaps impresses one the most is the image it presents of nature in New York: snow, puddles of rain, or intense sun. The sun, heat, phenomena of nature seem to rule, even in New York: we see streets in New York, with friends talking; we see people spending lazy summer days in the park or on the beach, people making food, intimate scenes, of love, a marriage, the birth of two children and glimpses of them growing up. The effect of the flow of images is that all images seem equally immediate, their object matter equally present. One even experiences at times the joy of living in the present moment

– of living in the ecstatic present (expressed, inter alia, in intertitles like 'Ecstasy of summer and being in New York'). But one realizes after some time that the film spans more than two decades (roughly from the late 1960s to the early 1980s). One realizes, then, that the film is a composition of journals—an effort to keep the past present, to keep it from slipping away.

On the sound track of **Paradise Not yet Regained** (1980), Mekas recounts a tale that suggests his mythologizing bent, a parable that offers his reworking of the story of Adam and Eve. After they were driven out of Eden, while the pair rested in the deep shadow of a rock, Eve looked back and saw the glow of paradise exploding into little fragments. The pieces fell to earth in a heavy rain, covering the ground and Adam, who remained asleep. Eve did not tell Adam of this. So now, for Adams descendents, paradise still exists: the filmmaker gathers together the fragments of paradise that are scattered all over the world. This fiction offers the deepest truth about filmmaking anyone has articulated. It is also story of lost unity and the shards we use in an attempt to re-create that paradisiacal moment.

Mekas' affirms of the redemptive powers of beauty and of art. You may be wondering, sometimes, why we keep making little movies, underground movies why we are talking of Home Movies. . . We want to bring him down, into his small room, to bring him home, where he can be, once in a while, alone with himself and his soul—that's the meaning of the home movie, the private vision of our movies. We want to surround this earth with our home movies. Our movies come from our hearts—our little movies, not the Hollywood movies. Our movies are like extensions of our own pulse, of our heartbeat, of our eyes, our fingertips, they are so personal, so unambitious in their movement, in their use of light, their imagery. We want to surround this earth with our film frames and warm it up, until it begins to move. . . There is pain in the arts of the last few decades. The whole period of so-called



modern art is nothing but the pain of our ending civilization . . . Now we are looking, we are being pulled by a desire for something joyful deep within us, deep in the stars, and we want to bring it down to earth so that it will change our cities, our faces, our movements, our voices, our souls—we want an art of light.

What he declares here is hope for recovering a lost unity, the unity of total presence.

In his memoirs, Mekas wrote about staring at New York from the deck of a ship called the General Howze, adding, "I am still staring at it, in my retinal memory." Much of his memoirs are consumed with a core loneliness of a man displaced by war and ideology. Displaced from his own country, dropped by the U.N. in New York, he plunged into his new life, filming all the while. Practicing an art few know, he remains an outsider; but, too, he has increasingly found—and founded—a new country, a new nation, conceived in liberty, composed by those figures of capable imagination who have dedicated themselves to keeping the soul from going rotten. With them, he has made himself a home. In his remarkable **Anti-100 Years of Cinema Manifesto** he concludes: "The real history of cinema is invisible history. History of friends getting together, doing the thing they love. For us, the cinema is beginning with every new buzz of the projector, with every new buzz of our cameras. With every new buzz of our cameras, our hearts jump forward my friends."

R. Bruce Elder, Film-Maker

P. Adam Sitney is the author of **Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943-2000** and the forthcoming **Eyes Upside Down: Visionary Filmmakers and the Heritage of Emerson** (both from Oxford University Press). He has also written *Vital Crises in Italian Cinema* (University of Texas Press) and **Modernist Montage: The Obscurity of Vision in Cinema and Literature** (Columbia University Press). He is a Professor of Visual Art at Princeton University where he directs the Visual Arts Program. He believes he owes his career to the support of Jonas Mekas with whom he co-founded Anthology Film Archives.

## P. Adam Sitney

I had tried to meet Jonas Mekas for at least a year before the filmmaker Gregory Markopoulos introduced me to him in the lobby of the Charles Theater in the fall of 1961. For a man who was so bold in his weekly "Movie Journal" columns in **The Village Voice** he appeared startlingly shy. He said little and often stammered. His brother, Adolfas, was the opposite. Nattily dressed, with a beret and cigarette holder, he intervened and held forth with intimidating wit and irony. Intimidating, at least, to me, a seventeen-year-old highschool student, who had read through at least once all twenty-three issues of **Film Culture** Jonas and Adolfas had edited and published since 1955 and nearly every "Movie Journal" column Jonas had written since 1958. Crudely imitating him and Parker Tyler, then the major exegete of avant-garde cinema in the pages of **Film Culture**, I had already launched myself as a critic and apologist (in my own mimeographed journal, **Filmwise**) for many of the very films Mekas was extolling. The shy, stammering prophet of a new cinema and his suave ironist brother struck me as a version of Moses and Aaron. Although Adolfas did nothing to disguise how ridiculous I must have appeared—an adolescent sycophant, and breathless enthusiast for the cinema of Maya Deren, who had just died, Sidney Peterson, Gregory Markopoulos, and above all Stan Brakhage—Jonas somehow found a way to encourage me. He told me he would reprint an article I had written on Ron Rice and Robert Frank if I rewrote it. Under his laconic, often painful editorial scrutiny, I began to find my own voice as a writer.

I was perhaps the first, but far from the last, adolescent on whom Jonas would gamble. A year later he put David Brooks, then a freshman at Columbia, in charge of the newly formed Film-Makers' Cooperative. I was merely nineteen-years-old when he offered me the opportunity to head up the International Exposition of the New American Cinema with which I toured Europe in 1964 and 1968 and went to Buenos Aires in 1965. Dozens of young, untested artists, critics, curators, as well as a few conmen and fledgling frauds, would

launch their careers because Jonas saw signs of hope in them. Richard Foreman put on his first play, Joan Jonas performed her first dance concert under his aegis. Barbara Rubin was under twenty when she attached herself to Jonas and quickly became a filmmaker in her own right.

We became fast friends despite the age difference of more than twenty years. When Adolfas married and moved out, Jonas's public persona changed. He spoke more fluently and gradually lost interest in the narrative feature films that had first attracted him and Adolfas to cinema. As Jonas became more and more of a public figure, giving most of his time to the distribution and exhibition of films, the previously retiring poet turned into a charismatic leader.

In the Sixties it was easy to live with very little money in New York. The Belmore Cafeteria, opposite the loft-office which housed the Film-maker's Cooperative and **Film Culture** on Park Avenue South and 28th Street, offered a selection of three vegetables for forty-five cents. Nearby at Bickford's Jonas could buy his standard holdover meal, a piece of pie and a cup of coffee for even less. He wore an inexpensive corduroy suit day in and day out, rode the subways or walked—he never learned to drive. Sometimes he didn't even have an apartment; so he slept under Adolfas's editing table in the office. He never took a vacation and traveled reluctantly, only when paid to present his work or shoot film.

An aura of magic in which poetry irradiated Jonas's daily life more than compensated for poverty. His writing, his filming, and his programming always left room for the subtle miracles continually expanding his work. Every week exciting new films appeared, often by previously unknown filmmakers. One afternoon as I was preparing to take the second exhibition of films to Europe, we were walking the streets discussing whether or not Jonas would start off the tour himself by accepting an invitation from the Pesaro film festival. My final examinations and graduation from Yale kept me from going

to Italy in time for Pesaro. The only attraction the invitation held for Jonas was the possibility of stopping on the return trip in Spain, to visit Avila and pay homage to St. Teresa, who fascinated him. We suspected her interventions accounted for the strange gifts and mysteries abounding in our activities. Unable to decide whether or not to go, he said, perhaps in jest, that he would wait for a sign from St. Teresa herself. No sooner had he finished that sentence than two roses fell from the sky at our feet. (Perhaps someone cast them from the window of a highrise apartment.) Thus, the decision was made. He went to Pesaro to launch the exposition and to Avila to thank St. Teresa for looking after him.

Even 16mm film stock and developing was cheap in those days. The way Jonas taught himself to work—clicking off single frames between short spurts of imagery, doing his preliminary editing in the camera—keeping up his film diary was a negligible expense. He photographed so non-chalantly his subjects were off guard. The filming was over before one could become self-conscious, posed. Only once can I recall accompanying him on a deliberate foray with the intention of shooting film. During a horrendous rainstorm he suggested we go out to record the weather. I was never so thoroughly, or happily, soaked as that day. The event appears in **Diaries, Notes, and Sketches**.

But Jonas didn't know he was making **Diaries, Notes, and Sketches** at the time. In 1965 he was still meditating various feature films. He was even making screen tests for one of them, to be told from the point-of-view of an adolescent girl. Even these tests were eventually incorporated into the film diary—in fact, at the very start—when he first assembled it in 1970 for a massive festival of new films he curated at the Elgin Theater. By that time, a lot had happened. Anthology Film Archives had been founded. Jonas asked me to head it up, but I couldn't handle the demands and tensions of the directorship. I settled into a secondary position and he was forced take over, giving up his plan to devote full time to his

filmmaking. The directorship came with a salary from which he drew the funds to print the three-hour film. Although Jonas has always insisted that he made the fragmentary diary rather than autonomous works because his obligations as an archivist, curator, and distributor kept him from taking the time to shoot and edit longer films, that is only partially true, and the least interesting part. With the assembly of **Diaries, Notes, and Sketches** he found his voice as a filmmaker. This was confirmed two years later when a German television station commissioned both Jonas and Adolfas to make films of their first return to Lithuania since the Second World War. Jonas was free to shoot in any mode he wished, but he made **Reminiscences of Journey to Lithuania** as a chapter of the on-going diary.

As a writer, the diary and the lyric had been his natural genres. But it took him more than a decade, and a thorough immersion in the films of Marie Menken, Stan Brakhage, and free-wheeling documentarists such as Richard Leacock, to realize his own cinematic signature in a fusion of the diary and the lyric (particularly the **Idyll**). In the early Seventies, none of us (including Jonas himself) recognized the scale and achievement of his film, that it was one of the rare masterpieces of the American avant-garde cinema.

In the fifteen or so years that I saw Jonas nearly every day, he never expressed a regret, or spoke of a mistake or an erroneous judgment. Rather, he acted as if every unacknowledged error, failure, or lapse was an essential step in the pursuit of his goals. That adamant self-confidence always amazed me. Even more surprisingly, he never talked of his feelings, even at the death of friends and family. Instead, he focused that expression of emotion in his poetry and in the poetic monologues that accompany some chapters of his film diaries.

Jonas's marriage to Hollis Melton and the birth of Oona and Sebastian made the most dramatic changes in his life, but

didn't alter his spirit. They moved into a large book-lined loft on lower Broadway where they put up visiting filmmakers and nearly every evening fed up to a dozen friends. At some point during the meal Jonas would take a few frames of the laughing or arguing guests for inclusion in the diaries that had come to be more and more centered on the growth of his children. Late at night, the friends departed and the family asleep, Jonas would edit his new and old footage. In these years, the concentration on his 16mm diaries and the acquisition of video technology permitted him to become an astonishingly prolific filmmaker.

Sadly I see too little of Jonas these days. I seldom get to New York and he is often in Paris, sometimes in Tokyo. With his children grown and his marriage ended, he remains indefatigable in his early eighties. The nearly five hour long chronicle of his marriage, **As I Was Moving Ahead, Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty**, is a masterpiece. This year he has released a new film every day! No filmmaker ever even attempted that before. He is still surrounded by young artists, many of them sixty years his junior. The shy prophet of a cinema-to-come has himself become the symbol of the insistent vitalism at the center of the art.

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Amy Taubin is a contributing editor to "**Film Comment**" and "**Sight and Sound**" magazines and is the author of "**Taxi Driver**" in the BFI's Classic Film Series. She received the Anthology Film Archives Film Preservation Honors' Siegfried Krakauer Award in 2007 and the Art Historian Award from the School of Visual Arts in 2005. In a former life she was an actress on Broadway and appears in several avant-garde films including those by Jonas Mekas and Michael Snow. She lives in a SoHo co-op that was organized by Georges Maciunas and has preserved the strange kitchen he designed for her loft.

## Amy Taubin

On the very day in 1949 that Jonas Mekas and his brother Adolfas arrived in New York, they plunged into its burgeoning film scene. The Mekas brothers were already film enthusiasts, but in New York, they discovered avant-garde film. They soon acquired a 16mm camera and Jonas began filming daily life in the city, focusing in particular on his own Lithuanian community. He attended film screenings all over Manhattan at such venues as the Museum of Modern Art and the City College of New York, where the artist and filmmaker Hans Richter was the Director of the Film Institute. Jonas often speaks about the profound effect that Richter's **Rhythmus 21** had on him. He was flabbergasted that a seven-minute film consisting of nothing more than the movement of black and white abstract geometrical shapes could be so visually and kinetically intense. By 1953, Mekas was himself organizing film screenings and in 1955, he brought out the first issue of what would be for many years the most serious, wide-ranging, and provocative film journal in the United States, **Film Culture** magazine. Included in this initial issue was an essay by Richter titled "The Film as an Original Art Form."

Richter wrote about the relationship of European avant-garde filmmakers of the 1920s to 20th century modernism: "The story of these individual artists, under the name avant-garde, can properly be read as a history of the conscious attempt to overcome reproduction and to arrive at the free use of the means of cinematographic expression. This movement spread over Europe and was sustained for the greatest part by modern painters who, in their own field, had broken away from the conventional." Richter goes on to define, as central to this first wave of avant-garde filmmaking, several films included in the program Jonas has curated for this new Visual Art Center: **Anemic Cinema**, **Ballet Mechanique**, **Un Chien Andalou**, and Richter's own **Rhythmus 21**, and **Ghosts Before Breakfast**.

In the 1930's, the avant-garde film movement became largely invisible as artists fled the rise of fascism in Europe and

totalitarianism in the Soviet Union. Many came to the United States bringing with them their knowledge of this brief brilliant moment in film history, and perhaps more importantly, the surety that films could be made outside the stranglehold of the Hollywood film industry. Richter settled in New York where Duchamp had already been living for a decade. Bunuel also immigrated to the U.S., working in New York at the Museum of Modern Art before moving to Mexico where he directed some half-dozen surrealist-infused narrative movies before returning to Europe. Others settled in Los Angeles, among them Alexander Hammid, a Czech cinematographer and the maker of several lyrical films. In the early 1940s, Hammid partnered with Maya Deren (who herself was brought to the United States as a baby by parents fleeing the rise of Leninism) to make **Meshes of the Afternoon** (1943), one of the most influential films of what would become the Second Wave of Avant-Garde Film, otherwise known as "Underground Film," or "The New American Cinema."

The major strands of early 20th century modernism—abstraction, dada, surrealism, cubism, and constructivism—all fed the first wave of avant-garde film. **Ballet Mechanique** (1924), the only film by the painter Fernand Leger, employs Cubist painterly strategies of fragmentation and collage, finding their filmic visual corollaries in close-up camera angles and in editing. Leger gleefully employs the cinematic apparatus as a machine that imparts mechanical qualities to everything it records, from an array of spoons and crockery to a beautiful woman's mouth to a washerwoman who carries her laundry basket up a flight of stairs—the same stairs she probably climbed everyday of her actual working life—over and over again. The magical ingredient, which transforms animate and inanimate objects alike into wind-up toys, is time, structured by repetition. An image of a smiling mouth is just a mouth or perhaps a lipstick advertisement. But when that same mouth widens into a smile and then relaxes three times in a row, we become aware of machine-like musculature that makes it possible to repeat the facial gesture, independent of any psychological cause.

The most familiar film on this program is Luis Bunuel's **Un Chien Andalou** (1924). Bunuel collaborated with the painter Salvador Dali on this cinematic Surrealist manifesto, which influenced not only the avant-garde, but narrative filmmakers from Hitchcock to David Lynch. With its opening sequence in which a scalpel slices through a forcibly-held, wide-open eye, Bunuel signals that the power of film is not limited to representing the surfaces of the physical world, but also can evoke the interior world of fantasy and dreams. **Un Chien Andalou** is a prototype for the surrealist theory of film as dream. What we find in the film is not the particular dream of a particular character (although in its depiction of the cultural, religious, and Oedipal baggage a man brings to a marriage, there is that too) but the underlying structure of dreams as they are shaped by the unconscious. Embraced by the surrealists as a source of artistic subversion and creativity, Freud's theory of the unconscious became a film editing manual. His description of the associative processes of the unconscious and of the condensation and displacement performed by the "dreamwork" on residues of daily life were made manifest on the editing table (or in what today's digital videomakers call post-production) thus liberating film from the straight jacket of 19th century narrative.

Like Leger, Marcel Duchamp made only one film, the deceptively simple **Anemic Cinema** (1926). It consists of alternating shots of two kinds of Roto Relief constructions. Duchamp's Roto Reliefs were flat disks attached to a motor, which made them spin, rather like a pinwheels. On one set of disks, Duchamp inscribed a text—one or two sentences per disk—in the form of a spiral. The text is filled with sexual innuendo, most of it in the form of puns that are impossible to translate. When the disks spin, it becomes difficult to read the words as they fly by. On the other set, he drew a variety of spirals. When these disks turn, the flat graphic appears three-dimensional, undulating toward and away from the viewer. Recorded on film (by Duchamp's collaborator Man Ray) the undulating effect intensified, as did the problem of reading the text. The association

with the "bathroom graffiti" gives the undulating spirals an unmistakable erotic charge. **Anemic Cinema** is a piece of meta-pornography. Hilariously confrontational, it frustrates the viewer's twin desires to read and to get off.

Something of a gadfly, Richter follows the pure abstraction of **Rhythmus 21** (1921) with a mix of Dada and Surrealism in his charming **Ghosts Before Breakfast** (1927-28) and again some twenty-years later in **Dreams that Money Can Buy** (1949). The premise of the latter film is an invocation of "film as dreams" and a pretext for collaboration. A young man discovers that he has the power to create dreams that seem like works of art, and he puts them up for sale. The dreams are indeed the work of major artists. Richter enlisted Duchamp, Man Ray, Leger, Max Ernest, and Alexander Calder as collaborators.

It is this spirit of collaboration as much as Richter's roots in the first film avant-garde that must have appealed to both Jonas Mekas and George Maciunas. Long-time friends and major artists, they are each of them renaissance men, both for the range of their art making, which encompasses a variety of mediums and for their importance as organizers, curators, theoreticians, and proselytizers for art movements that without them would never have had the recognition they now enjoy. Maciunas was the impresario of Fluxus, a loose-knit association of artists who brought a neo-dadaist, proto-conceptualist aesthetic to bear on every recognized art medium and on ones they invented on their own. The contributors to the **FLUX-FILM ANTHOLGY** (1964-68) include major artists associated with Fluxus, some of whom would never have made a film had Maciunas not asked it of them. Indeed, most of these pieces are so minimal that they seem to be anti-films, albeit made with great wit and a sense of secret love for the medium. This description certainly fits Maciunas's own films.

An anarchist with an epic sense of the absurd, a brilliant draftsman, a performer, an archaeologist who made archives



of everything from military medals to cat shit, a visionary architect, builder, and city planner, Maciunas's great work was the creation from the late 1960s through the mid-1970s of co-operatively-owned buildings in which artists lived and worked in the neighborhood that became known as Soho. Had Maciunas not been an anarchist and an artist—had he followed city and state rules and regulations—Soho would never have come into being and certainly would not have been affordable for the avant-garde artists with whom Maciunas identified. But this art work called Soho (which has similarities to the 1970s site-specific work of Gordon Matta-Clark and Robert Smithson) was achieved with great cost to Maciunas, who, became, in a very real as well as a philosophical sense, an outlaw.

Mekas reads his poignant diary of the last year of Maciunas's life on the soundtrack of his **Zefiro Torna** or *Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas (Fluxus) (1952-78)*. It is one of the most delicate, precise, and moving of his portrait films. In the mid-1960s, Mekas began editing the footage that he had been shooting with his hand-held Bolex camera since his arrival in New York in 1949 as a displaced person from Lithuania—an anarchist poet who fled the Soviets only to be captured by the Nazis and sent to a German work camp during the war. Among twenty-odd films he fashioned from this "raw" material are at least two of the greatest works, not only of avant-garde film but of cinema in its entirety, **Diaries, Notebooks, and Sketches**: *Walden (1969)* and **Lost, Lost, Lost (1976)**.

What we could call Mekas film poetics sprang in part out of economic necessity. Since film was expensive, he developed a method of shooting in short bursts of one, two, or three frames, before turning the camera elsewhere. Thus a single second of film could, theoretically, be edited in the camera into 24 discreet images. Although in practice, Mekas varied the length of his shots, the impression one has as a viewer of his films is of images that are simultaneously intensely present and as elusive as memory. The images are gone before we can fully grasp them. Like still photographers, Mekas has

always attempted to capture the essence of the moment, but for him as a filmmaker, that essence is found in movement—the instantaneous transformation of present into past. That transformation is re-enforced by the soundtracks that he constructs at his editing table—first-person commentaries mixing remembrances with immediate responses as he views and pastes together images that are, by definition, ghosts from the past.

Completed in 1992, fourteen years after Maciunas died, **Zefiro Torna** is both mournful and celebratory. The title, of which the English translation is **A Soft Wind Blows**, is also the title of a Petrarch elegy and of the Monteverdi duet which was one of Maciunas's favorite pieces of music and which he used during one of his most inspired performance pieces. Captured by Mekas' camera, a fragment of this performance appears in *Zefiro Torno*, a film which is a tribute to a great artist, to a great friendship, and to a community that, I fear, has all but vanished—as Maciunas, with his absurdist wisdom, always knew it would.

## Adolfas Mekas

You asked me to write something about my brother's poetry. Jonas Mekas. I don't know how one writes about poetry. Or: should one write about poetry? And why?

Let me start, anyway: As far as I can remember, Jonas always wrote poetry. I think he wrote his first poem the day he was born. Perhaps even earlier: he might have composed his first lines in the womb by listening to our mother sing-singing to herself as she worked – making up words and melodies – all day. She did this in the kitchen, in the fields – whenever she was alone. When I was a child I didn't realize what she was doing. I thought she was praying. Only later I learned that she improvised poetry all day long – making up words and melodies day after day, year after year. That was Mama Mekas. We, her children, we grew up in a mist of words and melodies.

I reread Jonass' short poems written when he was 13-15 years old. He was not very big for rhyming. His very early poems were not rhymed – there were alliterations, similarities, indications of rhyme – they read as if he were talking to himself. (Mama Mekas!) By 17-18 all his writing became very lyrical and (sometimes) romantic (which is good – it shows he was growing up as a man). He wrote quite a lot in those early years.

Then his whole world fell apart – war, etc. Nostalgia. Nostalgia as heavy as seven times seven tons of bricks on his chest made him write **Semeniskiu Idiles (Idylls of Semeniskiai)**. This collection of pastoral images, his very first book published in 1948, is considered by Lithuanians as a classic – stand on equal footing with another Lithuanian classic – **Metai (The Seasons)** by Kristijonas Donelaitis, first published in 1818. **Idylls of Semeniskiai** is the only book of his poetry available in an authorized English translation – published by Hallelujah Editions. The renowned American poet John Ashbery wrote: Jonas "... conjured lost landscapes in free-verse idylls that recall Virgil's Georgics, Hölderlin,

Stifter, Clare, Leopardi, Rilke, Pasternak, and William Carlos Williams, and are as direct as cinematography. His brother and fellow cineaste Adolfas, who was with him in exile and had shared those Kinderszenen, has performed a valuable service by rendering these marvelous poems in a crystalline translation whose clarity and emotional nuance are that of memory itself. **Idylls of Semeniskiai** is a spellbinding work of collaboration."

Prior to **Idylls**, Jonas wrote a long narrative poem cycle – **Reminiscensijos (Reminiscences)** about life in Displaced Camps in Germany after the war. It was published by Thistle Press in a passable English translation. These poems and **Idylls** mark the end of his "old fashioned" writing – very narrative, detailed descriptions to the point of being read like cinéma vérité or an inventory of life on the farm and a chronicle of misery, loneliness, and survival in the DP camps.

After arriving in New York (which to Jonas means: America), he was suddenly exposed to contemporary literature of the world. His writing style changed dramatically. The most startling and impressive is his collection of **Pavieniai Zodziiai (Single Words)**. The entire book consists of poems written in single words – a single word per line. Sometimes one word is broken up into syllables and carried over three lines. These poems are extremely condensed images, in the manner of a haiku.

Like this one, in a very quick translation:

Raining  
again.  
I  
lie  
listening  
how  
the rain  
drops  
splash  
in  
the yard,  
it  
is  
raining  
as  
if  
into  
my  
very  
soul.

Or this one:

I  
stand  
on  
a hill  
feeling  
the history  
as  
if  
it  
were  
now.  
In  
the valley  
running  
fields  
of  
grapes,  
like  
blood.

As you see from the samples above, Harry, the poetry found in the Lithuanian words is missing in English. The images and meaning translate easily, but the color, the pulse, and the sound are missing.

The book **Pavieniai Zodziai (Single Words)** starts with very simple images but as it progresses it becomes more abstract and complex, more soul searching (the theme which slowly becomes Jonass' trademark: Sorrow, Sorrow, Sorrow – the word you will find over and over in his later writings.)

**Geliu Kalbejimas (Flower Talk)**, precursor to **Pavieniai Zodziai (Single Words)** and the later collection of **Einu as Vienas**

**(I Go Alone)** create a trilogy of emotionally loaded little gems. If anyone wants to try, they may be (deceptively) the easiest three books to translate into English. Single words – what more can a translator ask for? In these and later books Jonas no longer invents new words as he did in **Idylls** which frustrated many a translator. Here he invents emotions, which also can be as challenging as playing with sharp swords.

I have read translations of Rainer Maria Rilke and Federico García Lorca – they read beautifully in any translation. Nice. But when I read **Der Tiger** by Rilke or **Romance Sonanbulo** by Lorca in the original, my eyes fill up with tears. Same with Jonas poems, especially the early ones: As nezinau, ar saule padare tai, lietus ar vejas – (I don't know if the sun did it, the rain or wind), one of his most beautiful lyrical love songs. I tried to translate it into English several times – I failed each time. The English has definite breaks between the words, while in Lithuanian the words merge imperceptibly into a litany or a lament. *Mama Mekas* again!

Harry, after you asked me to write about Jonas as a poet, not as a filmmaker, about a poet who is almost unknown outside his native homeland of Lithuania, I took down from the shelf all of his poetry books and opened them – year by year, page

by page, line by line. The collection of Jonass' writings is a heavy burden to bear at one time. He wrote so much. Besides the books I mentioned above, he collected unpublished pieces written over twelve years, and called it **Dienorasciai (Diaries)**. The only thing that unites them is that they are in the same book. This is a collection of Jonanesque moments in his life, jotted down quickly as if in shorthand: the book he is reading, the annoying noise of cars, boats he saw by the shore, white snow, sweeping the floor at the Anthology, or just a thought:

No,  
they won't shoot  
poets –  
or  
workers –

and another:  
in your eyes  
bloom  
summer  
roses  
time  
and  
suffering

or another one:  
Without poetry  
as if without  
a church:  
a brick only  
a brick  
stone only  
stone  
clay only  
clay  
word only  
word

and a grape  
not wine.

**Dienu rastai (Daily writings)**, is a collection of previously unpublished pieces spanning his entire writing life. The first third of the book contains his writings before he left Lithuania. The rest includes unpublished writings from the time he came to America, up to the summer of 1996. This collection shows clearly how Jonas' writing style evolved over the years, but the subject matter never changed: each piece stands alone, and the subject is anything that had caught his eye or mind at that moment: blue eyes, late spring, working in a factory in Brooklyn, what is Lithuania? I cry then I sing. The mist is rising in the meadow. Letters to friends. Avenue A. Julius, Eugenijus, Aurelija and other friends. The rain stopped. I walk all night. Ludlow Street. Baudelaire. The streets are empty. I am alone.

Jonas' writing is always lyrical, sentimental, and extremely personal. A multitude of themes and images appear and reappear many times throughout his writing. His poems are full of rain, of windows, of loves lost, of loves found, and much nostalgia. And always flowers. And stones. September wind. Glimpses of love in the spring and bits of love in the fall, before the freeze sets in. Snow. Rain. Apple blossoms. Sadness. Sorrow sorrow. Loneliness. More rain. More flowers. Rain again. Moments of joy. Paradise.

See, Harry, I tried to write, and this is it. Not much. How can I write about the poet struggling to express himself – to communicate – to reach others. I am sure Jonas would say the same as many a poet has said before him – I tried my best to open my heart to you. It is still bleeding. But you can't see it. Wishing you love and flowers in the fall, before the freeze sets in,

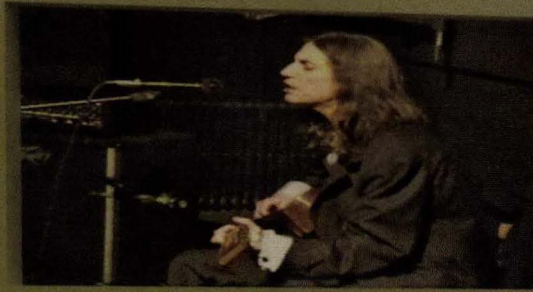
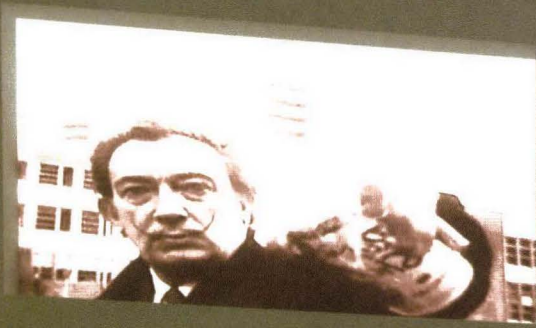
Adolfas Mekas  
August 2007



**Jonas Mekas  
Collection of 40 Films  
10 Monitor Installation  
with Projector**

**Edition of 3**

**2007**







## Jonas Mekas Collection of 40 Films

### 1. Fluxus on the Hudson, 4 min. 45 sec.

On July 7, 1971, George Maciunas arranged a boat ride up the Hudson. Mekas captured up-close and personal moments of these dynamic figures which features Maciunas, Yoko Ono, John Lennon, Joe Jones, Bob Watts, Ken Jacobs, and Michael Snow, among others, in a vibrant celebration of life on the scenic Hudson River. Presented in fleeting images, the film conveys these influential artists relating to one another in an open and intimate way. Music by musician and artist Henry Flint accompanies the film.

### 2. Jackie & Lee

#### Fragments of an Unfinished Biography, 5 min. 11 sec.

The footage comes from an unfinished film biography of American icon Jackie Onassis and her younger sister Lee Radziwill in New York, 1972. Mekas creates intimate portraits of Onassis and Radziwill by opening up with rare access to childhood photos, poems, and memorabilia. The well-loved American sisters opened their lives to Mekas' humble and trustworthy person, thus opening up intimate family events such as Jackie playing with her dog and shopping with her sister and family. This film is yet another example of the way Mekas' kind heart and dedication to his passion gave him a key into the lives of some of the most important figures of the 20th century.

### 3. Mozart and Elvis, 3 min.

Through selective editing, Mekas creates a unique recording uniting two of music history's greatest figures – classical composer, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and the King of Rock n' Roll Elvis Priestley. The film begins with footage of Vienna and leads into Elvis' last performance in New York on June 9, 1972. Music by Mozart plays through out the film, and accompanies Elvis' at his now legendary show. The conflation seems humorous as a bodysuit clad Elvis swivels and sings to the famous Mozart piece, that the archetype of high art.

### 4. Warhol and Maciunas, 3 min. 12 sec.

Warhol and Maciunas features Mekas' good friends and collaborators George Maciunas and Andy Warhol. Images include Warhol's show at the Whitney Museum of American Art in May of 1971 and Maciunas' dumpling party, attended by Warhol, John Lennon, and Yoko Ono, in SoHo, the following June. The film's audio track consists of Mekas' comments on the relationship between Warhol and Maciunas, Pop, and Fluxus.

### 5. Nam June Paik's Piano Piece, 6 min. 13 sec.

This short film (in two parts) portrays well-known video artist and Fluxus member Nam June Paik destroying a piano during a performance at Anthology Film Archives on November 1, 1997. In the spirit of Fluxus Happenings and performances of the 1960s, Paik untraditionally employs the instrument, repeatedly pushing it over onto its side, gradually making it unusable. Paik uses a stick-like object to beat the keys, smashing it until a strange type of sound emerges, in this musical performance that employs highly unusual techniques. The performance is a tribute to conceptual artist and fellow Fluxus member, Joseph Beuys and his similar piece **Revolutionsklavier** (1969), which also involved the destruction of a piano.

### 6. Taping for as I was Moving Ahead..., 7 min. 52 sec.

This film gives rare insight into Mekas' creative process. Included is a recording of Mekas singing and playing accordion in preparation for the soundtrack to his film, **As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty**, a supreme example of diarist cinema.

### 7. End of the Millennium Espresso, 7 min. 52 sec.

Over his last espresso of the millennium, Jonas Mekas sits alone at the bar of a restaurant in New York City, waxing poetic about the 20th century. He contemplates the atrocities of the last hundred years but also the creativity it inspired, giving nods to some masters of the century. He

also pontificates about the future as he sits at a café bar. The film, shot by the filmmaker, starring the filmmaker, exhibits the qualities of poeticism, intimacy, and sentimentality for which Mekas is known. This body of work ultimately looks to the new millennium, for a continuation of all hopes and miracles that Mekas' work has caught on film since the 1960s.

#### 8. *Destruction of the Berlin Wall*, 3 min. 49 sec.

The film presents footage from July 1990's historic fall of the Berlin Wall. Mekas films street peddlers selling pieces of the wall, and people walking by and taking pictures of its destruction. Presented is a rare and up-close look at one of the 20th century's most momentous events, a symbolic fall of an era, and a time during which Germans' lives changed forever.

#### 9. *Patti Smith at Anthology Film Archives*, 4 min. 38 sec.

Mekas creates a portrait of one of rock and roll's most influential figures, Patti Smith during an intimate performance at Anthology Film Archives. Smith performs an acoustic guitar solo of a song she was working on at that time, inspired by Harry Smith. The work is yet another example of the endless ways in which Mekas' reaches out to a wide expanse of artists, attending all kinds of very important cultural events and carefully documenting each moment of his extraordinary life.

#### 10. *The Song of Central Park*, 4 min. 24 sec.

**Songs of Central Park** was shot on January 16, 1966, with images of Central Park, the skating rink, and people walking around New York City. The images paint a lyrical portrait of the city. In the background, the filmmaker's own voice radiates like a song, retorting with irony that cinema is between the clips. The entire audio track is a kind of manifesto in which Jonas Mekas talks about the principles of film, revealing his unique perspective of avant-garde cinema.

#### 11. *The Song of Moscow*, 3 min. 26 sec.

Filmed in 1971, Mekas' emotionally rich footage includes

residents of Moscow engaged in daily activities such as walking around the city, drinking, eating together, and working. Mekas manages to capture the beauty and unseen magic of everyday life through footage of Moscow's majestic architecture, its energetic people, and traditional culture.

#### 12. *Jonas' Independence Speech at the Anniversary of the Filmmaker's Cooperative*, 4 min. 25 sec.

In his compelling Independence Speech given on July 1, 2004, Mekas reflects upon the Filmmaker's Cooperative's pivotal role in the establishment of independent cinema. He describes the organization's conception, noting that its founding was necessary to ensure the existence and progression of independent cinema. The speech discloses Mekas' dynamic and idealistic nature as he looks forward to an only-better future for the independent film community.

#### 13. *Graffiti Museum Bronx, NYC*, 6 min. 14 sec.

In **Graffiti Museum Bronx** shot on July 17, 1993, Mekas is given rare access to the behind-the-scenes work of New York City graffiti artists. These artists, similar to avant-garde filmmakers, operate outside the boundaries of mainstream society, invite Mekas into a world of paint over hushed subway tracks in the Bronx. His tour guide is graffiti artist Ivory. Footage includes graf pieces created by many classic graffiti artists of the time.

#### 14. *Award Presentation to Andy Warhol*, 12 min.

After short footage of Andy Warhol receiving a Film Culture Magazine Award for his film, **Sleep**, this footage depicts lost scenes from within the Factory. On December of 1964 at Andy Warhol's Factory, Mekas filmed Warhol with some of his closet friends, including Factory superstars such as Baby Jane Holzer, Ivy Nicholson, Gerard Malanga, Gregory Battcock, and Gregory Markopoulos. The film captures Andy and the figures above, eating fruit and vegetables handed to them by Andy. Each person slowly savors his or her fruit, mysteriously smiling as if to keep a secret. Subtle actions and

exchanges between the group create a vivid and raw portrait of Andy Warhol and his close friends performing a seemingly ordinary task. Mekas narrates, giving in-depth and personal commentary which points out the importance of Andy's work in society, his history, and his role as a visionary avant-garde filmmaker, a role that, as Mekas points out, is so often forgotten or overshadowed by his fame as a painter.

15. *A Visit to Timothy Leary*, 6 min. 33 sec.

Shot at the Millbrook estate of LSD guru Timothy Leary on July 1st through 4th, 1965, the film expressively presents flickering images of nature; trees, open fields, and flowers. Children jump on trampolines and play in the fields as the sun casts on the countryside. Mekas talks about humanity's lost love for mother earth. Weaved through out his somber, heartfelt testimony, are subtle hints of hope. The music is by composer Auguste Varkalis.

16. *Imperfect Film*, 4 min. 16 sec.

From his vast collection of film works, Mekas culled outtakes and found footage to create what he describes as an "imperfect film." Random images are presented—two monkeys playing, a man in a rocking chair reading a book, and moving clouds in the sky, as well as footage of the filmmaker himself. Accompanied by Auguste Varkalis on piano, Mekas singing a song by Hannelore Hahn, as the sound of church bells in Provence ring from afar. These "random" images, when viewed in sequence, become lyrical and poignant.

17. *Allen Ginsberg Sings Blues*, 2 min. 53 sec.

Recorded in March 1990 at Mekas' loft at 491 Broadway, the film gives an intimate look at Mekas' friend and collaborator Allen Ginsberg. The esteemed contemporary poet sits around a table of friends adorned with bottles and food. He sings his version of the blues, relating his poetic performance to political issues and examples of war and killing, that are affecting the world over. The refrain of Ginsberg's blues is the

haunting line, "hearts full of hatred will outlast my old age." Mekas captured a riveting and personal testimony from one of America's most intriguing figures of the 20th century.

18. *A Visit to Stan Brakhage*, 13 min. 15 sec.

**A Visit to Stan Brakhage** is an ultimate example of Mekas' ability to create film portraits through skillful camera work and selective editing. The film captures legendary experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage at his home in Rollinville, Colorado during a visit Mekas took to capture him. Included are images of Brakhage's children, dogs, wife Jane, and Colorado's picturesque landscape. The film is accompanied by the music of Lily Boulenger and the voices of the Brakhage family.

19. *Cinema Is Not 100 Years Old*, 3 min. 35 sec.

Mekas expressively states his declaration of the eternal youth of cinema. Presented is a viewpoint that avant-garde cinema's history is constantly beginning again, fresh, each time filmmakers gather or a camera begins shooting. As if to visually prove this, Mekas moves energetically around his apartment with a young boy, spinning and dancing and playing with a green balloon. Mekas himself appears eternally youthful. The word "terrorist" flashes across the screen in red capital letters. The word seems humorous, applied to a happily dancing Mekas but it also conveys the radical revolutionary potential of cinema, which is not something old to be canonized. Also noted is a momentary image in which Mekas and another filmmaker appear to be toasting to the future of avant-garde cinema.

20. *Cinematheque Francaise*, 6 min. 8 sec.

This film depicts Mekas' heartfelt visit to the legendary **Cinémathèque Francaise**, established by Henri Langlois at Palaisde Chaillot. The **Cinémathèque Francaise** was one of the largest film repositories, and screened a diverse program of archived films from all over the world that had been meticulously maintained by its founder Langlois. The footage

shows Mekas walking around the gutted structure's hallways, filled with movie posters but silent and empty. The film depicts Mekas himself in an act of reverence to his beloved cinema, which is symbolized so beautifully by this historic landmark.

21. *Moirés with Professor Oster and Salvador Dali*, 4 min. 37 sec.

This footage from January 24, 1964, portrays Professor Oster demonstrating a series of moirés patterns. He is shown discussing various topics and ideas with artist Salvador Dali; everything from Japanese basket weaving to LSD. The film gives a rare opportunity to observe first hand an intellectual meeting between two influential figures from varying disciplines.

22. *To New York With Love: A Letter to Penny Arcade*, 14. min. 46 sec.

In this diarist film shot on June 25, 2001, in Mekas' loft at 491 Broadway, the filmmaker declares his love for New York. He reflects back upon his home for the past fifty years, describing it as collection of memories that have become a part of him. The film compellingly conveys the poetic, lyrical, and sentimental qualities for which Mekas' films are known.

23. *Phil Glass Plays for Ralph Steiner's "Mechanical Principles"*, 9 min. 17 sec.

The film features a compelling performance given by Phillip Glass, widely considered one of the 20th century's most influential composers, at Anthology Film Archives on May 31, 2000. He plays the piano to modernist photographer and filmmaker Ralph Steiner's important film **Mechanical Principles**. Glass' music expressively accompanies the film's imagery of mechanical gears in motion. The shadow of Glass and the piano he's playing appear on the screen upon which the film is being projected.

24. *Robert Frank Films*, 1 min. 55 sec.

Jonas Mekas documented photographer and filmmaker Robert Frank making his well-known film **The Sin of Jesus** in 1960. The footage gives a rare look at Frank in the creative process. Dick Belamy and Mary Frank also appear.

25. *I Am Searching For Nothing*, 2 min. 51 sec.

An autobiographical vignette, Mekas presents footage from a visit at Marseilles in 1966. The film is accompanied by Mekas proclaiming his philosophy on life, disclosing that his films are his way of life, and a celebration of what he sees. Footage includes a wedding and Mekas sharing a croissant with a cat.

26. *Salvador Dali, Happenings*, 7 min. 24 sec.

Mekas filmed artist Salvador Dali carrying out a series of "Happenings," which include a series of artistic events which took place in New York between 1963-64. Included in the line-up is photographer Peter Beard, as both "production manager" and "casting director," model, actress, and artist Verushka, in the starring role, and writer, performer, and underground film star Taylor Meade, among others. Conceived as semi-happenings, performances were never carried out on stage, but usually in studios and private homes. In the footage, Verushka's body is repetitively lathered in shaving cream, a signature prop for Dali. The footage also features the model being tied up, a lot of twitching, and a girl slipping into a small wooden box as the film comes to an end. The footage is accompanied by Mekas' commentary and music by Dalius Naujo.

27. *Andy At Work*, 5 min.

**Andy At Work** is a revealing portrait of one of modern art's most iconic figures. The footage includes Andy videotaping John Kennedy, Jr. and Anthony Radziwill at Andy's estate in Montauk, Long Island. With direction by Peter Beard, it shows these influential figures as young boys having a fight with shaving cream, perhaps a reference to another of Mekas' films

which features another hugely famous artist, Salvador Dali, at work. Mekas brilliantly captures rare footage of Andy at work in Manhattan, at the Village Gate in 1966, and at work in his Union Square studio in 1976. Lee Radziwill, Peter Beard, Gerard Malanga, Peter Orlovsky, Ed Sanders, and Ronna Page are all featured. Music by Dalius Naujo and August Varkalis accompanies the film.

**28. Bed-In: John Lennon & Yoko Ono, 4 min. 21 sec.**

In this footage, shot on May 26, 1969, Mekas captures John Lennon and Yoko Ono carrying out their extraordinarily famous Bed-In for Peace Event at the Amsterdam Hotel in Montreal. The event was conceived as a non-violent way to protest the Vietnam War. Present at the event were many close friends of the couple's, including Timothy Leary, Timothy Smothers, Al Clapp, and Dick Gregory. John and Yoko, along with Leary, Derek Taylor, Petula Clark, and many others recorded the anthem of peace, "Give Peace a Chance," during the bed-in. Five weeks later the single reached no. 14 on Billboard's chart, and inspired a generation of youth to sing for peace, and an end to the Vietnam War. Accompanying the film is Free Music on Second Street.

**29. Hare Krishna, 5 min. 3 sec.**

This film features Mekas' friends and collaborators, Srila Prabhupada, Barbara Rubin, Phil Corner, and others, joining Hare Krishnas and protesters in a political demonstration on November 5, 1966, in New York City. Audio consists of chanting performed by Allen Ginsberg and others.

**30. Poets at the Living Theater, 3 min. 2 sec.**

Filmed in 1958 at the Living Theater, the footage presents poets Allen Ginsberg, Frank O'Hara, Ray Bremser, Le Roi Jones, and Peter Orlovsky. The film is an engaging visual account of these renowned poets interacting at the legendary venue, which provided writers, poets, and playwrights an alternative space to stage works. Voiceover by Allen Ginsberg, reading from his poem, **Sunflower Sutra**; recorded in 1960.

**31. To John with Love, 7 min. 50 sec.**

**To John with Love** is a telling portrait of John Lennon featuring some of the art world's best-known personalities including John and Yoko, Ringo Star, George Harrison, Allen Ginsberg, Phil Spector, Stevie Wonder, and others. Presented in three parts, footage begins with friends gathering to celebrate John's birthday on October 9, 1972, in Syracuse, New York, with people strumming guitars and singing meaningful songs. This footage gives a real sense of the filmmaker's love for his subjects and his work. John and Yoko's concert at Madison Square Garden is conveyed in quick, flickering images. The film ends with images from Central Park on December 8, 1980, the day John was shot. Sound includes improvisations during the birthday scenes and percussion by Dalius Naujo which blends quietly into the bold, vibrant images from the concert. Mekas created an expressive tribute to his friend and collaborator.

**32. Velvet Underground's First Public Appearance, 3 min. 5 sec.**

On January 14, 1966, Andy Warhol was invited to speak at the annual banquet of the New York Society for Clinical Psychiatry at the Delmonico Hotel in New York. Warhol invited Factory regulars, such as members of what would become the Velvet Underground, including Lou Reed and Nico. The band made their first-ever public performance with Nico at the psychiatric banquet, a legendary event that Mekas captured the only footage of. Mekas' work captures the early innocence of a band on the verge of revolutionizing rock n' roll for years to come. The captivating montage of images includes appearances by magnanimous celebrities such as Lou Reed, Edie Sedgwick, Gerard Malanga, John Cale, Andy Warhol, and others.

**33. To Barbara Rubin With Love, 7 min. 13 sec.**

This short film is a mini-portrait of Barbara Rubin, an experimental filmmaker of the 60's who fought to blur the lines between film and art. Rubin had a profound impact on the

New York art community – Mekas credits Rubin with the discovery of the Velvet Underground, for saving Bob Dylan’s mind after his motorcycle crash, and producing one of erotic cinema’s key works, **Christmas on Earth**. This filmmaker speaks out about women’s rights and artistic freedom in this important short film by her dear friend Mekas who first gave her a camera when she was a teen, with which she directed her acclaimed film, **Christmas on Earth**. Allen Ginsberg said of Rubin, “Her genius was sympathizing with everybody’s desire to get together in work with their fellow geniuses.”

34. *Elia Kazan, 1 min. 56. sec.*

Elia Kazan was a Greek-American theater and film director who influenced the cinema industry at every end. He co-founded the well-known Actors Studio in New York in 1947, and directed cinema masterpieces such as **A Street Car Named Desire, On the Waterfront, and East of Eden**. He is pictured at the house of Lee Radziwill on August 18, 1972 in Montauk with Barbara Loden, Peter Beard, Tina Radziwill, and Kazan Jr. Mekas portrays his subjects with the deep sentiment and poeticism for which he is known.

35. *Carl Dreyer, 1 min. 26 sec.*

Mekas recorded Carl Dreyer, widely considered one of the greatest directors in cinema, on September 17, 1965. Dreyer was renowned for his meticulous approach to filmmaking. The film is a brief portrait of the director who was very interested in Mekas’ lifetime passion of broadening avant-garde film and creating a flourishing community for it in New York City and the art world. It opens with a shot of the filmmaker staring out of a window with his back facing the camera. Mekas’ camera moves around Dreyer’s head, focusing and zooming in probingly on his face. The film is interspersed with an image of daisies in a field.

36. *Carl G. Jung or Lapis Philosophorum, 4 min. 17 sec.*

This footage features Carl Gustav Jung, one of the most influential figures in the history of psychology in a riveting

portrait of one of the most visionary minds of the past century. Shot by artist and composer Jerome Hill at Jung’s home in Switzerland in the summer of 1950, it begins with Jung reading from **Lapis Philosophorum**, the “philosopher’s stone.” With music and cinematography, both by Jerome Hill and editing by Mekas in 1991, this footage creates a revealing portrait of the Swiss psychiatrist in his natural habitat.

37. *The Monks of Cinema, 6 min. 17 sec.*

The insightful film was shot in the summer of 1964 when Mekas, Barbara Rubin, and Ken Jacobs went to the Robert Flaherty Film Seminar in Vermont to present Jack Smith’s film **Flaming Creatures** (for which they were later arrested on obscenity charges!). The filmmakers were not considered to be official guests and had to sleep outside in the Vermont cold. Mekas wrote, “The morning was beautiful and we all felt great, we felt we were the ‘Monks of Cinema.’” The footage is evidence of the young filmmakers’ commitment to the art of avant-garde cinema. It conveys the playful spirit, but also the devotion and seriousness of the artists.

38. *Kreutzer Sonata (From the Diaries), 4 min. 51 sec.*

The film gives a rare glimpse into Mekas’ creative process during the making of “As I Was Moving Ahead, Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty.” In the film within the film, we see images of Mekas’ former wife by a seaside. It displays how Mekas works, edits, and tapes but also shows a man reflecting on moments in his life. Musician and artist Henry Flynt’s piece, “Kreutzer Sonata,” expressively accompanies the footage.

39. *The Song of Avila July 22, 1967, 3 min. 2 sec.*

In 1967, Mekas met Meher Baba, the Indian guru/scientist who believed that three holy places existed in Europe: Avila, Assisi, and Fatima. Inspired by Baba’s idea, Mekas traveled to Avila the following year. The film is a diaristic record of his visit, disclosing his enlightening experience of the city, how he felt, and what he encountered. The footage presents flickering

images of Avila, its people, and buildings with voiceover by the filmmaker.

40. *Bibbe Hansen*, 3 min. 9 sec.

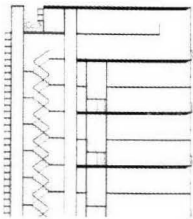
In 1966, Mekas filmed the young Bibbe Hansen, a Factory child, whose parents introduced to Warhol and his many muses at a very young age. She also starred in Warhol films with other Factory starlet Edie Sedgwick and in a screen test for a film Mekas intended to make about the life of a young girl growing up in New York. Shot in Central Park, the footage conveys the imaginary and innocent world of a city girl in a park, looking at grass, smelling flowers, and enjoying the sunshine. A haiku by Matsuo Basho, to whom the film is dedicated, accompanies the visual imagery, which seems like a whimsical ode to youth and beauty.



**Jonas Mekas  
Collection of 40 Film Stills  
66x46 cm Each  
C-Print**

**Edition of 3**

**2007**





## John Lennon

Jonas Mekas: Collection of 40 Films and Film Stills

Born in 1940 in Liverpool, England, Lennon was a founding member of The Beatles, as well as an artist, writer, actor and filmmaker. Mekas was introduced to Lennon through his wife and collaborator, Yoko Ono, an important member of the Fluxus art community. Yoko introduced John to the world of experimental filmmaking, and together the couple collaborated on **Smile, You Are Here, Rape, Fly, and Imagine**, among many others. Similar to the work of Jonas Mekas, the films double as "diaristic" portraits of John and Yoko as an artistic force moving through time. In the early 1970s John and Yoko took up permanent residency in New York City, bringing them closer to Mekas' circle of artists and filmmakers. They were frequent and adored subjects for Mekas' intimate film portraits. In his film **Bed-In: John Lennon & Yoko Ono**, Mekas conflates the role of artistic participant and historical preservationist. Mekas' final film, **For John with Love** is a moving elegy to the slain singer and a token of remembrance for his mourning fans.

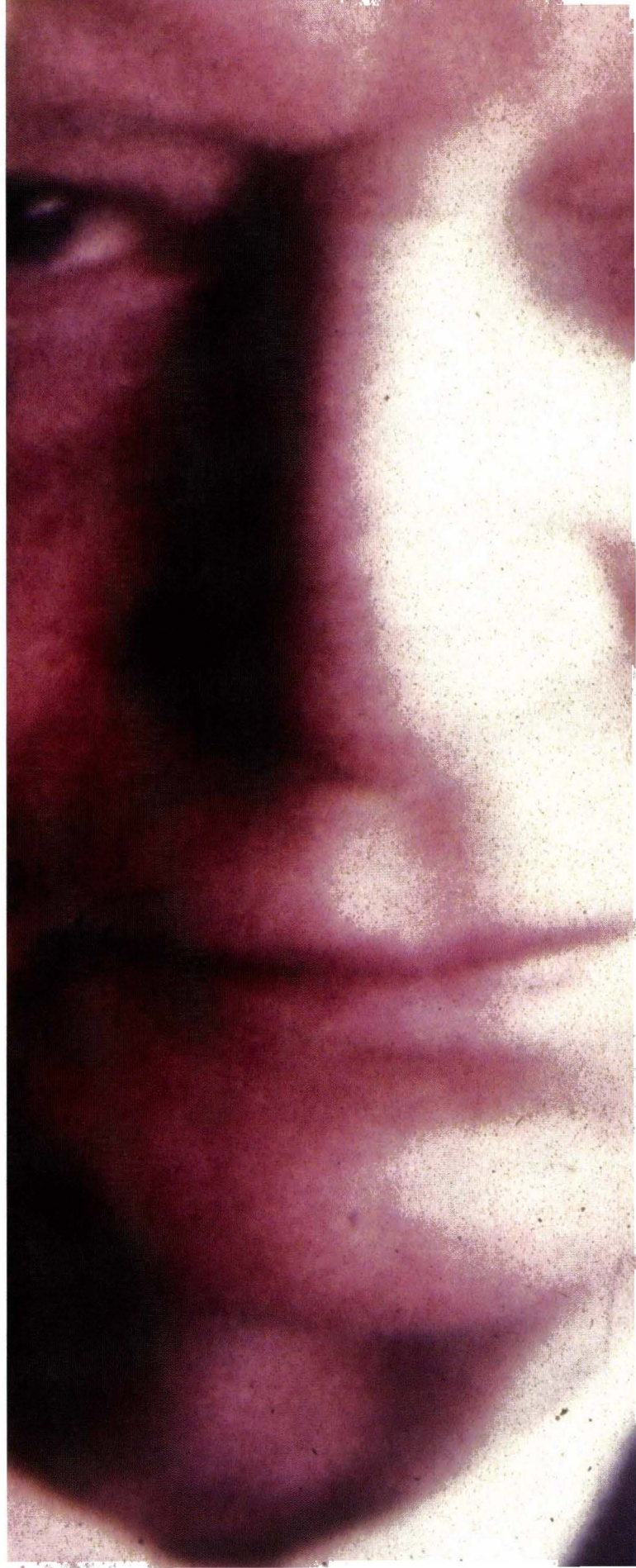




## Carl Dreyer

Jonas Mekas: Collection of 40 Films and Film Stills

Born in 1889 in Copenhagen, Dreyer is widely considered to be one of the most visionary filmmakers of avant-garde cinema. His films include **The Passion of Joan of Arc** (1928) and **Vampyr** (1932). His meticulous approach to filmmaking combined with a strict perfectionist tendency slowed his cinematic output, but nevertheless yielded the masterpieces that we have today. According to film critic Pauline Kael, "Carl Dreyer's art begins to unfold just at the point where most directors give up." Mekas' short film of the director, made a couple of years before his death, is a gentle, painterly portrait in light, reminiscent of Warhol's **Screen Tests**, in its adherence to the personal "reality" of the portrait's subject.





## Salvador Dali

Jonas Mekas: Collection of 40 Films and Film Stills

Born in 1904, Dali is a wildly popular Surrealist painter, perhaps best known for his melting clocks in the painting **The Persistence of Memory**. Dali's immense talent and outrageous personality gave him access to the poets, filmmakers, and painters who made-up the international avant-garde of the mid-century. Most notably, he collaborated with the surrealist filmmaker Luis Bunuel on the script for **Un chien andalou**. Dali was also courted by Hollywood directors such as Hitchcock and Disney, to varying degrees of success. Jonas Mekas, most notably makes his own appearance in Dali's film oeuvre as a participant and director of series of "Happenings" carried out on the streets of New York in 1963-64. Mekas' reverential joy in helping to bring Dali into the 1960's world of Happenings is made apparent in the film.



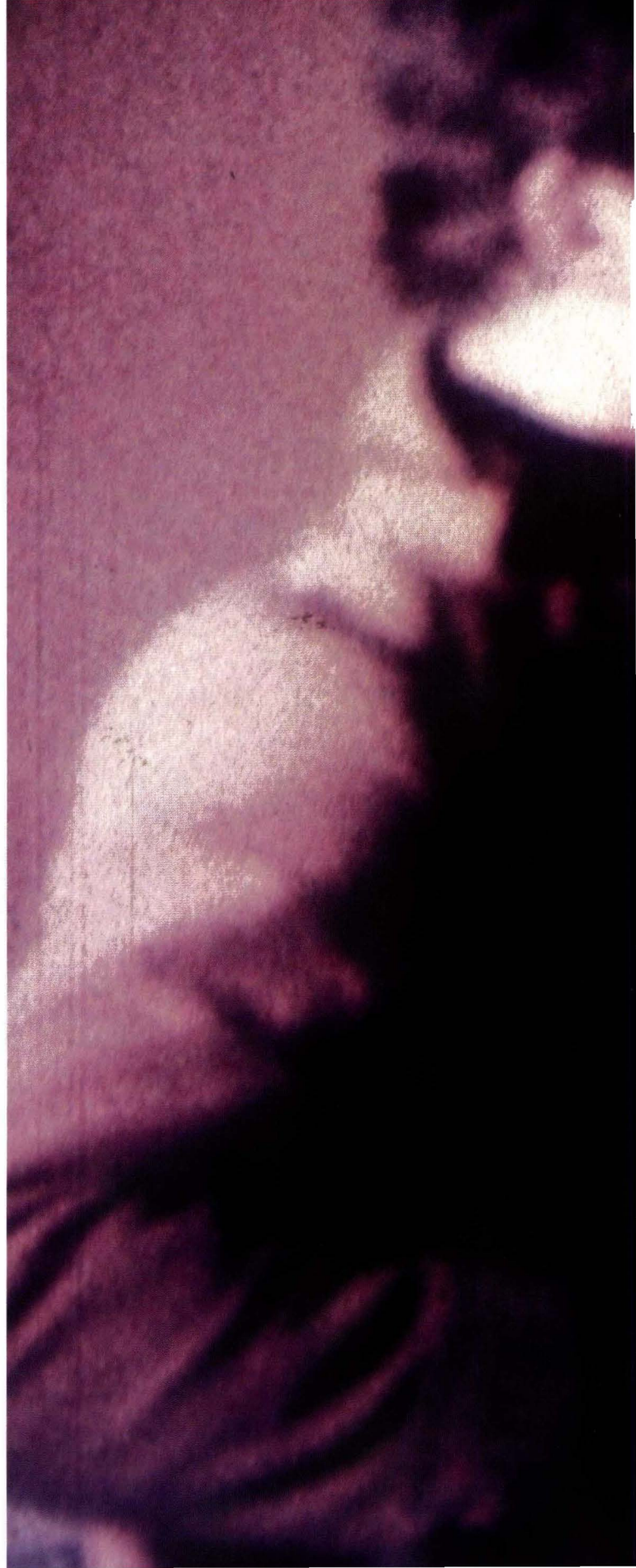




## The Velvet Underground

Jonas Mekas: Collection of 40 Films and Film Stills

The Velvet Underground's rock and roll career is a study in how a radical change in music culture can come from "underground" non-commercially viable groups. First gaining recognition as Andy Warhol's "house band" for the Factory, the Velvets sang about drug, sadomasochism, and French Surrealist inspired love songs. Jonas Mekas was on hand to capture the group's first live performance outside of Warhol's orbit, at a psychiatry conference, of all places. As the group's manager, Warhol brought in the German-model Nico, and was the mastermind behind the Exploding Plastic Inevitable light shows in which the band performed at. Like many members of the Factory scene, the band was a relatively short-lived project, releasing their final records in the early 70s. However, with the exception of Nico and Sterling Morrison, the majority of the band members including Lou Reed, John Cale and Mo Tucker are still going strong.

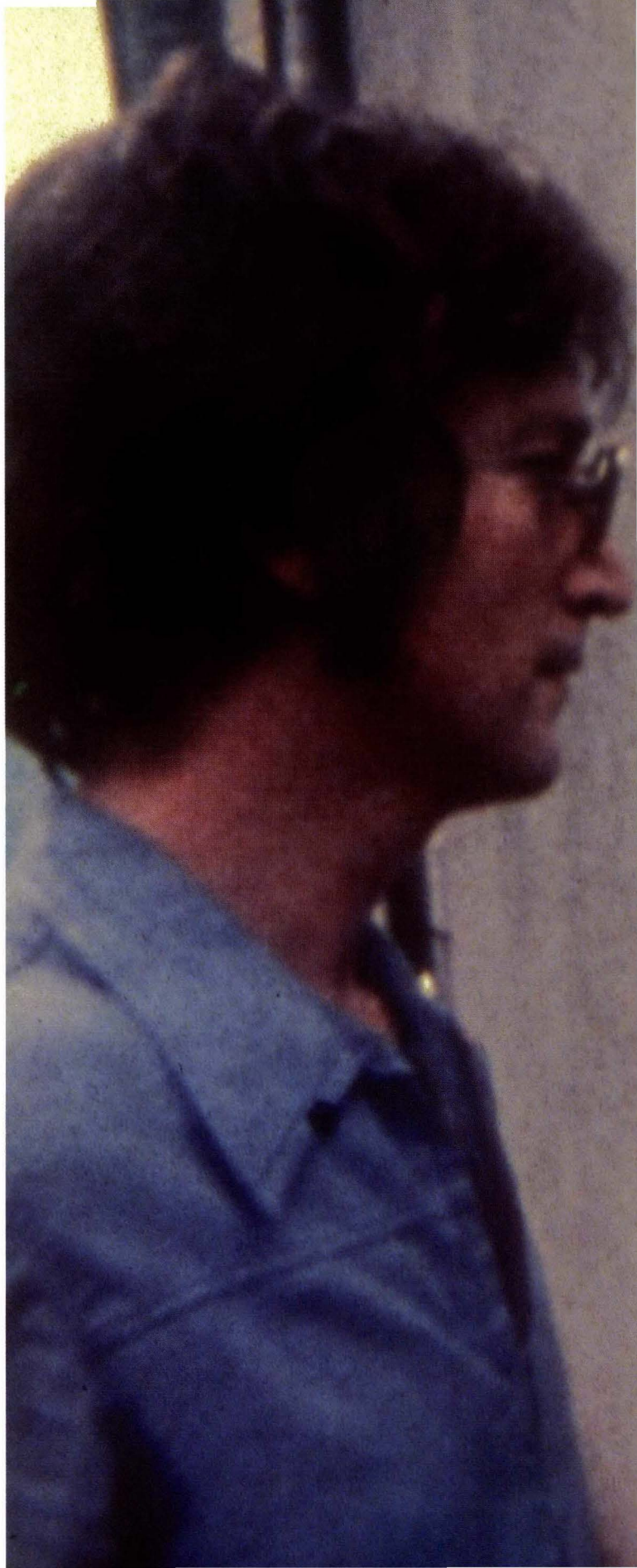


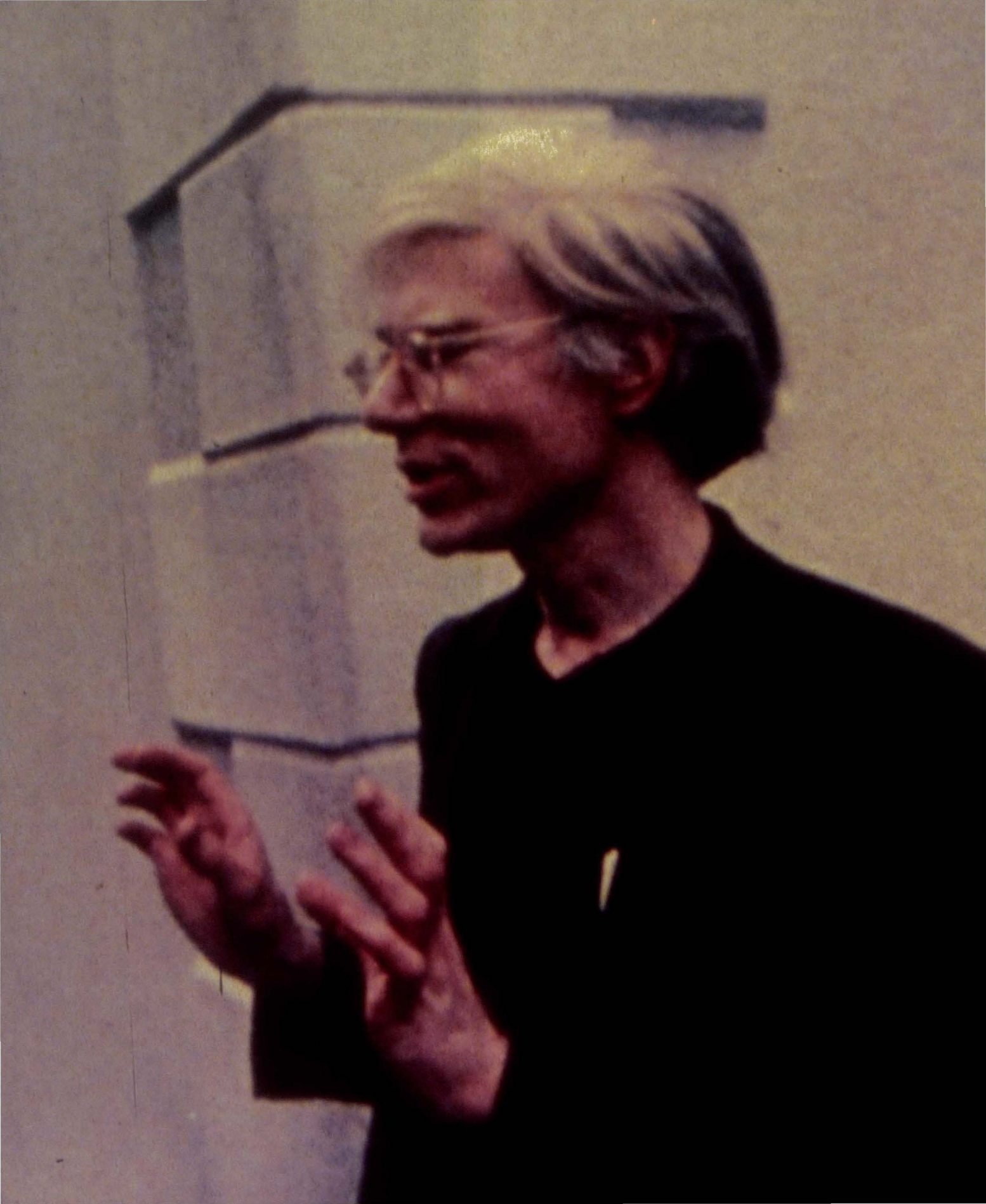


## Andy Warhol

Jonas Mekas: Collection of 40 Films and Film Stills

Born in 1928 Warhol is an American pop artist, avant-garde filmmaker, and perhaps the cultural force of the 1960s. Jonas Mekas was an early supporter of Warhol's first forays into experimental filmmaking with classics such as **Sleep, Blow Job, and Empire**. Mekas worked as a reel changer on 1964's **Empire**, a film of the Empire State Building captured at 24 frames per second. As a frequent guest at the Factory, Mekas captured a number of Warhol's "Superstars" on film, such as Edie Sedgwick, Bibbe Hansen, and the members of the Velvet Underground, whom he filmed in their first public appearance. A devoted follower and admirer of the consummate Pop Art legend, Mekas continued to film Warhol at work throughout the 1970s and remained friends with him until his death.

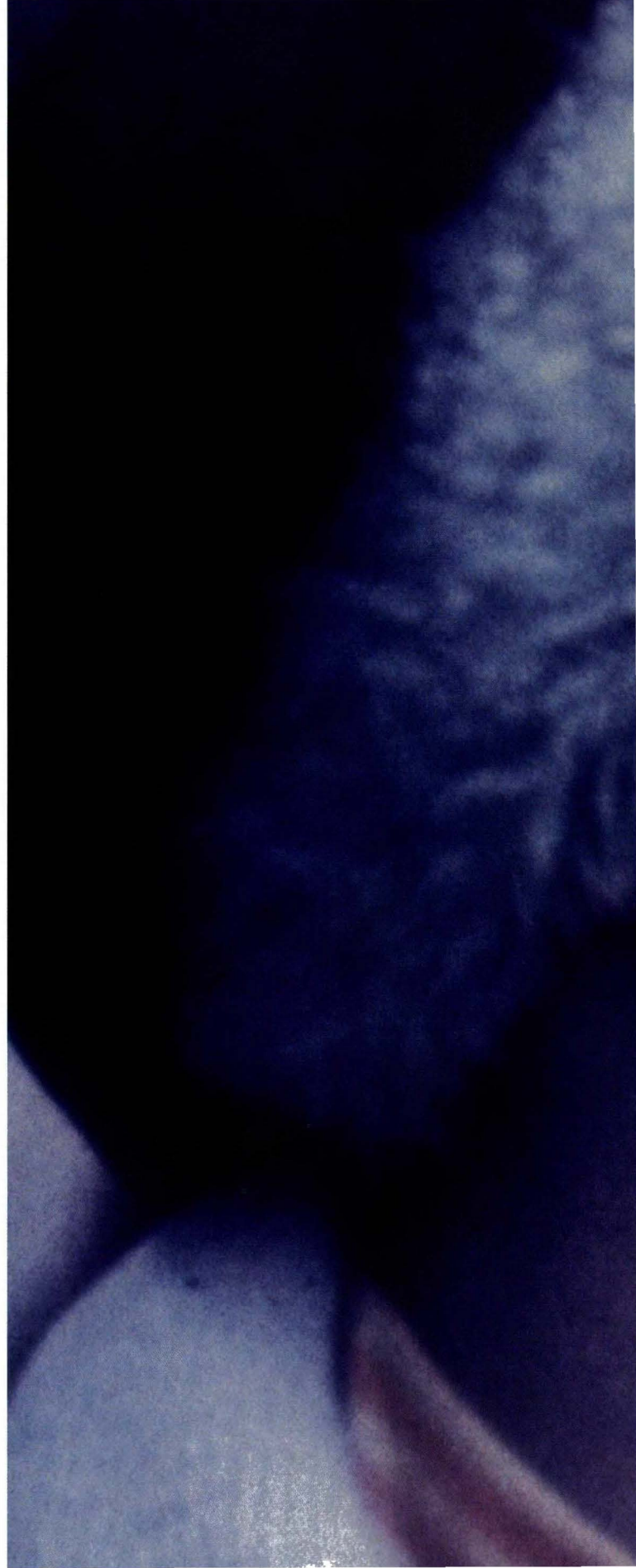




## Barbara Rubin

Jonas Mekas: Collection of 40 Films and Film Stills

Born in 1945, avant-garde film prodigy, Barbara Rubin began shooting her first films as a teenager, with the support of Jonas Mekas and the Filmmakers' Cooperative. Introduced into Mekas' experimental film world by her uncle, the art dealer William Rubin, Barbara soon became a close friend and collaborator. Her film **Christmas On Earth**, a document of a night of debauchery in a New York City apartment, is widely considered to be an erotic avant-garde masterpiece. Barbara Rubin had the gift of camaraderie with many key figures from the 1960s, making introductions between Warhol and the Velvet Underground, and bridging the avant-garde world with the pop world of her close friend Bob Dylan. Sadly her presence on the 1960's scene was short lived—she moved upstate and married a Hassidic Jew, became deeply religious, and died tragically at the age of 35 in childbirth for her sixth child.





## Nam June Paik

Jonas Mekas: Collection of 40 Film and Film Stills

Born in 1932 in South Korea, Nam June Paik rose to prominence as a member of the Fluxus movement. Paik was one of the first artists to experiment with the newly popular medium of video. Trained as a classical musician as a child, Paik's video art often includes footage of performances, most notably that of cellist Charlotte Moorman. In his first public exhibit as a visual artist, Paik stacked televisions on top of one another and used magnets to distort their images. Nam June Paik is seen in a number of Mekas' films as a spectator as well as a performer, most memorably in his musical performance homage to Beuys at Anthology Film Archives.







## Richard Serra

Jonas Mekas: Collection of 40 Films and Film Stills

Born in 1939, Serra is an American artist, widely recognized for his minimalist, industrial material based-sculptures. He is also an experimental filmmaker, writer, printmaker, and occasional performer in films, such as Matthew Barney's **Cremaster 3**. After graduating from Yale's MFA program, and time spent abroad in France and Italy, Serra eventually relocated to New York City in the mid-1960s. His short film **Hand-Catching Lead** (1968) a document of the artist's and the viewer's relationship to sculptural forms, is highly influenced by avant-garde filmmakers such as Maya Deren, Michael Snow, and Andy Warhol.





## Henri Langlois

Jonas Mekas: Collection of 40 Films and Film Stills

Born in Turkey in 1914, Langlois is the founder and director of the Cinémathèque Française in Paris. An institution beloved of film enthusiasts worldwide, the Cinémathèque was a landmark establishment that preserved films during the Nazi occupation and helped jumpstart the French New Wave in the 1950s. As a film preservationist and exhibitor, Langlois laid the groundwork for Jonas Mekas' own Anthology Film Archives. At the heart of both of their projects is the dual cultural need for both a film archive and a communal space for cinema in which aspiring filmmakers can meet **one another** and perpetuate the forward movement of cinema as an art form.





## Allen Ginsberg

Jonas Mekas: Collection of 40 Films and Film Stills

American poet whose 1956 poem "Howl," skyrocketed him to fame as the defining voice of the Beat Generation. Ginsberg was a close friend of fellow Beat writer Jack Kerouac, whom he met at Columbia University in the late 1940s. Ginsberg was a key member of the pop-rock intelligentsia in the 1960s—bridging the avant-garde film and art world with the burgeoning folk-rock scene. His friendships with Bob Dylan, filmmaker Barbara Rubin, Andy Warhol, John Lennon, and Jonas Mekas helped facilitate a radical dialogue across disciplines. In 1974 Ginsberg combined his deep interest in Buddhism and poetry by founding the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado.





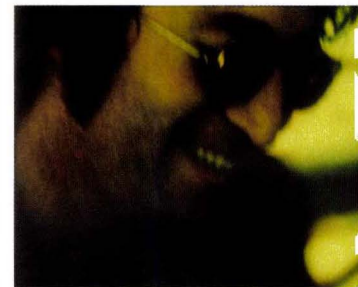


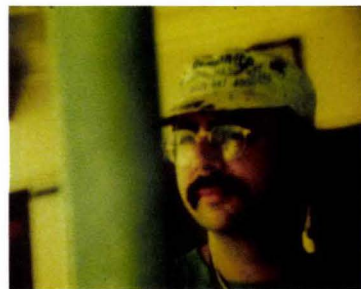
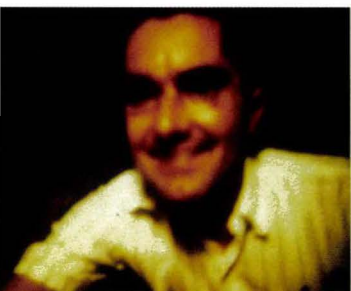


**Jonas Mekas  
Zefiro Torna 40 Film Stills  
61x51 cm each  
C-Print**

**Edition of 3**

**2007**

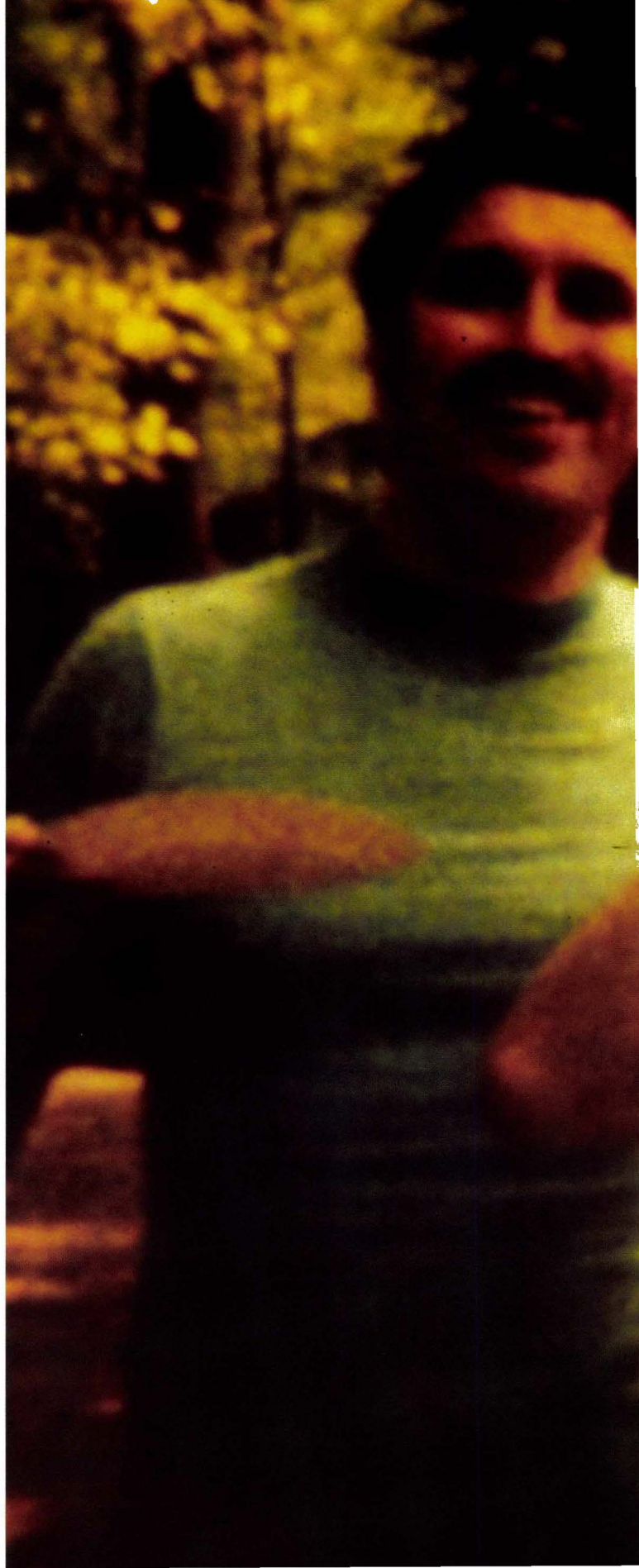




## Jonas Mekas

Zefiro Torna: Collection of 40 Film Stills

Almus Salcius holds up a loaf of Lithuanian bread and George Maciunas makes a joke for the camera at a picnic in Great Neck, Long Island, NY, circa 1970.





## Jonas Mekas

Zefiro Torna: Collection of 40 Film Stills

Teams compete in Ay-O's "team race with one pair of skis," held in the street in front of 80 Wooster Street as part of the Flux-Game Fest of May 1973.

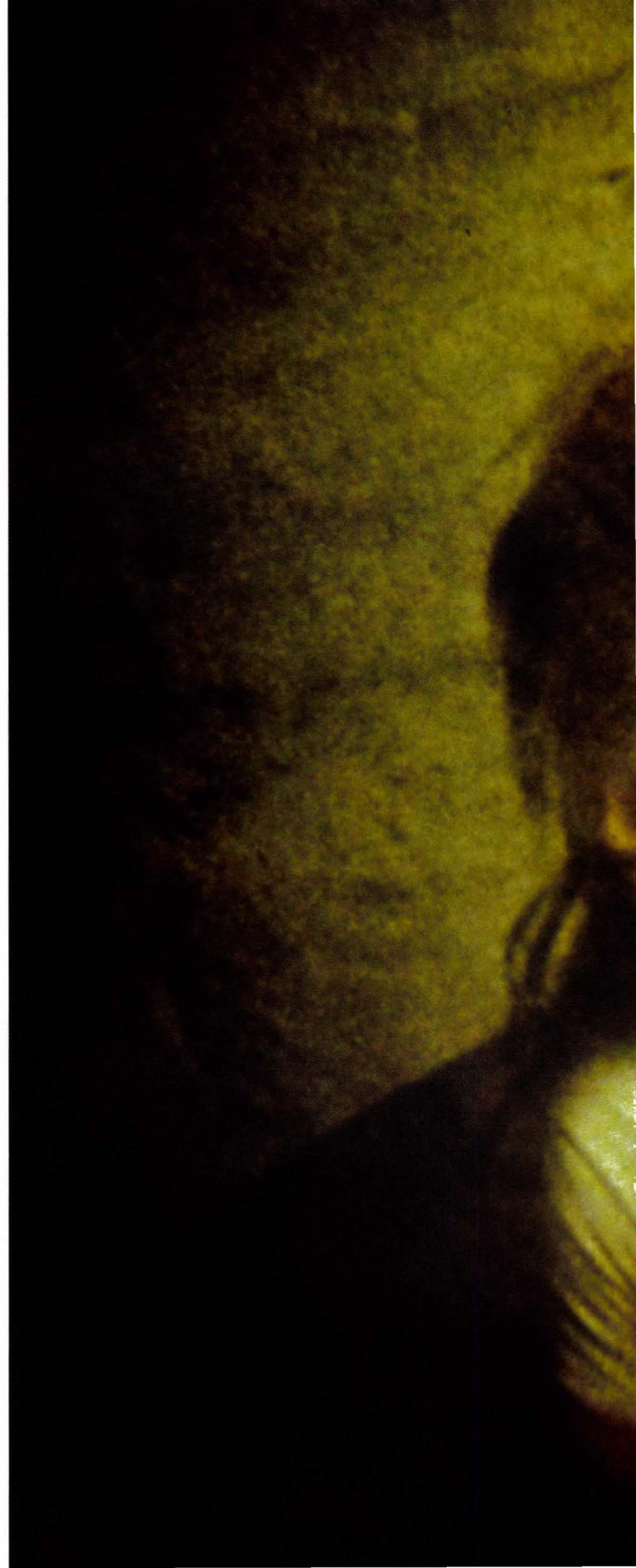




## Jonas Mekas

Zefiro Torna: Collection of 40 Film Stills

Maciunas enjoyed sharing meals with his Fluxus friends and associates. The meals often became Fluxus performances in their own rights. Among his most infamous culinary delights were his dumplings. As Jonas Mekas says in the commentary to the film **Zefiro Torna**, "And he has always been so proud of his dumplings all those dumpling parties! I tried to eat them too, but I always told him they were about the most terrible dumplings I ever ate, or rather tried to eat. They were terrible, made out of prepared, packaged dough, heavy, half-cooked, and tasteless. But George sat there, in the chair, leaning back, holding his stomach full of them, hiccupping and ecstatic." On this occasion Andy Warhol, Yoko Ono, and John Lennon were among the lucky guests.



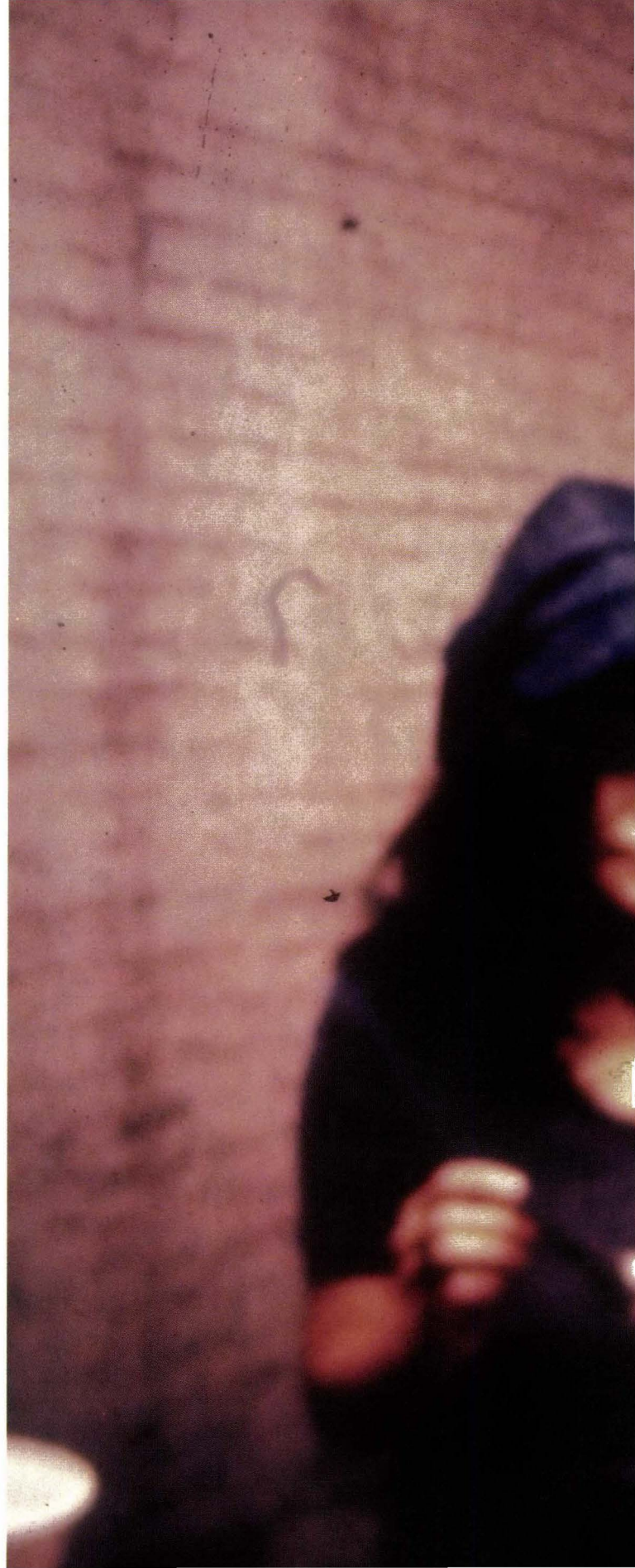




## Jonas Mekas

Zefiro Torna: Collection of 40 Film Stills

John Lennon, Yoko Ono, and George Maciunas. Dumpling party at 80 Wooster Street.





## Jonas Mekas

Zefiro Torna: Collection of 40 Film Stills

This door was a part of the event "Flux-Combat Between G. Maciunas & Attorney General of New York, 1975-76." In 1966, Maciunas launched a plan to buy old warehouses (in the area now known as SoHo), renovate them and form an affordable artists' FluxHouse Cooperative. During the process, however, the Attorney General of the State of New York cracked down on what it perceived to be "illegal co-ops" that were not remodeled according to code. Thrifty Maciunas had taken some short cuts, and was subpoenaed and intimidated by the Attorney General's Office to appear in court. In defiant yet humorous response, Maciunas turned his evasion of the law into a performance, complete with irreverent letters to the Attorney General, disguises, false impressions of having fled the country, and a booby-trapped and barricaded apartment. Anyone wanting to pass through Maciunas' front door to drag him to court would have to maneuver the threatening guillotine-like blades.





## Jonas Mekas

Zefiro Torna: Collection of 40 Film Stills

During the renovation of the buildings for the FluxHouse Co-operative, Maciunas hired contract laborers for certain jobs. A dispute over a particular bill resulted in the contractor sending strong-arm men to Maciunas' apartment to "settle accounts" on November 8, 1975. They attacked Maciunas, and he was hurt badly. An ambulance took him to St. Vincent's hospital in New York where he received treatment for broken ribs, a collapsed lung, and a severely damaged left eye in which he lost sight.





## Jonas Mekas

Zefiro Torna: Collection of 40 Film Stills

After the "official" Fluxus wedding ceremony of George Maciunas and Billie Hutching on February 25, 1978, the couple performed a piece called "Black and White" in which they exchanged clothes so that he ended up in the bridal gown (loaned by his sister Nijolie) and she in the bow tie, collar shirt and jacket.



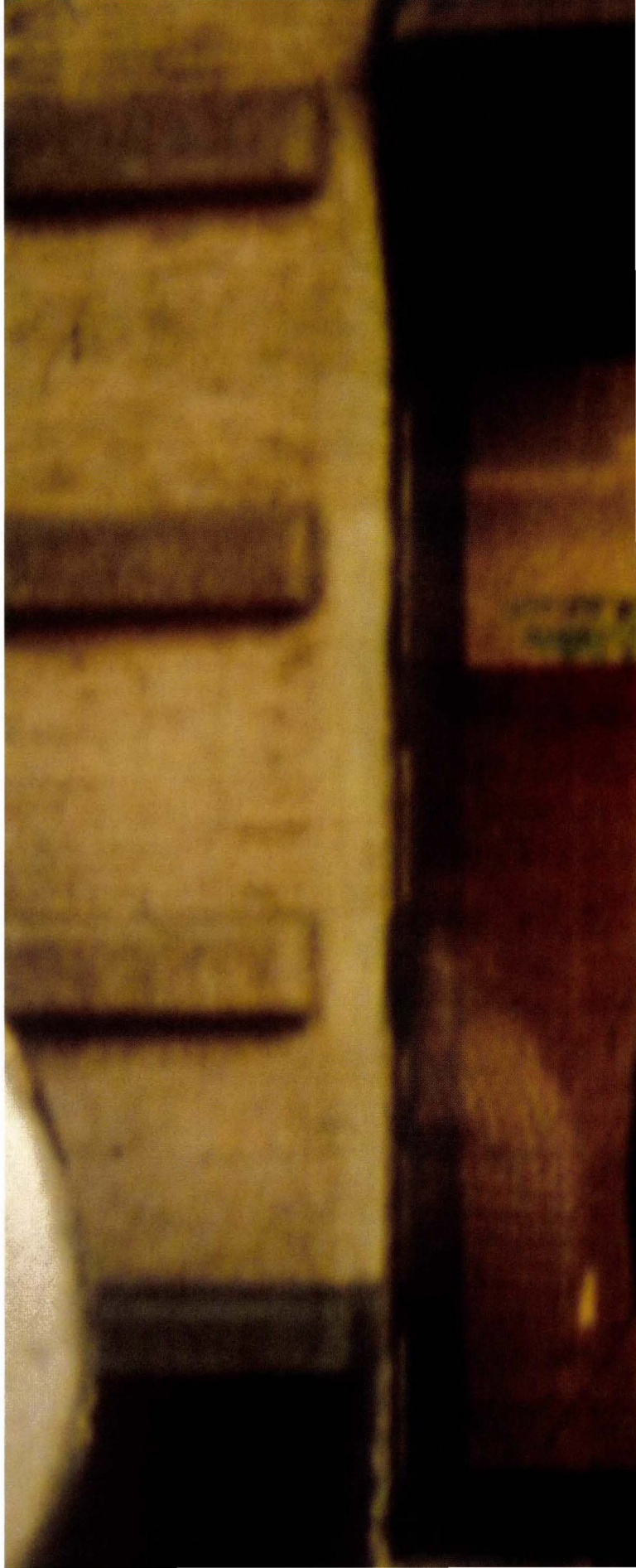




## Jonas Mekas

Zefiro Torna: Collection of 40 Film Stills

Jonas Mekas stands by the tree that he and Maciunas planted "illegally" in front of one of the FluxHouse Cooperative buildings at 80 Wooster Street, New York, circa 1967.





## Jonas Mekas

Zefiro Torna: Collection of 40 Film Stills

George Maciunas, Yoko Ono, and John Lennon participate in the Hudson River Fluxus boat trip organized by Maciunas, July 1, 1971.



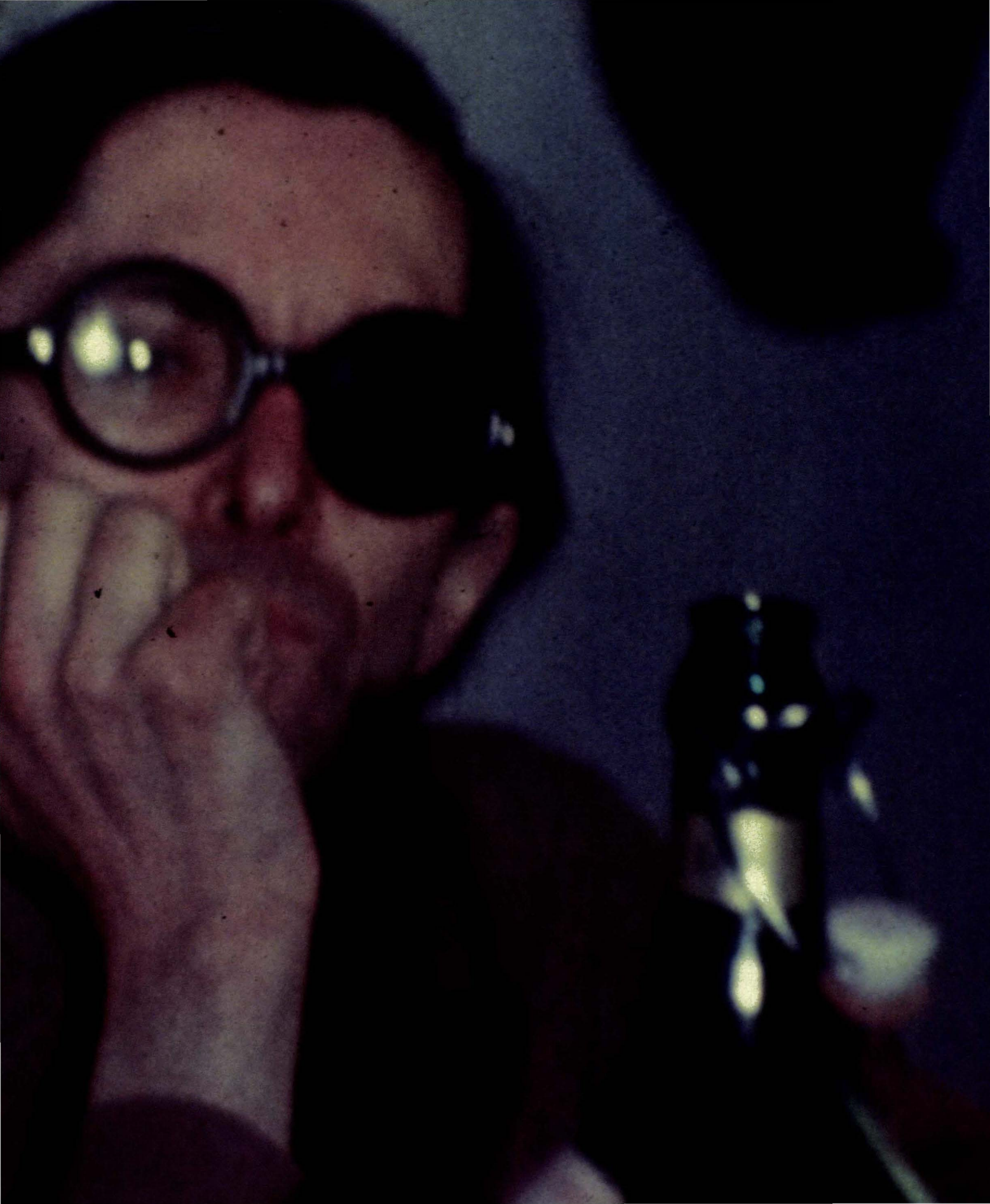


## Jonas Mekas

Zefiro Torna: Collection of 40 Film Stills

In 1976 Maciunas purchased the New Marlborough farm near Great Barrington, Massachusetts, and left New York City for the countryside. He attempted to get Fluxus artists involved in the project, envisioning the farm as a sort of "Post Cage Black Mountain College" where artists could live and work communally. It was a sizeable estate with some 12 buildings, including a 30 room main house. Here he sits at a table in the farmhouse, wearing his special glasses with a darkened lens over the eye in which he lost sight after being attacked by a contractor's thugs.





## Jonas Mekas

Zefiro Torna: Collection of 40 Film Stills

The Fluxus Wedding of George Maciunas and Billie Hutching took place on February 25, 1978, at the loft of Olga Adorno and Jean Dupuy in New York City. Both bride and groom wore wedding gowns. Their Fluxus artist friends played all the key roles for the ceremony. Larry Miller was the bridesmaid, Alison Knowles the best man, and Geoffrey Hendricks officiated as minister.







## Jonas Mekas

Zefiro Torna: Collection of 40 Film Stills

Maciunas and Hutching at Maciunas' New Marlborough farm in the winter of 1977-78. Maciunas died that spring on May 9, 1978.





## Mari Dumett

George Maciunas and Fluxus Rear-Guard

In 1964, George Maciunas proclaimed, "Fluxus must be rear-garde."<sup>1</sup> This pugnacious word play from the self-appointed chairman of the international art collective Fluxus was a retort to Charlotte Moorman's annual "New York Avant-Garde Festival."<sup>2</sup> Maciunas likened the "Happenings" of Moorman and her associates to "Versailles Garden Spectacles," considering it all "Neo-Baroque theatre."<sup>3</sup> If that was what "avant-garde" represented, then the avant-garde had gone belly-up in its own pretension and decadence, and Maciunas wanted no part of it. Instead he proposed the notion of the "rear-guard."

While it may seem strange to begin an essay for an exhibition entitled **The Avant-Garde: From Futurism to Fluxus** by noting Maciunas' apparent refusal of this tradition, his statement is pertinent. Maciunas saw the avant-garde in decline, but he was not willing to give up on it. So he aimed to give the avant-garde a swift kick from the rear to get it up on its feet and running again within the changed cultural and economic circumstances of the postwar period. It was a Herculean task taken on by a sickly, bespectacled Lithuanian with a love of history, an obsession for organizing and a

1. George Maciunas "Comments on relationship of Fluxus to so called 'Avant-Garde' Festival," as reprinted in **Mr. Fluxus: a Collective Portrait of George Maciunas, 1931-78**. eds. Emmett Williams and Ann Noël. London: Thames and Hudson, 1997. In this instance, Maciunas used the spelling "rear-garde." More often he used "rear-guard."

2. Maciunas' animosity towards Moorman and her representation of the avant-garde continued throughout his lifetime. In addition to the ideological and aesthetic debates, Maciunas undoubtedly was incensed by the fact that certain artists he considered to be Fluxus (or at least whom he admired) had entered her camp. In 1971, he wrote a Composition dedicated to all those artists he deemed truly representative of the avant-garde and consisting of a list of their names. The piece also stated that until the next year's festival he would have no "visual or oral contact" with those artists who had violated what should have been a sacred "FluxTrust" by participating in Moorman's event.

3. Maciunas makes these equations in his "Comments on..." op. cit., and also in Fluxus (its Historical Development and Relationship to Avant-Garde Movements) .

Mari Dumett received a B.A. in Political Science from Indiana University, an M.A. in Art History from the University of British Columbia, and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at Boston University where she is finishing a dissertation on George Maciunas and Fluxus and the co-curator of Fluxus Documents.

Vaudevillian sense of humor. Yet, it was from this unlikely bag of traits that Maciunas constructed Fluxus to test the limits of possibility for avant-garde practice at that time.

Of his generation of artists in New York, Maciunas was one of the most knowledgeable on the avant-gardes of the early 20th century. His historical comprehension was a product of a life-long self-education and several years of institutional training. After immigrating to the United States with his family at the age of 16 from Lithuania (via Germany in 1948) he studied art, graphic design and architecture at Cooper Union (1949-1951), received a bachelor's degree in architecture while also studying musicology at the Carnegie Institute of Technology (1952-54), and immersed himself in art history during five years spent at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York (1955-1960). While at the Institute, Maciunas began a graphic mapping of the history of art that occupied him for years to come. Hours upon hours he spent poring through books (especially encyclopedias where information is so well ordered), and fastidiously hand writing stacks of charts on ancient to modern art. It all culminated, however, in the avant-garde. And once he founded Fluxus, he visualized it as the logical end point of his evolutionary scheme. Unwilling to wait for the "passage of time" or a "recognized authority" to determine Fluxus' historical fate, his numerous diagrams would substantiate Fluxus' place in the avant-garde "canon." Such was the paradox of Maciunas' rear-guard avant-gardism. His **Fluxus (Its Historical Development and Relationship to Avant-Garde Movements)** venerable sources as Italian Futurist Theatre, Berlin Dada, and the Russian LEF (Left Front of Art). And his **Fluxus Manifesto** of 1963 recalls the manifestos of these groups:

Purge the world of bourgeois sickness, 'intellectual', professional & commercialized culture...PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART,...promote NON ART REALITY to be grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals....FUZE the cadres of cultural,

social & political revolutionaries into united front & action.<sup>4</sup>

Echoes of Marinetti, Huelsenbeck, and Mayakovsky's familiar anti-bourgeois and militaristic avant-garde tropes marshal Fluxus to carry on. But it was Maciunas' innovation to bring together the parodic playfulness of Dada and Futurist theatre with the organized functionalism of the Bauhaus and Constructivism. Lithuania, too, had an avant-garde tradition that might have provided inspiration.<sup>5</sup> Maciunas' great friend the Lithuanian filmmaker Jonas Mekas acknowledges that his own lifelong association with the avant-garde began when he read a history of Lithuanian Futurism as lead by the poet Kazys Binkis and the Four Winds movement.<sup>6</sup>

Certainly Maciunas' construction of a convincing avant-garde heritage for Fluxus was about affiliation, giving Fluxus credibility through an apparent sameness to the earlier groups.

4. George Maciunas Fluxus Manifesto, 1963. The manifesto was first distributed at the **Festum Fluxorum** on February 2 and 3 in Düsseldorf. It was not handed to audience members, but rather thrown at them.

5. For current references to Eastern European avant-garde tactics see the anthology **East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe**, ed. IRWIN. London: Afterall, 2006 (including a section on Lithuania).

6. In response to my query about his knowledge of Kazys Binkis, Mekas replied: "what I know for sure is that all graduates of six-grade school of Papily in 1938 [I graduated that year, it was my school too [Binkis finished the same school in 1908], my village, Semeniskiai, was three miles from Papily) received a beautifully printed and designed little c.120 pp book, as a graduation gift. It was written by Binkis and published probably by the dept. of education of Lithuania. Texts were all about Lithuanian history, culture, past, present, arts etc., like you see guidebooks published today for tourists. The difference was that it was written specially for young students and written in most beautiful literary language of which Binkis was a master. By the way, it was the director of the Gymnasium of Birzai, where I also went, [and where Binkis also studied] who wrote the first in depth study of Futurism in Lithuania. It was never published, but he gave me the manuscript to read and that's how I got the virus of modernism. I do not know if George also had a copy of the Binkis book, but possibly his sister had it because she was older and probably had graduated by the time they had to leave Lithuania." Letter from Jonas Mekas, August 12, 2007.

But it also served the opposite purpose, to set Fluxus apart as something distinct. Thus, despite Maciunas' own use of the term "Neo-Dada" in a pre-Fluxus text, he soon repudiated the notion that Fluxus was Dada.<sup>7</sup> In 1963, when he was hashing out Fluxus' program he wrote to artist Emmett Williams, "we must coordinate our activities or we shall become...another dada club, comming [sic] and going."<sup>8</sup> Maciunas expressed his anxiety about the avant-garde losing its "edge" with each new manifestation.

Although the **Fluxus Manifesto** of 1963 evokes the past, it also provides clues to the historical specificity of Maciunas' "rear-guard" strategy. Maciunas alternated his own hand-written rhetoric with mechanically reproduced dictionary entries for the word "flux." Like this appropriation of the dictionary, a tool that organizes, standardizes and authorizes an official language for a radical manifesto, Maciunas appropriated aspects of the system of mass production, distribution and consumption at large in order to call that system into question. No longer able to presume a privileged position outside the capitalist market, Maciunas' organization of Fluxus evinced an awareness of the system itself as a totalizing, if flexible, thing, in which the artist and the art object were wholly implicated. Maciunas' "rear-guard" would have to "flux" the system from within, going through society and exacerbating its purgative flows.<sup>9</sup>

7. George Maciunas "Neo-Dada in Music, Theatre, Poetry, Art" (1962). The text was read at the opening of the performance evening "Après John Cage" at the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, Germany, June 9, 1962, the same event at which Maciunas distributed his Fluxus [Brochure Prospectus for Fluxus Yearboxes]

8. George Maciunas Letter to Emmett Williams as reprinted in Emmett Williams **My Life in Flux and Vice Versa**. London: Thames and Hudson, 1992. p. 164-68.

9. Maciunas was a systematic thinker and his organization of Fluxus participated in the broader discourse on organization and systems thinking at that time. This discourse had its roots in cybernetics, but by the 1950s and early 1960s expanded to include practitioners from farther afield, including the social sciences and business management.

In this regard, it is fitting that Maciunas made his home and established his Fluxus Headquarters in the world's postwar cultural and economic capital, New York City. Yet, even within the belly of the Western "beast," he never abandoned his particular Eastern European sensibilities: from what recipients of his Fluxus communiqués called his "Lithuanian-English stream-of-consciousness" method of letter writing (which they found difficult to decipher) to his sharing of his beloved Lithuanian dark bread and borscht with Fluxus friends (which they preferred to his diet of canned food). In fact, the first sign of something called Fluxus emerged in this commingling of East and West, when on the evening of October 8, 1960, at an art gallery in Great Neck, Long Island a group of Lithuanians, including Maciunas and the gallery's owner Almus Salcius (whom Maciunas had met through Mekas), gathered to plan for the creation of a Lithuanian Cultural Club.<sup>10</sup> After much debate, they settled instead on the idea of publishing a journal. Maciunas proposed the name "Fluxus," to which the others agreed. In addition, Maciunas was allotted funds to purchase a typewriter for the journal's production. By the second meeting a month and a half later, however, Maciunas and Salcius found themselves alone in their determination for the project's success, and the journal was put on hold indefinitely. But in terms of the history of Fluxus, this false start afforded Maciunas two key things: the name Fluxus itself and the IBM Executive typewriter with its sans serif font with which he would design Fluxus' distinctive collective identity.

Maciunas and Salcius did not give up. They continued their partnership by opening the AG Gallery at 925 Madison Avenue in early 1961. It was during this same period, around the turn of the 1960s, that Maciunas became familiar with artists in New York who shared a desire to break down the barriers between traditional artistic media through performance-based works. Several years later, Fluxus artist

10. This history is recounted in MATS B., **Birth of Fluxus the Ultimate Version, Kalejdoskop**, Lund, Sweden, 1979.

Dick Higgins would coin the term "Intermedia" to characterize these new art forms.<sup>11</sup> Many of the artists whom Maciunas would organize as Fluxus, including Higgins, Jackson MacLow, George Brecht, and Al Hansen, had taken classes with composer John Cage at the New School for Social Research, and were adapting his Zen inspired experiments in chance, simultaneity and unconventional music scores to their own work. Maciunas emphasized the centrality of Cage to Fluxus' development in his art historical diagrams. While Cage created the possibility that everyday sounds could be music, Fluxus created the possibility that everyday actions could be art.

Although the AG Gallery got off to lively start with an exhibition of paintings by Yoko Ono, Maciunas' own ink blot canvases, and two performance series, Bread & AG and Musica Antiqua et Nova, by mid-summer all account books indicated that the gallery was a financial flop. It closed its doors on July 30th. Despite the AG Gallery's failure to surf the flux of capital, it was another short-lived venture embarked on by the two Lithuanians that would influence the formation of Fluxus in significant ways. Maciunas gained a first-hand sense of the importance of an organization for getting things done, and moreover of the seemingly contradictory potential of a business model to promote avant-garde culture. He had hoped that the gallery's operations would finance the pending **FLUXUS** magazine.<sup>12</sup> The gallery suggested the possibility of establishing an alternative system through which capital could be raised, administered and reinvested not with but in disruption of the flow of capital accumulation.

These points became sharper in Maciunas' mind once his awareness of experimental art expanded from New York to Europe. Apparently eager to avoid debt collectors' house calls, Maciunas left the States in the fall of 1961, and took a job as a civilian graphic designer at a U.S. Air Force base in Wiesbaden, West Germany. Crossing the Atlantic enabled Maciunas to make the contacts that formed the basis of Fluxus' internationalism, weaving a net of artists from North America, Western and Eastern Europe and Asia. The Korean-born artist Nam June Paik was the most instrumental in this regard. When Maciunas arrived in Wiesbaden, Paik was in nearby Cologne rapidly making a name for himself in West Germany's culture of new music with his own version of performance he called "action music." Paik used what cachet he had to connect the Lithuanian to artists, musician, composers and gallery owners. And it was Paik who created the opportunity for Maciunas to stage the first Fluxus related performance, "Après John Cage," as part of the Kleinen Sommerfest at the Galerie Parnass, in Wuppertal on the evening of June 9, 1962. By this time, Maciunas already had big plans. He envisioned a multi-issue **FLUXUS** journal and a series of concerts to support it, all showcasing the new performance oriented "talents" across Europe. For the Wuppertal event, he prepared specially the Fluxus [Brochure Prospectus for Fluxus Yearboxes] to publicize Fluxus and its upcoming activities.

From this point on he worked tirelessly from his office-apartment in Wiesbaden, and between the fall of 1962 and the summer of 1963, Fluxus made its bona fide world debut with concerts in Wiesbaden, Düsseldorf, Copenhagen, Paris, Amsterdam and Nice. These European experiences convinced Maciunas of the necessity for Fluxus to develop beyond the idea of journals and performance series into a full-fledged organization complete with centralized command and multi-city outposts.

11. Dick Higgins, "Statement on Intermedia," (1966) published in **DÉ-COLL/AGE**, July 6, 1967.

12. For example, one announcement for the **Musica Antiqua et Nova** series stated: "Entry contributions of \$3 will help to publish **FLUXUS** magazine." George Maciunas, **Musica Antiqua et Nova**, event announcement, n.d. (Archiv Sohm).

Hoping to build on the momentum gained during the festivals in Europe, Maciunas returned to New York and established the official Fluxus Headquarters. This is when his idea of the "rear-guard" really picked up steam. Fluxus the organization began to take shape based on a model of a multinational corporation, what I call Fluxus' "incorporated art collective." As its chairman, Maciunas organized a complex amalgam of Flux Products from the FluxShop and the Flux Mail-Order Catalogue and Warehouse, Fluxus copyright protection, a collective newspaper, a Flux Housing Cooperative and frequently revised lists of incorporated Fluxus "workers." To help him manage Fluxus on a multinational scale, he appointed artists such as Ben Vautier in France, Willem de Ridder in the Netherlands, and Takehisa Kosugi in Japan, as Fluxus regional outpost chairmen. As the Dutchman Ridder remarked:

We decided that I would become chairman of Fluxus for Northern Europe. I loved the idea that George was setting up a business....It created a fantastic confusion and nobody dared to take the risk not to take you seriously....we agreed that I would set up a mail-order house for Flux products and after that I got regular instructions from headquarters in New York. Precise instructions about who was Fluxus and who was not. Who was lost forever and who was promising. We agreed that Fluxus had to run a tight ship...<sup>13</sup>

The outpost chairmen facilitated the flow of Fluxus capital and goods (modest though they were), ostensibly circulating Fluxus ideas through the system parallel yet ideologically counter to those of corporate capitalism. This end, however, relied on the very hierarchic and bureaucratic means that Fluxus seemed to want to question, one indication of the greater degree of ambivalence towards the system characteristic of Maciunas' postwar "rear-guard." Fluxus represented a historically specific

"coming to terms" with the system yet for all its criticality, it shared many of its aspects with the system itself. In 1965, Maciunas wrote a second manifesto entitled FluxManifesto on FluxAmusement. Several versions exist, and the most extended one clearly identifies "Fluxus Art-Amusement" as a "rear-guard" action in direct opposition to "Art" (a category inclusive of Moorman's "avant-garde" with its "Baroque tendencies"). He states:

Fluxus art-amusement is the rear-guard without any pretention [sic] or urge to participate in the competition of 'one-upmanship' with the avant-garde. It strives for the monostructural and nontheatrical qualities of a simple natural event, a game or gag. It is the fusion of Spike Jones, Vaudeville, gag, children's games and Duchamp.<sup>14</sup>

In attempting to challenge the elitism, pretension, professionalism and henceforth "high value" of art, Maciunas sought recourse in the "low" and "base." This was, of course, a strategy as old as the avant-garde itself. However, Maciunas brought to it something new. And on this point his bag of traits from which he paradoxically pulled both a love of jokes and pranks and a desire for organization and systematization set him apart from his avant-garde predecessors. In other words, there was an underlying seriousness to his Vaudevillian masquerade. By means of Fluxus as an "incorporated art collective" he simulated the modes of mass commodity production, distribution and consumption, aiming to "flux" the system at each point.

Although most dictionaries categorize "amusement" and "entertainment" as synonyms, I suggest that Maciunas proposed "amusement" in strategic contradistinction to the "entertainment" of mass consumer culture. No longer able

13. Willem de Ridder, letter to Emmett Williams, Amsterdam, 1993, as reprinted in part in Williams and Noël, op. cit. p. 75.

14. George Maciunas "Fluxus Art-Amusement," as published by Maciunas in a 1965 inventory list of artists, publications, objects, festivals and concerts, and reprinted in Williams and Noël, op. cit. p. 88.



to deny art's commodity status, Flux-Art-Amusement would challenge the commodity form in both its "high art" and "low culture" manifestations. As Maciunas wrote in the Manifesto: "...art-amusement must...have no commodity or institutional value. The value of art-amusement must be lowered by making it unlimited, massproduced [sic], obtained by all and eventually produced by all."<sup>15</sup> In addition, Maciunas' idea of "amusement" asked users to think creatively in opposition to "entertainment's" expectation of a passive viewer. At the "rear-guard show," a visitor could only imagine what she might find when sticking her hand inside Ay-O's **Tactile Box** or, she might question uneasily whether the show was really over after being abandoned by the actors on stage during a performance of George Brecht's **Exit**. Like the roar of a swift tide coming in and out, a combined raising and lowering process occurred in the Art-Amusement. Here is the "REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART" of Maciunas' 1963 Manifesto. It was a utopian dream in which Fluxus Art-Amusement (as objects and performances) flooded the entire culture industry like an enema from behind, washing away pretentious art and mindless entertainment in a fantastic purge from which the entire system never recovered but a new less rational, regimented, and commercial social reality emerged.

Although a variety of Flux Products were produced through Fluxus Editions Robert Watts' Stamps, Brecht and Maciunas' No Smoking sign, the many objects listed in Maciunas' FluxShopNews the most characteristic form of the Flux Product was the box. It was one of many Fluxus standards that were born of Maciunas' extreme thrift. A shop on Canal Street sold plastic boxes in bulk at a price too cheap for Maciunas to pass up; he knew he could do "something" with them. Maciunas solicited ideas from fellow Fluxus artists for themes and contents of the boxes, but just as often produced the boxes himself, creating graphically innovative eye-catching labels that allowed him to control Fluxus' "branded" identity.

15. Ibid.

His obsession with organizing found ideal miniature form in the compartmentalized "perky boxes" into which he placed a wide assortment of things: keys, corks, pills, plugs, ticket stubs, light bulbs, used postage stamps and machine parts. Much of what he meticulously deposited into the boxes was trash. In a letter to Vautier regarding the preparation of Vautier's "Mystery Boxes," Maciunas seemed excited to share the significance of this practice:

We are packing your mystery boxes in nice carton boxes... Each box sold for \$2 nicely sealed, so there is no way to tell what is inside unless you open...Ok? ...This will be very practical since we can dispose of garbage by this...and even get money for it...<sup>16</sup>

In Fluxus performances, actions of everyday life routine such as exiting a room in George Brecht's **Exit**, making food in Alison Knowles' "Proposition #1: Make a Salad," or taking out Vautier's garbage are restaged and re-valued. In the **Fluxus Boxes**, things of everyday life the detritus of mass consumer society are repackaged and, through commerce, also re-valued. As opposed to a resource-guzzling, trailblazing avant-garde, Fluxus' rear-guard swept up what was left after consumption's glut and shot it back into circulation in new form. As Maciunas explained, Fluxus was "motivated by a desire to stop the waste of material and human resources... and divert it to socially constructive ends."<sup>17</sup> It attempted to create "social value" out of society's "shit." And the closer Fluxus approximated the dominant system the more vital it became, the greater its potential to generate

16. George Maciunas, letter to Ben Vautier, 1964, as reprinted by Jon Hendricks in **Fluxus etc. / Addenda II**. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection. Pasadena: Baxter Art Gallery, California Institute of Technology, 1983. p. 155.

17. George Maciunas, letter to Tomas Schmit, January 1964, as reprinted in **What's Fluxus? What's Not!** Why. exh. cat. Curator and Editor, Jon Hendricks. Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil – Brasília / Rio de Janeiro; The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection – Detroit. p. 163.

“fantastic confusion” and to “flux” that system. Fluxus was a necessary yet temporary tactic. Maciunas understood the concerts, publications and objects to be at best transitional as “educational means to convert the audiences to...non-art experiences in their daily lives.”<sup>18</sup> After the task was accomplished Fluxus would also wash out with the tide. But it was a utopian dream. The revolutionary flood and tide never came. In an interview near the end of his life, Maciunas remarked that they did not sell anything from the FluxShop at 359 Canal Street the entire year it was open, not even a \$.50 sheet of stamps.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the strategy of appropriation always ran the danger of simply reproducing the dominant system it aimed to critique.<sup>20</sup> The dream was not realized fully, the current going against it proved too strong, but all the same, Maciunas’ “rear-guard” was not a failure. The strategies Maciunas set in play with his rear-guard action enable us to see more precisely the degree to which the historical position and contradictions of the avant-garde had shifted in the postwar period in relation to the broader epistemological rupture and reformulated terms of critical discourse. This rupture has been described as the shift from modernism to postmodernism. Maciunas’ kick from the rear did not prove to be the purgative force for art and life that he had hoped, but it was right on target.

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18. George Maciunas, Letter to Tomas Schmit, 1963, as reprinted by Jon Hendricks in **Fluxus etc. / Addenda II**, op. cit. p. 166.

19. Fluxus did make sales through its mail-order business, but they were not of significant volume. Larry Miller, Interview with George Maciunas, 1978, as reprinted by Jon Hendricks in **Fluxus etc., Addenda I**. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection. New York: Inc &, 1983. p. 20.

20. Maciunas himself realized this when he, Robert Watts and Herman Fine formed **Implosions**, Inc. as a strictly commercial for profit enterprise. Maciunas stated: “we could consider at present Fluxus to be a kind of division or subsidiary of Implosions.” See George Maciunas FluxNewsletter, March 8, 1967 as reprinted by Jon Hendricks in **Fluxus Addenda I**, op. cit. p. 174.





WMA

## Manifesto:

2. To affect, or bring to a certain state, by subjecting to, or treating with, a flux. "Fluxed into another world." South.  
3. Med. To cause a discharge from, as in purging.  
flux (flüks), n. [OF., fr. L. *fluxus*, fr. *fluere*, *fluxum*, to flow. See FLUENT; cf. FLUSH, n. (of cards).] 1. Med.  
a A flowing or fluid discharge from the bowels or other part; esp., an excessive and morbid discharge; as, the bloody flux, or dysentery. b The matter thus discharged.

Purge the world of bourgeois sickness, "intellectual", professional & commercialized culture, PURGE the world of dead art, imitation, artificial art, abstract art illusionistic art, mathematical art, — PURGE THE WORLD OF "EUROPANISM"!

2. Act of flowing: a continuous moving on or passing by, as of a flowing stream; a continuing succession of change.  
3. A stream; copious flow; flood; outflow.  
4. The setting in of the tide toward the shore. Cf. REFLEX.  
5. State of being liquid through heat; fusion. Rare.

PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART,  
Promote living art, anti-art, promote NON ART REALITY to be fully grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals.

7. Chem. & Metal. a Any substance or mixture used to promote fusion, esp. the fusion of metals or minerals. Common metallurgical fluxes are silica and silicates (acidic), lime and limestone (basic), and fluorite (neutral). b Any substance applied to surfaces to be joined by soldering or welding, just prior to or during the operation, to clean and free them from oxide, thus promoting their union, as rosin.

FUSE the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front & action.

## George Maciunas

Fluxus Manifesto, 1963

The various definitions of the word flux were of great appeal to Maciunas in selecting Fluxus as the name for an international art collective, and for the manifesto he alternated dictionary definitions with his own rhetoric. The goal of Fluxus was to emphasize the purgative flux that would clear out both art and life. Life had become too rational, regimented and commercial, and art a profession like any other. In the manifesto, the dictionary excerpts provide rational meaning for the idea of change, while Maciunas' words echo the revolutionary tradition of the historical avant-garde. The dialectic of order and disorder was central to Fluxus.

## Clive Phillpot on Maciunas' Manifesto

When George Maciunas consulted his dictionary he found that the word "flux" not only existed as a noun, a verb, and an adjective, but also had a total of seventeen different meanings. At the head of his Fluxus... Tentative Plan for Contents of the First 6 Issues, issued late in 1961, he rearranged five of these definitions to explain the use of the term Fluxus, bringing to the fore the idea of purging (and its association with the bowels). By 1963, these selected dictionary definitions of "flux" could no longer encompass the developing intentions of Fluxus, and Maciunas began to promote three particular senses of the word: purge, tide, and fuse—each not amplified by his own comments. These amounted to new working definitions of the three senses, and were refined to the point where they could finally be incorporated into a collaged, three-part Manifesto, together with photostats of eight of the dictionary definitions.

The aims of Fluxus, as set out in the Manifesto of 1963, are extraordinary, but connect with the radical ideas fermenting at the time. The text suggests affinities with the ideas of Henry Flynt, as well as links with the aims of radical groups earlier in the century. The first of the three sections of Maciunas' **Mani-**

**ifesto** reveals that the intent of Fluxus is to “PURGE the world of dead art...abstract art, [and] illusionistic art...” What would be left after this purging would presumably be “concrete art,” which Maciunas equated with the real, or the ready-made. He explained the origins of concrete art, as he defined it, with reference to the ready-made objects of Marcel Duchamp, the ready-made sounds of John Cage, and the ready-made actions of George Brecht and Ben Vautier.

The first section of the **Manifesto** also states that Fluxus intends to purge the world of such other symptoms of “bourgeois sickness” as intellectual, professional, and commercialized culture. In one of a series of informative letters to Tomas Schmit, mostly from 1963 to 1964, Maciunas declares that “Fluxus is anti-professional”; “Fluxus should become a way of life not a profession”; “Fluxus people must obtain their ‘art’ experience from everyday experiences, eating, working, etc.” Maciunas is for diverting human resources to “socially constructive ends,” such as the applied arts most closely related to the fine arts, including “industrial design, journalism, architecture, engineering, graphic-typographic arts, printing, etc.” As for commercialism, “Fluxus is definitely against [the] art-object as [a] non-functional commodity—to be sold and to make [a] livelihood for an artist.” But Maciunas concedes that the art-object “could temporarily have the pedagogical function of teaching people the needlessness of art.”

The last sentence of this section of the **Manifesto** reads: “PURGE THE WORLD OF ‘EUROPANISM!’” By this Maciunas meant on the one hand the purging of pervasive ideas emanating from Europe, such as “the idea of professional artist, art-for-art ideology, expression of artists’ ego through art, etc.,” and on the other, openness to other cultures. The composition of the group of Fluxus people was exceptional in that it included several Asians, such as Ay-O, Mieko Shiomi, Nam June Paik, and Yoko Ono—as well as the black American Ben Patterson and a significant number of women—and in that it reached from Denmark to Italy, from Czechoslovakia through

the United States to Japan. Interest in and knowledge of Asian cultures were generally increasing in the West at the time, and, in this context, are evidenced by Maciunas’ tentative plans in 1961 for a Japanese issue of **Fluxus**, which would have included articles relating to Zen, to Hakuin, to haiku, and to the Gutai Group, as well as surveys of contemporary experimental Japanese art. (Joseph Beuys rather missed the point when he altered the 1963 **Manifesto** in 1970 and read: “Purge the World of Americanism.”)

The second section of the **Manifesto**, which initially related to flux as “tide,” is really the obverse of the first: “PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART. Promote living art, anti-art, promote NON ART REALITY to be grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals.”

Maciunas’ third section was “fuse,” and read: “FUUSE the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into (a) united front & action.” Inevitably most of Maciunas’ time was spent trying to fuse cadres of cultural revolutionaries, though not all the Fluxus people saw themselves in this way. One of his tactics was the employment of the term Fluxus beyond the title of the magazine as a form of verbal packaging, whereby Fluxus people would benefit from collective promotion.





- flux** (flŭks), *n.* [OF., fr. L. *fluxus*, fr. *fluere*, *fluxum*, to flow. See FLUENT; cf. FLUSH, *n.* (of cards).] **1. Med.**  
**a** A flowing or fluid discharge from the bowels or other part; esp., an excessive and morbid discharge; as, the bloody *flux*, or dysentery. **b** The matter thus discharged.  
**2.** Act of flowing; a continuous moving on or passing by, as of a flowing stream; a continuing succession of changes.  
**3.** A stream; copious flow; flood; outflow.  
**4.** The setting in of the tide toward the shore. Cf. REFLUX.  
**5.** State of being liquid through heat; fusion. *Rare.*  
**6.** A fusible glass used as a base for enamels; also, an easily fusible enamel used as a ground for enamel painting.  
**7. Chem. & Metal.** **a** Any substance or mixture used to promote fusion, esp. the fusion of metals or minerals. Common metallurgical fluxes are silica and silicates (acidic), lime and limestone (basic), and fluorite (neutral). **b** Any substance applied to surfaces to be joined by soldering or welding, just prior to or during the operation, to clean and free them from oxide, thus promoting their union, as rosin.  
**8. Math.** The integral over a surface of the normal component of a vector field. Cf. STOKES' THEOREM.  
**9. Photom.** = 1st LIGHT, 18 b.  
**10. Physics.** **a** The rate of flow or transfer of fluid or of energy across a surface. **b** By analogy, the surface integral of a vector distributed over a surface. Cf. ELECTROSTATIC FLUX, MAGNETIC FLUX.  
**11. Plant Pathol.** A slime flux.

- flux**, *v.*; FLUXED (flŭkst); FLUX'ING. *Transitive:* **1.** To cause to become fluid; to fuse; to treat with a flux.  
**2.** To affect, or bring to a certain state, by subjecting to, or treating with, a flux. "*Fluxed* into another world." *South.*  
**3. Med.** To cause a discharge from, as in purging.  


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*Intransitive:* **1.** To flow freely. *Archaic.*  
**2.** To become fluid; to melt.  
**3.** To undergo a flux; specif., to bleed copiously. *Obs.*  
**flux** (flŭks), *adj.* [L. *fluxus*, fr. *fluere*. See FLUX, *n.*]  
 In flux; variable. *Obs.*

## Fluxmanifesto on Fluxamusement

George Maciunas, 1965

In proposing the idea of "FluxAmusement," Maciunas aimed to deflate pretentious professional "high art," and also to offer an alternative to the commercial culture of advanced capitalist culture. He knew Fluxus works would have to compete with commodity culture's allure, and attempted to produce "amusing" objects and performances of higher "use value" as a parallel yet critical alternative. This is indicative of Maciunas' general Fluxus strategy of appropriating certain aspects of the dominant modes of production and distribution in order to critique the system itself from within.



FLUXMANIFESTO OF  
ARTIST'S NONPROFIT  
HE MUST DEMONSTRATE  
SELSUFFICIENCY  
THING CAN SUBSTITUTE  
STITUTE ART-AMUSEMENT  
INSIGNIFICANCES, HE  
BE UNLIMITED, OBJECTS  
THE ARTIST DOING  
STRATE THAT ONLY  
COMPLEX, INTELLECTUAL  
ITS COMMODITY VALUE  
THEREFORE ACCESSIBLE



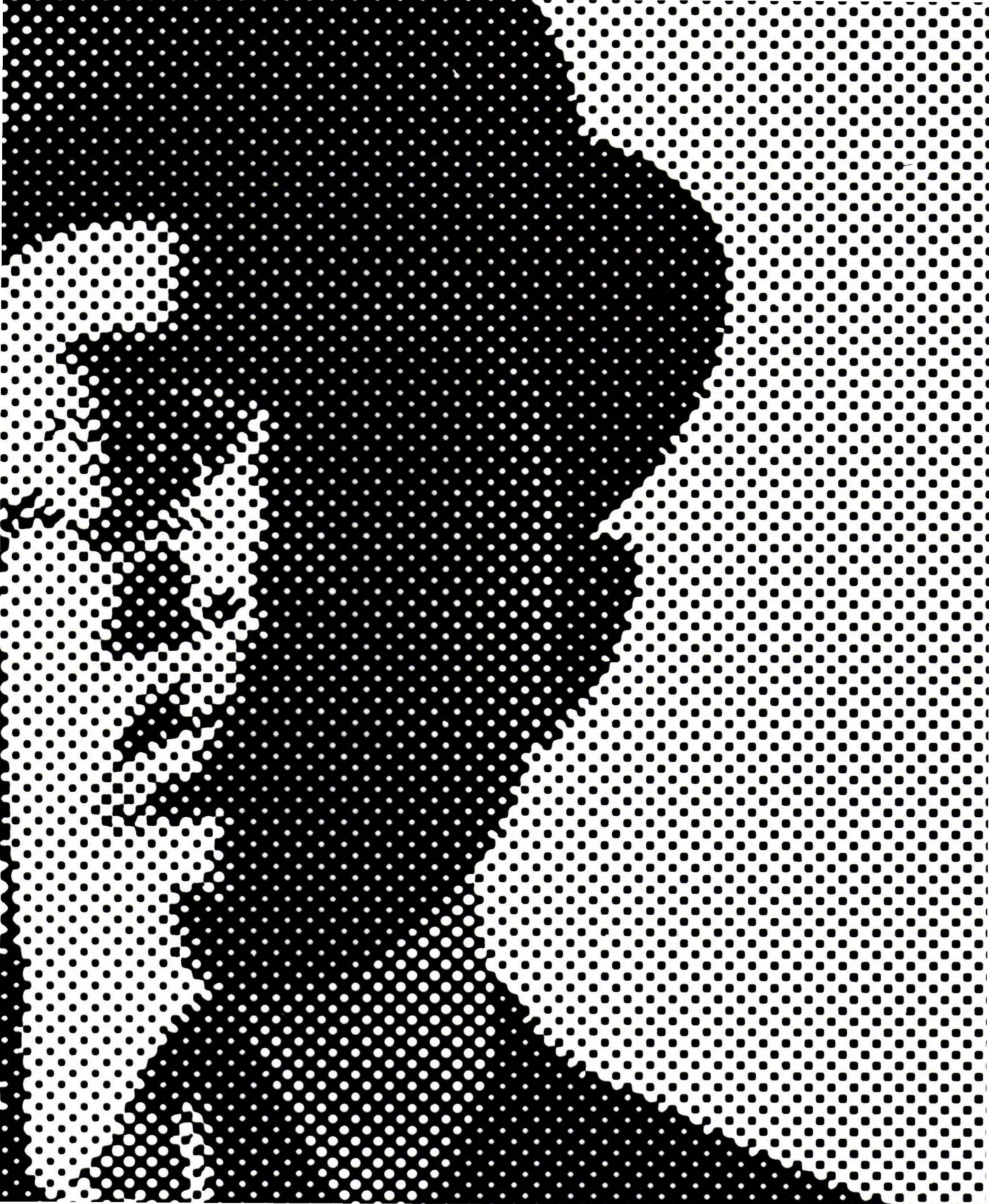
UXAMUSEMENT - VAUDEVILLE - ART? TO ESTABLISH  
ONAL ,NONPARASITIC,NONELITE STATUS IN SOCIETY,  
TE OWN DISPENSABILITY, HE MUST DEMONSTRATE  
THE AUDIENCE, HE MUST DEMONSTRATE THAT ANY-  
ART AND ANYONE CAN DO IT. THEREFORE THIS SUB-  
ENT MUST BE SIMPLE, AMUSING, CONCERNED WITH  
NO COMMODITY OR INSTITUTIONAL VALUE. IT MUST  
ABLE BY ALL AND EVENTUALLY PRODUCED BY ALL.  
MEANWHILE, TO JUSTIFY HIS INCOME, MUST DEMON-  
CAN DO ART. ART THEREFORE MUST APPEAR TO BE  
AL, EXCLUSIVE, INDISPENSABLE, INSPIRED. TO RAISE  
IT IS MADE TO BE RARE, LIMITED IN QUANTITY AND  
E NOT TO THE MASSES BUT TO THE SOCIAL ELITE.

## Self Portrait

George Maciunas, c. 1963

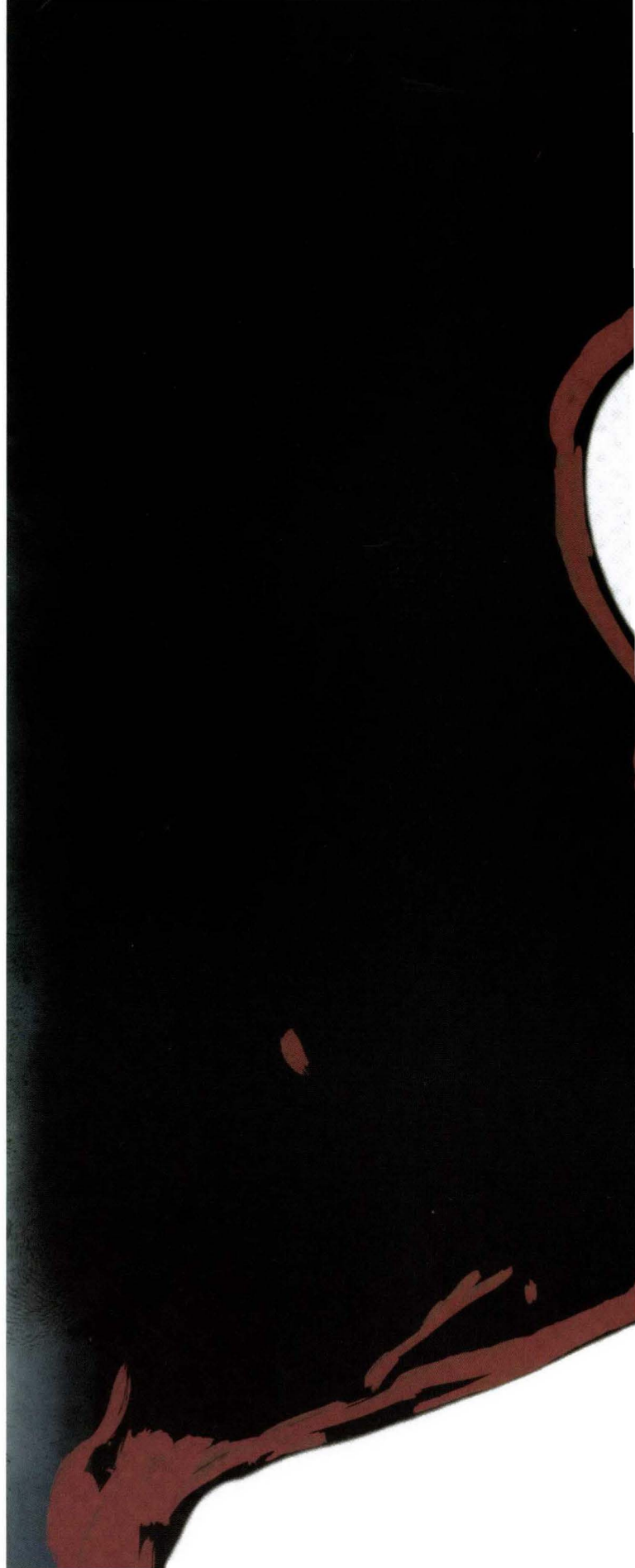
Maciunas' construction of Fluxus' collective identity is full of anachronistic play. His graphic design comes to life in the clash of his innovative typography and images of a 19th century bourgeois world. This play is also highly visible in his self-presentation. In this self-portrait he dons his characteristic bowler hat, high-collar shirt, suit and monocle, calling up the sartorial image of both an early 20th century avant-garde artist (such as the Italian Futurist or the Dadaist) and a businessman. In playing these images off of each other, Maciunas raised questions as to the possibility of avant-garde practice within the advanced capitalist system at that time.





**Self Portrait**

George Maciunas, c. 1963





# Personal hist.

Born: 1931, Nov. 8, Kaunas

Social security no. 106-

Drivers license 799613-

Bank account 123-0083

Blood type O, WBC,

Pulse 110; blood pressure

head normocephalic; ears

Ear-ceruminous; heart-

Sputum, nose, throat cult

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nasal left septum deviate

Address POB 180 NY 10

Schooling: C Hooper Un



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F-6003

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120/80

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us tachycardia;

e - normal flora,

Klebsiella aerobacter group.  
lectomy 1940,

13

Comp Inst of Tech 2 15A

## George Maciunas Life Chronology 1939-1978

1978

When Yurgis Maciunas traveled from Lithuania to Germany his name was "Deutschified" to Jürgen Matschunas for the official records. When the Lithuanian Society in New York rescinded its agreement on the use of its auditorium for the promotion of Fluxus for fear that Maciunas and his colleagues were communists, Maciunas was so incensed that he Anglicized his name to George. Perhaps even from a young age Maciunas had a sense of identity's mutability. In Fluxus, Maciunas had great fun playing with his identity, as seen in the variety of biographies and life chronologies he produced. In **Personal History**, Maciunas represented himself through clinical statistics as if a subject of medical study. Maciunas was plagued by poor health from childhood, and sickness and treatment are recurrent themes in his accounts of his life. In "Life Chronology, 1939-78," Maciunas' life appears as fragments of "facts" and "memories": some years are left blank, many notations are vague, and certain pivotal events are inserted as if afterthoughts. It is chaotic by Maciunas' usual ordered standards. In **Flux Biography**, Maciunas placed the clinical self-presentation amid the Fluxus logo and his Fluxus Artist Name Card, identifying himself as an individual with the collective.

Own

6 d x child's photo.

type box \$

Finest  
Fi  
9 AM  
Community Action  
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electric train car.

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1949

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Kroll

Afax

T. Mann

Syringe

Shit

Jeans cab

Farm

photos

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42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48

Appendix  
Appendix  
glove finger  
bullet  
peanuts butter or coke top  
1st. drag stocking or ~~garter~~  
sea

photos  
photos  
photos

Dostoyevsky book. Oobles Form  
" article + chess piece  
balsa wood models (photos) or stair model

Garnegie - music John cage - photo & prepared 2 strings.  
Thalia films. Europe hist chart + Cloisters - article + photos.

more Prefab systems  
Siberian + granite chart - fragment roll  
ancient instr. - prefab photos  
monterevdi tape or harpsichord pack

tachisme + ancient text art  
Fluxus + Asthma - nebular + syringe L.M.Y.

Europe tour Fluxfest - photos + paper reviews  
France Italy old postport  
Thomas Mann?

canal left + shop bulb + whistle  
Arizona + Flux films - cacti or sand  
Flux concert + balloon ticket

photos secret photos  
Implosions + Coops - Soho - facade photo.  
secret photo + hi heel shoe heel oreg

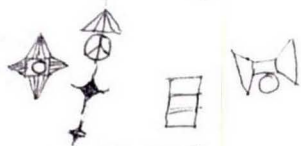
80 w bsmt  
Ginger Isl + Calif - Univ. chart, roll.

Flux mass - move to 80w + Yoko - ceramic tile  
Yoko's Syracuse show - heavy cigaret or glove or pipe  
dried leaf of ailanthus.

Europe Island Tour - pebbles + photos postcards  
Islands Flux games - ping pong balls dice

Att. General & eyes - wrecked door knob - original  
gonilla foto + letter  
folded 8 times referring to breath-in

Eye hosp island sailing - pebbles - sea charts + shells  
Farm Berlin Lavandis (wd, top) - or belt  
photos whip-smack (eyelash + cosmetic) or hair



1450

## GEORGE MACIUNAS

Address: 349 West Broadway, New York, N.

Born: Nov.8,1931 in Kaunas, Lithuania,

Schools:

Cooper Union, School of Art, graduated 1951

Carnegie Institute of Technology, Bachelor

Institute of Fine Arts, NYU, 1955 to 1959, M

## PAST EMPLOYMENT

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill 1951

Olin Matheson Chemical Corp. 400 Park 1952

Knoll Associates, 320 Park ave. 1953

AFEX (AirForce Exchanges) Europe 1954

Jack Marshad,Inc. 300 E 40 St. 1955

## PRESENT OWN BUSINESS 1956

Clients (starting with most recent):

N.Y. Graphic Society Ltd. (Forrest Selvig) W

Hy Ross Assoc. Inc. 180 Madison Ave. (Bob

mailing piece for Duals by Herman Mill

University of California, Santa Cruz, (Carneg

Aspen Magazine, 333 6 Ave. 989-1623: 1965

Fluxus, POB 180, N.Y. 10013: logos, monog

Lord & Hill, 565 5 Ave. (Bill Shepard) 986-9

Implosions, Inc. 80 Wooster st. (Bob Watts):

Film Culture Magazine, 80 Wooster st. (Jonas

Film Makers' Cinematheque, 80 Wooster st: i

Museum of Primitive Art, 15 W 54 (Douglas

Museum of Contemporary Crafts, 29 W 53 St

E & O. Mari, 38-01, 23 Ave. LIC. (Daniel Mar

EL AL Airlines (tour booklet 1959) AG G

## TYPE OF WORK DONE:

trademarks, logos, letterheads, envelopes, ma

packaging, labels, box-design, books, magazin

Design & production in all categories.

Exhibited at: AG Gallery, 1961; Mead

Rewards: Typomundus 20, 4 Certific

MINIMUM PAY REQUIRED: \$14,000

3 tel: (212) 966-6986  
tly LTSR, USSR)

Soc. sec. no. 106-24-6003

ecture, 1955

uate studies in: history of art (European & Siberian migrations, iconography etc.)

Architectural work

Research & Development dept, Aluminum Div. product development & design  
interior design, interior graphics, exhibits, displays, structures.

interior design, interior graphics, signs, logos for shopping centers.

graphic design: annual reports, house organs, film/slide strips, displays, exhibits etc.

clients: Air Reduction, Am. Bible Soc. Society of Chemical Engineers, etc.

4, book design

usen) 532-3570, 3D & graphic display wall for their lobby, display for Sikes carpets,  
aging & box design for their swatch boox, etc.

project) (Margaret Mahoney) PL3-3100, set of 30 posters (art education reform)

nd possibly Winter issue), multi-media box (with booklets, posters, records etc.)

oels, newspapers, posters, books, films & film-titles, multi-media boxes, environments, et

otographs for their calendar

oducts: tabletops, aprons, napkins, cups, playing cards, sunglasses, stick-ons, etc.

925-2250: (since 1963) magazine (design of format, logo, papers etc.)

design, logo, posters, announcements, tickets, letterhead, etc.

CI 6-9494: Book on African & Afro-American Art by R. Thompson (in progress)

Smith) CI6-6840: announcement, poster, ticket & mailing piece for paper show, 1967

4005: book series (Guitar, Guitar Strings, Viola d'Amore etc.)

interior, letterhead, announcements 1961)

. posters, announcements, 3-D announcements, 3-D displays, exhibits, environments,  
papers, photography,, interior, product & architectural design.

Library of Ideas, 1964; Walter Thompson, 420 Lexington Ave. Nov. 1968

Mead Papers' Library of Ideas, Graphis: several pieces published.

per hour on free-lance basis, plus costs.

## George Maciunas

### Curriculum Vitae

November 8, 1931 Born in Kaunas, Lithuania

### Education

1949-52 Cooper Union School of Art, studied art, graphic art, architecture

1952-54 Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, studied architecture and musicology. B. of Architecture

1955-60 Institute of Fine Arts, NYU, studied European and Siberian art of migrations

### Charts, Diagrams and Atlases

1953 Atlas of Russian History (book of translucent pages, superimposed maps)

1958 Atlas of Prehistoric Chinese art

1955-60 History of Art Chart (incomplete) a giant 6 ft. x 12 ft. time/space chart categorizing all past styles, movements, schools, artists, etc.

1958-66 History of Art 3-dimensional Chart (1st category on drawer faces, 2nd category on horizontal surface of drawer interior and 3rd category on vertical multiple surfaces of drawer interior-faces of filing cards)

1969 Re-categorization of fields of knowledge, completed 2-dimensional diagram & tabulation, intended as the first surface of 3-dimensional storage and retrieval system, called a "learning machine".

1966-present History of Avante-garde, particularly its development from Futurism, Dada, Duchamp, Surrealism, John Cage, Happenings, Events, and Fluxus, with particular emphasis on documentation of Fluxus. 23in x 80in. (still in progress)

1972-present Architectural monuments of the world, Atlas of maps. (still in progress)

### Objects and Exhibits

1962-present edited, published, designed containers, labels, packaging, other graphics of all flux editions (several hundred items)

1964 edited & published Fluxyearbox 1, anthology of flat objects in envelopes. Contributed a chart on architectural criticism.

1965 edited and published Fluxkit, an attaché case with various flux objects produced up to that date.  
Flux-organ (12 bird calls activated by bellows), various chess sets (pieces as grinders, colored balls, sand timers, etc.)  
Edited, designed titles (using various animation and camera techniques) of some 20 films into Flux-film anthology, contributed: films made without camera (sing various adhesive patterns on clear film stock): Artype, 10 feet, end after 9, eyeblink (high speed camera).  
1966 edited & published Fluyearbox 2, anthology of film loops, games and paper events. Contributed 4 film loops. Designed first prepared ping pong and badminton rackets (undulating, convex, with hole, hinged, elastic etc. surfaces)  
1967 stick-on tattoos of hardware etc. photo aprons (venus de milo, stomach anatomy, Napoleon, etc.)  
1968 organized and participated in Flux-exhibit, Univ. of Calif. San Diego art Col.  
1967 designed announcements for paper show and body covering show at Museum of Contemporary Crafts, NYC. Participated in the first.  
1969 clock faces: decimal, degrees, backward etc. multi-faceted mirror, adding machine, distilled coffee, tea, juices, eggs, containing vodka, noodles, egg-white; tea from ropes, pine cones etc.  
1970 smile machine, 64 needle syringe, 12 bird aerophone machine, dancing duck call machine.  
1971 Produced, designed and contributed to "This is not here" show of Yoko Ono and John Lennon at Everson Museum, Syracuse.  
1972 names spelled with objects, burglary kit, anthology of animal excreta, etc.  
1975 edition of Hospital even, edited Fluxpack 3, contributed 3 stationary designs, 2 aprons, postage stamp[s], published by Multipla, Milan.  
1976 Sept. initiated collaborative flux-labyrinth project, major contribution, to be exhibited at US. Centennial Exhibition, Berlin.

#### Performance Compositions, Performances, Film Screenings, Events

1961 Organized a series of events by Maxfield, Cage Ichiyanagi, Higgins, Flynt, La Monte Young, Yoko Ono, Ray Johnson, Walter De maria.  
1962 Initiated the Flux group activities with first flux festivals: 14 concerts in Wiesbaden state museum, 6 concerts in Copenhagen, 7 in Paris, First musical compositions (music scored by animals, music for lips, mud, bottles, pebbles, balloons, ladders, violin, 12 piano pieces, In memoriam to Adriano Olivetti for bowler hate, 8 homages, etc.)  
1963 Flux festivals in Dusseldorf, Amsterdam, Hague, Nice (first street events)  
1964 organized & contributed pieces for flux orchestra concert at Carnegie Recital Hall, (piano for carpenter, string quartet, etc.)  
Piece for violin performed at Little festival of new music at Univ of London, also at Hague and Milan.  
Organized a series of concerts and events at 359 Canal St., NYC. Initiated 1st sport events at Washington Sq. Gal. own: ping-pong & badminton.  
1965 2nd flux-orchestra concert at Carnegie Recital Hall, designed balloon tickets and glider programs. Flux-fest at NY Cinemathque  
1966 Event at Village Gate (benefit for EVO) (adhesive net dropping over dancing guests) Organized flux fest in Prague  
1967 Flux films shown at Cologne, Turin, Perugia, Como, Savona, Zurich, Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo, several U.S. colleges,  
Flux films awarded Milwaukee Art Center Award, 4th Ann Arbor film Festival Award.  
Organized and contributed to Waldorf Astoria Hotel room clinic. Own pieces performed at Genoa, Nice, Paris, Rome etc.  
2 paper performance pieces at Time & Life bldg, sponsored by Container Corp. & Museum of Contemp. Crafts, (arrow attack on paper curtain and a paper sound orchestra) Participated with paper objects in Paper show at Museum of Contemporary Crafts, NYC

1968 Organized first artist housing cooperatives in SoHo, NYC. Organized and contributed to first flux-food events  
1969 2nd flux-food event (funny foods) contributed egg pieces, rope, cone & wood tea, distilled juices etc. transparent coffee, etc.  
1970 Composed flux mass, performed at voorhees chapel, Douglass College, NJ. At same college organized flux sport Olympiad (own handicap races, giant glove boxing, bicycle joust, various racket games, etc.)  
Organized a flux festival in collaboration with Yoko Ono & John Lennon at 80 Wooster St. grapefruit banquet, funny tours & tickets, measuring clinic, garden of water events, made of difficult doors, film capsule-environments, etc.)  
1972 Advised & contributed to the Flux shoe festival, at Falmouth, Exeter, Croydon, Oxford, Cardiff, Blackburn, Hastings, Nottingham (England)  
1973 Ping-pong table & rackets set up at Contemporanea. Incontri Internazionali D'Arte. Rome.  
Organized & contributed to flux game festival on Wooster St. (human treadmill, multi-bike square vehicle, 2 swing joust, multi-player chess.)  
1975 Organized & contributed to flux harpsichord recital at Film Archives, Organized 12 big name event & Rainbow food event (+ transparent)  
1976 Organized & contributed to Time events at Clock Tower, Leonard St. & Broadway. Also flux-tours (2 weeks of events at SoHo, NYC)  
Fall: will perform own pieces and organize entire harpsichord recital at the Berlin, SoHo show.

#### Publications, Essays, Articles

1964 Covered in Postface by Dick Higgins, Something Else Press. Also in John Cage—Notations, 1962 various European newspapers.  
1965 Tulane Drama Review, designed fluxus fold out section. Also article on Fluxyearbox 1 by John Wilcock in Village Voice, No. 25.

1966 essay: US surpasses all nazi genocide records! Publ. by Edizioni di cultura contemporanea, Milan, No.2, ED 912  
1967-69 published in Arch Do, Milan. Also in Da a/u dela, magazine of arts, Milan  
1968 Article on Fluxyearbox 2 by Grace Glueck, New York Times, June 16  
1970 Article of Flux festival in Village Voice, May 20 & april 30. Happenings & Fluxus Catalog, Cologne, edited by Hans Sohm.  
1972 Arts & Artist Magazine, England, issue devoted to Fluxus: Edited and contributed to special section of paper events. Oct. issue.  
Flux shoe, published by Beau Geste Press, Devon, England.  
1976 AQ 16, microdmystification. Contribution in special issue.  
Article on Harpsichord Flux recital by Peter Frank in SoHo News.

#### Objects in Collections

Stockholm Museum of Modern Art, Centre Beaubourg, Paris, Jean Brown Archives, Tyngham, Mass, Hans Sohm Archives, Germany, Cedille qui Sourit, France, Multiplan, Milan; collection of Yoko Ono & John Lennon, John Cage, Marcel Duchamp, Peter & Barbara Moore, etc.  
May 2, 1976 recipient of "Laudatio scripta pro George Maciunas concepta hominibus fluxi", organized by all flux-members (27)





**Mats B.**

"Birth Of Fluxus—The Ultimate Version,"  
Kalejdoskop, Lund, Sweden, 1979

## Birth of Fluxus – the ultimate version

In 1960 an unusually small art gallery, *Almus Gallery*, was in existence since a few years in a private home of a once fancy suburb of New York, Great Neck on Long Island. The shows at the gallery were mostly dedicated to immigrant or East European artists. Its owner, the expressive but somewhat disorganized Almus Salcius, had arrived from Lithuania ten years earlier and in the U.S. he, like so many other *nouveaux pauvres*, adapted to the contrasts of a dynamic inner life and a cold outward reality filled with compromises.

In the evening of October 8 a group of Lithuanians met in the gallery to discuss the possibility of founding a "Lithuanian Cultural Club", a meeting-ground for recollections, sentiments and debates. Among the enthusiasts were the artist V. K. Jonynas, Salcius and George Maciunas, an artist at large whom Salcius had met through the filmmaker Jonas Mekas. As the evening became late they finally decided to start a magazine instead. Someone proposed the name *Ryšys* (Lithuanian for 'Union'), someone else suggested *Influx* – but as one of them knew about the medical meaning of the word a few of them laughingly accepted the quick proposition of Maciunas: *Fluxus*. However, the definite name was not agreed upon. The one thing they did agree on was to let Maciunas, already a part time designer, do the lay-out of the future magazine and so it was decided that he during the following week would receive the funds to acquire an electric IBM on behalf of the group.

The next day Salcius sent a check to Maciunas and started to write an article: "Lithuania Belongs to the World." He had read the article "The United States Belong to the World", written by an executive at the Rockefeller Foundation, and considered its polemics to be useful once again.

At the second meeting of the group, November 21 in the home of Maciunas and his mother, Salcius and Maciunas realized that they were the only ones still interested in the project. Salcius kept asking Maciunas to review a book about the history of Soviet music, and Maciunas kept insisting that the magazine should be called *Fluxus*. In an attempt to reconcile their different outlooks they began to plan an expansion of the gallery instead.

December 8 Maciunas found an empty space on Manhattan: 925 Madison Ave., a prestigious address close to ParkeBernet Galleries, and two days later Salcius visited him again. They had an exquisite dinner made out of canned french gourmet foods (Maciunas had bought enormous quantities of cans in Europe the same year with the hope of selling them with a profit to American restaurants). During the meal they found a name for the new locale, *AG Gallery* (which opened shortly thereafter), and decided that Maciunas should be sole responsible for it, as Salcius alone was in charge of *Almus Gallery*. Their policies were to be the same: they were both to show relatively negotiable works of art, and the exhibiting artists were to pay the maintenance of the galleries.

But then, of course, Fluxus turned out to be quite something else!

MATS B.

## George Maciunas

Fluxhouse Cooperative Building Project, 1966  
photograph and prospectus

In 1966, a new U.S. Federal Housing Authority subsidy enabled Maciunas to organize a plan to buy abandoned buildings and convert them into artists living and working spaces. The chosen neighborhood is now known as SoHo, but was then called "Hell's Hundred Acres" for its urban decline. Maciunas hoped to realize his dream of creating a true Kolkhoz (collective estate), including a permanent Fluxus theater, FluxShop, Film Co-op, darkroom and recording studio. Maciunas incorporated the Fluxhouse Cooperative officially, made himself chairman, acquired the first properties at 18 Green Street and 80 Wooster Street, and got many artists to buy into the spaces. By 1968, Maciunas and Mekas had moved into the Wooster Street address, where Mekas also housed his Film Makers' Cinematheque. In this way, Maciunas started the first artist cooperatives in SoHo, and the tree that Maciunas and Mekas planted "illegally" in front of 80 Wooster Street circa 1967 grows as marker of this history to this day.





FLUXHOUSE COOPERATIVE

**George Maciunas**

Fluxhouse Cooperative Building Project, 1966  
photograph and prospectus (back side)

FLUXHOUSES were formed in 1966 as cooperatives consisting solely of artists, film-makers, musicians, dancers, designers, etc. seeking adequate combined work and living space. Its aim is to purchase, renovate and maintain suitable buildings for artist occupancy. A comprehensive survey led FLUXHOUSE to select the area of Manhattan between Houston and Canal as most suitable because of economy, structural soundness of buildings located there and accessibility from them to subway transportation. 8 buildings have already been purchased, grouped in 3 cooperatives and renovation work commenced or nearing completion. The buildings already purchased are at: 80 Wooster street (also housing *Film-Makers' Cinematheque*), 16-18 Greene st. (which will house various cooperative workshops, dark-rooms, studios, food distribution center and a theatre to be called *18 Greene street precinct*), 64-70 Grand and 33 Wooster st. and 131 Prince st. Buildings may be formed into independent cooperative corporations or grouped with an existing cooperative. Each member becomes a shareholder with shares proportional to the square footage he owns. Since Fluxhouse Cooperatives are not receiving any assistance from any foundations or government agencies, members must purchase buildings with own money and finance own renovation costs. All buildings to be purchased will have the ground floor owned by all members of the cooperative and leased for profit, thereby reducing for all the monthly carrying charges. This scheme requires members to put up cash of about \$2 per square foot to purchase the building with a monthly charge of about 3 cents per sq. ft. per month to carry mortgage interest, amortization, realty tax, insurance premiums, heating and elevator maintenance. Cash payment for the purchase of the building also includes legal fees, organizational commission, brokerage or finders fees (if any). Not included are: renovation costs (extent of which is determined by the members), architectural fees (which are determined from cost of renovation), further legal fees, (residence permits, proprietary leases etc.).

Renovation costs amount to the following:

2x4 stud partition with 5/8" gypsum board, both sides - 30 cents per sq. ft. without labor, 60 c. with labor; electric system within floor (conduits, fixtures, outlets, switches) about 15 cents per sq. ft.; new plumbing system (brass water pipes, bathroom fixtures and kitchen sink) \$1000 per bathroom; carpentry and ceramic tile work - \$300 to \$500 per bathroom, tile alone - \$1.30 per sq. ft. labor & mtl. Labor costs: unskilled (demolition, hauling etc.) \$1.50 per hour; skilled (carpentry, masonry, minor electrical etc.) \$2.50 to \$3.00 per hour.

All these buildings are located in M1-5 (manufacturing) zone and prior to its legal use for residences and studios, it will be necessary to obtain appropriate permits either (1) by amendment of sec. 276 of N.Y. State Multiple Dwelling Law, or (2) by reclassification of artists residence-studio by the City Zoning Commission, or (3) by obtaining zoning variances from the Board of Standards & Appeals.



All inquiries should be directed to GEORGE MACIUNAS 349 West Broadway, apt. 11, tel: 925-0274, president of Fluxhouse Cooperative, Inc., who is performing all organizational work: forming cooperatives, purchasing buildings, obtaining mortgages, legal and architectural services, conducting work as general contractor for all renovation and building management (if so desired by the members). Checks should be made out to: Fluxhouse Cooperative, Inc. Meetings and tours of buildings for prospective members start weekly at 80 Wooster st. ground floor, every Thursday 3 P.M. Buildings can be also visited by appointment. This bulletin is not an offer. Inquiries will be accepted.

## George Maciunas

FluxHouse Newsletter No. 10, Feb. 8, 1967

By 1967, Maciunas' plans for the FluxHouse Cooperative were well underway and much of his time and energy was devoted to realizing them. As the **Newsletter** indicates, he had artists signed up to take spaces in the various buildings, but still had many bureaucratic details to work out according to the mandates of the Federal Housing Authority. The **Newsletter** is also a good example of Maciunas' own bureaucratic methods, organizing people and events through charts, lists, schedules, orders, etc. In 1968, he incorporated the FluxHouse Cooperative officially and named himself president.



# Fluxhouse Newsletter no.10, Feb. 8, 1967.

Recent meeting with FHA & City officials have disclosed following additional requirements to be met by each member within 6 months:

- 90% of all members must be married. This can be accomplished by one of the following: (a) marriage within 6 months, (b) substituting own membership with a married party & re-exchanging membership after building is occupied, (c) cancelling own membership & receiving back all deposits paid.
- All members should provide proof of past earnings (tax returns for past 3 years) and rent payment. The lower the earnings & the higher the rent - the better our position with FHA.

Fluxhouse 2 members should pay balance-deposit [final deposit minus original deposit] within 4 weeks.

Make checks payable to: Howard Squadron, (Attorney for Fluxhouse) 32 E 57 St.  
\$5000 has been paid for 80 Wooster St. building as downpayment. This amount for Fluxhouse 2 is expected from Kaplan Foundation & will therefore be returned to all members once it is received.

## Fluxhouse 1, 18 Greene St.

Unit	Cooperative members	Fl.	area sq.ft.	basic month cost	Est. utility cost	total month cost	original deposit paid.	Final deposit	balance paid.	no. of people.
	George Maciunas	6	1400	78	42	120				
	Martial Westburg.	6	1100	62	33	95				
	Robert M. watts	5	1400	78	42	120				
	Dan Lauffer	5	1100	62	33	95	115			
	Jake & Ginny Berthot	4	2500	140	75	215	260			3
	Bill & Charlotte Saylor	3	2500	140	75	215	260			
	Jonas Mekas	2	2000	100	47	147	145			
	Charles Ross	2	1460	70	38	108	100			
	Cinematheque I & Coop.	1	3200	400	100	500				
	Totals			1130	485	1735				

Categorization of costs.	
Building sale price:	60,000
Renovation cost:	120,000
Elevator conversion	20,000
Central air heat & cooling	20,000
10 Kitchens & 10 Bathrooms + plumbing.	90,000
Electrical wiring, lighting	15,000
walls, partitions, doors	10,000
Flooring & mezzanines	20,000
Glazing, windows.	5,000
Total loan to be applied for	180,000
40 year total	540,000

## Fluxhouse 2, 80 Wooster St.

7A	Hannah Weiner	7	1400	80	34	114	150	330		
7B	Joseph & Trisha Schlichter	7	2100	118	52	170	150	470	300	3
6A	Toby Mussman	6	1400	80	34	114	120	330		
6B	Workshop no. 5 Film Coop.	6	900					200		
6C	Barbara Jarvis	6	1200	70	30	100	100	270		
5A		5	1400	80	34	114	120	330		
5B	Mac Wells	5	2100	118	52	170	180	470		
4A	Joseph Russo	4	1650	95	43	138	150	400	200	
4B	Bill Chaikin	4	1650	95	43	138	135	400		
3A	Annette Michelson	3	1400	80	34	114	120	330		
3B	Workshop no. 6 Film Coop.	3	900					200		
3C	Jim & Beth Baumbach	3	1200	70	30	100	105	270		3
2		2	3600	195	85	280	300	800		
1	Cinematheque II + 2 workshops.	1	4800	400	130	530	500	1500		
B		B								
	Totals			1580	646	2226		5400		

Building sale price	105,000
Renovation cost:	145,000
Elevator conversion	20,000
central air heat & cooling	25,000
Kitchens, bathrms, plumbing	30,000
Electrical wiring, lighting	20,000
Partitions, doors.	15,000
Flooring	20,000
Cabinetwork, misc. carpentry.	15,000
Legal fees	
Total	145,000
Total loan to be applied for	250,000
40 Year total (principal, interest, taxes)	750,000
Monthly total per building.	1,560

## Fluxhouse 3, 109-111 Spring St. ?

	Geof & Bici Hendricks	5	4400	195	95	290	330			
	Robert Fiore	4	2200	98	47	145	160			
	Susan Brockman	4	2200	98	47	145	148			
	Alfred Leslie	3	3400	152	78	230	253			
	David Antin	3	810	43	17	60	121			
	Robert & Yvonne Morris	2	3400	152	78	230	253			
	David Antin	2	810	43	17	60	-			
	James Wines	1	6300	430	100	530	583			
	Basement - Martial Westburg	B	3400	90	80	170	187			
	Totals			1300	565	1865	2053			

Building sale price	92,000
Renovation cost:	118,000
Elevator conversion	20,000
central air heat & cooling	25,000
8 Kitchens, bathrms + plumb.	25,000
Elec. wiring, lighting.	15,000
Partitions, doors.	10,000
Flooring, mezz.	13,000
Total loan to be applied for	210,000
40 Year total	630,000

## Fluxhouse 4.

	La Monte & Marian Young									2
	Aaron Kuriloff									
	Jerome Martin									
	Steve Rosenfeld									
	Leonard Neufeld									
	Hollis Frampton									
	Sherman Draxler									
	Robert Whitman									
	Richard Nondas									
	Jackson McLow									

**Meeting**  
Fluxhouse 3 & 4 members & any new interested parties.  
Saturday 10 AM (sharp)  
Feb. 18th. end by Noon.  
at James Wines studio  
2nd. floor. 60 Greene st.  
(at Broom st.)

Any questions should be directed to: George Maciunas  
Weekdays 9AM to 5:30PM - PL 2-4990  
Weekdays 6:30PM to 10PM 925-0274  
Weekends 4 PM to 10 PM " "

## **George Maciunas**

*Evening of Lithuanian Poetry announcement, n.d.*

Maciunas designed this announcement for an event at Jonas Mekas' Film-Makers' Cinematheque, which by 1968 was a part of the FluxHouse Cooperative at 80 Wooster Street. As avant-garde artists Maciunas and Mekas often felt estranged from the traditional Lithuanian immigrant community in New York, however, both made efforts to maintain connections. The Lithuanian American Foundation, Inc. sponsored the event and Lithuanian was the primary language spoken with English translations available.

## PAKVIETIMAS

**KADA:** Tūkstantis devyni šimtai septyniasdešimtais metais, birželio šeštą dieną, ketvirtą valandą "po pietų"

**KUR:** Film-Makers' Cinematheque, 80 Wooster Street, New York City.

**KAS:** LEONAS LĖTAS, iš Kauno, pakeliui; VIOLETA PALCINSKAITĖ, iš Kauno, pakeliui; JONAS MEKAS, iš Semeniškių, pakeliui, – skaitys iš savo naujos ir ne naujos poezijos. Jūs esate kviečiami būti jų svečiai.

**PROGA:** VIOLETOS PALCINSKAITĖS prabėgantis sustojimas New-Yorke, pakeliui.

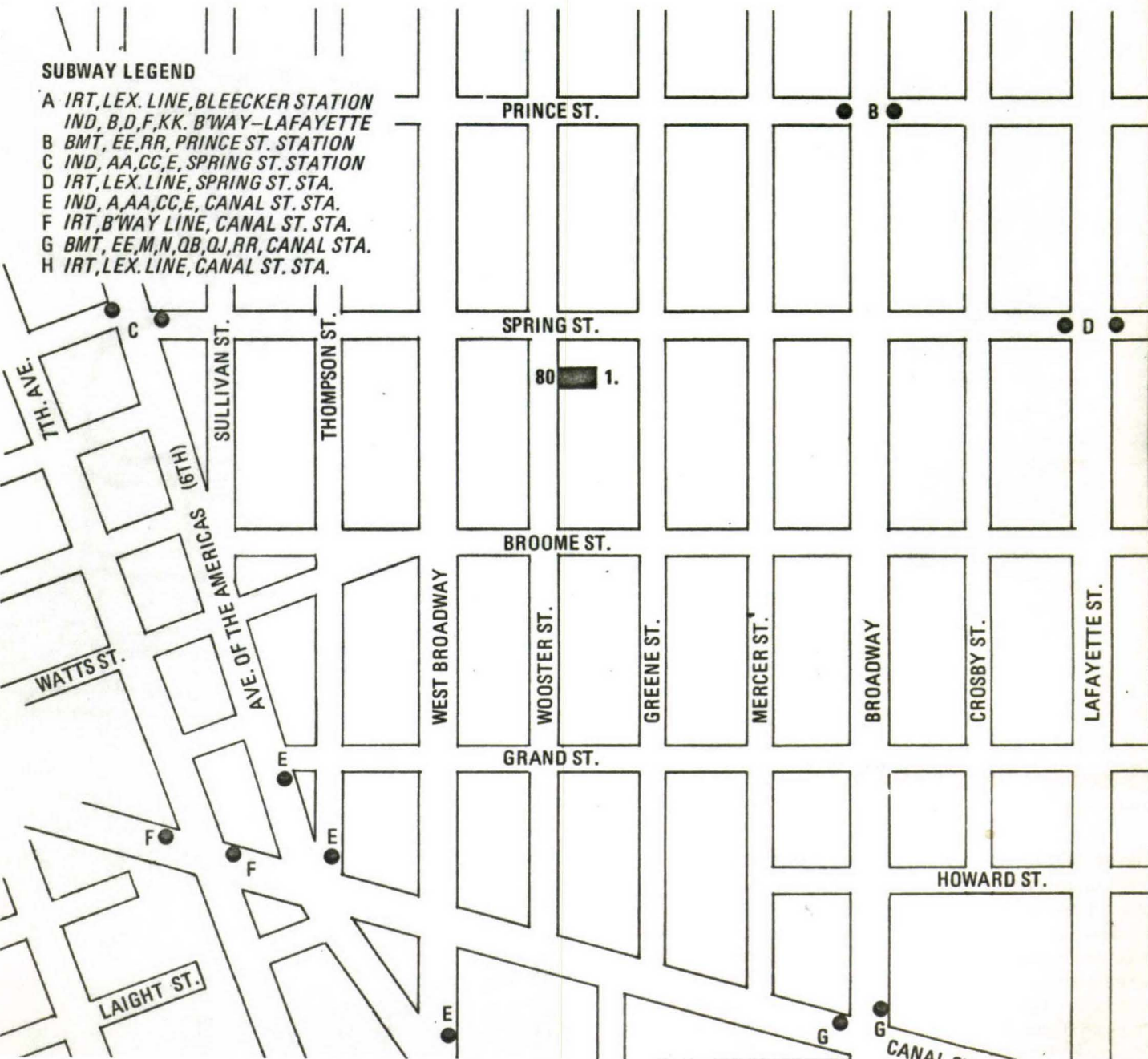
## FOR OUR ENGLISH (AMERICAN) FRIENDS:

An afternoon of contemporary Lithuanian poetry will take place at the Film-Makers' Cinematheque on June 6th, 4PM. Miss Violeta Palcinskaite, one of the young poets of the Soviet Lithuania, who is here for a brief visit, will read some of her poetry. Two other modern Lithuanian poets, Leonas Letas and Jonas Mekas, both on a world journey, (temporarily sojourning in New York) will read their poetry too. Fragmentary and unpretentious English translation will be provided.

## THE LITHUANIAN AMERICAN FOUNDATION, INC.

### SUBWAY LEGEND

- A IRT, LEX. LINE, BLEECKER STATION  
IND, B, D, F, K, K. B'WAY-LAFAYETTE
- B BMT, EE, RR, PRINCE ST. STATION
- C IND, AA, CC, E, SPRING ST. STATION
- D IRT, LEX. LINE, SPRING ST. STA.
- E IND, A, AA, CC, E, CANAL ST. STA.
- F IRT, B'WAY LINE, CANAL ST. STA.
- G BMT, EE, M, N, Q, B, Q, J, RR, CANAL STA.
- H IRT, LEX. LINE, CANAL ST. STA.



## George Maciunas

*Flux-Game Fest Announcement, New York, May 1973*

The majority of activities for this event took place on May 19th at 80 Wooster Street. Some were held outdoors in the street, including the construction and riding of Maciunas' multi-tandem bicycle, team race on one pair of skis by Ay-O, team race with canvas loop by Robert Watts, and Maciunas' giant wheel that moved as people walked inside it. Other activities took place indoors, such as jousting on swings by Maciunas, "Kicking Boxes billiards" by Saito, and soccer on stilts by Bici Hendricks. It all ended in a Fluxus themed food party.



CARLA LISS  
ROBIN CROZIER

YOSHIMASA WADA: exerci  
JOE JONES: musical tricycle



**TAKAKO SAITO:**  
 rubber ring race & fight  
 have a nice day

**GEORGE MACIUNAS:**  
 swing joust  
 slow bike race  
 team ski-run  
 target game

**YASUNAO TONE:**  
 catastrophe

**MIEKO SHIOMI:**  
 mirror piece no.2  
 balance poem

MAY	
19	20
26	27
80	
WOOSTER	
2	PM



**BOB WATTS:**  
 team canvas loop run  
 box race

FLUX		GAME	
FL		FEST	



**NAM JUNE PAIK**  
 communication game  
 draggingsuite



**SHIGE KUBO**  
 invisible ga

## George Maciunas

Composition, dedicated to all Avant-Garde artists such as, 1971

In 1964, Maciunas and other Fluxus associated artists staged the first boycott and picket of Charlotte Moorman's annual "New York Avant-Garde Festival." For Maciunas' there was a sharp distinction between "Happenings," which he called "neo-Wagnerian operas," and Fluxus, which were based on simple, mono-structural everyday actions. Belief in a humorous, unpretentious art for the masses was central to Maciunas' Fluxus, and Moorman's event appeared to be the antithesis of his ideas. In 1971, he went so far as to denounce individual artists who worked with Moorman, indicating he would have no further "visual and oral contact" with them. **Composition** includes the names of artists who did not participate and Maciunas felt were more authentically avant-garde.

## Composition 1971

Vito Acconci, Eri  
Robert Barry, Jos  
Stanley Brouwn,  
Jim Collins, Merc  
Fahlstrom, Robert  
Friedman, Terry  
Have, Davi Det H  
Ken Jacobs, R. Ja  
King, Per Kirkeby  
Paul Kos, Joseph  
Barbara Lloyd, R  
Mekas, Bruce Mel  
Bob Morris, Gord  
Nitsch, Claes Old  
Patterson, Steve P  
Rinke, Diter Rot,  
Robert Smithson,  
Stromberg, Julias  
Robert Whitman,  
who refused or di

*George Maciunas  
this festival until*

**George Maciunas, dedicated to all avant garde artists such as:**  
Ersen, Carl Andre, Arman, David Ascevolt, Ayo, J. Baldessari,  
Leuys, Mel Bochner, Robert Bozzi, George Brecht, Bazon Brock,  
Brown, Gunther Brus, James L. Byars, John Cage, Neke Carson,  
ningham, Walter De Maria, Ger Dekkers, Jan Dibbets, Oyvind  
iou, Henry Flynt, Richard Foreman, Simone Forti, Ken  
Dan Graham, Colin Greenly, Hans Haacke, Alex Hay, Henrik  
on, Hi Red Center, Doug Hubler, Alice Hutchins, P. Hutchinson,  
Ray Johnson, Joan Jonas, Joe Jones, Thadeusz Kantor, Kenneth  
gt Af Klintberg, Milan Knizak, Alison Knowles, Arthur Koepcke,  
th, Tetsumi Kudo, Jean Jacques Lebel, Barry LeVa, Sol LeWitt,  
d Long, J.O. Mallander, Gordon Matta, Barry McCallion, Jonas  
Mario Merz, Jean-Claude Moineau, Meredith Monk, Peter Moore,  
umma, Giancarlo Nanni, Bruce Nauman, Phil Niblock, Hermann  
g, Dennis Oppenheim, Judy Padow, Daniela Palazzoli, Ben  
n, Yvonne Rainer, Robert Rauschenberg, Jock Reynolds, Klaus  
ko Saito, Italo Scanga, Tomas Schmit, Paul Sharits, Mieko Shiomi,  
ael Snow, Alan Sonfist, Keith Sonnier, Daniel Spoerri, Harvey  
as, Timm Ulrich, John VanSaun, Ben Vautier, Branko Vucicevic,  
imasa Wada, La Monte Young, ZAJ group,  
**participate in the so-called *annual avant-garde festival***

*avoid all visual and oral contact with any of the participants in  
next one comes along.*

## Ben Bozzi

Festival of Total Art and Organized Behavior,  
(with the Participation of the International Fluxus Group)  
July 26, 1963, Nice, France

Maciunas was very impressed by French artist Ben Vautier, and gave him unprecedented control over the program and publicity for this festival in Nice from July 25 through August 4, 1963. The festival represented a convergence of Vautier's idea of "Total Art Theatre" and Maciunas' idea of Fluxus, which were not so different. In the photo, Robert Bozzi, Maciunas, and Vautier (from left to right) perform in front of an outdoor audience.





Concert Fluxus 1963 à Nice avec Macunas Ben Bogzi'

## **George Maciunas**

No Smoking, Fluxus Edition, c. 1963/1973

"No Smoking" was first a ready-made sign by Brecht from c. 1963. In this later version, Maciunas supplied the creative graphic design. It was the ideal collaboration as the asthmatic, adamant non-smoker Maciunas was well-known for posting "No Smoking" signs in his living and working quarters.

NO  
EMO  
KING

## Julia E. Robinson

George Maciunas: Design on Fluxus

George Maciunas is best known today as the “impresario” of Fluxus: an international group of artists whose first members came together in 1962 for an inaugural concert series at Wiesbaden, Germany (not far from the epicenter of New Music in Darmstadt). Hardly a regular “concert,” the “Fluxus Festspiele Neuester Musik” – as Maciunas called it, upping the stakes of New Music, by claiming this to be the “Newest” Music – introduced an extensive array of the most radical scoring practices of the day, enacted by a group of young artists from the United States, Korea, Germany and Lithuania. The Fluxus group would come to include more nationalities and more women than any avant-garde since Dada. The first concert series happened at Wiesbaden because Maciunas was based there and he set about to organize it; he gathered the scores to be presented, rallied the artists, arranged the venue, designed the poster, promoted the event and performed in it. In fact, the word “impresario” does little to explain the work the Lithuanian émigré did for Fluxus. Rather, it has mostly been a way for scholars to avoid the difficult territory of how and with what to credit George Maciunas.

The unorthodox range of tasks Maciunas undertook to organize Fluxus has generated debate between Fluxus artists as well as historians about his proper title and whether or not he warrants the description of “founder” or “leader.” For simplicity’s sake, Maciunas is often called an artist, but the role he adopted among artists resists this classification. As a trained graphic designer with broad political ambitions, Maciunas’ Fluxus work – designing posters, flyers and labels, compiling editions and multiples, drawing up calendars of activities, writing and circulating “news (policy) letters,” and planning and directing concerts – suggests a complex and hybrid “authorial” model that would suspend the term “artist” or reveal it to be beside the point. Rather than imposing conventional terms onto the figure of Maciunas, as debates about his proper title in Fluxus would do, it is perhaps more useful to examine this hybrid role he devised for himself, its fundamental motivations and its legacy.

Julia E. Robinson is an art historian and curator based in New York. She is completing her doctoral dissertation on the Fluxus artist George Brecht at Princeton University and recently curated a major retrospective of Brecht’s work for the Museum Ludwig, Cologne, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Barcelona. Her writing on Fluxus, Pop Art, Assemblage, and other art of the 1950s and 1960s has been published widely in international art journals and magazines. She is a lecturer at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

### Re-Presenting History

To appreciate what Maciunas brought to Fluxus and how he positioned it at all levels, it is essential to look back briefly at his training and early ideas about the role of history and its (re)presentation. A postwar émigré from Kaunas, Lithuania, Maciunas came to the United States in 1948 settling in New York.<sup>1</sup> Over the course of a decade, beginning in 1949, Maciunas studied graphic design at New York's Cooper Union, architecture at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, and finally, art history at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts. During this time, he developed a passionate interest in genealogical charts. Producing them became a monumental project running parallel to his studies and informing them.

The charts were a magnum opus for the young Maciunas, a feat of utter commitment, diligence and exhaustive attempts to master a vast body of information. The scale of some of the early charts is breathtaking. The final dimensions of his "Atlas of Russian History," tracking the major changes in the Russian state up to the Revolution, were six by nine feet, and his "History of Art" chart, from the Visigoths to Modernity, came in slightly larger at six by twelve feet. These were great fields of pasted paper, which projected the information laterally while also extending into three dimensions in towers and accordion structures filled with gridded text (the precursors of the formats for his Fluxus compendia). As movable, architectonic, genealogical models, Maciunas' charts emancipated the student of history, placing the structuring of knowledge in his own hands and those of every future reader. Through the charts Maciunas acquired a thorough grounding in Art History, which undoubtedly emboldened him to judge the status of art in his own historical moment. He called the charts "Learning

Machines" and ultimately considered them among the most important work of his life.<sup>2</sup>

Some years later, Maciunas brought his passion for charting history to his work on Fluxus, giving Fluxus a genealogy of its own. In addition to drawing up a number of charts positioning Fluxus within a trajectory of 20th century avant-gardes and neo-avant-gardes, he continued to use the chart structure for his overall organization of the group's activities. The rigor with which Maciunas crafted the Fluxus charts framed this seemingly cryptic and ephemeral project in terms of its historical relevance as well as giving it a kind of "readymade" place in history. In an important late interview with Fluxus artist Larry Miller, Maciunas explained one of these charts, acknowledging the central position of John Cage:

So, you see, this chart is just a culmination of other charts I've done in the past for other histories.... In the vertical line is shown the years and the horizontal layout shows the style. So you can point on the chart to any activity, pinpoint it exactly with this grid of time and style. Now it could also be... I've done charts which... vertically is shown time and horizontally geographical location. This way you could say any activity of the past, you could locate exactly on the chart where it happened and when. Now for this chart I chose rather style than location because the style is so unlocalized... mainly because of the travels of John Cage. So you could call the whole chart ... "Travels of John Cage" like you could say "travels of St. Paul," you know? Wherever John Cage went he left a little John Cage group, which some admit, some not admit his influence. But the fact is there, that those groups

2. For further information on Maciunas' charts see Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, **Maciunas' Learning Machines: From Art History to A Chronology of Fluxus**, The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection (Berlin: Vice Versa Verlag, 2003). Schmidt-Burkhardt's path-breaking scholarship and the Berlin exhibition for which this catalogue was made (mounted with the support of Jon Hendricks, curator of the Gilbert & Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Foundation), are an invaluable contribution to the Maciunas literature.

1. A new biography on Maciunas gives an extensive account of previously unpublished information about his background, see Thomas Kellein, **The Dream of Fluxus: George Maciunas-An Artist's Biography**, (London and Bangkok, Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 2007).

formed after his visits. It shows up very clearly on the charts.<sup>3</sup>

After this, he goes on to fill in the picture at the prompt of Miller's questions, situating first Cage and then Fluxus with reference to Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, and the relevant postwar movements: from the first Happenings (in Japan in the 1950s – the Gutai Group), to French Nouveau Réalisme and then back to the U.S. with figures surrounding Cage such as La Monte Young and many artists who would ultimately join Fluxus.

### Designs for Radical Practice

In October 1960, Maciunas was meeting with a group of compatriots at the gallery of his friend Almus Salcius in Long Island to discuss prospects for a Lithuanian cultural club. In the end, the group decided to make a magazine and "Fluxus" was the name George (Jurgis) proposed for it.<sup>4</sup> Maciunas went on to start an exhibition space with his friend Almus, called the AG Gallery (Avant-Garde? Almus & George?) at 925 Madison Avenue in New York City. The idea of presenting Lithuanian culture did not last long and Maciunas took over the programming of the gallery (albeit conservatively at first). After attending composer Richard Maxfield's electronic composition class of 1960 at The New School for Social Research, and meeting La Monte Young, the program for the gallery changed radically and Maciunas started showing future Fluxus artists and having Young program concerts there.

Young not only exposed Maciunas to a whole range of new and exciting work – Yoko Ono, Henry Flynt, George Brecht, Dick Higgins and others – he also gave him a chance to see how these radical scoring practices might figure as an object of graphic design, asking him to be the designer for a new

3. Maciunas, interview with Larry Miller, March 24, 1978. Reproduced in Jon Hendricks, **Fluxus, etc. Addenda I** (New York, The Gilbert & Lila Silverman Collection, 1983), 11.

4. For a detailed account of this story see **Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas**, edited by Emmett Williams and Ann Noël (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1998), 33-35.

collection of scores he was editing, which came to be called **An Anthology**. Out of this collaboration, Maciunas discovered much of the work he would gather together under the banner of **Fluxus** the following year. He kept the idea of a publication called Fluxus for a long time, though the proposed content changed as much as Maciunas' ideas about art did in this period.

"Ever since he had become friends with three Lithuanian colleagues, namely Jonas Mekas, Almus Salcius and Stanley Buetens... he had wanted to become the editor of a journal of his own."<sup>5</sup> The first chance at this was in the designing of **An Anthology**. Maciunas approached this work with zealous commitment to economy, insisting "contributions were to be copied on colored, almost square copy paper, pasted together and sold as a low cost book."<sup>6</sup> He typed the entire book on his IBM Executive typewriter but within its pages there were many innovative approaches to presentation, including little envelopes containing scores, loose pages with cut-outs, etc. This would be the beginning of many more adventurous design projects for Fluxus, which were part book, part poster, part object. As Maciunas explained to Miller:

We couldn't include everything that we had collected by then, like it didn't have Bob Watts and ... had very little things by George Brecht and so I thought I would go ahead and make another publication with all the pieces that were not included in **Anthology**. More or less newer pieces. But La Monte wasn't interested in doing a second **Anthology** book. So the initial plan was just do another, like a second **Anthology** book except graphically it would have been a little... less conventional than the first one, which means it would have had objects and... a different kind of packaging. So really then the idea germinated to use the whole book as bound envelopes

5. Thomas Kellein, **The Dream of Fluxus: George Maciunas – An Artist's Biography**, op. cit., p. 37-38.

6. Ibid, p. 38.

with objects in the envelopes. See, we had a couple objects already in the first Anthology, you know, like the loose Diter Roth machine holes, things like that. A little envelope with [the] card of La Monte Young [Composition # 10, 1960 To Bob Morris – draw a straight line and follow it.], another envelope with a letter in it, you know, so things like that. Cards that have to be cut up ....<sup>7</sup>

This format came to inspire the first compilations of the collective works of Fluxus: **Fluxus I** and the **Fluxus Yearboxes**. **Fluxus I** consists of envelopes containing contributions from the artists with foldout parts. It was bolted together and encased in a wooden box. In an amusingly self-deprecating comment on the innovative format, Maciunas stated that the contents were “like an accordion, it just keeps falling out and being in your way.”<sup>8</sup> After the prototypes were complete, Maciunas assembled subsequent copies on demand (from 1964-mid-1970s).

Maciunas conceived and worked on these first **Fluxus** publications and others, such as the complete collection of George Brecht scores, called **Water Yam** [1963] while he was in Germany. Since they were so complex to make, and he did not always have the funds to proceed, he decided to organize concerts of Fluxus scores and contextual work as publicity for the imminent arrival of the published material. This concept initiated the performance practice of concerts and festivals that has animated and defined the Fluxus group from 1962 to the present.<sup>9</sup>

The first events explicitly called “Fluxus” (at Wiesbaden) ran as a series of fourteen concerts (September 1-23, 1962) and

others followed at Amsterdam, Düsseldorf and Paris. With the a number of artists there to perform the scores of both present and absent authors – Nam June Paik, Alison Knowles, Emmett Williams, Benjamin Patterson, Dick Higgins and Maciunas – the spectrum of activity was broad enough that the scope for Fluxus was glimpsed. As previously mentioned, Maciunas’ strategy on this occasion, to draw attention to the concert, was to connect it with New Music. This was highlighted in the poster he designed, which read “Fluxus Festspiele Neuester Musik,” with white text on a black ground naming all the scores to be performed and listing their composers.

More than mere “publicity” for the forthcoming publications, which ultimately did not come out in these first months, the performances drew scandalous attention and a number of misunderstood impressions from audiences and the press. This may have been due to the selection of scores, which themselves were rather extreme and often performed in somewhat hyperbolic ways. Paik’s **Zen for Head**, for example, involved dipping his head, hands and tie into a bucket of paint and tracking it along a long scroll of paper, which he did manually, sending the audience into fits of laughter. And the finale, Phillip Corner’s **Piano Activities**, which called for performers to “play,” “scratch or rub,” “pluck or tap,” “drop objects” on, “act on strings,” “strike soundboard, pins, lid or drag various kinds of objects across” and “act in any way on underside of piano,” ended by an excess of enthusiasm, with the total destruction of the piano. There were undoubtedly aspects of many of the pieces, performed here for the first time, which might have superficially conjured Dada (as the press observed). But Fluxus had almost nothing to do with Dada, and ways were found to clarify this important distinction as the concerts were repeated.

The “problem” of Dada, had been identified just one year earlier in Darmstadt, when Theodor Adorno gave his lecture “Vers une musique informelle,” enumerating the contemporary reasons for its critical disqualification. As Adorno saw

7. Maciunas, interview with Larry Miller, March 24, 1978, op. cit., p. 15.

8. Interview with Larry Miller, op. cit., p. 17.

9. A rich compilation of Fluxus performance over more than two decades can be seen in the 1991 film **Some Fluxus**, by Larry Miller (distributed by EAI-Electronic Arts Intermix).

the situation, any anti-art sentiment expressed, in the postwar period, as a direct action “in contrast to its Dadaist grandparents... degenerates at once into culture...”.<sup>10</sup> He explained that “this is dictated by the impossibility today of the politics on which Dadaism still relied. Action Painting and Action Composing,” said Adorno, “are cryptograms of the direct action that has now been ruled out; they have arisen in an age in which every such action is either forestalled by technology or recuperated by an administered world.”<sup>11</sup> In Fluxus, however, the intervention of the score was the crucial agent of mediation, the marker of the enactment as indirect action. It was important that the line Paik painted in his animated performance was indeed not a direct action he had spontaneously devised, but rather, an interpretation of La Monte Young’s **Composition #10, 1960 To Bob Morris**, which instructed the interpreter to “draw a straight line and follow it.”<sup>12</sup>

Changes in the enactment of Maciunas’ own newly penned score, In Memoriam To Adriano Olivetti, between the Wiesbaden and Düsseldorf performances showed that he had gleaned a great deal from the interaction with his colleagues. In November 1962 he actually rewrote parts of it.<sup>13</sup> In Maciunas’ Olivetti score, and in the performances

10. Theodor Adorno, “Vers une musique informelle” [1961] in *Quasi una fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, Rodney Livingstone transl. (New York: Verso, 1998), 316.

11. Adorno, “Vers une musique informelle,” op. cit., 316.

12. The La Monte Young score is reproduced in **An Anthology**, op. cit., (unpaginated).

13. At the time of the third Fluxus festival Maciunas revised the score for **In Memoriam Adriano Olivetti**. For the sequence of these early festivals see my chronology in Julia Robinson, **George Brecht Events: A Heterospective** (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2005), 312. The date of the revision is November 8, 1962; in other words, before the key festivals of Paris (December, 1962) and Düsseldorf (February, 1963). The revision date appears on the score, reproduced in see Susan Hapgood, **Neo-Dada: Redefining Art 1958-1962**, (New York: American Federation of Arts, 1994), 88-89.

that have departed from it (with Maciunas always as a performer), the influences of Cage and Duchamp seem to meet up with the “administered” conditions to which Adorno referred. The performers stand on stage in suits, which can be military uniforms, business attire, and conduct simple everyday actions based on the numerical cues from “any used tape from an Olivetti adding machine,” their timing dictated by a metronome.<sup>14</sup> They may be prompted to stand or sit for several seconds, bow, raise their hat, or put an umbrella up and down.<sup>15</sup> If the performance comes off well, it seems less like the anarchic, “direct actions” associated with early Dada, than like the frozen gestures of the “malic molds” in Duchamp’s *Large Glass* thrown into the context of performance, their subjection projected into the living matrix of scored mechanical action.

In between the early concerts in the different European cities, subtler deviations from the approach of absent authors also occurred. Maciunas showed how all approaches were equally valid in his performances of George Brecht’s score *Drip Music* (1959-62), which changed several times in the first few months of Fluxus. Once he exaggerated the piece by doing it from atop a tall ladder in Düsseldorf. Another time he realized the piece a little closer to how Brecht might have approached it, standing calmly on stage and relocating the water from jug to bucket with a degree of reverence in Amsterdam.<sup>16</sup>

14. The score calls for “performers to be formally dressed,” later mentioning the use of a “bowler hat,” with one performer “No. 9 in military uniform.” See reproduction in Susan Hapgood, **Neo-Dada**, *ibid*.

15. These details are taken directly from the score, see Hapgood, op. cit., 88.

16. I have discussed in greater detail the implications attending the gap between score and performance, with particular reference to Paik and Brecht, elsewhere; see Julia Robinson, “The Brechtian Event Score: A Structure in Fluxus,” **Performance Research**, Vol. 7.4, (U.K., Routledge, Fall 2002). For photographs of Maciunas in the two different approaches to Brecht’s *Drip Music*, see **George Brecht Events: A Heterospective**, op. cit., 134-135.



### The Fluxus Manifesto

For Düsseldorf, Maciunas produced the now-famous Fluxus Manifesto (1963). This was prompted by a request from Joseph Beuys, who was based in Düsseldorf and who Maciunas had enlisted to help out with the organization. Beuys felt the group needed some formal statement to declare the stakes of their project.<sup>17</sup> Maciunas' first response was to mail Beuys a clipping of the dictionary definition of the word Fluxus. By the time the concert took place, he had amended it, cutting and pasting the dictionary text and interspersing it with his own handwriting: the format in which it is now known. This manifesto entered Fluxus performance literally, as hundreds of copies of it were thrown to the Düsseldorf audience.

The 1963 "manifesto" has been reproduced and discussed many times but it has rarely been analyzed beyond its overt content. As an intervention into language and representation, it remains one of the earliest and most important documents Maciunas used to initiate and define Fluxus. It did not matter that no one added his or her signature to satisfy the conventional definition of a manifesto. The important thing for Maciunas was that being defined and presented as such, he could project manifesto-like energy onto Fluxus.

### New York: Designs on Fluxus

During Maciunas' final months in Europe in 1963 as he was working on Fluxus I and Brecht's Water Yam, he began to set his sights on a much more ambitious project of Fluxus production. At this time, he wrote a letter to Robert Watts

saying, "Now... how about... boxes. I mean we could publish a 100 [sic.] boxes each containing objects which you would 'mass produce' like in a factory." Later in the letter he reiterates his idea to "start a factory!"<sup>18</sup>

When he returned to the United States in late 1963 he did just that. He established what he called the "Fluxshop" as a site for the production of Fluxus objects and the performance of the scores at 359 Canal Street in New York City. Here he once again drew from the most sophisticated aspects of the projects of the historical avant-gardes, deploying his considerable skills at design and typography to frame the politics of Fluxus. Acknowledging the distant realm of the utopian ideals in the formats of the Soviet avant-garde or Dada, Maciunas' use of design constituted instead an astute intervention into the burgeoning commodity culture of the 1960s contemporaneous with the rise of Pop Art. If Pop Art turned commodity culture into "art" – "representing" it as painting or sculpture – Maciunas used impressive and exuberant design to generate "anti-commodities." He continued calling for ideas, games and scores from the Fluxus artists, which he then "packaged" and "marketed" under the collectivist authorship of "Fluxus." As Benjamin Buchloh has argued: "Fluxus artists gave a dialectical answer to Pop Art's inherent traditionalism and its implicit aestheticization of reification by dissolving both the artistic genre's and the readymade object's centrality."<sup>19</sup>

The individual labels Maciunas developed turned each artist's name into a kind of brand. Generated with scrupulous economy, he variegated letters, changing their scale by photostatic enlargement and printed them in black and white. These Fluxus labels thrived on being cryptic, on forcing the "consumer" to have to think and work out their meaning. One

17. I thank Joan Rothfuss for informing me about the details of this and sharing the associated documentation (email exchange, April 2007). See also, Rothfuss, "FluxBeuys," in **What's Fluxus? What's Not! Why**, Jon Hendricks ed., (Brazil: Centro Cultural Banco de Brasil/Gilbert & Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Foundation, 2002), 57-65.

18. Letter reproduced in Jon Hendricks, **Fluxus Addenda II**, op. cit., 149.  
19. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "1962" (Fluxus chapter), in Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois and Benjamin Buchloh, **Art Since 1900**, Vol. 2 (New York and London, Thames & Hudson, 2004, 456-463.

example among many is the particularly efficient logo for Yoko Ono, which began as a line drawing of every letter in the alphabet, and ended as a finite set of axial lines superimposed to spell out the letters of the artist's name. In a manner related to the function of a score, which must be read and enacted, even if only in the mind, this ambiguous lettering addressed Maciunas' concern to generate an active rather than a passive subject of design. Discussing the effect of Maciunas' label design, Buchloh notes:

In the typographical design of these name cards, individual subjectivity hovers somewhere between allegorical ornament and corporate trademark, between Fluxus' utopian abolition of the exceptional artist and the existing rule of corporate culture, which dismantles any form of subjective experience. To have brought out the precariousness of this historical dialectic is one of the movement's many achievements.<sup>20</sup>

The impact of Maciunas' labeling, as the design meets the Fluxus object, is dramatically demonstrated in the before and after views of Ay-O's **Finger Box** (1964). Playing upon the subject's irresistible desire to "touch," Ay-O's box features a finger-sized hole with various hidden materials placed inside (different in each, like nylon stocking, rubber or nails) to challenge tactile perception. In its raw state, Ay-O's **Finger Box** might ultimately have been dismissed as an eccentric and largely illegible item of Fluxus pranksterism; its unassuming form, proposing an action that seems like a futile one-liner. However, with the addition of Maciunas' label the object becomes a more complex challenge to the subject. The 1964 label and packaging design for Mieko Shiomi's score, **Water Music** adopts the classic consumer culture strategy of combining the esoteric and the mundane (the score for **Water Music** and bottled water) while introducing a degree of mystification into the prospect of consumption. Buchloh has explained that for Maciunas (hence for Fluxus) "both framing

20. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, *ibid.*

and presentational devices... typography and graphic design [were considered] as languages in their own right, not just separate and lesser carriers of a language that takes the higher form of "art." [He] thereby equated work and frame, object and container."<sup>21</sup> Fluxus scores and instructions, prescriptions for "art experience," as Maciunas called it, clearly anticipated the linguistic strategies of Conceptual and Post-Conceptual Art.<sup>22</sup> Maciunas' brilliance was to recognize the conceptual implications of the work and to elaborate upon them through his own "conceptual" design.

The organization through design that was Maciunas' life-long project for Fluxus constituted a model of quasi-mimetic resistance to the regime of design culture. His mode of design acknowledged design as a code, one that is accepted by the masses and even enjoyed as entertainment, but a code that can nonetheless be scrambled by oppositional codes that are able to act in similar ways. By putting this insight to work for Fluxus he underscored the politics of the art and made his own powerful political contribution.

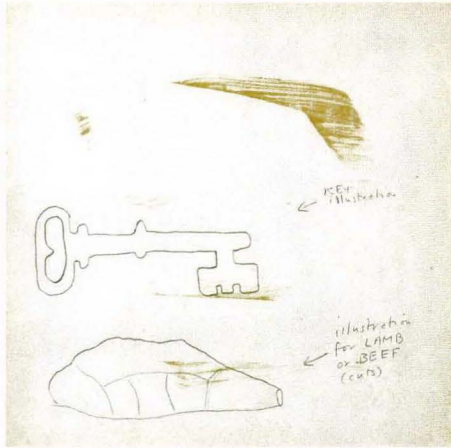
In his 1992 documentary film on Maciunas, **Zefiro Torno**, Jonas Mekas makes a connection between Fluxus and Pop Art,

21. Buchloh, **Art Since 1900**, *op. cit.*, p. 458.

22. The first entry in Lucy Lippard's foundational **Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972** (1973), (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 11, is George Brecht. Lippard states that: "Independently, and in association with the Fluxus group, Brecht has been making "events" that anticipate a stricter "conceptual art" since around 1960." For a more recent discussion of this topic see Liz Kotz's articles, "Post-Cagean Aesthetics and the 'Event' Score," **October 95**, Winter 2002, and "Language Between Performance and Photography," **October 111**, Winter 2005. Speaking of the effect of Maciunas' work, particularly the ubiquity of the recognizable font from his IBM typewriter, Buchloh show what Maciunas added to Fluxus' proto-Conceptualism: "This machine imbued all Maciunas' typographic designs – from La Monte Young's **An Anthology** ... onward – with an administrative rationalism and immediacy that would become compulsory under the reign of Conceptualism." Buchloh, *ibid.*

stating that "Pop art took a look at the daily banality too – but it seemed to embrace it – Fluxus brought it into critical awareness – in that sense Fluxus is political art." To this he adds a somewhat more enigmatic statement "Andy/George ... George/Andy," which he leaves hovering. The connection between Maciunas and Warhol is still almost entirely unexplored in the scholarship on Maciunas. It is hardly a coincidence that Maciunas and Warhol conceived of the site of their production as "factories." Likewise the fact that both trained and worked as graphic designers, bringing this expertise to the context of art. Maciunas' "performance" of the left wing zealot, proclaiming socialist values and being obsessed with converting art into factory production, can hardly be seen as more eccentric than Warhol's factory production championed by the statement, "I want to be a machine." If Warhol's well-known "performance" as he redefined the role of artist/author (and art itself), can be characterized as that of the "author as consumer," Maciunas' choice, equally as poignantly, was the author as producer.

Though Maciunas' obsessive and idiosyncratic work has still not been adequately recognized for what it was, namely, one of the most incisive critiques of art and consumer culture of the 1960s, some of his contemporaries had understood this: above all, his oldest friend, Jonas Mekas. Echoing the model of Maciunas' beloved Soviet avant-garde, the full title Mekas gave to this film was **Zefiro Torno: Scenes From the Life of George Maciunas**. In case we were to think this a coincidence, interspersed with amusing and playful images of all Maciunas' activities comes the flash card: "This is a political film.



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 NIGHT

## George Brecht George Maciunas

Iced Diced, 1964

Brecht's original idea for this work was to have people subscribe to events. His advertising card reads: "ICED DICED. Events arranged by G. Brecht on a subscription basis. Order by title from black cards like this one, enclosing a fee in any amount or an object you care about. G Brecht, FLUXUS, P.O. Box 180 New York 13, NY." If someone subscribed to the title "Dry Cleaning," then Brecht would make art from doing dry cleaning. But no one subscribed. Maciunas' designed this piece as a Fluxus Edition for sale through the European FluxShop and Mail-Order House.

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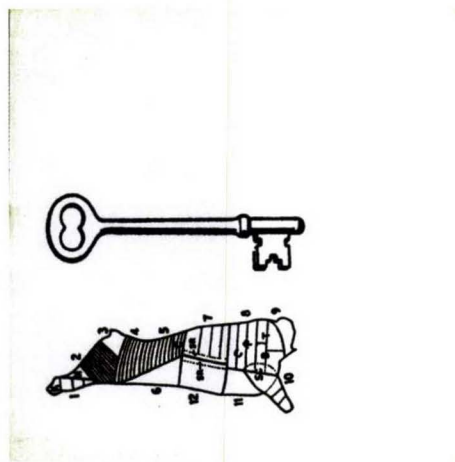
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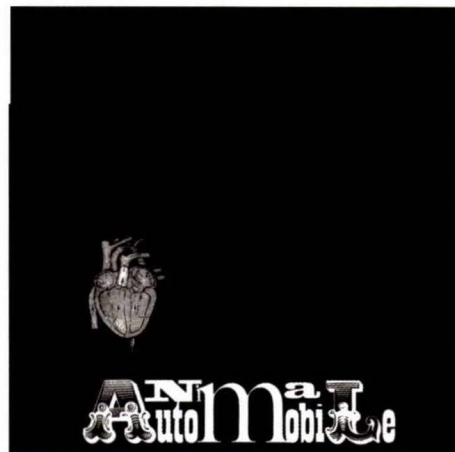
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**George Brecht**  
**George Maciunas**

1964

Demonstration Destruction Earth Exits  
& Entrances Fire Flag Fluid Food Furniture

Fire  
Flag  
Fluid  
Food  
Furniture

DEMONSTRATION & DESTRUCTION  
OF FLUIDS & ENTRANCES  
EXIT & ENTRANCES  
FURNITURE

**George Brecht**  
**George Maciunas**

1964

Haircut Handshake Hearing Jackpot Joke  
Junking Key Lecture Light Lingo Night



**H**aircut  
AND SHAKE  
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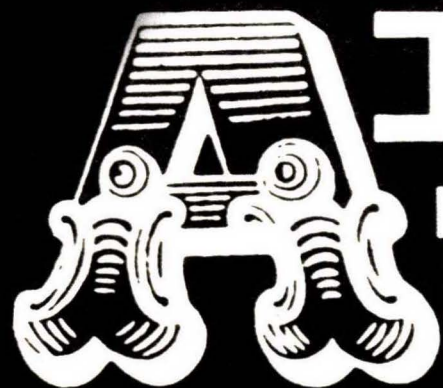
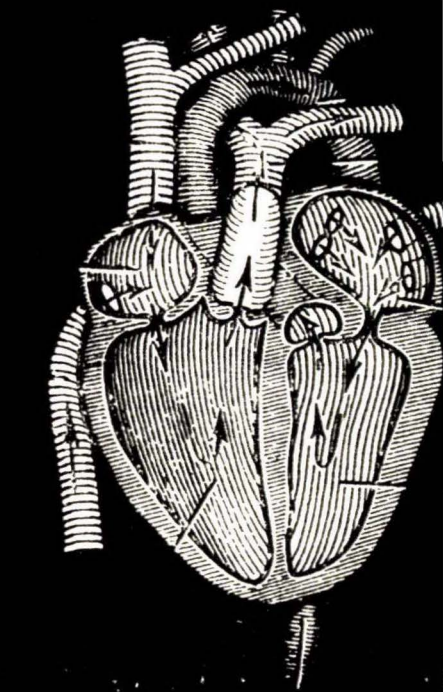
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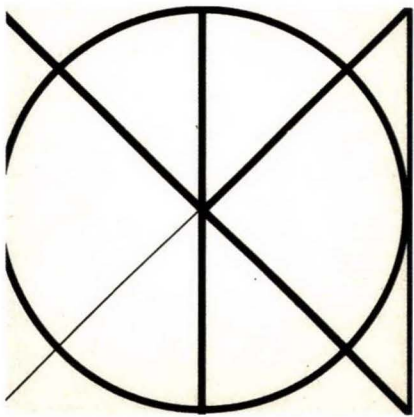
**George Brecht**  
**George Maciunas**

Iced Dice, 1964



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## **George Maciunas**

Fluxus Artists Name Cards, 1964

Maciunas designed these cards for his Fluxus colleagues. They are of a standardized size, and although the colors, fonts, and layout differ from card to card, they are visually part of a unified whole. The Artists Name Cards are part of Maciunas' strategy to create a collective identity for Fluxus, branding all publications, products, and artists with his distinctive graphic style.

Spatial Poem by Meiko Shiraishi  
1975 in Osaka, Japan. In 1975  
Maciunas picketed Karlheinz  
music-play “Originale”, played  
other Fluxus members on 5/10/75  
accused us (or me in particular)  
“social climbers”, and Stockhausen  
“racist” and a “cultural imperialist”.  
latter did not have a high regard for  
Black people’s invention. (Maciunas  
the French Fluxus member

## George Maciunas

Jonas Mekas Name Tag, 1964

Both Lithuanian immigrants with an interest in avant-garde culture that alienated them from the majority of the Lithuanian community in New York City in the 1950s and 1960s, Mekas and Maciunas probably understood each other better than any other Fluxus artists. They worked tirelessly to reinvigorate the avant-garde in the specific circumstances of their historical moment, Mekas promoting cinema and Maciunas promoting Fluxus with its alternative idea of art and life. Mekas had a strong impact on the production of film in **Fluxus**, and the anthology **FLUXFILMS** was first assembled by Maciunas and distributed through Mekas' Film-Makers' Cooperative circa 1966. Mekas' filming of the avant-garde community in New York in the sixties and seventies is another of his major contributions. His **Zefiro Torna or Scenes From the Life of George Maciunas** is important for its insight into Maciunas' world and as a poetic memorial and historical document.

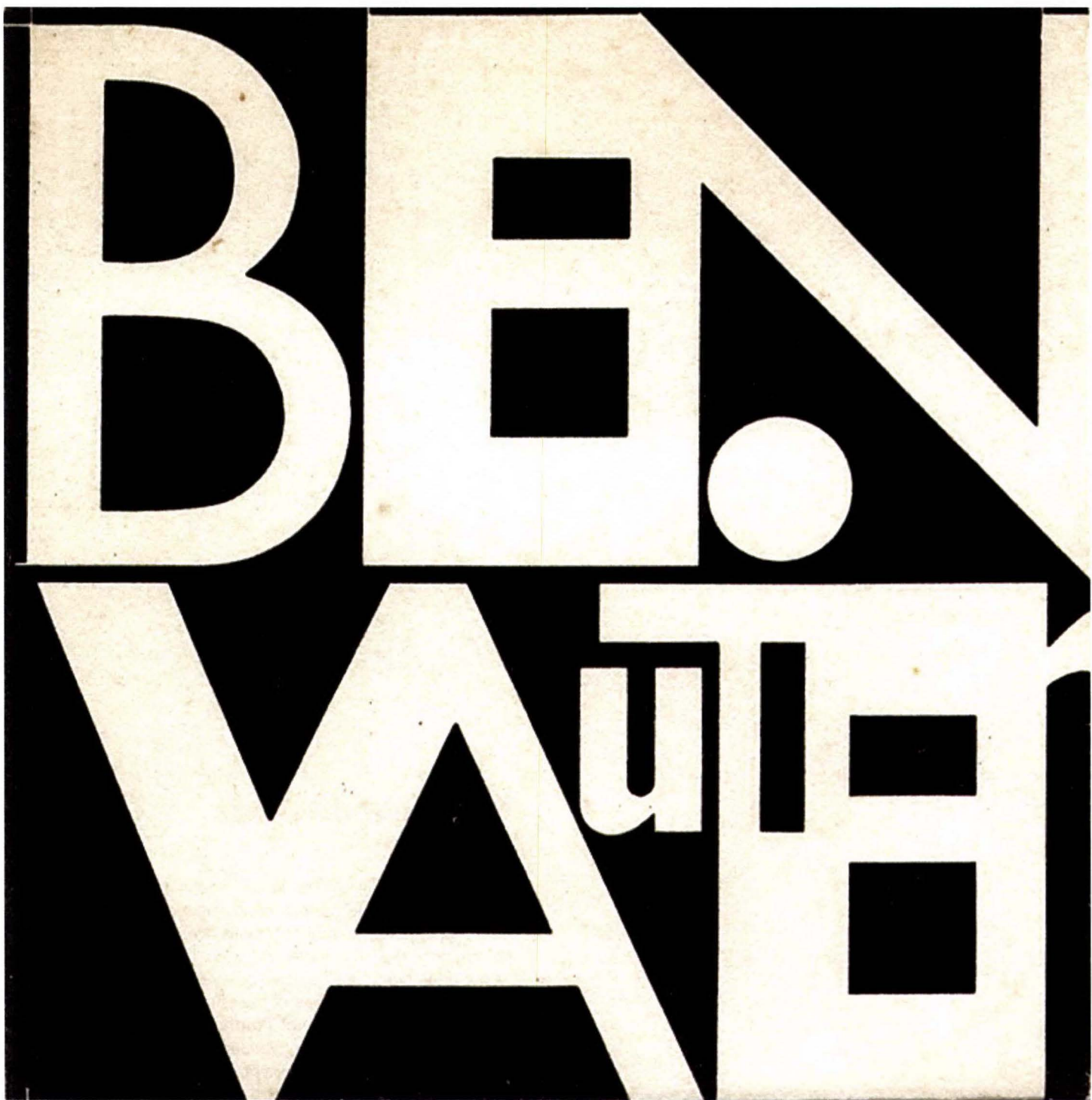


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## George Maciunas

Ben Vautier Name Tag, 1964

Maciunas and the French artist Ben Vautier, aka "Ben," first met in London in 1961 at the "Festival of Misfits," a pre-Fluxus group event that included many artists who soon after associated with Fluxus. Vautier's Festival piece, **Living Sculpture**, in which he put himself on display like a work of art in a gallery window for two and one-half weeks, impressed Maciunas and he asked Vautier to contribute to the planned Fluxus publications and performances. Vautier supplied Maciunas with many ideas for Fluxus Editions, and is best known for his idea of Total Art Theatre in which he signs everything as art dirty water, himself, time and God in his overarching project. Maciunas designated Vautier chairman of Fluxus South, one of several Fluxus outposts coordinated by Maciunas at Fluxus headquarters in New York.



## George Maciunas

Yoko Ono Name Tag, 1964

In 1960, Ono's loft on Chambers Street in New York was an important site for the presentation of new performance-based art in the city. On several occasions, Maciunas attended performance evenings there. When in 1961 Maciunas and fellow Lithuanian Almus Salcius opened the AG Gallery at 925 Madison Avenue, one of their first shows was of Ono's interactive paintings, such as **Painting to be Stepped On**. After the founding of Fluxus, Maciunas provided the graphic design for several of Ono's works, including **Do It Yourself Fluxfest** of 1966.



## Yoko Ono

Do It Yourself Fluxfest, 1966

Indicative of the Fluxus notion of art as a simple action that anyone can do, Ono's piece presented a series of instructions to be carried out on consecutive days of an imaginary "festival." Maciunas provided the obsessive images that give Ono's text humorous, erotic, or ominous twists. The work appeared first in "3 newspaper eVents for The pRicE of \$1," the No. 7, February 1966 issue of the Fluxus magazine **cc V TRE**, edited by Maciunas, and was also printed on card stock and cut into squares to be packaged and sold as a boxed Fluxus Edition.



## Film Culture Magazine

Editor, Jonas Mekas

Designer, George Maciunas, various dates

Jonas Mekas published the first issue of **Film Culture** magazine in December 1954. At the time, there were hardly any serious journals on film of any kind, and so Mekas stretched **Film Culture** to cover both commercial and avant-garde cinema. By 1965, when more film publications emerged, Mekas trimmed the commercial content to devote more pages to the discussion of avant-garde productions. Mekas hired friend and fellow Fluxus artist Maciunas to do graphic layout, resulting in some of the journal's most innovative designs. Thrifty and ingenious, Maciunas always made use of his day job resources for Fluxus, and **Film Culture** was no exception. Often he was able to take home left over paper stock, which would then become a Fluxus event poster or a Fluxus Artist Name Card. Looking at his designs, it seems Maciunas had a keen eye for color. But Maciunas was colorblind, meaning such decisions were sometimes left to chance, including the color of **Film Culture's** refuse on any given day.





EVENT

## An Anthology

Editor George Maciunas,  
Designer La Monte Young, 1961-1963

**An Anthology** is a pre-Fluxus publication, but is important to the history of Fluxus in several respects. It includes works by artists who became part of Fluxus. Maciunas designed it, using the IBM Executive typewriter with its sans serif font that characterized his Fluxus typography. It was distributed in part through the Fluxus European Mail-Order Warehouse and Shop. And Young's idea of the anthology format inspired Maciunas' plan for a series of **Fluxus Yearboxes**. Of the seven international versions he envisioned initially, only **FLUXUS I** was actually produced in 1963.





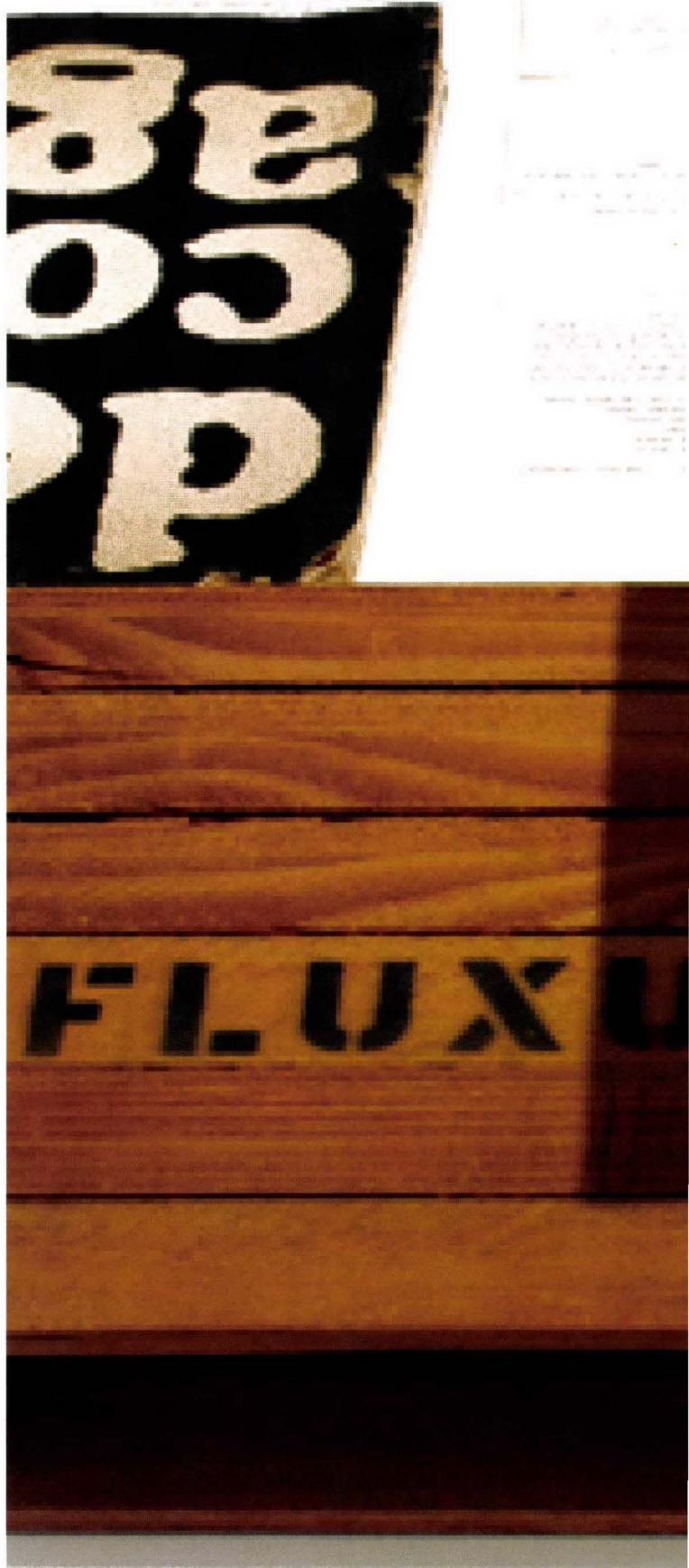
## George Maciunas

Editor and designer. FLUXUS I, 1964

Initially, Maciunas planned for seven issues of **FLUXUS**, but in the end only the first was actually published. It is representative of Maciunas' innovative design. Although there are conventional printed pages, often these are replaced by manila envelopes inside of which are the artists' contributions it is a book literally full of things. Rather than standard stitched binding, Maciunas used bolts to hold it together. Finally, he packaged it in a wood box that served simultaneously as protective cover and mailing case. Maciunas produced copies of **FLUXUS I**

on a per order basis, and it was available from 1964 to the mid-1970s. But this production method meant that each copy was in fact unique and not a standardized object of mass production, the form Maciunas intended to appropriate in his critique of the objet d'art.

Wolf Vostell, Dé-Coll/Age-Happenings,  
New York, Something Else Press, 1966



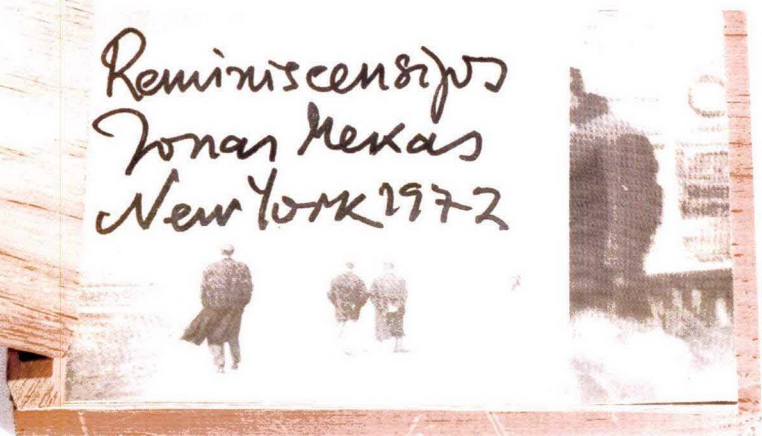


## Jonas Mekas

Reminiscencijos, Fluxus, New York, 1972

In addition to all of his work in avant-garde cinema, Mekas is a poet. He writes his poems in Lithuanian. **Reminiscencijos (Reminiscenes)** is an extensive meditation on the author's life in the immediate post World War II period. Jonas and his brother Adolfas were forced to leave Lithuania during the war due to their anti-Nazi and anti-Soviet activities. While escaping on a train to Vienna, however, they were seized by German troops and put in a forced labor camp near Hamburg. After the war they were taken to a displaced persons camp in Wiesbaden, where they spent nearly four years. In the poem, Mekas describes his daily sense of alienation, fear and fatigue as well as his hope for freedom during this time.

Reminiscences  
Jonas Mekas  
New York 1972



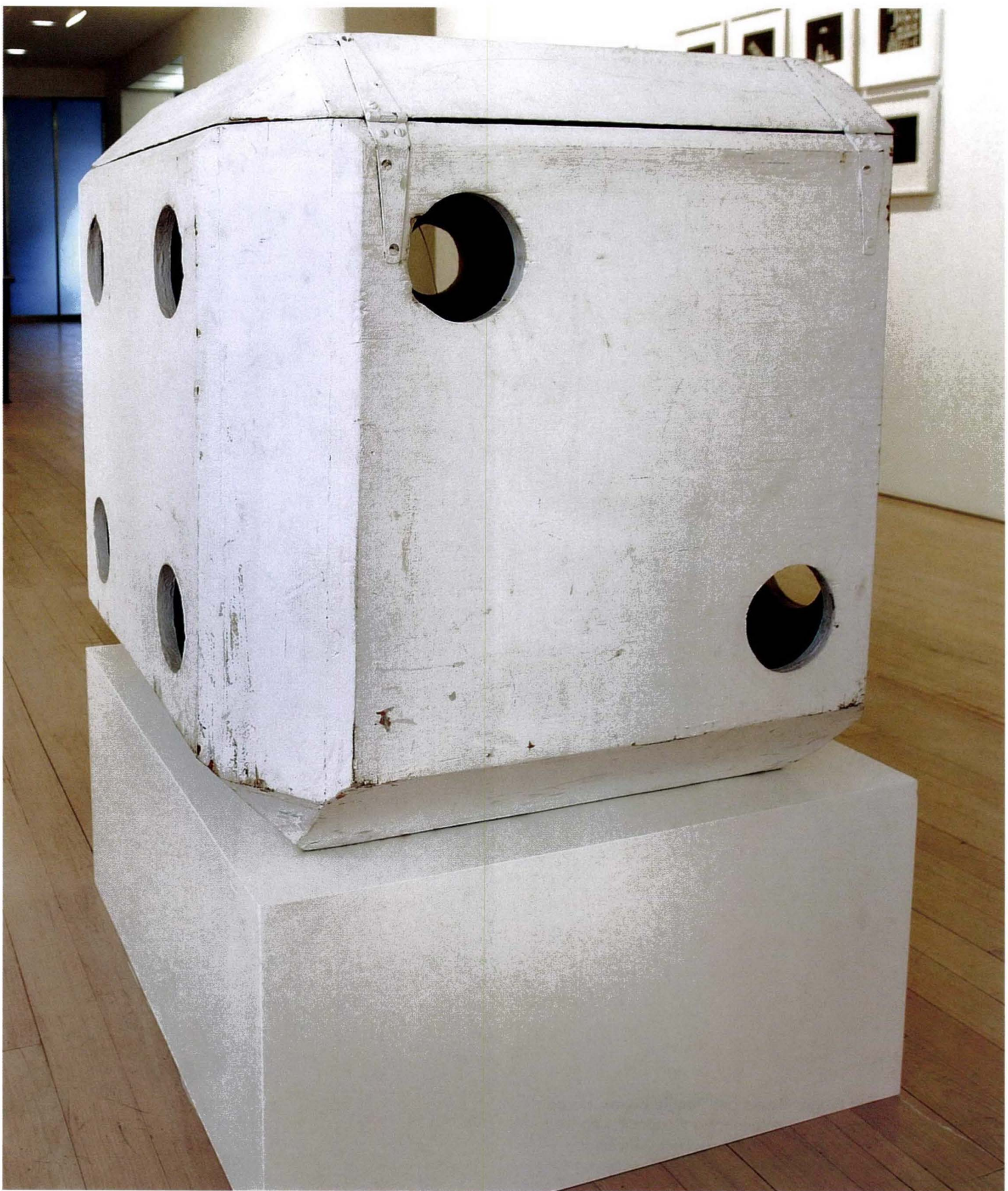
174

## George Maciunas

*Dice Sculpture, n.d.*

In his "FluxManifesto on FluxAmusement," Maciunas stated that Fluxus was "the fusion of Spike Jones, Vaudeville, gag, children's games and Duchamp." He believed that the avant-garde tradition of Duchamp's ready-mades could be reinvigorated in the contemporary moment through, among other things, an infusion of games and play. This gesture contrasted greatly with dominant postwar culture's prizing of rational efficiency. According to Fluxus artist Larry Miller, Maciunas would get inside the die to be "rolled" by his fellow Fluxus artists.





## Ay-O

Tactile Box, 1964

Ay-O conceived of **Finger Boxes** and **Tactile Boxes**, based upon the single concept of experiencing the tactile surprise of what is felt but not seen inside a box. Both Maciunas and Ay-O probably made the box from Ay-O's prototype for Fluxus Editions.





1200

**Y-O'S  
TILE BOX**

No 25

**Y-O'S  
TILE BOX**

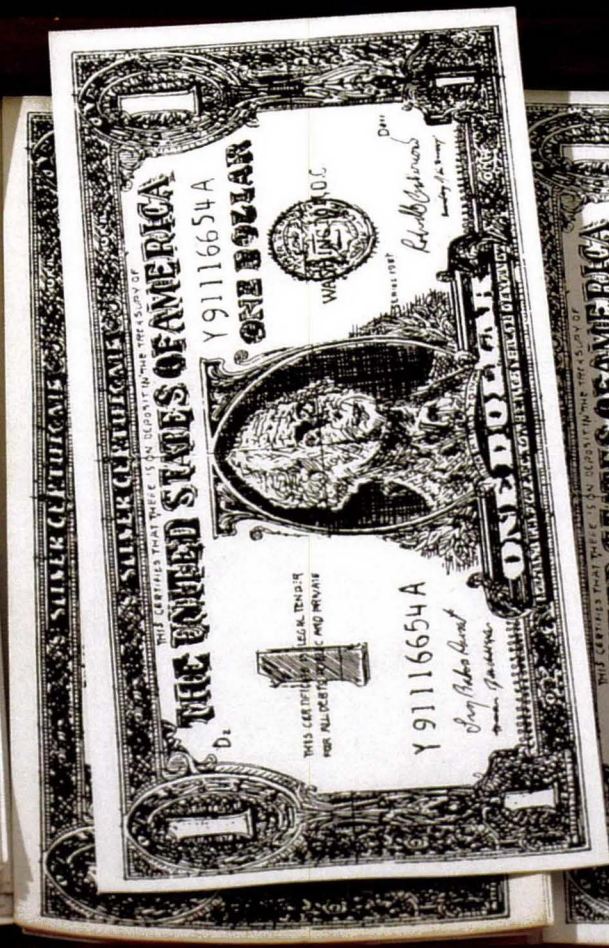
## Robert Watts

\$ Bills in Wood Chest

Fluxus Edition assembled by Maciunas, 1975

In 1962, when Maciunas was working as a designer for the U.S. Air Force in Germany, he and Watts humorously “plotted” to produce counterfeit American money in the piece **Dollar Bill**. Maciunas would offset print the bills in Germany and then send them to Watts in the States. However, this raised the problem of how to mail them. Such “subversive” Fluxus activity might cost Maciunas his APO (Army Post Office) status or bring U.S. Customs officials knocking at his door. Maciunas decided to look for travelers going back to the States to carry the counterfeit loot.









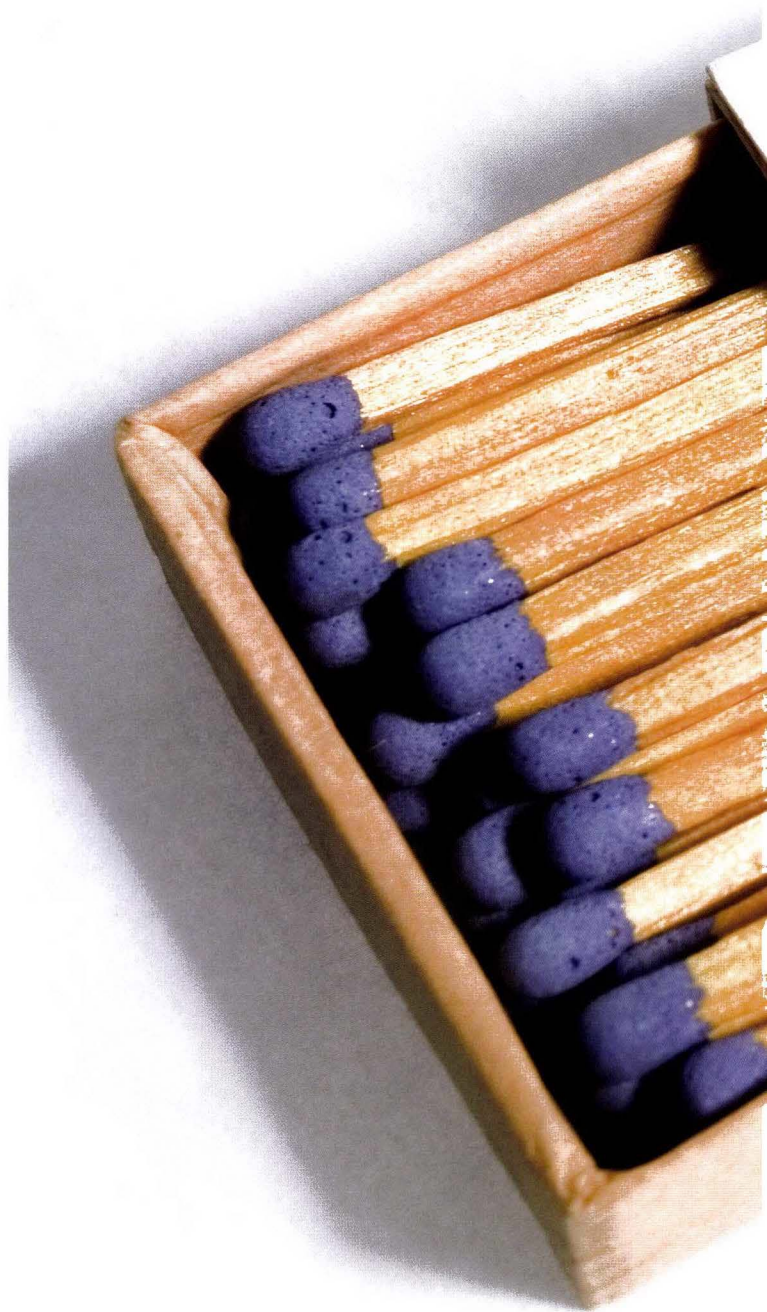
**BAD PERSON**

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## Ben Vautier

Total Art Match-Box, 1965

Ben Vautier produced these boxes, and sent several to Maciunas to sell through Fluxus. The work represents an incendiary take on Vautier's idea of "Total Art Theatre," which was similar to the Fluxus idea of purging art and life. Both were premised on a disdain for traditional art, elitism, and authority. Like Maciunas' idea of Fluxus as a temporary tactic to bring about the demise of bourgeois notions of art and the artist, Vautier encouraged the viewer to save the last match to burn the box itself.





# TOTAL ART MATCH-BOX

USE THESE MATCHS TO DESTROY ALL ART — MUSEUMS  
ART LIBRARY'S — READY —  
MADES POP — ART AND AS  
I BEN SIGNED EVERYTHING  
WORK OF ART — BURN —  
ANYTHING — KEEP LAST  
MATCH FOR THIS MATCH —

## Fluxfax Portfolio

The Fluxfax Portfolio was created in honor of George Maciunas, the founder and guiding soul of the Fluxus art movement, on the occasion of the Fluxus Festival held in New York City in 1994. The portfolio contains 35 hand printed lithographs and screenprints by the following artists; Eric Andersen, Ay-O, Giuseppe Chiari, Henning Christiansen, Philip Corner, Willem de Ridder, Jean Dupuy, Ken Friedman, Geoff Hendricks, Jon Hendricks, Dick Higgins, Allen Kaprow, Bengt Af Klintberg, Milan Knizak, Alison Knowles, Shigeo Kubota, Vytautas Landsbergis, Jackson Mac Low, Jonas Mekas, Larry Miller, Hermann Nitsch, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Ben Patterson, Knud Pedersen, Jeff Perkins, Takako Saito, Mieko Shiomi, Anne Tardos, Yasunao Tone, Ben Vautier, Wolff Vostell, Yoshimasa Wada, Emmett Williams, LaMonte Young, and Marian Zazeela. All of the artwork was faxed with attached instructions for the printer, hence the title FLUXFAX.



A dark brown leather briefcase with a handle and a zipper, featuring the text 'UXFAX' in large red letters. The briefcase is shown from a three-quarter view, highlighting its texture and stitching. The text 'UXFAX' is printed in a bold, sans-serif font in a vibrant red color, positioned on the front panel of the bag. The background is plain white, making the dark leather and red text stand out.

**UXFAX**



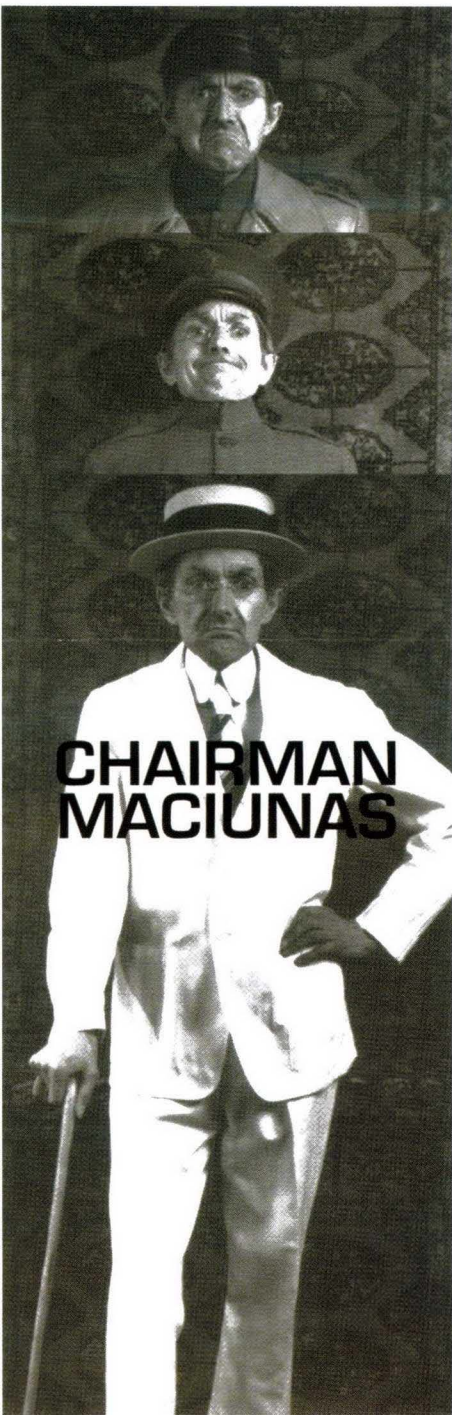
**George Maciunas**

"Key" wedding present to Jonas Mekas, June 1974



## **Nam June Paik**

**Artforum International** vol. 29, March 1991, pp. 90-1  
2 x mini Giants – a project for **Artforum**.



# 2x mini GIANTS

By Nam June Paik

The East European revolution produced a playwright-president: Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia, but few people know that it also produced a Fluxus-president: Vytautas Landsbergis, the president of Lithuania. During the spring of '90, the bespectacled and stoop shouldered image of this "music professor" paraded across the TV. news every day. He successfully defied the blockade of soviet power and the "benevolent" advice of the Western press to go slow lest he destroy the superpower summit. When Gorbachev received the Nobel Prize, Landsbergis sent him a congratulatory telegram: "His Majesty....."

This audacious (seemingly reckless) style of David and Goliath situation strongly reminded me of his best friend George Maciunas: founder of the "small" Fluxus Movement and the "enormous" Soho glitz.

Landsbergis and Maciunas were both the sons of well-to-do architects, and were best friends at a grade school in Kaunas, Lithuania in the last peaceful days of pre-war Europe. The Soviet-German occupation/war/retreat with the German army/hunger/the displaced person's camp/his father's enigmatic death (suicide?)/the vanity of New York/Capitalism's "contradictions" - all these horrendous events made George Maciunas a heavy asthmatic, a fanatical dogoodist, an ego centrist and a part-time paranoiac. As a native Marxist, Maciunas started to contact his old friend left in Lithuania in 1963, who was alas a burning anti-Marxist. In a letter of December 5 1963, Landsbergis sent Maciunas performance ideas:

## 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."

Landsbergis, although still confined in Soviet-Lithuania, participated three times in the Fluxus mail art event organized by Mieko Shiomi from Osaka, Japan. Two examples from 1966 are:

## Spatial Poem No. 3

"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."

Lithuania, July 31, 1966

## Spatial Poem No. 5

"Open Event. People opened...Vytautas Landsbergis. A day after my return from the country to my flat in Vilnius, I opened the lid of my piano and hit the keyboard of F. sharp. When the sound died down completely, I went to my study to continue on some unfinished work."

Vilnius, 1 PM July 23, 1972





Spatial Poem by Meiko Shiomo was printed in 1975 in Osaka, Japan. In 1964 George Maciunas picketed Karlheinz Stockhausen's music-play "Originale", played by myself and other Fluxus members on 57th Street. He accused us (or me in particular?) of being "social climbers", and Stockhausen of being a "racist" and a "cultural imperialist" because the latter did not have a high regard for jazz: the Black people's invention. (Maciunas even let the French Fluxus member Ben Vautier picket John Cage and Merce Cunningham in Nice for a similar reason in 1965.)

However, we (Allan Kaprow, Dick Higgins, Jackson Mac Low, Charlotte Moorman, Ayo and myself) continued the "Originale" performance inside the Judson Hall at 57th Street.

Feeling betrayed by his comrades, Maciunas, the chairman of Fluxus, declared Fluxus dead and plunged himself into the Soho housing project. He won a landmark decision to convert a light manufacturing loft building into an artist studio residence. He yet endowed the venerable Fluxus name to the first artist co-op in Soho at 80 Wooster Street. The similar conversion of twenty seven buildings followed at no profit to him, which ignited the Soho real estate boom. Nevertheless, Maciunas finished his life at forty seven in poverty, betrayed by his tenants, co-op members and real estate interests. He was half killed by terrorists and the Manhattan D.A. sent him a formal arrest warrant.

In 1978 Josef Beuys and I performed a farewell Sonata for him at the Dusseldorf Kunst Akademy. Soon a quiet renaissance of Fluxus began, and behind the Iron Curtain, the slow renaissance of Lithuania was growing, led by the stubborn Ex-Fluxus man Vytautas Landsbergis.

Recently the correspondence of these two giants from a mini-nation was printed in the Lithuanian Music Magazine "The Young Music." When he was dying in 1978, Maciunas entrusted his part of the correspondence to Jonas Mekas, and President Landsbergis kept his half for the past quarter century in the long winter of resistance.

ALL MATERIALS SUPPLIED BY JONAS MEKAS  
THANKS TO ALLAN MARLIS  
MACIUNAS PHOTOS ©1978 BY PETER MOORE  
DESIGN BY GIL SHAAH

A PROJECT FOR ARTFORUM

# The War of Nerves

Lithuania waited while Moscow escalated its campaign of intimidation

The Soviet column snaked through the darkened city; nearly 100 military vehicles in the early hours of Saturday morning. "There was absolutely no confrontation," said Julius Palunas, a spokesman for the Lithuanian Parliament. But to citizens of the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, the convoy was every bit as unsettling as Mikhail Gorbachev meant it to be. Fearing the worst, the Parliament passed an emergency resolution transferring its authority to the Lithuanian chargé d'affaires in Washington in case Soviet forces occupy the legislature and shut it down. Last weekend, as Lithuanians sweated out their self-proclaimed independence



Vol. 114  
Page 1  
No. 134  
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## The Washington Post

DECEMBER  
A: News/Editorial  
B: Sports  
C: Style/Personal/Class  
D: World/Politics  
E: Front/Arts  
F: Features  
Detailed index on Page A.

No. 134

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18, 1990

## Soviets Inform Lithuanians Of Cuts in Oil, Natural Gas

By Michael Dobbs  
Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, April 17—The government of the breakaway Soviet republic of Lithuania said today that the Kremlin had signaled the start of a partial economic blockade by ordering sharp cuts in oil and natural gas supplies.

Lithuanian Prime Minister Kazimieras Pranaskevicius told a televised news conference that she had been unofficially informed that Soviet oil



## FINANCIAL TIMES

LONDON • PARIS • FRANKFURT • NEW YORK • TOKYO

Wednesday June 13 1990

## Gorbachev hints at deal on Lithuanian independence

By Leyla Boulton in Moscow

MR Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet leader, yesterday held out his first hint of a compromise with rebel Lithuania and sketched his vision of a Soviet federation of sovereign states.

At a meeting with the leaders of the Soviet Union's 15 republics, Mr Gorbachev talked of a new union treaty ensuring republics sovereignty and new, individually-tailored links with the centre, according to the official Soviet news agency Tass.



PRESIDENT LANDSBERGIS

Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt is a historian of images. She is a lecturer of the history of art since the Enlightenment at Freie Universität Berlin. She studies and publishes on diagrammatics, the eye, and the pseudonym. Recent publications: **Stammbäume der Kunst: Zur Genealogie der Avantgarde**, Berlin, 2005; **Maciunas' "Learning Machines": From Art History to a Chronology of Fluxus**, Berlin, 2003 (Maciunas "Learning Machines": **A művészettörténetől a Fluxus-kronológiáig**, Budapest, 2006). Numerous articles (selection): "Der Witz im Diagramm"/"Wit in Diagrams", in: Helmut Draxler (ed.), **Shandyismus. Autorenschaft als Genre**, Vienna 2007, pp. 194-204, 305-307; "Mapping Minds – Mapping Concepts: Zu Stephan von Huenes diagrammatischer Zeichenpraxis", in: Monika Grzymala and Katrin von Maltzahn (eds.), **Beyond the Line: Ein künstlerisches Forschungsprojekt zur Zeichnung diesseits und jenseits der Linie**, Braunschweig 2007, pp. 94-103; "Das Diagramm als Gedächtnisform: Zu Stephan von Huenes Mind-Map/Method", in: Irmgard Bohunovsky-Bärnthaler (ed.), **Kunst ist gestaltete Zeit: Über das Altern**, Klagenfurt, 2007, pp. 105-141; "Okulartyrannis: Vom Foto-Auge zum Kamera-Auge", in: Fotogeschichte, vol. 26, no. 100, 2006, S. 37-49; "Querelle des modernes: Zum Generationskonflikt der Avantgarde", in: Sigrid Weigel, Ohad Parnes, Ulrike Vedder and Stefan Willer (eds.), **Generation: Zur Genealogie des Konzepts – Konzepte von Genealogie**, Munich 2005, pp. 57-89; "Metaphysik der Eigennamen: Zum künstlerischen Identitätstransfer mittels Pseudonymen", in: Martin Hellmold, Sabine Kampmann, Ralph Lindner and Katharina Sykora (eds.), **Was ist ein Künstler? Das Subjekt der modernen Kunst**, Paderborn 2003, pp. 89-116; "Modern Eyes: A History / Ojos modernos: Una historia / Ulls moderns: Una història", in: **La vista y la visión**, Valencia, 2003, pp. 136-157, 342-346; "The Barr Effect: New Visualizations of Old Facts", in: Branislav Dimitrijevi and Dejan Sretenovi (eds.), **International Exhibition of Modern Art**, 2013 featuring Alfred Barr's Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1936, Beograd, 2003, S. 48-59.

## Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt

George Maciunas' Charts: the Historical Past of Fluxus' Future

One makes history if one actively intervenes. From the position of stepping back and reflecting, one writes about it. George Maciunas practiced both. As "agent-provocateur" of the New York Fluxus Movement, he made himself a name and, lastly, made his own name synonymous with Fluxus. As editor of partially improvised, partially graphically styled publications, the educated designer banged heavily the advertising drum. As impresario, he coordinated worldwide the artistic activities so that Fluxus not only continued to be a "new wave" which, as many other isms came and went, grew to an international stream of art which overtakes all other styles. Maciunas tried to impose on it a status of something historical not from the outside and not afterwards, but rather from the midst of this artists' movement, and from its inception.<sup>1</sup> Only for this reason already, Maciunas became the central figure of the whole group.

Despite Maciunas' engagement, the danger of trivializing this avant-garde movement, which had formed itself at the beginning of the Sixties, was by far not averted. Fluxus moved in the limits between art and non-art and consequently risked being marginalized and, thereby, landing outside the popular art scene, which was dominated by Pop Art. With Fluxus, it is less about artistic theory, which led to an affirmative aesthetics of the consumption culture and more a specific practice which was oriented towards the trivializing of the aesthetics and bringing ordinary life into the arts. Particularly ephemeral works like "gag-like simple events" or so-called "games" are characterized more by their event character than by tangible results. Therefore, they run the danger of being played down. To this adds the medial fuzziness. Fluxus acted predominantly within the limits between music, performance, visual arts and literature. It was a mixed form, therefore, "intermedia."<sup>2</sup> In

1. Jon Hendricks, Fluxus Codex, Detroit, Mich. and New York, Harry N. Abrams, 1988.

2. Dick Higgins, "Intermedia", in: **The Something Else Newsletter**, vol. 1, no. 1, Febr. 1966.

order to create a general conscientiousness for this type of art, new general conditions had to be created. Maciunas spoke in the his flyerbrochure "Fluxus" (Its Historiczal Development and Relationship to Avant-garde Movements) of a "borderline be rationally defined", a limit, which on one side should have the effect of being historically legitimizing and, on the other side, to be artistically encouraging. He illustrated, with a series of diagrams, how he wanted this to be understood. The diagram was Maciunas' life theme.<sup>3</sup> Not only did he produce numerous diagrams with almost scientific diligence, but he also archived selected examples, or redrew them for purposes of demonstration.

Maciunas began collecting facts at a very early stage. It began during his studies at the Cooper Union School of Art in New York (1949-1952), he carried on at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh (1952-1954) and continued at the Institute of Fine Arts at the University of New York (1955-1960): He collected facts on art, facts on history, facts on migration, facts on economy, facts on literature and facts on Fluxus. All in all Maciunas studied for eleven years. While taking classes like art, graphic design, architecture, music and art history, he additionally studied languages, took classes in logic and psychology. His constant accumulation of knowledge practically forced him into developing diagrams. Following the examples of chronology and synopsis he started developing graphic displays or build atlases, which he used to show large amounts of condensed information. There are many indications that Maciunas was aiming for an ultimate source of reference. In the course of this challenge he substituted a narrative transfer of knowledge with a visual information system. The illustrated diagrams are a logical consequence of Maciunas' animosity towards weighty tomes.

Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, „Learning Machines“: From Art History to a Chronology of Fluxus, Berlin: Vice Versa Verlag, 2003.

During his studies Maciunas began visualizing his notes from class into several illustrated text collages. More remarkable is the quality of the stamp sized black and white photographs and the precise accuracy of the added comments in ink. Maciunas preserved the letter sized perforated pages in ring binders. They had the advantage that new pages could be inserted without mixing up the chronological order. Not until uncountable sums of information were brought together does Maciunas take the next step of designing a historiographical layout. He bonds page after page to display his schima. The footage was divided into geometrical fields and keywords were systematically added. Concrete illustrated material had no more space in these diagrams. The lock up of consecutive eras brought a system into the course of history no matter if it was about artifacts from China, archaeological discoveries of the "Siberian interrelationship with West and China" or European and American art. The first approach of a layout regarding a global culture and art history was determined and Maciunas could begin elaborating.

In his **Art History Chart** consisting of 28 pages he attempts to map out the development of the Visigoths all the way to Vorticism with his microscopic handwriting. The chaos of history tamed. The systematical arrangement within the coordinates of historical moments and geographical room allow orientation. According to his grid, the two dimensional area is divided into historical modules. The lined pages with the vertical pink margin on the left hand side, which Maciunas preferred, were an ideal premise. Additionally he received helpful suggestions from the design industry. Oswald Ungers' furniture series or Charlotte Perriand's simple storage system supplied him with demonstration material for diverse structures. Maciunas, visibly impressed by this, had discovered images of the grid-like-structures in a French magazine about art and architecture.

Already from the first Fluxus charts on, it is clear that Maciunas wants to put on paper the artistic and sociopolitical chronological evolution. He could not imagine the extent to which he

was part of a new trend. That is to say, with the 20th century, the era of art genealogy began.<sup>4</sup> However, Maciunas had no concrete precedence for his charts. He also entered the multicultural and intermedial conditions for Fluxus in a tabular arrangement. With this, he moved in a clear counter position to the American tradition of formalism, which reaches back over Ad Reinhardt's sarcastic art genealogical tree **How to Look at Modern Art in America** (1961 and 1946), Nathaniel Pousette-Dart's **Gestaltiar Chart of Contemporary American Art** (1938), and Alfred H. Barr, Jr.'s paradigmatic Chart (1936) to Miguel Covarrubias' **Tree of Modern Art - Planted 60 Years Ago** (1933).

The heterogenic relations, which Maciunas shows in his charts, mirror, if looked at together, the tendency of Fluxus artists to a synthesis of the arts the entirety of a piece of art. Thereby, Marcel Duchamp, as a representative of art beyond painting, and John Cage, with his experimental music, were each conceded a central position. Diverse influences from church processions to futuristic theatre, channeled Maciunas in view of the different performance and action directions within the artistic collective, which let them finish in chronological order of the Fluxus history. The chronology lets the long history of Fluxus appear relatively short in view of its thoroughness and degree of precision. Maciunas determines time and again, on the basis of these schemes, who belongs to the hard core of Fluxus and who had been excluded from membership. The diagram, therefore, takes the characteristics of a "show" trial. In this manner, questions of writing history and pictorial politics are brought newly forward.

Maciunas' diagrams, relative to the history of Fluxus, have not been spontaneously designed, certainly not at the spur of the moment. They were preceded by many intensive history

studies, which Maciunas undertook at the Carnegie Institute of Technology and New York University. As was usual amongst American students of the fifties, he developed long tables with data and facts, offering him a better overview of larger developments. The written word became the decisive motive for the trained typographer. Maciunas was a downright "Learning Machine." His widespread interests and his universalistic approach required suitable forms of knowledge management in order for him to retain an overview of the enormity of the material. The diagram offered its services in so far as it sorted the facts, reduced the complexity, and made sense. Maciunas established very precise and orderly, extensive chronologies relative to Russian history, relative ancient history, and relative to the history of art, in which he sometimes also drew miniatures.

Maciunas' **Learning Machines** are made from paper and glue. Their design followed the comparative time tables. Space and time, the juxtaposition, and the dissolution into succession, configure together in an orderly system in which one can integrate historiographical knowledge. Thereby, the space and time axis create a mathematical relation between the individual data which allow the making of quantitative statements. It is this geohistorical coordinate space which interests Maciunas for the generation, distribution, and maintenance of knowledge. In order to create these informative concentration zones, he breaks up the factographical scheme by extending into the third dimension.

As a self appointed genealogist, Maciunas summarizes the essential influences for Fluxus. As a Fluxus chronicler, he keeps track of all events; he transfers his many experiences with Fluxus in large amounts of data. Maciunas tried to escape from the silence of facts and to change them into a diagrammatical discourse on history, and to process them graphically so that they are accessible for historical interpretation. Maciunas was not a fantasist. With a certain bean counter mentality, he established accurate lists of all Fluxus activities and put them

Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, **Stammbäume der Kunst: Zur Genealogie der Avantgarde**, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2005.

together in a synopsis. Maciunas was an analyst. He tried to explain Fluxus in his charts since he was interested in historical preconditions and backgrounds. Add to that the What, When and Where. Maciunas was a chronic systemizer. Regardless of whether he managed his work week or brought abstract words into correlation to each other, or whether he schematized the history of Fluxus, the anti-narrative structure determined his thinking. Maciunas spread the sequential events of history out in a way that they made spatial order. In the grid, they take symbolic form. This geometrical figure, whether in its strict form or as a graphic matrix, structures all Maciunas' knowledge pictures.

Maciunas approaches the field of art from the side of history. But still he comes with his schemes to visual expression about the development of art, which are a testimony to his attention relative to the problems of historiography. Writing history has to do with processes which, in their multilayered appearances, have to be continually newly oriented. The advantage of analytical graphics in the field of art and images lies in its explicative function. It reduces complex situations without many words and makes them presentable in their entirety. By systematizing the information, by means of rationalizing factual relations, it establishes a structure of knowledge.

The art of networked thought is dealing with simplifying complexity and to admit new views. This basis of thinking, which transgresses all areas of science, also determines Maciunas' artistic practice. If it were up to Maciunas, there would be no real understanding of the evolution of art without visual presentation.

The three dozen history diagrams which Maciunas established between 1953 and 1973 to demonstrate historical causalities try to create a factographical image of history in different ways which consist of data and facts and also of lines and vectors. The result is scientifically and artistically equally fascinating. It does not only open views into previously unknown relations

between years on one side and historical events on the other. This results in a completely new form of knowledge transfer.

Maciunas makes transparent very complex relationships by means of close interaction of political, cultural, historical, economical, poetic and aesthetic aspects. You can read his diagrams like a "cultural timetable" which, at the same time, predetermine the geohistorical framework of the Fluxus movement. From universal history is created the Fluxus chronicle, on which the claim is based for universal validity for the future.

Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt

## George Maciunas

Letter from Film-Makers' Cinematheque  
to All Friends of Cinema, August 20, 1967

In 1966, Maciunas set plans in motion for the founding of a FluxHouse Cooperative in which artists living and working spaces as well as permanent facilities for Fluxus would be housed. This project also enabled the co-habitation of Fluxus and Jonas Mekas' Film-Maker's Cinematheque. Mekas had been running the Cinematheque from a theatre on 41st Street, but the FluxHouse Cooperative enterprise afforded the opportunity to expand and reorganize the Cinematheque's activities at a cheaper cost. In order to effect the proposed changes, Mekas needed to raise a lot of money quickly. Maciunas provided the graphic design for this fundraising letter, including the characteristic Fluxus pointing finger graphic for playful emphasis (also used by Dada). In 1968, a new Film-Makers' Cinematheque opened in the Fluxus Co-op building at 80 Wooster Street.



To: ALL FRIENDS OF CINEMA

To provide some guidance to the speedily growing movement of New Cinema in this country and to give a new impetus to the viewing of cinema and the creation of cinema, a need has arisen to bring a new clarity into the Film-Makers' Cinematheque's programming. For this purpose, we have taken the steps to establish three different showcases described below. Our decision was helped by the fact that the National Foundation for the Arts gave a \$20,000 grant to the Fluxhouse Coop as part down payment on the 80 Wooster St. and 18 Greene St. buildings (which will be transformed into artists' studios). Film-Makers' Cinematheque, as a member of the Fluxhouse Coop, became the owner of the ground floor of the 80 Wooster St. and the ground and basement floors of the 18 Greene St. As soon as these two low rental spaces became available to the Cinematheque, decision was made to abandon the more expensive 41st St. Theater (which was the home of the Cinematheque for last two years) and move downtown, out of the competitive and commercial spheres. The 41st St. Theater was taken then by the Film-Makers' Distribution Center to serve as a "commercial" outlet for those films which will qualify so, that is, to serve those film-makers who will want to reach wider audiences or who need wider audiences by the nature of their films or by the nature of their producing methods.

FILM-MAKERS' DISTRIBUTION CENTER	FILM-MAKERS' CINEMATHEQUE	
<p><b>41st ST. THEATER</b>                      During the month of September the 41st St. Theater will be transformed into a regular First Run moviehouse. Because of its low (when compared with other arthouses) cost, it will, finally, fill the long overdue need of a first run showcase for the independently made features. The theater will be owned and programmed by the Film-Makers' Distribution Center. It will be used to premiere or simply run all those films or programs of films which have a need of wider audiences, be it by the nature of their content or their producing methods.                      The Theater will open on October 1st with the premiere of Shirley Clarke's new film, "The Portrait of Jason."</p>	<p><b>CINEMATHEQUE I (80 WOOSTER ST.)</b>                      This will be our experimental showcase open to anyone who has a film or a mixed media show, happenings, events, etc. with no strict "quality" control over the programming. The audiences will have to take chances with new artists and with new works of established artists. This will be our workshop, our testing ground where anything goes. It will premiere all new Coop works.                      Cinematheque I will open September 30th with the First Annual N.Y. Film-Makers' Ball which will inaugurate one month Festival of New Cinema and Events.</p>	<p><b>CINEMATHEQUE II (18 GREENE ST.)</b>                      In a sense, Cinematheque II will be our Academy. The films at the Cinematheque II will be carefully selected. Although the emphasis will be on the Avantgarde cinema, other classics of cinema will not be excluded. This will be a place of CINEMA. This will be the first Repertory Cinema Theater. The programs will be designed so that during a period of one year a film student would have a chance to see the best that there is in cinema. Every addition to the repertory will be carefully considered. The 18 Greene St. building will also house the Millenium Film Workshop, the Cinematheque Archives, the Film-Makers' Coop archives, lecture rooms and private film viewing rooms for film students, visiting University film teachers, and others.</p>

To put all three showcases into working conditions we need your immediate assistance. This is what's needed:



**41st ST. THEATER**  
 \$12,000 is needed for putting proper projection, the marquee on 42nd St., the entrance to the theater from the 42nd St., to change the lobby, to put in new seats, to paint the theater.  
 After this work is done, theater will be able to operate on approximately \$1500-\$1800 weekly expense (as against the \$3500 weekly rental of the lowest price theater available today to the film-maker in midtown area).



**CINEMATHEQUE I (WOOSTER ST)**  
 Total of \$16,000 is needed before October 1st. Expenses are divided as follows: Clean-up, painting -- \$500; electricity -- \$700; seats -- \$600; plumbing, bathrooms, toilets -- \$1500; front of building -- \$400; flooring of theater -- \$3500; projection room \$1700; projection and sound equipment -- \$4000; down payment on the building (needed by September 1st) -- \$3280.  
 Monthly rent will be \$250.



**CINEMATHEQUE II (GREENE ST.)**  
 Total of \$16,000 is needed before November 1st. (The breakdown of expenses is similar to that of Cinematheque I). The down payment on the space is \$3050 and is due on September 15th. Additional \$5000 will be needed to put the workshops and lecture rooms in shape. Monthly rent will be \$250.

**INLU**

SUBS	CRIBE	NOW
PAY	ONLY	\$2 PER MONTH
\$1.50 flux content	50¢ flux clinical record	fluxfest s-a-l-e 50¢
flux air sculpture \$5	finger hole \$7	by ayo
find the end \$3	flux balloon \$3	fire alarm \$3
\$3 piece for flux-orchestra	events \$3	by albert fine
flux musicbox \$7	by joe jones	finger sweater \$2
stick-on jewelry \$1	stick-on fasteners \$1	stick-on medals \$1
e.s.p. fluxkit \$3.00	clock cabinet \$100	by james riddle
instruc-tion 2 \$3	by ben patterson	flux post cards 20¢ ea.

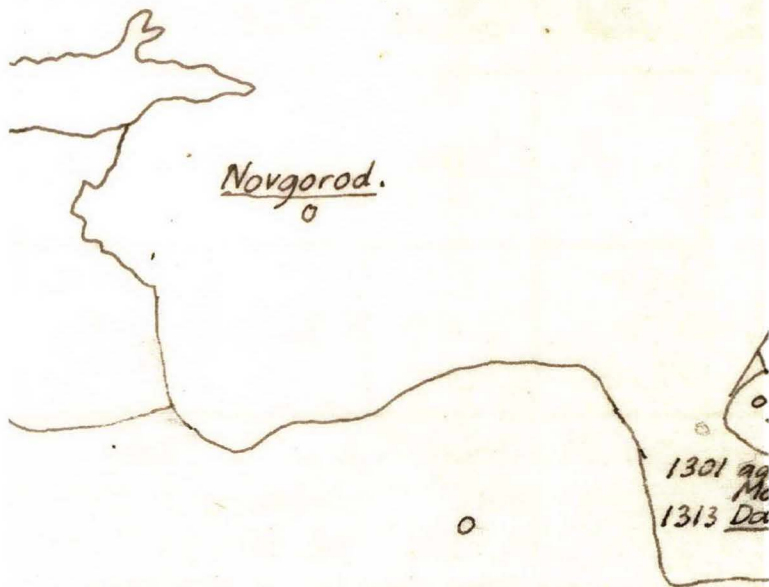
## George Maciunas

FluxShopNews, late 1960s

In "FluxShopNews," Maciunas plays on the seductive language and imagery of advertising for the dual purpose of selling Fluxus products and propagandizing of Fluxus ideas. The multiples produced under the aegis "Fluxus Editions" represented Maciunas' idea to provide affordable art to the masses. Although some items on the price list run over \$100, the majority cost between \$.50 and \$7. This price list applied to Flux Products ordered through the mail, or purchased directly at the Fluxshop at 356 Canal, which was open for a year during 1964-65. Maciunas appropriated the idea of a mail-order warehouse and shop because he considered them to be less elitist forms of distribution. Idealistically, he attempted to develop these forms in Fluxus with the hope of sabotaging the dominant market system in a revolutionary flood and tide. However, the risk to reinforce the system was always present. In the end, they did not sell a single Flux Product the entire year the FluxShop was open.



	<b>S</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>S</b>
o. 30 013	TO	THE	SELEC	TION	OF	THE	MONTH	!!!
	\$24 PER YEAR	AND	RECEIVE	AN	ITEM	items over \$10 excepted	EVERY	MONTH
ews \$1 o 8	stick-on tattoos \$1	snow game \$3.00	flux medicine \$4.50	flux post kit \$7	flux year box no.1 \$20	flux year box no.2 \$30	15 films 35min. 8mm\$30	fluxkit \$150
	by eric andersen	boxed fluxbook \$4.50	by jeff berner	games & puzzles \$3	namekit \$4.50	deck \$6.00	wateryam (events) \$7	by george brecht
n ap	boxbox \$7	by farmers' co-op.	events & games \$20	by milan knižak	obvious deck \$6	fluxdust \$3.00	table 36 x 36 \$160	by robert filliou
ost	flux corsage \$3	flux clippings \$3	clean- liness kit \$3	garnisht kigele \$3	open & shut case \$3	events \$3	just for you \$8	by ken friedman
k- s	boxed solid \$7	flux clock \$8	by per kirkeby	hi red center \$1	flux napkins \$3	by shigeko kubota	lovelight \$5	by dan laufer
\$4	flux checkers \$7	\$30 flux checkers (timers)	\$30 flux chess grinders	\$40 flux chess (spices)	by george maciunas	wall poem \$3	open the door \$6 fluxbook	by paul sharits
aper s	by greg & paul sharits	thompson & grimes	water music \$1.50	spatial poem 1 \$30	spatial poem 2 \$1	spatial poem 3 \$6	events & games \$4.50	by chieko shiomi
ry	missing card deck \$1.50	flux animal \$1.50	dirty water \$1.50	god \$3	total theatre \$3	holes \$3	suicide fluxkit \$4.50	by ben vautier



Lithuania

1360 Algirdas till Black Sea.

Galicja Daniel of Galicja  
free themselves from  
tartar yoke by the  
aid from the Lith.

## George Maciunas

Atlas of Russian History

Felt-tip ink and ballpoint on translucent paper, 1953

29,21cm x 20,32cm

1241 - 1325

# Russian Principalities

Tartar domination  
unification of  
Forest & Steppe  
Golden Horde

W

## ○ Vladimir

-63 A. Nevsky.  
Grand Prince of Vladimir.  
submitted to Tartar rule.  
strengthened their auth.  
defended from West.  
80 transfer of metropol. Cyril III  
from Kiev.

# Golden Horde

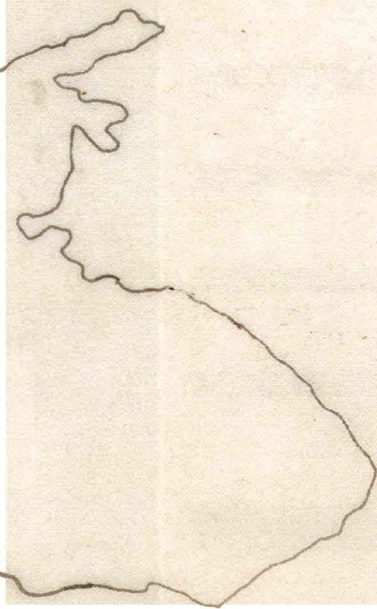
1253 Foundation of Sarai, as Capital.  
Highest development til mid. 14 cent.  
Russia became Djuchis ulus.

## ○ Sarai

"Golden Horde"  
relations with Byz. Egypt & Genoa.  
internal policy:

1. protection of state routes
2. strict order.
3. toleration of religion.
  - first Khans - Shamanists
  - son of Batu - Christian
  - brother " - moslem
  - next " - Shamanists
  - 1314 → - moslem
4. loyal submission of princes.  
(Daniel of Galicia didn't)  
russian princes were forced  
to recognize the Khan.
5. Mongolian agents - collected  
revenue & soldiers.

1312-40 Rule of Khan Uzbek.  
Zenith of Golden Horde



**FLUXUS (ITS HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONSHIP TO AVANT-GARDE MOVEMENTS)**

Today it is fashionable among the avant-garde and the pretending avant-garde to broaden and obscure the definition of fine arts to some ambiguous realm that includes practically everything. Such broad-mindedness although very convenient in shortcutting all analytical thought, has nevertheless the disadvantage of also shortcutting the semantics and thus communication through words. Elimination of borders makes art nonexistent as an entity, since it is an opposite or the existence of a non-art that defines art as an entity.

Since fluxus activities occur at the border or even beyond the border of art, it is of utmost importance to the comprehension of fluxus and its development, that this borderline be rationally defined.

Diagram no.1 attempts at such a definition by the process of eliminating categories not believed to be within the realm of fine arts by people active in these categories.

**DEFINITION OF ART DERIVED FROM SEMANTICS AND APPLICABLE TO ALL PAST AND PRESENT EXAMPLES.**

(definition follows the process of elimination, from broad categories to narrow category)

	INCLUDE	ELIMINATE
1. ARTIFICIAL:	all human creation	natural events, objects, sub or un-conscious human acts, (dreams, sleep, death)
2. NONFUNCTIONAL: LEISURE	non essential to survival non essential to material progress games, jokes, sports, fine arts.*	production of food, housing, utilities, transportation, maintenance of health, security, science and technology, crafts, education, documentation, communication (language)
3. CULTURAL	all with pretence to significance, profundity, seriousness, greatness, inspiration, elevation of mind, institutional value, exclusiveness. FINE ARTS ** only, literary, plastic, musical, kinetic.	games, jokes, gags, sports.

\* Past history shows that the less people have leisure, the less their concern for all these leisure activities. Note the activities in games, sports and fine arts among aristocrats versus coal miners.

\*\* Dictionary definition of fine arts: "art which is concerned with the creation of objects of imagination and taste for their own sake and without relation to the utility of the object produced."

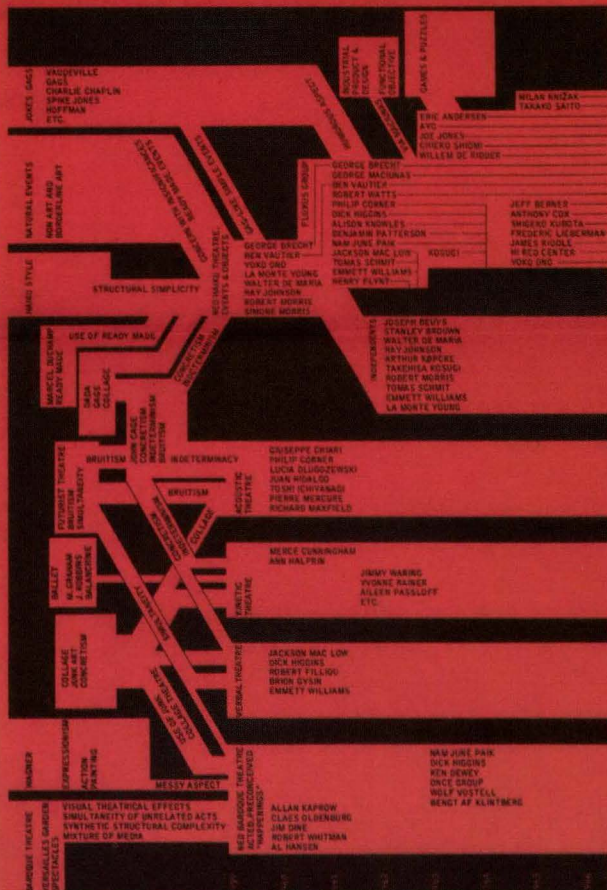
Since the historical development of fluxus and related movements are not linear as a chronological commentary would be, but rather planometrical, a diagram would describe the development and relationships more efficiently.

Diagram no.2 (relationships of various post-1959 avant-garde movements)  
Influences upon various movements is indicated by the source of influence and the strength of influence (varying thicknesses of connecting links).

Within fluxus group there are 4 categories indicated:

- 1) individuals active in similar activities prior to formation of fluxus collective, then becoming active within fluxus and still active up to the present day, (only George Brecht and Ben Vautier fill this category);
- 2) individuals active since the formation of fluxus and still active within fluxus;
- 3) individuals active independently of fluxus since the formation of fluxus, but presently within fluxus;
- 4) individuals active within fluxus since the formation of fluxus but having since then detached themselves on following motivations:
  - a) anticollective attitude, excessive individualism, desire for personal glory, prima dona complex (Mac Low, Schmil, Williams, Nam June Paik, Dick Higgins, Kosugi).
  - b) opportunism, joining rival groups offering greater publicity (Paik, Kosugi).
  - c) competitive attitude, forming rival operations (Higgins, Knowles, Paik).

These categories are indicated by lines leading in or out of each name. Lines leading away from the fluxus column indicate the approximate date such individuals detached themselves from fluxus.



## George Maciunas

Fluxus (Its Historical Development and Relationship to Avant-Garde Movements), c. 1966

Although Maciunas was critical of much of the art that professed to be avant-garde in the postwar period, he was invested in a project of rehabilitating what he perceived to be true avant-garde ideals. **Fluxus (Its Historical Development and Relationship to Avant-Garde Movements)** comprises two diagrams. In the first, Maciunas delineated the category of "art" so that Fluxus' activities might be distinguished clearly from it. In the second, he drew lines of influence from the avant-garde groups of the early twentieth century to the proliferation of avant-garde trends in the 1950s and 1960s, while also indicating the relationships of the various contemporary artists to each other. He wanted to establish who was Fluxus and who was not. This work was a part of Maciunas' larger project of graphically mapping the history of art, and also represents his belief in the importance of rational systematization to efficient learning.

JOKES GAGS  
VA  
GA  
CH  
SP  
HO  
ET

NATURAL EVENTS  
NON ART AND  
ROPERLINE AD

HAIKU STYLE

MARCEL DUCHAMP  
READY MADE

BALLET

APLIN  
S

INDUSTRIAL  
PRODUCT &  
DESIGN

FUNCTIONAL  
OBJECTIVE

GAMES & PUZZLES

MILAN KNIŽAK  
TAKAKO SAITO

ERIC ANDERSEN  
AYO  
JOE JONES  
CHIEKO SHIOMI  
WILLEM DE RIDDER

HUMOROUS ASPECT

VIA MAGNANAS

CONCERN WITH INSIGNIFICANCES  
READY MADE EVENTS

GAG-LIKE SIMPLE EVENTS

FLUXUS GROUP

NEO HAIKU THEATRE,  
EVENTS & OBJECTS

GEORGE BRECHT  
BEN VAUTIER  
YOKO ONO  
LA MONTE YOUNG  
WALTER DE MARIA  
RAY JOHNSON  
ROBERT MORRIS  
SIMONE MORRIS

GEORGE BRECHT  
GEORGE MACIUNAS  
BEN VAUTIER  
ROBERT WATTS  
PHILIP CORNER  
DICK HIGGINS  
ALISON KNOWLES  
BENJAMIN PATTERSON  
NAM JUNE PAIK  
JACKSON MAC LOW  
TOMAS SCHMIT  
EMMETT WILLIAMS  
HENRY FLYNT

JEFF BERNER  
ANTHONY COX  
SHIGEKO KUBOTA  
FREDERIC LIEBERM  
JAMES RIDDLE  
HI RED CENTER  
YOKO ONO

KOSUGI

STRUCTURAL SIMPLICITY

READY MADE

CONCRETISM  
INDETERMINISM

INDEPENDENTS

JOSEPH BEUYS  
STANLEY BROUWN  
WALTER DE MARIA  
RAY JOHNSON  
ARTHUR KÖPCKE  
TAKEHISA KOSUGI  
ROBERT MORRIS  
TOMAS SCHMIT  
EMMETT WILLIAMS  
LA MONTE YOUNG

GAGS  
COLLAGE

JOHN CAGE  
CONCRETISM  
INDETERMINISM  
BRUITISM

INDETERMINACY

GIUSEPPE CHIARI  
PHILIP CORNER  
LUCIA DLUGOZEWSKI  
JUAN HIDALGO  
TOSHI ICHIYANAGI  
PIERRE MERCURE  
RICHARD MAXFIELD

BRUITISM

BRUITISM

ACOUSTIC  
THEATRE

CONCRETISM  
INDETERMINISM

COLLAGE

MERCE CUNNINGHAM  
ANN HALPRIN

KINETIC  
THEATRE

JIMMY WARING  
YVONNE RAINER  
AILEEN PASSLOFF  
ETC.

STANETTY

# George Maciunas

Skeleton Plan of the First Six Issues of Fluxus Yearbox, 1962

Maciunas made certain to have the first prospectus of the publication **Fluxus** ready in time for the performance evening "Après John Cage" at the Kleinen Sommerfest at the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, Germany, on June 9, 1962. He saw the event not only as an opportunity to perform Fluxus compositions, but also to spark interest in upcoming Fluxus activities. Included in the four-page publication are a dictionary entry for "flux" to define Fluxus, and a skeleton outline of the themes, schedules, editors, contributors and content for each of the six (seven total) proposed issues. They would be international in scope, encompassing of new art, and mindful of avant-garde history.

*On poetry:  
Al. Prucha  
K. Kuppelberg  
K. Kuppelberg  
G. Maciunas  
D. Smithers*

*François Truffaut  
Alain Resnais  
Jonas Mekas*

*Serge  
The new cinema*

## FLUXUS

1. To purgare = fluid discharge, esp. an excessive discharge, from the bowels or other part.
2. A continuous moving on or passing, as of a flowing stream,
3. a stream; copious flow,
4. the setting of the tide toward the shore
5. Any substance or mixture, as silicates, limestone, and fluorite, used to promote fusion, esp. the fusion of metals or minerals.

## SKELETON PLAN FOR CONTENTS OF THE FIRST 6 ISSUES:

NO.1 U.S. ISSUE, Jan.1962	
Walter De Maria	Deflating the NY abstract expressionists
A.Kaprow	Historical precedents of "Environment-happenings"
*	Neo junk art - concretism
*	Neo Dada in US (folio and anthology)
La Monte Young	?
Henry Flynt	Philosophical basis for Neo Dada
Walter De Maria	Meaningless work
*	Indeterminacy in poetry and music (folio & anthology)
Joe Byrd	Audience attitude reevaluated
Dick Higgins	Politics in art
Philo Corner	New art and new society
R.Macald (?)	Development of tape music in U.S. (record)
Jonas Mekas	<del>Art in the 1960s - G.S. 2000 - G. Maciunas &amp; G.</del>
George Maciunas	The great fakers of architecture: M.v.d. Rohe, Saarinen, Bunshaft, Stone, Wright, etc.
*	Atlas of new art and music in U.S.
NO.2 JAPANESE ISSUE, March 1962, ed. Toshi Ichihyashi	
S.Eratta (?)	Japanese abstract choreography, origins, development & aesthetics, with folio of full scale reproduction
Kenzo Tange (?)	New Brutalist architecture in Japan
*	Experimental cinema
Toshi Ichihyashi	* (record)
Philo Corner	Relationship between traditional Japanese music and Western concrete music.
*	Japanese electronic music (record)
Ayo * *	Scripture from inside
NO.3 HOMAGE TO THE DISTANT PAST, May 1962	
*	Overtones pattern and polyphony of Medieval and Renaissance musical instruments.
Don Smithers	15th and 16th century instrumentation (record)
Philo Corner	The radicals of 14th century secular music (record)
G.Maciunas	Development of abstraction in Animal Style of 7th to 9th century European migration art.
*	Ying Yuch Chieh, the ink splasher of Chan painters. (
*	Machine music of Athanasius Kircher
NO.4 HOMAGE TO DADA, July 1962, ed. Tristan Tzara (?)	
*	Origins and aesthetics of junk collage
*	Origins of noise music (Brulism) in Futurist and Dada works by Russolo, Ball, Tzara etc. (record)
*	Poesies simultanees ( folio)
*	Dada theatre - "happenings" (anthology)
*	Abstract sound poetry of Tzara, Ball, Arp, Hausmann, Schwitters. (essay and anthology)
*	Significance of Dada political orientation
NO.5 WEST EUROPEAN ISSUE, Sept.1962	
Peter Land	Development of Brutalist architecture
*	Origins, development & aesthetics of magnetic tape music. (record)
G.Maciunas	Concretism vs. Illusionism in plastic and sound art
Dick Higgins	Lettrism from Isidore Isou to present
*	Neo Dada in Europe
G.Maciunas	Experiments in cinema
*	Development of European abstract choreography (folio)
*	Atlas of new music and art in Europe
NO.6 EAST EUROPEAN ISSUE, Nov.1962	
G.Maciunas	letter
*	New Polish concrete music (record)
*	Polish electronic music (record)
A.Rannit (?)	Early Soviet literary experiments: V.Klebtkov, I.Selv, K.Faulin etc. Zdanovitch, Krutichov, Terentiev etc.
Grigori Chukralov	<del>The making procedures in Soviet concrete *</del>
*	Principles of Dialectic Materialism in concrete art.
*	Experimental cinema in East Europe
*	Sound poetry & lettristic poetry.
*	New plastic arts
*	Potentialities of concrete prefabrication in Soviet arc.
*	Study of reactionary counterrevolution of Illusionism I
*	* to be determined
EDITORS:	Publisher & editor in chief: George Maciunas
	U.S. Section: Dick Higgins, Walter De Maria, Philo C Jonas Mekas.
	Japanese Section: Toshi Ichihyashi
	West European Section: Nam June Paik, Sylvano Bus
	Peter Land, G.Maciunas and
	East European Section: * & G.Maciunas

## TEMPORARY ADDRESS:

- Ita (?) Japanese abstract chirography, origins, development & aesthetics. (with folio of full scale reproductions)
- Tange (?) New brutalist architecture in Japan  
Experimental cinema
- Ichiyonagi \* (record)
- Corner Relationship between traditional Japanese music and Western concrete music.  
Japanese electronic music (record)
- \* Sculpture from inside

### HOMAGE TO THE DISTANT PAST, May 1962

- Overtone pattern and polychromy of Medieval and Renaissance musical instruments.  
15th. and 16th. century instrumentation (record)
- Smithers Corner The radicals of 14th. century secular music (record)
- Ciunas Development of abstraction in Animal Style of 7th. to 9th. century European migration art.  
Ying Yuch Chieh, the ink splasher of Chan painters. (Machine music of Athanasius Kircher)

### HOMAGE TO DADA, July 1962, ed. Tristan Tzara (?)

- Origins and aesthetics of junk collage  
Origins of noise music (bruitisme) in Futurist and Dada works by Russole, Ball, Tzara etc. (record)  
Poemes simultanes (folio)  
Dada theatre - "happenings" (anthology)  
Abstract sound poetry of Tzara, Ball, Arp, Housmann, Schwitters. (essay and anthology)  
Significance of Dada political orientation

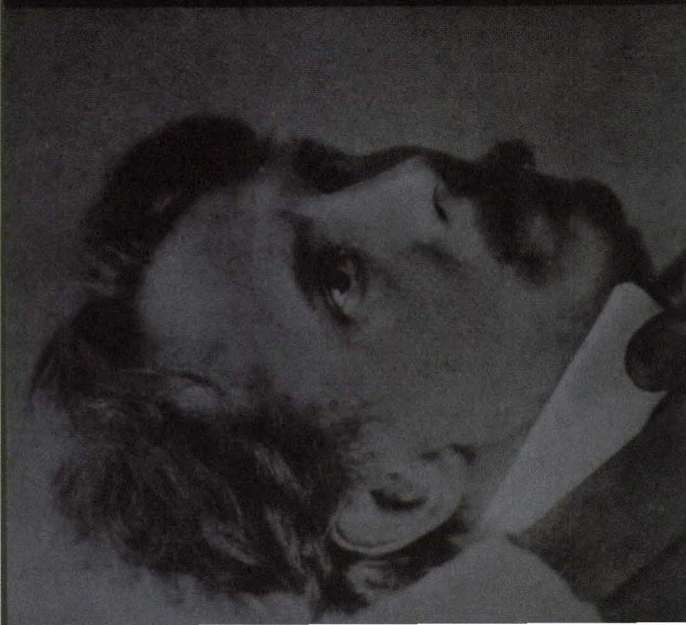
## George Maciunas

Ciurlionis Announcement

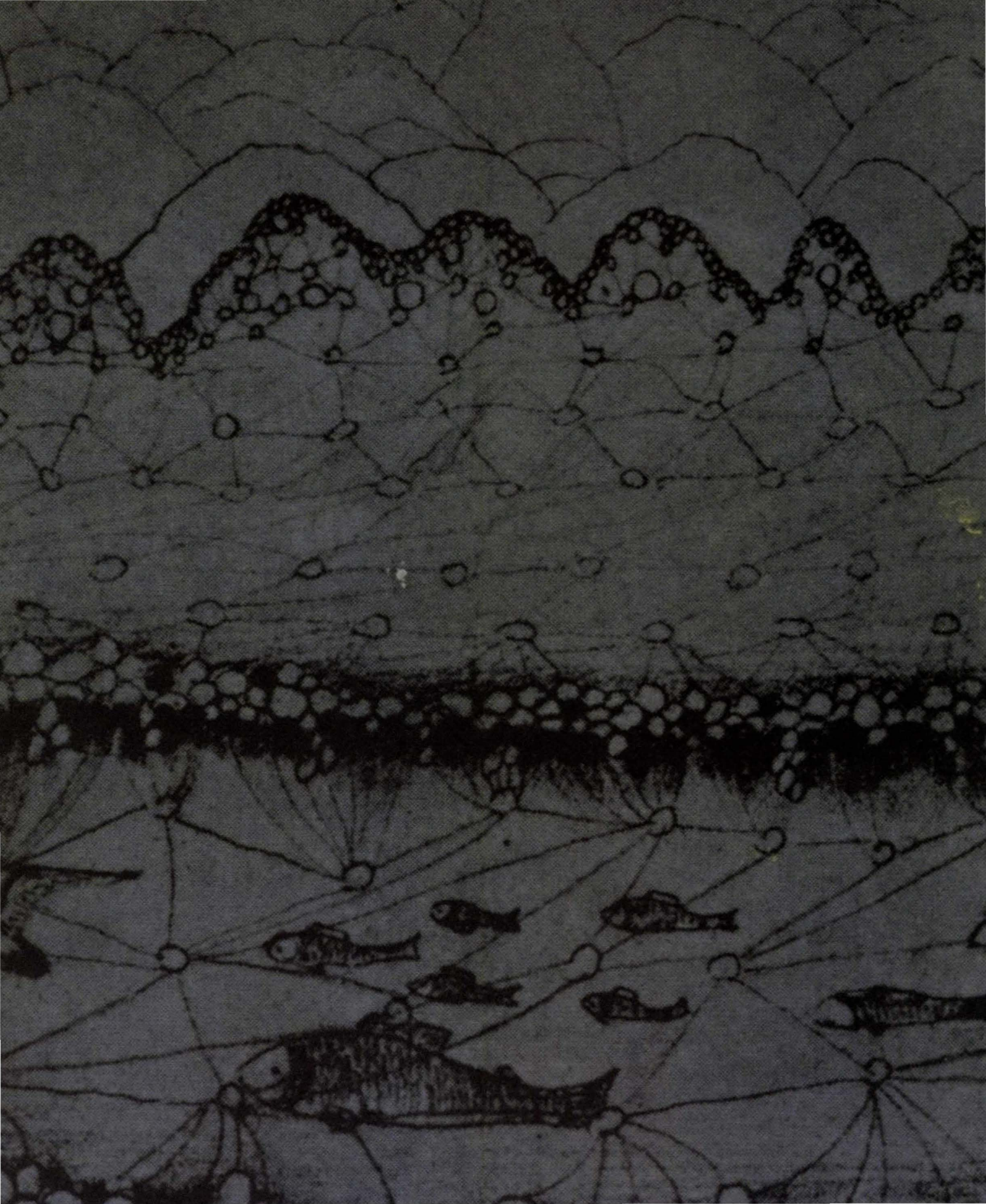
George Maciunas produced this announcement for a program of works by the famous Lithuanian composer Mikalous Konstantinas Ciurlionis. However, Ciurlionis was also a painter, and he created an innovative relationship between the two arts at which he excelled. Many regard him to be the father of musical painting. In this regard, Ciurlionis' work represents a historical precursor to Maciunas' own interest in a more radical dismantling of the barriers between traditional artistic media. Ciurlionis was born in Varena, Lithuania in 1875, but grew up primarily in Nemunas where his father had a job as an organist. Under the influence of his father, Ciurlionis learned to read music by the age of seven. Thus, at this young age he entered Prince Oginski's orchestra school in Plunge, learning to play several instruments and to compose music before leaving in 1893. Sponsored by the Prince, he left Lithuania for the Warsaw Conservatory of Music, which he attended from 1893-1899. At the Conservatory he created his first major musical compositions for which he received high recognition. And of his own accord he studied the natural sciences, cultural history, and literature. He had a great interest in the harmony of the universe, which influenced both his music and his visual art. In the first decade of the twentieth century, he turned more seriously to drawing and painting. Although Ciurlionis was interested in the fundamentals of painting, it was musical form that most strongly influenced the organization of his visual art. Some paintings had these forms in their titles; he painted "fugues," "preludes," and a series of "sonata" cycles. Thus, he was among the first to use musical methods to organize form and color in visual works, attempting to create a synthesis between the two. Inspired by the greater cultural freedom that resulted from the 1905 revolution, Ciurlionis declared he would "dedicate all his past and future work to Lithuania." His paintings were on display at the first Lithuanian art exhibition held in Vilnius from December 27, 1906 to February 15, 1907. In Vilnius he was active in the Lithuanian Arts Society and wrote on music and art for the Lithuanian press. When he died at the young age of 35 in 1911, Ciurlionis left to Lithuania and the world an impressive legacy of over 200 musical compositions and some 30 paintings.

MIKALOJUS ČIURLIONIS

ŠIŲ METŲ KOVO MĖN. 25 D.  
ŠEŠT. RENGIAMAS VAKARAS;  
ČIURLIONIO PASAULIS  
50 METŲ MIRTIES SUKAK-  
TUVIŲ PROGA. PROGRAMOJĖ:  
ANDRIUS KUPREVIČIUS  
IR KOSTAS OSTRASKAS  
IR ALEXIS RANNIT.  
VAKARAS ĮYKSTA CARNEGIE  
ENDOWMENT SALĖJĖ, U.N.  
PLAZA IR 46ST. MANHATTAN.  
PRADŽIA 6-TĄ VAL. VAKARO,  
IĖJIMAS \$ 3, PO PROGRAMOS  
UŽKANDŽIAI SU KAVA.  
BILIĖTUS IŠANKSTO GALIMA  
IŠIGYTI SKAMBINANT  
LA 8-2231 N. VALAITIENEI.  
RENGIA ŠVIESOS IR SANTAROS  
FILISTERIŲ N.Y. SKYRIUS.







**DIRECTIO**

**Arrange to  
indicating**

## **George Maciunas**

*Various Scores, 1959-1965*

Brecht invented the "Event Score." In contrast to a conventional music score that uses notes to produce sound, an event score uses words to produce actions. One of Brecht's sparsest scores reads simply Exit, and the event itself was as simple as the idea conveyed. Brecht's scores had a strong impact on Maciunas' definition of the Fluxus event, which he said was monostructural, humorous, insignificant, unpretentious, unprofessional, and "closer to a natural event (till it will eventually disappear)."



**Observe a sign  
direction of travel.**

**Travel in the indicated direction**

**Travel in another direction**

**NO SMOKING EV**

**Arrange to observe**

- **smoking**
- **no smok**

**ENT**

**a NO SMOKING sign.**

**ng**

## George Brecht

Various Scores, 1959-1965

Brecht invented the "Event Score." In contrast to a conventional music score that uses notes to produce sound, an event score uses words to produce actions. One of Brecht's sparsest scores reads simply **Exit**, and the event itself was as simple as the idea conveyed. Brecht's scores had a strong impact on Maciunas' definition of the Fluxus event, which he said was monostructural, humorous, insignificant, unpretentious, unprofessional, and "closer to a natural event (till it will eventually disappear)."

**WORD EVENT**



**EXIT**

**G.Brecht  
Spring, 1961**

## Shigeko Kubota Duchampiana

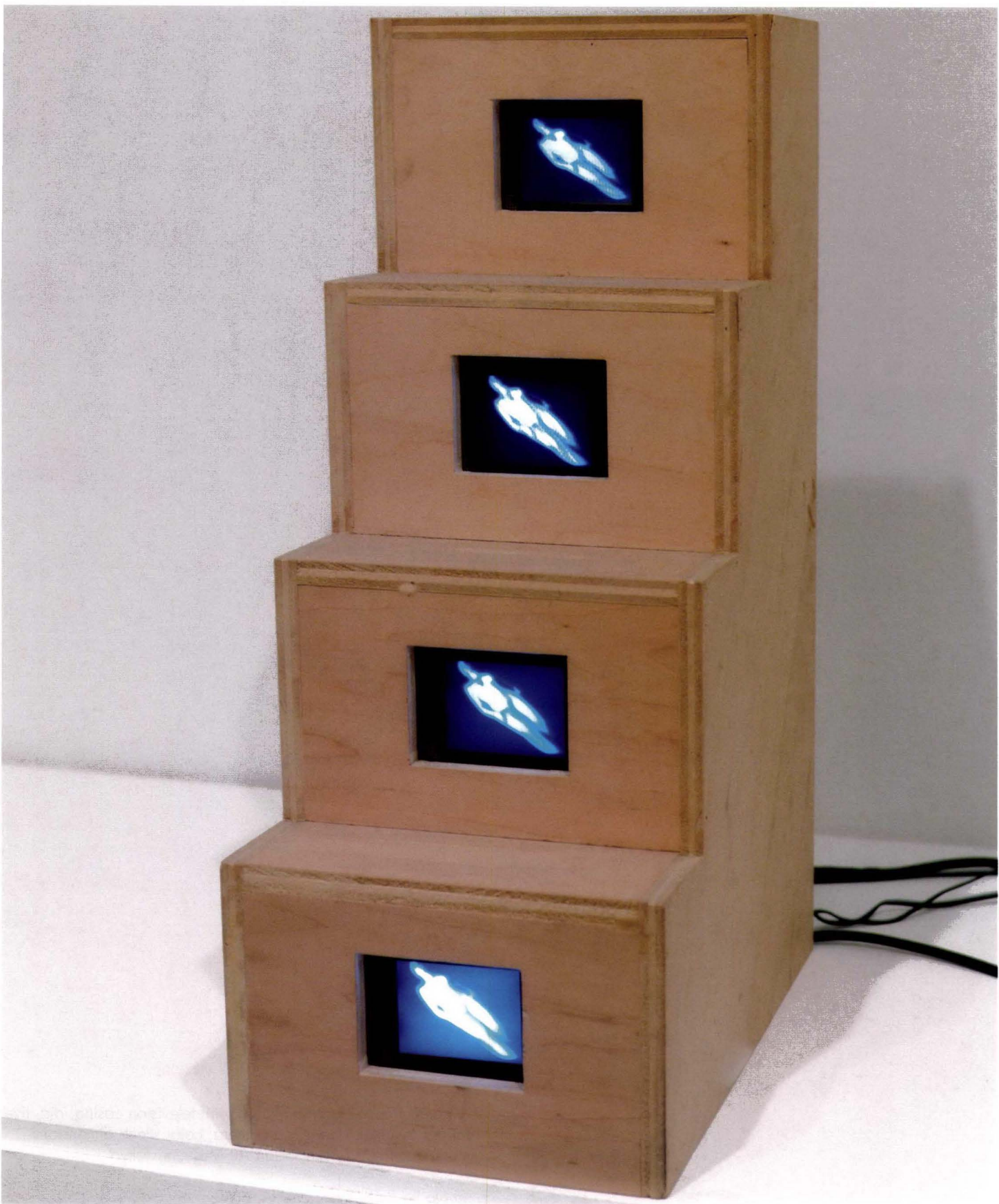
*Nude Descending a Staircase, 1976*

Kubota arrived in New York City from Japan in 1964, and soon after got involved in Fluxus. She was among the pioneering artists who turned video into an art form after the first Sony portable video cameras appeared on the market in the mid-1960s. Her work of the early and mid-1970s introduced the term “video sculpture” to the art history lexicon. Marcel Duchamp was a pivotal art historical figure in the life of Fluxus, and in the life of Kubota in particular. Between 1976-1990, she created five major works in dialogue with Duchamp’s concepts and gestures. In this piece Kubota re-envisioned Duchamp’s painting **Nude Descending a Staircase** of 1912. Kubota’s “video sculpture” embodies (through a real female model) and literalizes the movement of Duchamp’s abstract canvas.

### *Nude Descending a Staircase (1976)*

A freestanding plywood staircase with four steps originally with one nine-inch and three thirteen-inch monitors, (now all thirteen-inch monitors) cutouts in the steps expose the monitor screens. The image is of a nude woman going up and down stairs built by George Maciunas at Anthology Film Archives, New York. The tape is a single-channel combination of color-synthesized, color video, and color Super-8 in video. Kubota’s handpainted wall text reads: Video is Vacant Apartment./ Video is Vacation of Art./ Viva Video.... *Nude Descending a Staircase* was the first video sculpture acquired by the Museum of Modern Art.





## **Nam June Paik**

*Real Plant/Live Plant, 1978 (1982 version)*

Closed-circuit video installation with television casing, dirt, live plants, monitor, and video camera; color silent; dimensions variable. Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, Tokyo.

Photo by Peter Moor/VAGA, NYC.



Maria Carolina Carrasco is an art historian and curator based in New York. She is completing a Ph.D. at New York University on George Maciunas and notions of space and place in architecture, and she is currently co-curating an upcoming site-specific exhibition in New York City community gardens.

## Maria Carolina Carrasco

What the Flow Meant: Maciunas' Corbusier'

George Maciunas' background in architecture has been the object of recent interest.<sup>2</sup> The main facts of his involvement in the discipline are embedded in his biography. His father was a successful engineer with ties to the field of architecture.<sup>3</sup> Further, his mother Leokadija Maciunas observed in the young Maciunas an early interest in construction, which led to her "decision," to use her own words, "that he should be an architect."<sup>4</sup> In 1952 he began studies at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, where he completed his Bachelors in Architecture, with honors, in only two years.<sup>5</sup> Maciunas' training at Carnegie Institute of Technology had an enduring effect on Maciunas' thinking, as it provided an early stage to test out the relationship between art and functional production. It marked the beginning of a long engagement with architectural concepts that would later impact his vision of anti-art and

his articulation of Fluxus.

Maciunas' stay at the Carnegie Institute of Technology coincided with momentous changes in its teaching philosophy and faculty, which tempered its practical orientation - modeled on the Bauhaus, like that of the majority of US architecture schools after 1936 - with a more humanistic approach. Broadly speaking, these changes may be considered a part of the reaction against a mechanistic conception of architecture that is also the result of the mistrust in technology brought about by World War II. It is nonetheless true that Maciunas' education was affected by the very specific circumstances at Carnegie Institute of Technology in the early 1950s. One of them can be seen as the result of the gradual implementation of the "Carnegie Plan" (officially proposed in 1940), the university's attempt to improve the communication skills of its students.<sup>6</sup> In 1950, as a response to that university-wide call, the School of Architecture launched its "Experiment in Teaching Communication to Students of Architecture," which was fully implemented by Maciunas' last year in school. Rather than add courses in written and oral expression, the strategy was to emphasize communication within the pre-existing, problem-solving oriented curriculum. A preliminary report on the experiment describes the approach, "Students were asked to write about buildings... They were asked to verbalize their thinking about architecture."<sup>7</sup> In 1947, another crucial event in the School of Architecture at the Carnegie Institute of Technology took place, when Hans Vetter (1897-1963) joined the faculty. Vetter was an Austrian architect connected to the Viennese Arts and Crafts movement, who became professor

1. This essay is part of the author's ongoing dissertation work on Maciunas and notions of space and place, where **Corbusier** is studied in-depth. I would like to thank Harry Stendhal of Maya Stendhal Gallery for the opportunity to publish this paper. Many thanks to Robert Storr, Edward Sullivan, Marco de Michelis, and Terry Smith for their continuing support of my research. For their invaluable research assistance at Carnegie Mellon University Libraries I would like to thank Jennie Benford and Kathleen Behrman (University Archives), Martin Aurand (Architecture Archives), and Mary Catharine E. Johnsen (Special Collections). I thank also Mary Weakland of Carnegie Mellon University's Enrollment Services. For his orientation and feedback I would like to thank Daniel Williamson, and for help with drafts of this text I would like to thank Adele Nelson and Jennifer Brown.

2. Two authors that have discussed Maciunas' background in architecture thus far are Cuauhtémoc Medina in "Architecture and Efficiency: George Maciunas and the Economy of Art," **RES** 45 (Spring 2004); and Thomas Kellein in **George Maciunas: The Dream of Fluxus** (Thames and Hudson, 2007).

3. Leokadija Maciunas, "My husband - Aleksandr Maciunas," Special Collections, Getty Research Institute, cited in Kellein, 11.

4. Leokadija Maciunas, "My Son," trans. Thomas Campbell, in **Kabinet: An Anthology**, Viktor Mazin, ed. (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1997), 151.

5. Grades transcript, photocopy at Enrollment Services, University Registrar, Carnegie Mellon University. Maciunas attended college at Cooper Union School in New York before transferring to the Carnegie Institute of Technology. Carnegie Institute of Technology became Carnegie Mellon University, 1967.

6. Austin Wright, **The Warner Administration at the Carnegie Institute of Technology** (Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Press, 1973), 29.

7. Department of Architecture, College of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute of Technology, "Report to the Pittsburgh Foundation, Wherrett Fund, on the Experiment in Teaching Communication to students of Architecture, 1950-1953. Draft," April 15, 1953, Administrative Series, Architecture Department Holdings, University Archives, Carnegie Mellon University.

at the Academy in Vienna in 1933.<sup>8</sup> At the Carnegie Institute of Technology he “became the soul of new directions” as he brought “a new artistic spirit” and his interest in the philosophy of architecture. He gathered a large student following, and his sudden death in 1963 “left a void in the department that has never been filled.”<sup>9</sup>

Maciunas’ **Corbusier**, a recently uncovered manuscript most likely produced during Maciunas’ studies in this school, allows a focused look at the mentioned circumstances.<sup>10</sup> (Fig. 1). In **Corbusier**, Maciunas transforms and comments on images of Le Corbusier’s model for *Maison Locative à Alger* (1933), a non-executed proposal for a specific building that emerged from Le Corbusier’s extended project of urbanization for the city of Algiers (1931 - 1942).<sup>11</sup> The union of technical training and the fostering of critical thinking and writing skills attempted by the experiment in communication is echoed in the dual nature of **Corbusier**. Here Maciunas transforms through drawing the design solution by Le Corbusier for ensuring visual access to the sea from the street for cliff-side buildings, and develops in written and visual format his own ideas on architecture.

8. Biographical information on Hans Vetter, in **Carnegie Review** 20 (July 1969), 3.

9. Howard Saalman, “Architectural Education at Carnegie Tech: 1905-1990,” photocopy, Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives, 23.

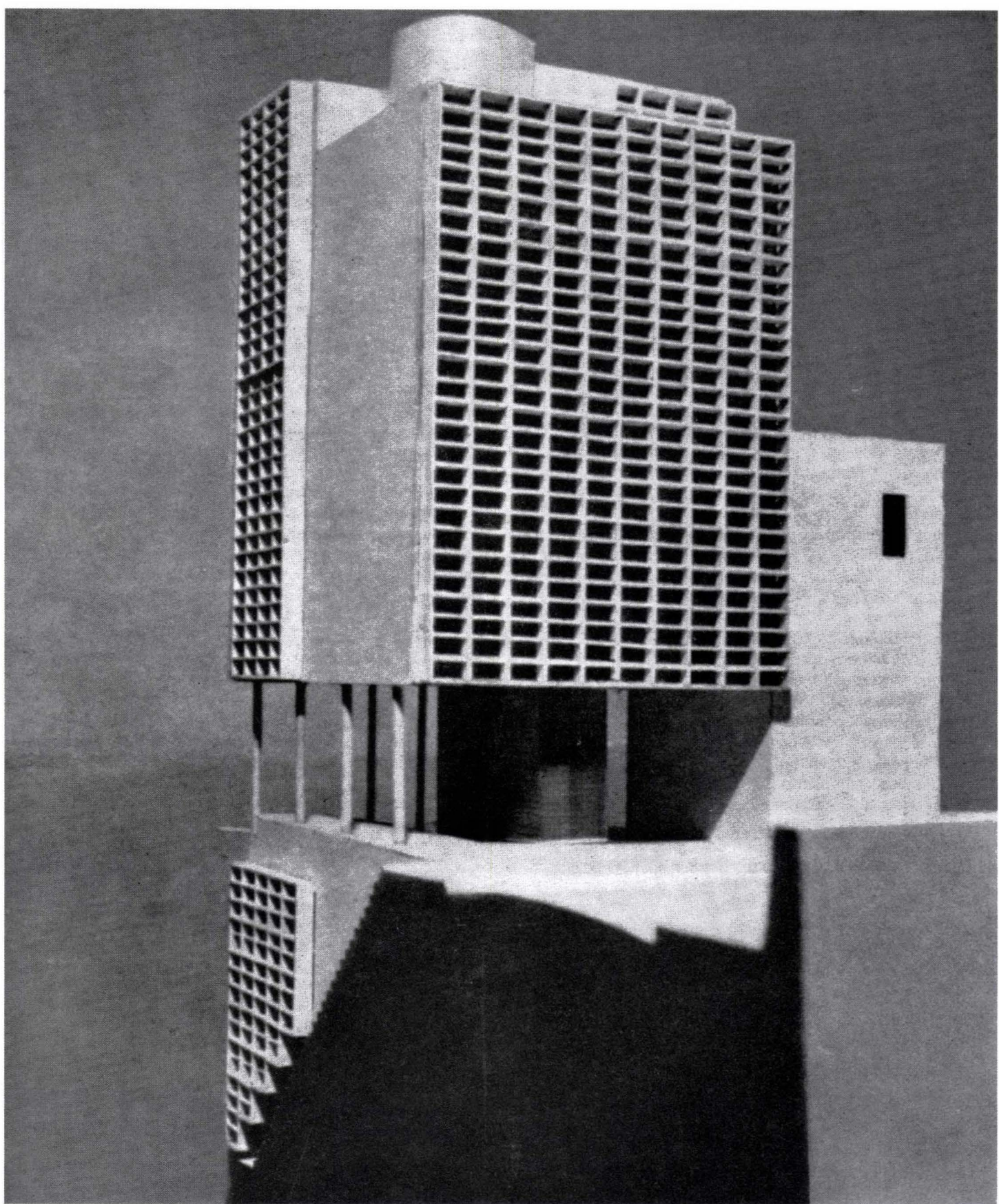
10. Among the factors taken into consideration for the dating of the piece that will not be directly addressed in this essay are its hand-styled graphics, non-execution of the project by Le Corbusier (it cannot have been part of Maciunas’ projected **Atlas of Architectural Monuments**), availability of a research library, and its lack of mention in any Fluxus-related ephemera. **Corbusier** is part of the holdings of the The Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center, Vilnius, Lithuania.

11. Jean-Louis Cohen, “Le Corbusier, Perret et les figures d’un Alger modern,” in **Alger: Paysage urbain et architectures, 1800-2000**, Jean-Louis Cohen, Nabila Oulebsir and Youcef Kanoun (Paris: Les Editions de L’Imprimeur, 2003), 160. For more on Le Corbusier’s involvement in Algiers, see Mary McLeod, “Le Corbusier and Algiers,” in **Oppositions** 19-20 (Winter/Spring 1980), 55-85.

On the other hand, Vetter left a deep imprint on the young Maciunas, which will be the object of a closer analysis in what follows. In addition to taking Vetter’s Philosophy of Architecture class, Maciunas traveled to Salzburg in the summer of 1953 to participate in a summer seminar Vetter organized, where he, not surprisingly, gave great importance to courses on cultural subjects.<sup>12</sup> Vetter’s impact on Maciunas came first at the level of encouraging a desire to rethink basic terms in the field, among them chiefly form and function and their relationship. Vetter was engaged in an ongoing scholarly conversation with Sigfried Giedion, a prominent mid-century Swiss historian and critic of architecture who, during the 1940s, developed fresh accounts of the history of architecture in two widely circulated books: **Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition** (1941) and **Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History** (1948). In this sense, Giedion was certainly a figure whose arguments needed to be closely followed, if not agreed with. In his 1951 lecture “The Artist and the Mechanic: What We Are Not Allowed To Say,” Vetter discusses at length his views on functionality, criticizing a mechanistic and merely causal approach to the determination of needs, a response to Giedion’s **Mechanization Takes Command**. Vetter was far from being Maciunas’ only possible means of exposure to a discussion of these terms—the reaction to functionalism had long been in place by the early 1950s and Giedion himself had done his share in spreading them to larger audiences. Yet what needs to be stressed here is Vetter’s attempt to come up with his own theoretical framework and how this influenced Maciunas. In the text of **Corbusier**,

12. Hans Vetter to Dean J.W. Graham, undated, Hans Vetter Collection, box 1, Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives.

13. Hans Vetter, “The Artist and the Mechanic: What We Are Not Allowed To Say,” annual banquet of the Department of Architecture, Carnegie Institute of Technology, May 3, 1951, Hans Vetter Collection, box 1, Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives. The ideas expressed in this lecture were offered subsequently in various occasions by Vetter, and published in **Carnegie Review** 20 (July 1969), 4-7.



Maciunas compares the design philosophies of two icons of the Modern Movement, Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright:<sup>14</sup>

Corbusier. He lost the tie with nature, would say F.L.W. Well, what is nature? Is it what is under the ground or maybe above the ground? F.L. Wright certainly thinks nature is on the ground.... But to Corbusier, nature may just as well be in the air, and it isn't any more unnatural, than the earth.<sup>15</sup>

The notion of organic architecture, promoted and symbolized chiefly by Wright's designs, proposed the integration of the site and context and the work of architecture. Maciunas indirectly alludes here to Wright's motto "form and function are one," whereby the "nature of materials" should determine architectural forms.<sup>16</sup> For Wright, the best example of the relationship between form and function is to be found in nature itself, where this integration is best fulfilled. Though Maciunas is clearly versed in this standard interpretation of Frank Lloyd Wright and organic architecture, when discussing Le Corbusier and *Maison Locative*, he performs a conceptual shift that enables him to link the notion of the organic not with nature, but with space.

Vetter also prompted Maciunas' wish to experiment with the style of communication, in addition to the content, of his ideas. Vetter employed varied manners of expression of his knowledge and thinking on architecture and space, ranging from diagrams to poems—among which can be found a collection of sonnets entitled "Rühme den Raum" [In Praise

of Space].<sup>17</sup> In **Corbusier**, Maciunas reworks diagrams and photographs of Le Corbusier's model for *Maison Locative*. In the upper part of the drawing, Maciunas copies a photograph of an elevation of the building (Fig. 2). In the lower part of the drawing, however, he synthesizes three images of Le Corbusier's project, a diagram illustrating a design solution to ensure visual access to the sea from street level, and two elevations of the building. (Figs. 3, 4, and 5).<sup>18</sup> Instead of describing the direction of vision, the arrows now describe movement between the buildings; yet Maciunas appears quite ambivalent as to what is the subject of that motion. Without the accompanying text, one might take the arrows for a rendition of air circulation, and indeed at the beginning of the text Maciunas writes mostly about air movement. As the text progresses, however, Maciunas increasingly substitutes space for air, and the piece gradually strikes the viewer/reader as an almost lyrical exposition on the essence of space.

Le Corbusier's concept of "ineffable space" provides here an interesting comparison, in that it also obeyed the desire to work out an alternative language for the omnipresent concept of space.<sup>19</sup> "Ineffable space" for Le Corbusier is a "boundless depth" which resonates, like a sounding board, with the presence of architectural elements. It is a concept that calls attention to the relationship between architecture and setting—a concern parallel to Wright's concept of organic architecture, among others. However Le Corbusier uses a more expressive

14. Maciunas also mentions in passing the architecture of Mies van der Rohe.

15. Unless otherwise noted, the quotes by Maciunas used throughout this essay were extracted from his work **Le Corbusier**.

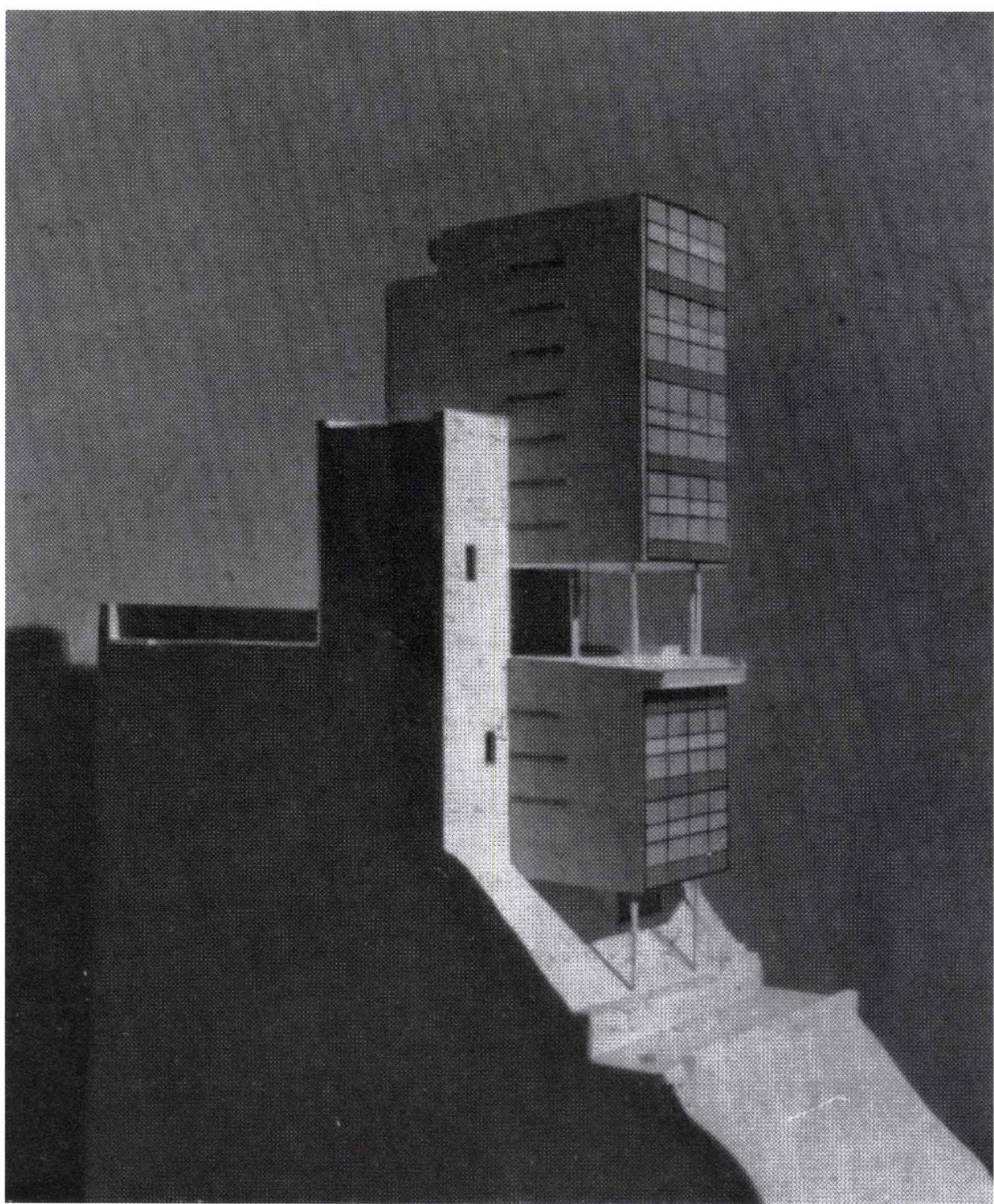
16. Frank Lloyd Wright, **An organic architecture; the architecture of democracy**, Watson Chair Lectures 1939 (Cambridge, M.I.T. Press, 1970), 4.

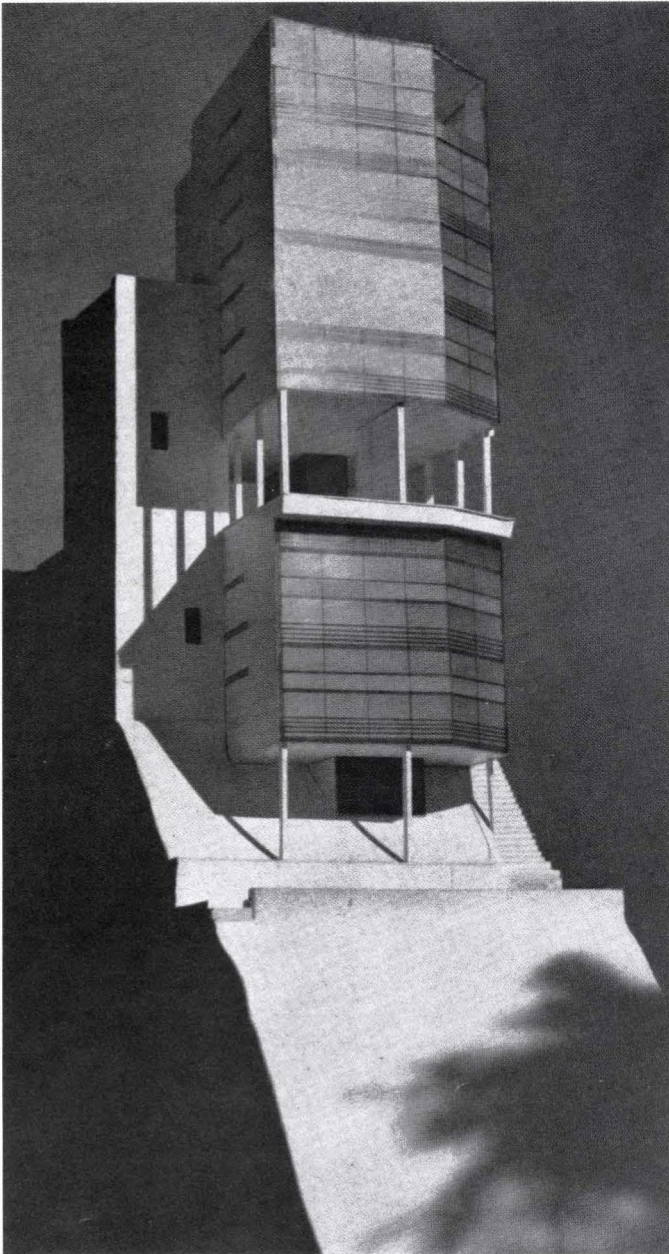
17. Hans Vetter, "Rühme den Raum," Hans Vetter Collection, box 1, Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives. Three of the sonnets were published in **Carnegie Review** 20 (July 1969), 25-29.

18. For an interpretation of the relationship between Le Corbusier's ideas and the illustrations on his books, see Daniel Naegele, "Photographic Illusionism and the 'New World of Space,'" in **Le Corbusier. Painter and Architect** (Aalborg: Nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, 1995), 83-117.

19. The concept of "ineffable space" is described by Le Corbusier in his book **New World of Space** (1948). Anthony Vidler, "Framing Infinity: Le Corbusier, Ayn Rand, and the Idea of 'Ineffable Space,'" in **Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture** (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2000), 54.







vocabulary to describe this relationship; the effect of the work of architecture on the site provokes "Vibrations, cries, or shouts [...] arrows darting away like rays, as if springing from an explosion." In turn the site "brings its weight to bear" on the work. Le Corbusier also employs language rich in bodily allusions, as the site is "shaken," "touched, wounded, dominated or caressed" by the work of architecture, and alternately, the site imposes on the work its deep spaces or projections, its hard or soft densities, its violences or its softnesses.<sup>20</sup> Similar wording, both in its expressive and in its phenomenological content, is used by Maciunas:

[Air] flows through the building, down from it, and through again cutting the building in half. The second part (higher) becomes then an organizer of the flow, and therefore is subjected to the attack of the air. The defensive side becomes all gnawed out by the flow of the air. It seems as if one flat area has lost its flesh, because the winds blew it away from the skeletons. Yet the other side, being never attacked by the flow of the air is smooth and "fleshy." The air in this case is the tool that shaped the building.

For Maciunas as for Le Corbusier, the relationship between work and setting is not the plain and straightforward result of truth to materials but rather is akin to magnetic forces in interaction; to paraphrase Anthony Vidler, buildings are objects activated in space and by space.<sup>21</sup> One may, prompted by the similarities in writing style, interpret Maciunas' emphasis on the play of light and dark in the photographs of *Maison Locative* (he extends the massive shadow on the cliff where the building stands to cover the lower portion of his drawing) as illustrating Le Corbusier's boundless depth, or Maciunas' vectors between buildings as visually describing Le Corbusier's "darting arrows." What must be stressed, however, is the

20. Le Corbusier, **New World of Space** (Boston: The Institute of Contemporary Art, 1948), 8.

21. Vidler, 55.

degree to which Maciunas experiments in this work with different ways to think about architecture and concepts like form, function, and space.

Maciunas' insistence on the flow of space in Corbusier testifies to an additional connection with Vetter's thought:

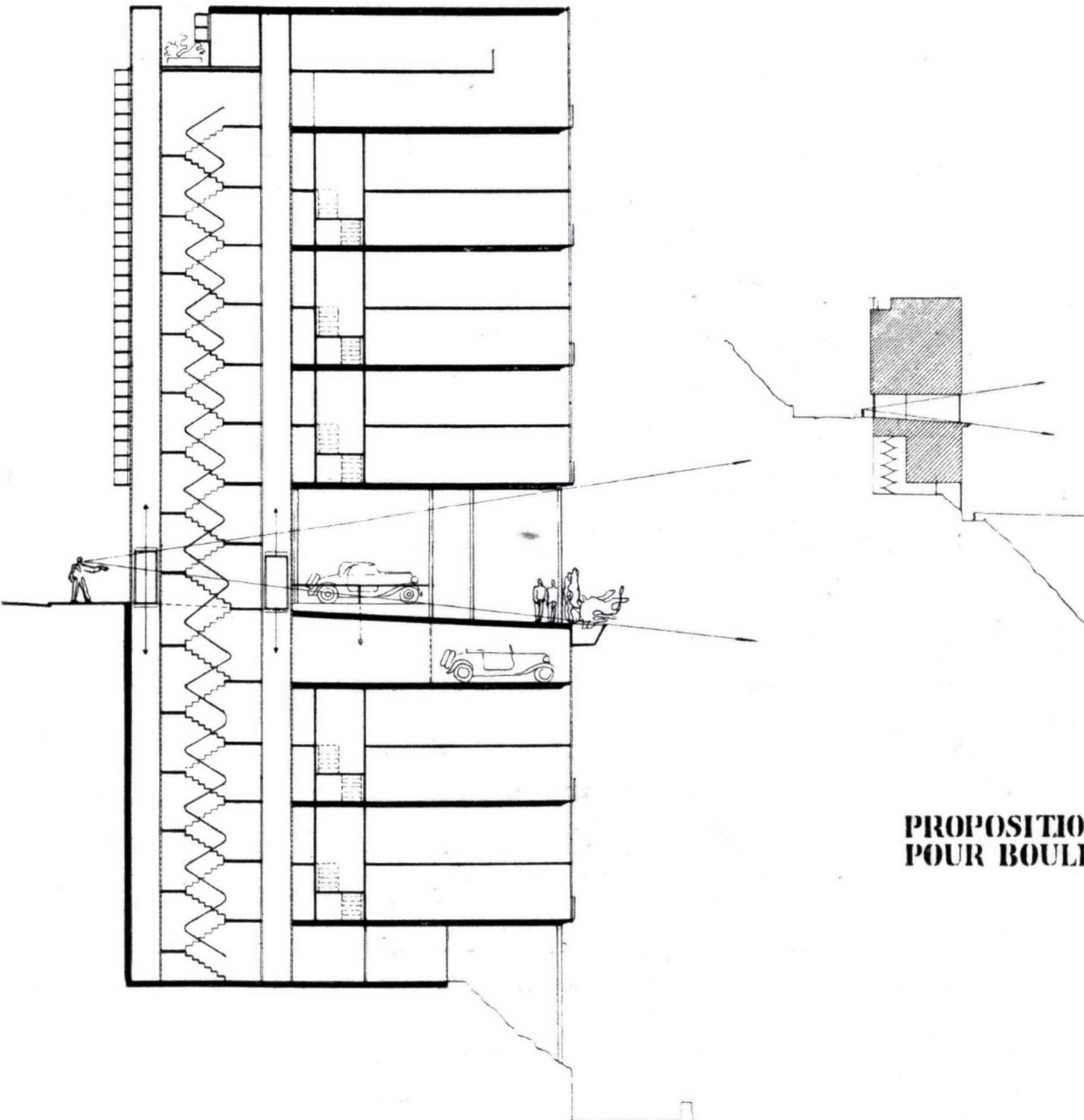
For Corbusier space is a movement within itself, it is never at a standstill, just as sea is never without a wave.... Space is a dynamic force that cannot be defined by static defense, for it is an unconquerable force, which instead of being defined, defines us....

At the beginning of the twentieth century the notion of space as dynamic (because of its interaction with the "fourth dimension," time) had broadly concerned artists and theorists, particularly those associated with Futurism and Cubism. In fact, Le Corbusier, central to that intellectual milieu, shares and shapes this concern; he gives it its most clear expression in some of his buildings and refers to the fourth dimension when describing "ineffable space."<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless Maciunas here also responds directly to Vetter's ongoing scholarly conversation with Giedion.

In 1941 Giedion published his extensive history of architecture **Space, Time and Architecture**, where he made the notion of "space-time" (space that flows because of the added fourth dimension) widely available and emphasized the importance of the experiments of Cubism and Futurism for the history of architecture. His interest was, above all, to re-integrate emotional content, "the special concern of the artist" to industrial and technical fields, a concern certainly related to a generalized reaction against rationalism and functionalism.<sup>23</sup> In this text Giedion commented on the feeling of uninterrupted

22. Le Corbusier, **New World of Space**, 8.

23. Sigfried Giedion, **Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition** (Cambridge: The Harvard University Press, 1941), 350.

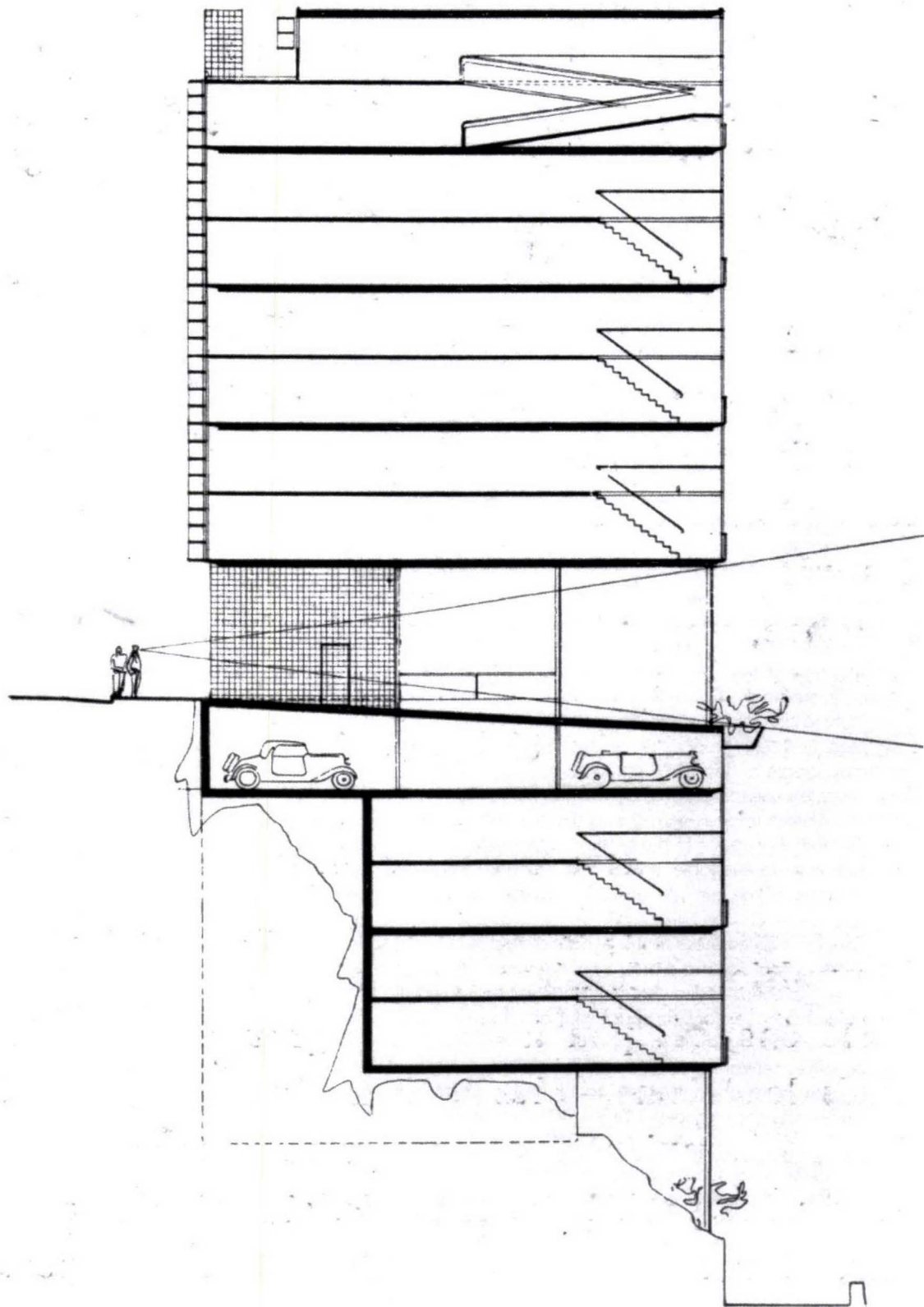


SUR ESCALIER

PROPOSITION  
POUR BOULE

CO

**REGLEMENTATION  
DS EN CORNICHE**



SUR APPARTEMENTS

flow of space provoked by certain works of architecture. In what seems an intentional misreading of Giedion, in his Philosophy of Architecture class, he emphatically asserted: "Space does not flow as Giedion says. This is an example of sloppy language – bad journalism."<sup>24</sup> Indeed in one of his diagrams entitled "On Knowledge 'A Priori': Twenty Easy Lessons," he gathered what he saw as basic truths beyond which everything else could be questioned.<sup>25</sup> He expressed these in a group of aphorisms, divided into three columns, one each for time, space, and matter. In the column for space he states: "Space has no motion, but all motion is in it." Interestingly, however, one of his sonnets in his collection "Rühme den Raum" seems to contradict this idea, as he proclaims that "[spaces] open and lead you/- More fluent than stream or flood/Where room and room touches -".<sup>26</sup> The multiple conceptual complexities that historians and theorists of architecture dealt with during these years, ranging from the nature of space to the tension between functionalism and feeling were available to Maciunas through Vetter, and are apparent in the multiple tensions in **Corbusier**.

Special circumstances in the School of Architecture, in spite of the school's strong professional orientation and its problem-solving emphasis, allowed Maciunas not only exposure to theoretical questions on space and architecture, form and function, but the room to elaborate on them. This stimulus becomes central to his vision for Fluxus. In his diagram "The Grand Frauds of Architecture" (published in 1964 in **Fluxus** 1), he accuses architects Wright, Mies van der Rohe, Eero

Saarinen and Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill of imposing preconceived stylistic solutions on design problems (and notably omits Le Corbusier), a criticism of the degeneration of functionalism into one more stylistic formula, the International Style. This diagram has been interpreted as exposing Maciunas' anti-art rationale, and as evidence of his naïve understanding of functionalism.<sup>27</sup> After analysis of Corbusier what was before seen as lack of intellectual sophistication might be more accurately seen as a conscious adherence to the concept of functionalism, or rather, as a wish to experiment with its expression (the work is indeed an unlikely mix of diagrams, photographs, and transparencies). In 1965, he transforms his criticism into a concrete proposal for prefabricated housing for the USSR. In 1966 he begins his most ambitious enterprise to date, the Fluxhouse Cooperatives, whose main goal was to transform run-down buildings in SoHo in order to provide inexpensive housing for friends—and friends of friends. This has been seen in retrospect as the first of several similar projects that led to the urban renewal of SoHo, and as a pioneering model for alternative art spaces.<sup>28</sup> Maciunas' work continues to testify to his involvement with questions emerged and derived from his years of architectural training, of which these are only the obvious examples.

Explanations for the origin of the word Fluxus are multifarious; some were emphasized by Maciunas himself (namely its biological/medical usage), some are scholarly reconstructions (based on, for example, his late fifties belief in the cycles of art),<sup>29</sup> and others are retrospective views on the nature of the movement (as, for example, its resistance to definition). I would

24 Jon D. Collier, Class notes of Professor Hans Vetter's course Architectural Philosophy, September 1951 – June 1952, Hans Vetter Collection, box 1, Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives.

25 Hans Vetter, "On Knowledge 'A Priori'," Hans Vetter Collection, box 1, Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives, published in **Carnegie Review** 20 (July 1969), 30.

26 Hans Vetter, "Gateway," in "Rühme den Raum," trans. Howard Saalman, manuscript, Hans Vetter Collection, box 1, Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives.

27. Cuauhtémoc Medina, "Architecture and efficiency: George Maciunas and the economy of art," RES 45 (Spring 2004), 275.

28. Peter Frank in Emmett Williams, Ay-O, and Ann Noël, eds. *Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas, 1931- 1978: Based Upon Personal Reminiscences* (N.Y. : Thames and Hudson, 1998), 170

29. Peter Frank in Emmett Williams, Ay-O, and Ann Noël, eds. **Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas, 1931- 1978: Based Upon Personal Reminiscences** (N.Y. : Thames and Hudson, 1998), 170

like to add yet another: Maciunas' exposure to mid-century discussions on the flow of space. As he writes in **Corbusier**, the architect creates a "waterfall," which becomes "not an end but a passage." Years later this language reoccurs when he employs a dictionary definition to compose the manifesto of the movement, and what the flow meant during his years of architectural training is brought to bear in its very definition: "Flux, n. [OF., fr. L. fluxus, fr. fluere, fluxum, to flow.... 2. Act of flowing: a continuous moving on or passing by, as a flowing stream; a continuing succession of changes. 3. A stream; copious flow; flood; outflow." <sup>30</sup>

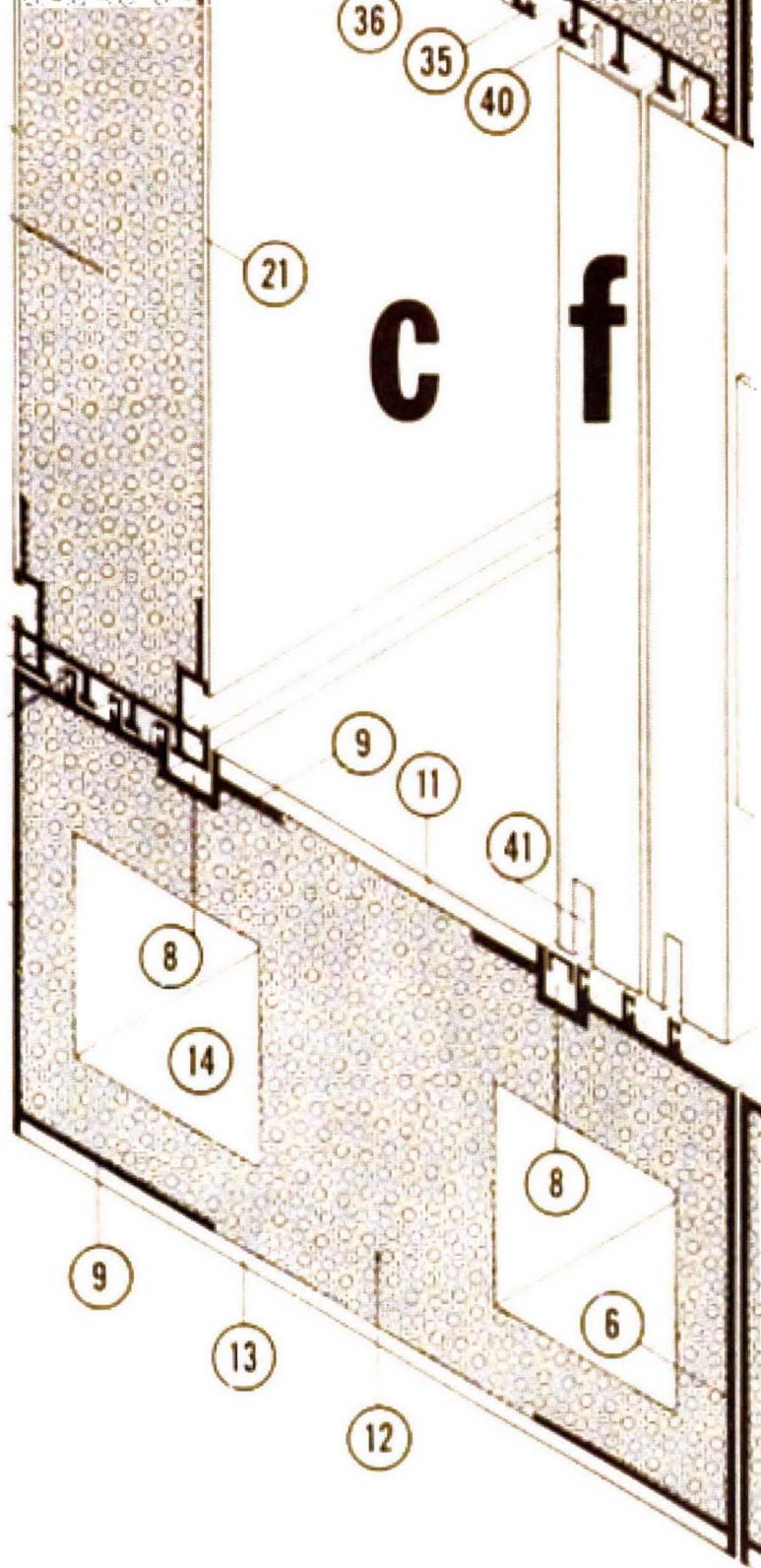
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30. George Maciunas, "Manifesto," in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, eds. **Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas 1931-1978** (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 116.

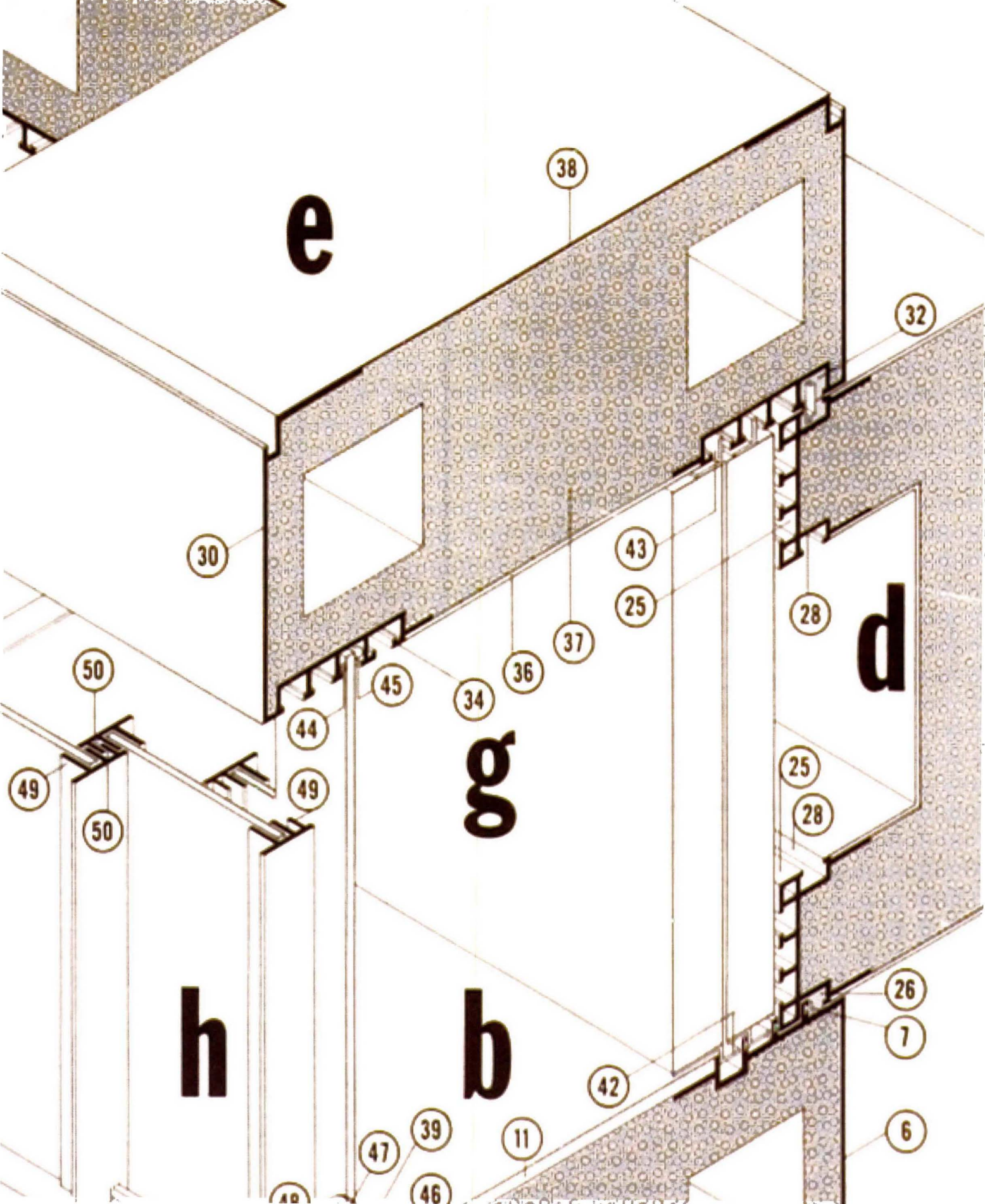
## George Maciunas

Prefabricated Building System, 1965

Also known as Maciunas' Plastic Prefab, this work marries Maciunas' design skills and systematic thinking in a scheme for prefabricated mass housing. It was published initially in two places: a 1965 issue of the journal **Underground**, and a 1966 collaborative work by Henry Flynt and Maciunas. Maciunas admired the official Soviet housing program and in 1965 he called it "the most efficient mass housing program in production in the world today" but he also believed his plan was "even more efficient." The charts, diagrams, and isometric cross-sections detail both Maciunas' rational analysis informing the scheme as well as the pragmatics of how it could be realized. This work dialogues with his earlier text **The Grand Frauds of Architecture: Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen, Gordon Bunshaft, Frank Lloyd Wright** (1964), in which he critiques these icons of modern architecture for not living up to their own ideals. To rectify this betrayal, Maciunas' Prefabricated Housing System would remain true to standards of value, economy, and efficiency.





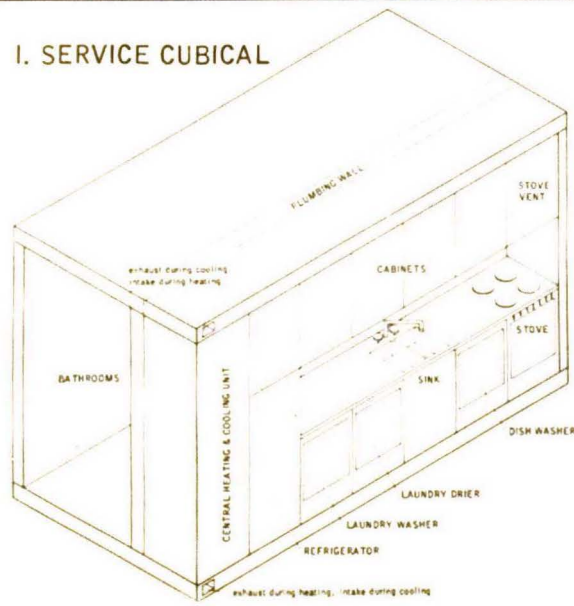


# APPENDIX 2. MACIUNAS PREFABRICATED BUILDING SYSTEM

COPYRIGHT BY GEORGE MACIUNAS, 1965

1. METHOD OF DESIGN DEVELOPMENT			2. DESCRIPTION OF NUMBERED COMPONENTS		3. E
A. ESTABLISHING BASIC OBJECTIVES AFTER ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS			A. FOUNDATION PILE		
WORKABILITY	Enclosure from Structure Servicing	rain, vapor, wind, dust, heat & cold, sunlight, sound support of enclosure traffic and communication, temperature control, light and air control, storage, hygiene	1 precast concrete 2 channel anchor set into concrete 3 stainless steel bolt applied from outside with a wrench 4 shims for adjusting height of floor panel 5 aluminum nut, prewelded to the inside face of channel edge		
ECONOMY	In material In manufacture In labor use In transport In erection In maintenance	minimum use of material use of abundantly available material minimum number of components simple method of fabrication and construction of components simple tooling requirements adaptability to adaptation minimum use of labor more productive & efficient use of labor in plants rather than site use of unskilled labor on site for erection light and well packaged speedy and simple erection requiring little labor and little skill no heavy equipment required (cranes, bulldozers etc.) permanency of materials, efficiency of insulation, washability of all interior and exterior surfaces	B. FLOOR PANEL 6 aluminum extruded edge, indispensable as structural member and functioning also in the following areas: 7 projecting fin, part of extruded edge, functioning as track and weatherseal (containing wool pile) for the bottom edge of the movable nonstructural panel F or as weatherseal lock for bottom of structural panel C. 8 conduit for electrical wiring covered with small snap-on aluminum cover for access 9 structural stiffening leg providing a surface for bonding the outer face 10 snap-on cover over panel joint where no sliding walls, doors or structural panels are required (rarely used) 11 interior panel face (floor) made of vinyl, hard rubber or neoprene sheets, functioning as soft walking and maintainable surface and also as structural membrane 12 expanded polystyrene panel core, functioning as insulation and acoustical barrier and structural compression member 13 exterior panel face made of cement-asbestos or plastic type of material, functioning as moisture barrier and structural tension member 14 air passage functioning at the time of panel construction and production as a passage for steam to enter the core and expand polystyrene beads, and afterwards for warm and cool air of the cooling-heating system (passages can be plugged where not required)		1. Precast 14' x flat base
ADAPTABILITY	To function To plan To climate To owners To site	residential, institutional, industrial, agricultural etc. flexibility in shape and size of buildings climatic changes within same location (seasonal extremes) climatic variations in various geographic locations their special needs and habits topography and soil conditions	C. STRUCTURAL FIXED WALL PANEL 15 universal panel extruded aluminum edge used for all sides of panels C and as edges for structural cabinets D, functioning as structural stiffening member and 16 side notch functioning as support for hangers 17 side notch functioning as a container for extruded neoprene weather seal, receiving into itself the edge of sliding nonstructural exterior panel 18 front notch functioning as container of universal extruded neoprene weather seal in compression with another seal of an adjoining panel 19 bottom, front notch containing universal neoprene seal which overlaps and presses itself to the floor weatherseal-fin no. 7 20 conduit for electrical network (directly above floor conduit) 21 laminated thermosetting plastic sheet as interior face, functioning as structural tension member and maintainable (washable) surface 22 same as no. 12 23 asbestos reinforced calcium silicate sheet as maintainable face, functioning as moisture barrier, washable surface, hard surface against vandalism and structural tension member		2. Kitchen lower
DURABILITY	Resist aging Resist disasters	due to rot, termites, discoloration and corrosion hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, vandalism	D. STRUCTURAL WALL CABINET 25 same as 15, also functioning as alternate track for cabinet doors 26 side notch functioning as notch no. 19 27 same as no. 17 28 side notch functioning as alternate track for cabinet doors 29 shelf brackets secured to interior face of exterior cabinet face made of aluminum brake formed into box-like shape or fiberglass reinforced molded plastic		3. Floor
B. DESIGN SOLUTION AND ITS RELATION TO OBJECTIVES			E. ROOF PANEL 30 same function as no. 6 functioning also in the following areas 31 bottom front notch functioning as container of universal extruded neoprene weather seal in compression with the seal of adjoining top of structural wall panel 32 same as no. 31, but adjoining top of structural panel edge 33 elastic adhesive type sealant (polysulfide base) in seams between all roof panels 34 bottom notch functioning as track for curtains 35 same notch as no. 34, but functioning as track for interior sliding door-wall 36 interior face of roof panel made of perforated steam cured, asbestos reinforced calcium silicate or of laminated thermosetting plastic, functioning as acoustic absorbent surface and also as structural tension membrane 37 same as no. 12 38 exterior face of roof panel made of aluminum sheet press or brake formed into pan shape or welded in flat form to horizontal legs of edge, or made of rigid rubber or neoprene sheet and bonded to legs of edge extrusion. This face is functioning as water barrier and as structural membrane 39 snap-on cover over electrical conduit		4. Struct to floor braces
basic solution functions performed			F. SLIDING INTERIOR WALL PANEL 40 notch functioning as track for top guide of sliding panel 41 wheel bearings housed inside sliding interior panel and riding over floor fin no. 7		
MULTIFUNCTIONAL COMPONENTS	building panels containing functions of structure, enclosure and service made of 4 basic parts: interior, exterior faces, core and edge	Easily maintainable, inorganic and structurally strong surface materials are used Light, low density, insulative and strong in compression core materials are used Structural panel edges are used to make panel supportable at corners, thus permitting panels to be adapted to various plan requirements Structural edges are made to function also as weather seal, tracks for movable panels (doors, windows etc.), air duct, electric conduit, meeting the double function requirements of service and structure Storage cabinets are made to substitute for structural walls.	G. SLIDING CABINET DOOR 42 bottom door guides riding within floor notches 43 top door guides riding within ceiling notches		
MINIMUM NUMBER OF COMPONENTS	all components with a single function to be eliminated	Windows and doors are made to be where wall is absent (which is void and therefore not manufactured) rather than a hole in wall, which would require its manufacture and wasted material cut off from solid panel to make a hole. Window and door frames are likewise eliminated by employing structural panel edge of the adjacent panel for that purpose Number of panel components are reduced by employing finished surfaces, such as structural panel faces, thus eliminating the need for such nonstructural surfacing materials as floor tiles, ceiling tiles, plaster, paint, moldings	H. SLIDING EXTERIOR WALL PANEL made of opaque material (steam cured, asbestos reinforced calcium silicate with enamel surface on both faces), translucent (thermosetting plastic) or transparent (thermosetting plastic or glass) in thicknesses between 1/4 and 1 inch 44 ceiling notch functioning as track and weatherseal (containing wool pile) for top of nonstructural sliding panel 45 spherical elastic ball functioning as bearing for sliding panel and applying pressure on sliding panel upon wool pile weatherseal 46 wool pile weatherseal inserted in floor fin no. 7 47 ball bearing wheel attached to sliding panel by a 48 bolt through the panel itself 49 interlocking meeting stiles with neoprene weatherseals (both extrusions are same) 50 neoprene weatherseals		5. Roof structure
FLEXIBILITY	system to permit change in room layout, simple expansion or contraction, simple climate control	A nonstructural panel (50% of all wall panels) are movable without any addition of components, since sliding panel tracks are at every floor panel joint for structural necessity. Rooms can be therefore enlarged by opening dividing nonstructural walls Climate control can be effected by using various materials for exterior sliding panels: transparent low-insulative material during mild climate, opaque high-insulative material (asbestos) during severe heat or cold, or any combination of the two. Number and area of transparent and opaque panels can be varied by the simple sliding operation.	I. SERVICE CUBICAL constructed in its entirety in the plant, brought to the site on flat bed trailer truck and lowered over 4 piles 51 building plumbing system 52 central heating and cooling unit 53 main exhaust and intake to be connected to panel system 54 kitchen equipment and fixtures connected to common wall 55 bathroom equipment and fixtures connected to common wall		6. Nonst interior of panel Exterior
DURABILITY	use of inorganic & fire res stain materials, hard surfaces, water resistant & elastic flexible joints	Enamel-asbestos, nonferrous metal and elastomers are used in the more critical exterior applications and various types of plastics for the less critical interior applications			

## I. SERVICE CUBICAL



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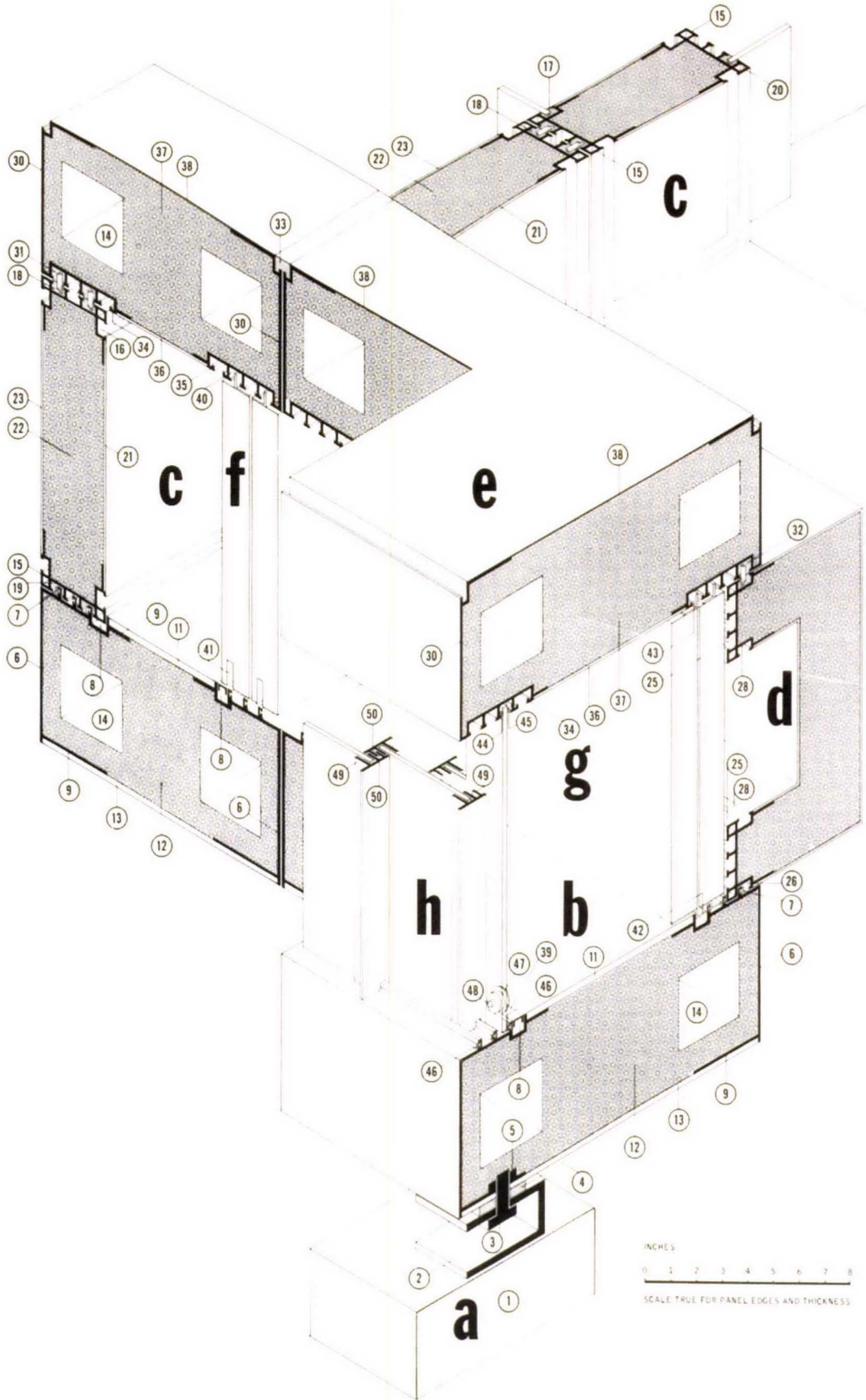
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## 4. ISOMETRIC CROSS SECTIONS OF COMPONENTS



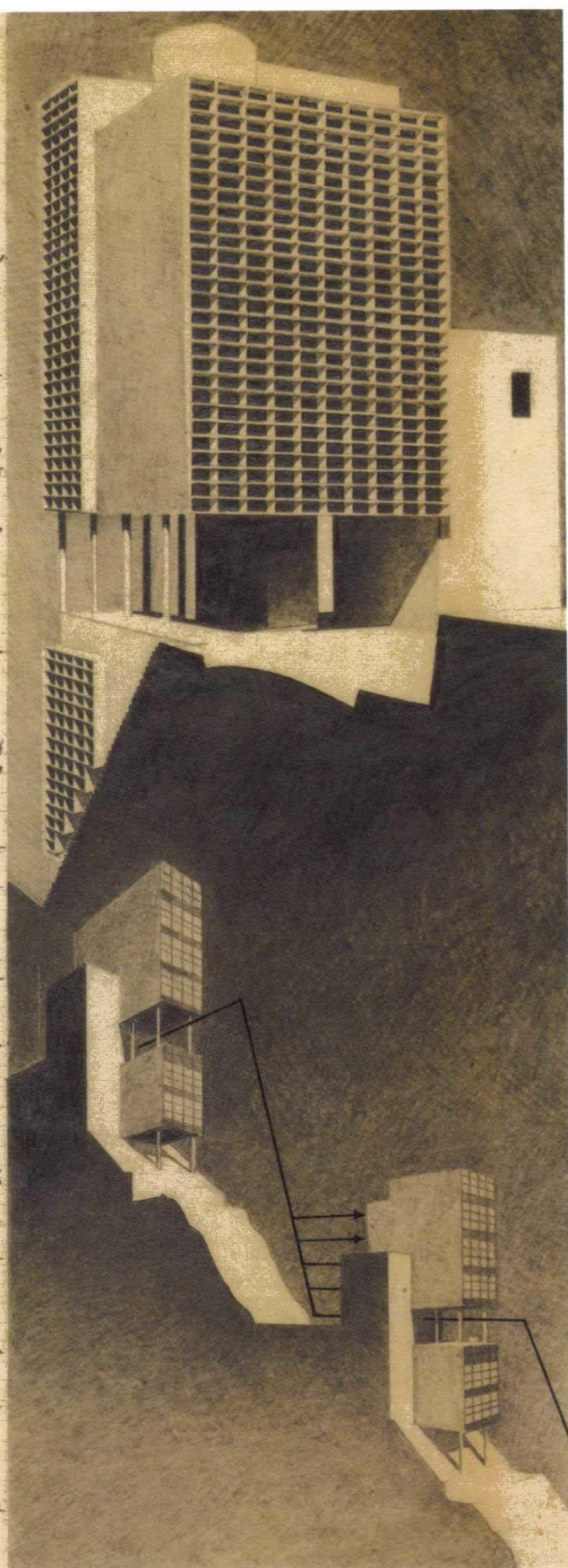
## George Maciunas Corbusier

c. 1952-54

It is likely that Maciunas produced this piece while studying for a degree in architecture at the Carnegie Institute for Technology, Pittsburgh from 1952-54. The work represents Maciunas' early critical engagement with modern architecture in which he hails Le Corbusier as the exemplary builder in space. Le Corbusier never surrendered his architecture entirely to pragmatism or "stage design." In 1964, Maciunas of stronger voice produced *The Grand Frauds of Architecture: Mies van der Rohe, Saarinen, Bunschaff, Frank Lloyd Wright*, a systematic critique of the iconic modern architects based on standards of value, economy, and efficiency. In his estimation, they had knowingly betrayed the very avant-garde ideals they proposed. As a corrective to the "fraud," Maciunas proposed his own design for a Plastic Prefab Building System in 1965.

# corbusier.

He lost the tie with nature, would say F.L.W. Well, what is nature? Is it what it is under the ground, or on the ground, or maybe above the ground? F.L.Wright certainly thinks nature is on the ground and he certainly grows from the ground. But to Corbusier, nature may just as well be in the air, and it isn't anymore natural, than the earth. And just as F.L.Wright grows from the ground, so does Corbusier grow from the air. Just as F.L.Wright, Corbusier creates buildings that are shaped by the force of nature, - flow of air, winds. His creations seem like dried up skeletons suspended from nowhere to sway in the wind. Yes, Corbusier is a product of space, just as the swaying skeleton, or just as a flower is a product of earth. Corbusier considers his building as a receiver of the space and air. Air seems to blow through the building, and blows through in an organized manner. It is in how the air travels that Corbusier creates the beauty. To him air seems to be the primary force of nature, a unit within which our world lives. It is therefore of primary concern, for an architect to create buildings that would face space and live within space - the universe, for to feel the universal one must not be localized to the earth. But how does Corbusier achieve to create within the space and air, within the universe? Let's analyze the project as shown in the drawing. The building are on a slope, where air seems to fall like a waterfall, never moving up. (black ink) It flows through the building, down from it, and through again cutting the building in half. The second part (higher) becomes then an organizer of the flow, for it directs the air to travel, squeezing it between the first structure. But the second part contrary to the first, isn't hidden from the flow, and therefore is subjected to the attack of the air. The defensive side becomes all gnawed out by the flow of the air. It seems as if one flat area has lost its flesh, because the winds blew it away from the skeletons. Yet the other side, being never attacked by the flow of the air is smooth and "fleshy". The air in this case was the tool that shaped the building. Thank's to a masterful handling of the tool the creation clearly conveys the character and effects of the tool. We call this process -spacial relationships. But it isn't really very correct, for his buildings really never define space, they never resist, contradict the flow. In order to define it. Corbusier never builds static fortresses, hard defensive planes, contradictory lines, angles. He never really considers space as a big area, void at a standstill, within which we can create movement, relationship, definition. This concept can be applied to Mies Van der Rohe, but never for Corbusier, for Corbusier space is a movement within itself, it is never at a standstill, just as sea is never without a wave. Space is a dynamic force that cannot be defined by static defence, for it is an unconquerable force, which instead of being defined, defines us, defines Corbusier. Corbusier realized the force of space and therefore never even tried to resist it by defining it, he instead, integrated his buildings into space by creating not an end but a passage.



Hollis Melton – photographer, writer, publisher – was George Maciunas' assistant during the last four years of his life and was very active in the development and work of Anthology Film Archives during its early years. He presently works in alternative medicine and lives in Vermont.

## Hollis Melton

Notes on Soho and a Reminiscence

"Although once thought as a 'movement', with all the appropriate manifestos and positions, Fluxus is not a movement as such, but a tendency which cuts across the oeuvres of various artists rather than encompassing them totally. This brings Fluxus into total harmony with the art trends of the 1970s.

What distinguishes Fluxus from other trends is that it itself is the locus of various trends — or, rather, of various arts. Music, theater, dance, literature, visual art, and even non-art factors inform Fluxus—without forcing it, as they might force other forms of intermedia, to identify its principal roots. Unlike happenings, conceptual art, current performance art, visual poetry, and new forms of dance, music and theater, Fluxus exists at a point equidistant from all the arts."

Peter Frank — Experimental Music in "Fluxus New York," in **New York-Downtown Manhattan: Soho**, catalogue for Berliner Festwochen. Sept. 5–Oct. 17, 1976. Akademie der Künste, Berlin. P. 177.

The determination of his individual dwelling lies, as it has with the residential housing throughout history, on his financial means, technical know-how, and personal whim. Only in this way can we open the way to the essential quality of organic diversity within the urban environment which has been the natural outcome of human settlement in the past. This diversity is an imponderable no architect can foresee, only the inhabitants and time can create. The architect provides construction whose relationships suggest a certain way of life; the people make of those shells a city.

– Roger Katan, **New York: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, World Cultural Guides**, Dore Ashton, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, Chicago and San Francisco, 1972, p. 202.

The 43 block area bounded by Houston Street on the north, Lafayette Street on the east, Canal Street on the south and

West Broadway on the west has been designated as a landmark for cast iron architecture. The style of the cast iron buildings is called palazzo, an American adaptation of the Renaissance palace for the 19th century business. These statuesque buildings line Broadway, Mercer Street, Broome Street, Greene Street, Spring Street, Wooster Street, West Broadway, Crosby Street and Lafayette Street. What used to be called "The Valley" by the city planners, or "Hell's Hundred Acres" by the Fire Department (because there were so many fires caused by violations in the buildings) is now called Soho, the name taken from the City Planner's map of New York: So.Ho. (South of Houston Street).

The history of Soho's survival and renaissance is related to the history of artists in search of living/working spaces. After World War II artist started moving into commercial buildings in lower Manhattan. On Broadway just south of 14th Street (De Kooning, Jasper Johns, Franz Kline, Jackson Pollack and Mark Rothko), on Greene Street (Marie Menken), on the Bowery (Robert Frank, Alfred Leslie, Elaine De Kooning), in the East Village, and further downtown in places like Coenties Slip (Ellsworth Kelly, Agnes Martin, James Rosenquist, Ken Jacobs), which was demolished in the Sixties, and a highrise erected on the site (the downtown branch of the Whitney Museum of American Art is now located there). The artists lived in the commercial buildings illegally and their occupancy was tenuous. They could rent the raw space very cheaply, renovate it and then the landlord could refuse to renew the lease in order to rent the improved space (improved at no cost to the landlord) to another tenant at double the rent.

In 1962, the City Club had published a study called "The Wastelands of New York City," which listed Spring, Broome, Mercer and Greene Streets as Commercial slum area No. 1 and recommended demolition and rebuilding. "The analysis clearly showed," said the study, "that there are no buildings worth saving." (Ada Louise Huxtable, **The New York Times**, May 24, 1970.) The developers were ready to move in with

the bulldozers and the area south of Houston Street would have been demolished and built up into highrise dwellings for the middle class had it not been for the Rapkin Report. Chester Rapkin, a city planner, made a city finance study in 1963 to determine the value of the area south of Houston Street to the city. The study revealed that some of the industries in the area recycled wastes—rags into paper, newspaper waste into paper boxes. These and other industries in the area employed thousands of minority workers, many of whom did not speak English and would have been otherwise unemployable. There were also many small manufacturers who were just starting their business and could not afford a higher rent area. The City Planning Commission flowed the recommendation of the study and decided to protect the industries by forbidding any form of residency in the area.

This move perpetuated the history of artists' evictions and harassments by the city. But artist continued to move into the area despite the illegality of loft living; there were many unoccupied lofts, even whole buildings had been abandoned as the industries shut down, or moved away, seeking better alternatives, often across the river in New Jersey. The landlords were happy to rent to artist who could improve the space, and who could then be easily evicted since they had no legal protection.

The general consensus is that the major influx of artist to Soho was in 1966, and again the general consensus attributes this factor to the vision of the late George Maciunas, founder of Fluxus (a loosely organized art movement) who introduced the concept of artist owned and run cooperative buildings.

The first successful Fluxhouse Cooperative to be organized was 80 Wooster Street. Maciunas purchased the empty loft building for the cooperative in 1966, with the monies put up by the Film-Makers' Cinematheque, and his mother, and loans from Kaplan Fund and the National Foundation for the Arts.

Among the first to join the cooperative venture was Maciunas' friend Jonas Mekas. Mekas had been looking for a permanent home for the Film-Makers' Cinematheque since 1961. Prior to this the group had been screening films in rented spaces, often chased from one space to the next, the group never had the security of a permanent home. The dream of the Cinematheque was to design and construct its own theater suitable to the needs of the independent avant-garde cinema. With the help from Jerome Hill, a friend film-maker, Mekas secured the seed money for the deposit on the 80 Wooster building, and secured the ground floor and basement space for the Film-Makers' Cinematheque. The Building Department, however, refused to issue the Film-Makers Cinematheque a Certificate of Occupancy, and then refused to issue them a theater license because there was no Certificate of Occupancy. The Cinematheque was presented with a list of thirty-seven violations, the major one of which was the artists, fellow cooperative members, who were living illegally on the floors above the Cinematheque. Mekas called a meeting of artists from the neighborhood on April 22, 1969. He wanted the neighborhood to organize itself and push for the legalization of loft living. Out of this meeting came the Soho Artists Association (SAA). The group published a newsletter, met periodically with members of the City Planning Commission and helped to save Soho from the Broome Street Expressway, along with another group, Artists Against the Expressway.

The SAA sponsored the first Soho Artists Street Festival in May 1970; its opening coincided with the Kent State Massacre; in lieu of canceling the festival the SAA draped the fire escapes of the Greene Street Cooperative buildings in black crepe and Yvonne Rainer led a procession of mourning for the dead at Kent State. Thousands of tourists came. The festival received attention from the media and John Lindsay, the mayor, and Nelson Rockefeller publicly recognized Soho as a healthy entity. The artists had succeeded in drawing attention to their plight with the city to legalize loft living. Finally in September 1970 the City Planning Commission passed a resolution permitting

artists to live in Soho lofts whose size did not exceed 3,600 feet. Buildings owned cooperatively would be legalized regardless of their size. However, the new law required that all cooperatives file a prospectus with the Attorney General's Office.

Jim Stratton, author of a book about lofts, **Pioneering in the Urban Wilderness** (Urizen Books, 1977) used to write a column in the **Soho Weekly News** about lofts. In the November 28, 1974, issue he devoted the entire column to the law that requires a cooperative to file a prospectus with the A.G.'s office. He said:

"The main function of the prospectus is to increase the price of the building to the person co-oping it and to restrict the developer population to only those who can afford it. Legal fees to a good lawyer for drawing up a prospectus can run to \$10,000. Then there are engineering reports, surveys, accountings and all of them cost money.

The prospectus, therefore, assures that the developer will be monied and shrewd, out for big profits, and the lofts will go for a bundle. Then the A.G. is happy. The buyers have no more than they would have had without a prospectus, except it cost more. That's the American way.

Curiously, most 'illegal' offerings I've seen can be read like an open book by any layman who wants to dig a little and ask a few questions. A phalanx of lawyers, however, know no more about a building after reading the prospectus than they did before they opened it.

Except that now they know they can't sue (the seller)."

Maciunas organized fifteen co-ops between 1966 and 1975 without ever filing a prospectus. This brashness infuriated the Attorney General's Office. A warrant was sent out for the arrest of Maciunas in 1974. Maciunas' response to the warrant



out for his arrest was characteristic. He designed a series of elaborate disguises for wearing out in the street and kept right on with business of forming co-ops, renovating lofts, and made a Fluxus kit of disguises for the A.G.'s office.

The cooperative owners were safe, there were increasing numbers of them, they were homeowners, paying taxes to the city. The status of ownership gave them greater stability and clout politically. Maciunas who had studied architecture and whose father was an engineer, was always very forthright with those whom he dealt with; he knew the building code inside and out and knew exactly what the structural problems of each building were. He never recommended fixing anything that wasn't necessary to the safety of the building and the people living there. His methods were unorthodox and his financial manipulations were staggering to a normal person, but he was never dishonest and his vision was so far reaching that one could always forgive his transgressions, provided one could appreciate his particular vision. And many couldn't. many of his initial cooperative buyers revolted against his iron rule and forced him out of their co-ops.

At that time he lived rent free in the basement of 80 Wooster Street, owned by the Film-Makers' Cinematheque. His room was filled with five or six big Norfolk pine trees and some huge rubber plants, which he put outside in summer. Tools were hanging up along the wall and from the ceiling beams, there was a white harpsichord that he had put together himself, and a metal table with a glass top and white metal chairs around it. The chairs weren't very comfortable. Though neat, the room always seemed to be bursting with its contents. Full length windows looked outside to the courtyard where he had designed a tiled garden. He slept on a cot in a tiny room off the main room and had built a secret escape tunnel to the adjacent Mekas' film editing room. From there he had cut a hole in the ceiling that led to the ground floor and gave access to the street, just in case he needed to escape from inside to get away from the A.G.'s men. The escape hole was designed

only for his thin body to get through; no normal size police type could even squeeze himself through the escape hole. In addition, he had fortified the door to his room with an extra panel, in between the panel and the door he had installed rows of very sharp blades. The Fire Department forced him to cover the blades with the panel, "to protect innocent visitors from harm." A sign on the door warned visitors of the blades behind the panel. To gain entrance in those days one had to know the secret knock and then announce oneself in a clear voice that was not a shout.

I used to visit him a lot in 1975. I was President and Treasurer of the 491 Broadway co-op he had organized for us—the last co-op he did organize—and I needed a lot of help, which he was always willing to give. He showed me how to keep the books, how to organize all of the bills, how to pay the real estate taxes with a certified check so that the building would have an instant receipt to show the Mortgagee. He passed to me all of the summonses made out in his name for violations on the building and when I went to the court to straighten it out the woman clerk couldn't believe George was walking around free, with so many warrants out for his arrest. He always stressed that we should learn to run the building ourselves, and gradually I became more confident and began to enjoy work for the co-op. We had some terrible arguments, but I could never remain angry with him for long; he had a strong quick temper that would erupt and then everything would be calm as if there had been no outburst. He said his quick temper came from taking cortisone injections every day for his asthma and the outbursts were the result of the cortisone in his system. I can't respect and trust his judgement; he had an incredible purity and singularity of vision rarely encountered nowadays. Sometimes he reminded me of Don Quixote. He used to say that lawyers and artists were parasites and used to make jokes about them. He said he thought home-making was the greatest art. He was always willing to help anyone who had a plan or a dream and was always encouraging people to make up Fluxus games and jokes. He had a dream of buying a big ship

and going around the world, everyone on the ship would be a useful expert—doctor, nurse, botanist, engineer, fisherman, mechanic, biologist, sailor, navigator, etc. he spent long hours making a tape anthology of this favorite music—Monteverdi, Schuetz, Machaud, Adam de la Halle, Couperin—he didn't like anything classical after the Baroque period, but he liked Bob Dylan. He would sell the records he had taped for his selected anthology to friends at big discounts. He liked to cook Borsht, Mousaka, Beef Bourguignon. Whenever he came to visit he would bring a big bottle of semi-sweet German white wine. He knew all about the history of food and machines and he was working on a map of the world which would encapsulate the history of art and civilization. He greatly admired the culture of Burgundy in the 14th century. Sometimes he spoke of going to Japan to study the art of archery.

On November 8, 1975 (his birthday) two men lured him to a vacant loft on Mercer Street, under the pretense of being prospective buyers, and beat him up with metal pipes. They broke two ribs, collapsed a lung and damaged his left eye so that he lost the sight. He said they were from the electricians union. He owed them money for some poorly done work; they beat him up because he told them they would have to wait for the money. It was a bad time. He was trying to raise \$130,000 to meet the balloon mortgage on the co-op at 141 Wooster Street. The other shareholders were beginning to turn against him and threatened to sabotage the deal because they didn't want George to remain a controlling factor in the co-op, then known as Good Deal Realty (a typical Maciunas corporate name), the balloon payment was met, though at great cost to George's health. Soon after that he found a 40-acre farm in new Marlboro, Mass., which had been formerly owned by a family who bred race horses. There were many barns and outlying structures on the property and George persuaded his sister Nijole Valaitis, and his partner, Robert Watts, to put up money to purchase the farm. He slowly began moving his belongings (an enormous collection of odds and ends salvaged from empty lofts he had renovated—boxes full of ribbon, man-

nequins' heads, artificial roses, etc.—all the things he had collected during his 15-year stay in Soho. The move to the farm coincided with his withdrawal from the real estate business. "Too risky," he said, and he didn't want to lose his other eye. Getting away from the city and the pressures of the A.G.'s office and the Soho real estate business transformed him. He worked on the renovation of the farm, spent more time making Fluxus objects, helped Jean Brown, the biggest Fluxus collector, to organize a Fluxus archives in her home in Tyringham, Mass. By the second summer the farm was like a resort. Friends came and rented rooms and George dreamed of making the farm into a school, patterned after the Black Mountain School.

During the fall of 1976, Maciunas participated in a large show entitled **New York-Downtown Manhattan: Soho**, sponsored by the Akademie der Künste and the Berliner Festwochen, in Berlin, to commemorate the American Bicentennial. He designed a Flux-Labyrinth and participated as a performer. The catalogue for the show is over 400 pages, with illustrations, biographies of the participating artists, and articles about Soho by Rene Block, Lawrence Alloway, Peter Frank, Lucy Lipard, Douglas Davis, Stephen Reichert and Joan La Barbara.

In the summer of 1977 Maciunas organized a big Fluxus exhibition which was sponsored by the city of Seattle. He came back very elated with anecdotes and jokes, but he was very thin and complained of pains in his stomach. He joked and said he was losing weight so he could fit into the antique clothes he had found in a trunk on the farm. Throughout the fall he kept losing more weight and his doctor gave him morphine to kill the pain. He was planning to organize a Flux New Year's Cabaret in which everyone would have to perform an erotic cabaret act or bring an erotic dish for an erotic Flux feast. His health kept deteriorating and he decided to enter the hospital for tests right after Christmas. The tests revealed nothing, but exploratory surgery revealed a tumor in his pancreas, and the cancer had spread to the liver. But George kept

making plans. He decided to get married and have a Fluxus wedding combined with the erotic Flux cabaret. All the time he was actively investigating cures for cancer. His energy was phenomenal; he would come thundering into the city in his high boots and riding pants, wearing an orange leather coat and leather captain's cap and race around buying up toys, and odds and ends from Canal Street and Job Lot, the raw materials for Fluxus objects.

The wedding and cabaret were on February 25, 1978, at Jean Depuys loft at 537 Broadway. George kept a very tight control over the whole event. For the wedding both Billie Hutchins, the woman he married, and he wore bridal gowns. Geoff Hendricks prepared a special Fluxus ceremony and officiated as the priest. The bridesmaids, Jon Hendricks and Larry Miller, were in drag and the best man, Allison Knowles, in tails. Jonas Mekas was dressed as a Franciscan monk and only spoke Lithuanian. There was a wonderful feeling at the wedding feast but poor George couldn't eat any of the food; his digestive system had become so frail that any intake of food resulted in tremendous pain. For the cabaret he and Billie performed a piece called "Black and White." While a recording of Monteverdi's madrigal **Zefiro Torna**, a duet, played, George and Billie walked into the performance space dressed very elegantly; he in black tails, she in a wig, and a long white satin evening gown, with long white gloves. Very slowly, very carefully they performed an exchange of clothes. The piece had an overwhelming dignity and was very beautiful; classic.

After the Flux wedding and cabaret George and Billie returned to the farm. Larry Miller and Joe Jones went to help him assemble the Fluxus objects which he would give to those who had contributed money towards his cure. His cancer had progressed. One of the doctors from Sloan-Kettering Institute told him there was no hope; his pain would get worse and he would grow weaker; he gave him two to four months to live. He went to a clinic in Jamaica that specialized in nutrition and

vitamin therapy; he kept getting weaker, bravely holding on. He died in a Boston hospital on May 9, 1978. He left no will; he had removed his name from all property deeds because of the problems with the Attorney General, and a suit brought against him by the 141 Wooster Street co-op. The farm had been sold. Fluxus lives on. The last concert, a retrospective of Fluxus works, at the Kitchen in May 1979, sold out and many younger artists are interested in Fluxus now.



## Flux Labyrinth

The large Flux-Labyrinth constructed in 1976 at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin as part of the comprehensive exhibition and performance program **New York-Downtown Manhattan: Soho** was a memorable grand-scale work that marked the particular organizational and collaborative genius of George Maciunas. Covering an area of approximately one hundred square meters, the Flux-Labyrinth was a life-sized environment that provided those who entered an experience which Maciunas often referred to as “concretism” and “functionalism.” From September 5 to October 17 of that year, thousands of participants made their way through the extensive maze of puzzling and obstacle-laden corridors. Based on ideas by numerous Fluxus artists, doors, walls and floors were altered to make passage very challenging. To cite a few examples – opening one door caused a large inflated ball on a pendulum to strike the participant in the face. As it swung back the other way the individual was able to proceed down the corridor. Another door opened only by playing a specific key on the piano connected to it. There was a slippery floor covered with marbles, and a sticky floor covered with tacky adhesive paper.

The Flux-Labyrinth has special significance in its scale, corresponding as a series of large cubicles, to the small scale Fluxus boxes that invited close-up physical participation by hand and head and, often further assembled into briefcases containing a panoply of different artists’ submissions. The architectural “Flux-Box” enabled the human body to fully enter into the puzzling and playing. Part fun house and part game arcade, the labyrinth fit within Maciunas’ broader idea of Fluxus-Art-Amusement. Maciunas spent months planning and adjusting the concepts of the contributing artists. We met several times in New York to discuss possibilities, and Maciunas sent me to Berlin in order to locate materials and begin the fabrication two weeks in advance of his arrival. In all, construction took about one month.

The label written by Maciunas and posted at the entrance to the Flux-Labyrinth read: “Realized by George Maciunas

and Larry Miller. With contributions by Ay-O, George Brecht, Joe Jones, Yoshimasa Wada, Bob Watts and ... (assisted by museum personnel.)” It is important to note that the work was a cooperative concept and was intended to include sections by artists such as Ben Vautier, Geoffrey Hendricks and others. These could not be realized for various reasons at the time, nor those of Brecht and Watts. Nam June Paik’s piano-activated section went un-credited on the outside label, although it was labeled inside.

Diagrams, sketches and correspondence in several publications by the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection document the realization of the labyrinth that Maciunas and I finally constructed. We built the labyrinth over several weeks, especially with the help of Yoshimasa Wada and Joe Jones. A selection of my photos here documents moments during the construction and opening of the event.

The Berlin version was dismantled, but for the Walker Art Center’s exhibition **In the Spirit of Fluxus** in Minneapolis in 1993, I was asked to reconstruct the Flux-Labyrinth. The updated construction included the addition of elements from artists such as Geoffrey Hendricks and Alison Knowles, which were not realized in 1976. In 2003 Midori Yoshimoto orchestrated yet another incarnation of the labyrinth at AI Art Interactive in Cambridge, Massachusetts as part of the show **Do-It Yourself Fluxus**. For this version, I drew up a plan for an abbreviated “mini-labyrinth” that replicated nearly one fourth of the 1976 installation.

Larry Miller , 2007

## George Maciunas

Maciunas put together Flux-Labyrinth for the exhibition **New York-Downtown Manhattan: Soho** held at the Berlin Akademie der Kunst from 5 September-17 October, 1976. The work was an extensive maze of corridors with altered doors, walls and floors that made passage very challenging. Opening one door caused a beach ball on a pendulum to strike the participant in the face. As it swung back the other way the individual was able proceed down the corridor. Another door opened only by playing the piano connected to it. There was a slippery floor, and a sticky floor covered with fly catching paper. Part fun house and part game arcade, the labyrinth fit within Maciunas' broader idea of Fluxus-Art-Amusement.

*Flux-Labyrinth. Akademie der Künste, Berlin 1976*

Two door handles present the first puzzle at the entrance to the Flux-Labyrinth.

Photo: Larry Miller ©1976/2007

Flux-Labyrinth



Flux-Labyrinth

## Larry Miller

Labyrinth Door

Flux-Labyrinth. Akademie der Künste, Berlin 1976

The rotating door to Miller's dark, multi-layered passageway. On the left is the rolling metal drum of Joe Jones's section inside which participants walked forward to roll the drum along on metal rails.

Photo: Larry Miller ©1976/2007





## **Ay-O**

Flux-Labyrinth. Akademie der Künste, Berlin 1976

Passing slowly through the rubbery soft latex net obstructing the passageway and the entry lined with wallpaper brushes conceived according to ideas by Ay-O.

Photo: Larry Miller ©1976/2007



## **George Maciunas**

Flux-Labyrinth. Akademie der Künste, Berlin 1976

Navigating the challenges in the George Maciunas section which included a foam stairway, a tottering bridge, a springy rubber bridge, a precise path for foot-placement across an area of water, a staircase of open bins filled with tactile materials, a "rolling" floor area covered with marbles and a length of "sticky" flooring.

Photo: Larry Miller ©1976/2007



## **George Maciunas**

FluxLabyrinth. Akademie der Künste, Berlin 1976

George Maciunas working on the mechanism in the collaborative Maciunas-Miller section in which a large inflated ball fell quickly but harmlessly into the face of a startled participant, triggered by the door being opened.

Photo: Larry Miller ©1976/2007



## George Maciunas

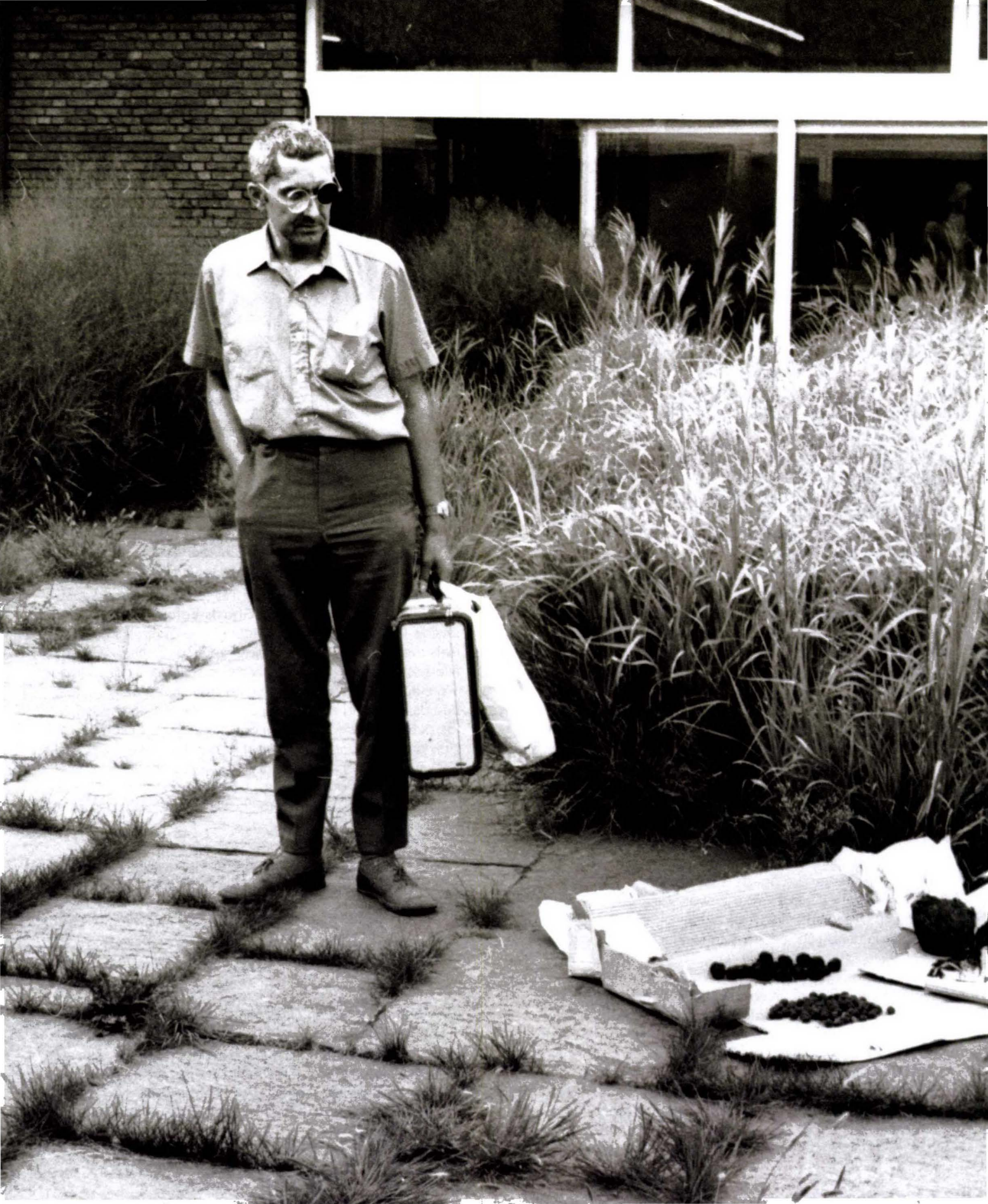
Preparations regarding Flux-Labyrinth and Excreta Fluxorum  
Akademie der Künste, Berlin 1976

George Maciunas, with Robert Watts and Shigeko Kubota, surveys his collection of animal feces gathered from Berlin's zoo for use both in the Flux-Labyrinth (elephant dung) and for his own Fluxus edition, **Excreta Fluxorum**.

Photo: Larry Miller ©1976/2007







## Program 1

### Early Avant-Garde Films

*Ballet Mécanique* (1924), Fernand Léger, 12 min. Silent. B&W  
Considered one of experimental cinema's masterpieces, **Ballet Mécanique** is the only film that artist Fernand Léger made directly. Dudley Murphy also directed and artist Man Ray directed cinematography. The film's focus on the mechanical world reveals modern artists' fascination, and disillusionment with science and technology. In the "ballet," mechanical instruments including player pianos, airplane propellers, electric bells, wire whisks and funnels, copper pots, and lids assume the place of dancers. Presented in a series of movements and repetitions, these multiple images eloquently express the structure and repetition of daily life, one of modernism's distinctive conditions.

*Anaemic Cinema* (1926), Marcel Duchamp. 7 min.  
Silent. B&W

**Anaemic Cinema** is a characteristically Dada film by Marcel Duchamp with the assistance of artist Man Ray. The viewer is presented with alternating shots of Duchamp's **Disk Bearing Spirals**, spiral patterns intended to produce a three-dimensional quality, and texts pasted letter by letter, of punning phrases by Duchamp's pseudonym, Rose Sélavy. The phrases are nonsensical, arranged in spiral patterns, and read from outside inwards. This reading suggests a sense of eroticism, which is reinforced with the backward forward direction of pattern movement. Duchamp employed a series of optical experiments to create an engaging, near hypnotic effect.

*Un Chien Andalou* (1929), Luis Buñuel. 17 min. Silent. B&W  
Directed by Luis Buñuel, in collaboration with Salvador Dalí on writing, **Un Chien Andalou** is one of the most well-known surrealist films in the history of avant-garde cinema. Over a period of six days, Buñuel and Dalí wrote the film's content in a stream of automatic writing, a basis for surrealist theory and practice. There is no clear storyline and the film's sequence is chronologically incoherent. Instead, a series of irrational, at times shocking images are shown, comparable to a sequence of dreams. Unforgettable images include a woman's eye being

slit open with a razor, ants emerging from a hole in the palm of a man's hand, and a woman's armpit hair attaching itself to a man's face. Pierre Batcheff, Simone Mareuil, Jamim Miravilles, Luis Buñuel, and Salvador Dalí appear in the film.

*Ghosts Before Breakfast* (1927-28), Hans Richter. 7 min.  
Silent. B&W

German born artist and filmmaker Hans Richter believed it was the responsibility of the artist to reveal truth and beauty through art. His riveting film, **Ghosts Before Breakfast**, reveals this philosophy. Considered one of the first surrealist films ever created, the work also expresses Richter's earlier interests in Dada. The film presents a series of illogical images – a man's bowtie magically moves and unties itself, men's beards grow and then disappear, bowler hats fly around in the air, and men vanish behind a pole. Richter explains, "Objects are also people and [they] follow their own laws" – "the rhythm of the clock." The film premiered at the International Music Festival, Baden-Baden. Darius Milhaud, Jean Oser, Walter Gronostay, Wern Graeff, Paul Hindemath, and Richter make appearances.

Publication excerpt *Circulating Film Library Catalog*,  
New York The Museum of Modern Art, 1984, p.166

## Program 2

### Films on Fluxus

*The Misfits: 30 Years of Fluxus* (1993)  
Lars Movin. 80 min. Color

Lars Movin presents an unconventional video portrait of the international Fluxus movement of the 1960's. Fluxus aimed to overturn past art traditions through collaborations in all media including performance, the visual arts, music, and literature. Footage was largely shot 30 years later in Venice in 1990 when many original Fluxus artists met for an exhibition related to the Biennale. Presented are interviews with Fluxus' core members, documentation of key works, and footage of pio-

neering performances and film works from the past 30 years.

With: Eric Andersen, Philip Corner, Henry Flynt, Ken Friedman, Jon Hendricks, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Jackson Mac Low, Jonas Mekas, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Ben Patterson, Wilem De Ridder, Ben Vautier, Emmet Williams, La Monte Young. Appearances by Ay-O, Joseph Beuys, John Cage, Geoffrey Hendricks, George Maciunas, Larry Miller, Charlotte Moorman, A.O.

*Some Fluxus* (1991), Larry Miller, 59 min. B&W with Color

**Some Fluxus** is a revealing documentary examining the wide-ranging and dynamic activities of Fluxus. Miller culled from his vast collection of archival footage Fluxus' most important works. Selected pieces from Miller's interview with George Maciunas are presented through out the film, providing insight to the movements founding member and the influences such as John Cage and Marcel Duchamp that led to Fluxus' conception. Featured are performances by Ay-O, Eric Anderson, George Brecht, Philip Corner, Jean Dupuy, Ken Friedman, Al Hansen, Geoffrey Hendricks, Dick Higgins, Joe Jones, Milan Knizak, Alison Knowles, Larry Miller, Takako Saito, Mieko Shiomi, Yasunao Tone, Yoshi Wada, Ben Vauteir, and Robert Watts.

*Zefiro Torna* (1992) Jonas Mekas. 24 min. B&W with Color

The film presents images from the life of George Maciunas. Jonas Mekas documents special moments of his good friend and collaborator including Maciunas in 1952 at his parents' house with his father, mother and sister Nijole, fragments of Fluxus performances, picnics with friends (Almus, Warhol, Lennon, Yoko Ono, etc.), Maciunas' wedding and footage shot of him in Boston Hospital three days before his death. The soundtrack includes Monteverdi, and Mekas reading from his diaries written during the last ten months of Maciunas' life.

4. *George Maciunas With Two Eyes* 1972,  
*George Maciunas With One Eye* 1976 (1994)  
Shigeko Kubota, 7 min. B&W

For this film, Fluxus artist Shigeko Kubota creates an intimate portrait of friend and collaborator George Maciunas. She records Maciunas touring New York's SoHo neighborhood, which he helped make into the legendary artists' district. Maciunas and Fluxus artists and friends including Nam June Paik, Barbara and Peter Moore, and Yoshi Wada discuss a SoHo building in his or her own language. The film's second part features Fluxus artist Ben Vautier's opening at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 1976.

## Program 3

*Flux Film Anthology* (1962-1970), George Maciunas. 120 min.

George Maciunas' ambitious compilation, **Fluxfilm Anthology**, consists of 37 short films that range in length from ten seconds to ten minutes. This comprehensive work encapsulates the movement's collective interests, dynamic tendencies, and humorous character. The films were shown as part of performance events and happenings carried out by members of New York City's avant-garde during the 1960's.

*Fluxfilm Anthology*. 120 min. Anthology Film Archives version.

This is the most complete version of the **Fluxfilm Anthology**. It took several months of research and detective work to locate some of the films. Four films, however, are still missing: **Fluxfilm No. 32: Intermission**, Milan Knizak; **Fluxfilm No. 34: Rainbow Movie**, Ay-O; and **Fluxfilm No. 35: Moon Landing**, Geoffrey Hendricks.

*Fluxfilm No. 1:*

**Zen For Film** (1964), Nam June Paik. 20 min. Entry by Maciunas: "Clear film, accumulating in time dust and scratches."

Fluxfilm No. 2:

**Invocation of Canyons and Boulders** (1966), Dick Higgins. 3 min. version. Entry by Maciunas: "Mouth, eating motions."

Fluxfilm No. 3:

**End After 9** (1966), George Maciunas. 1:20 min. Silent. B&W. Entry by Maciunas: "Word & number gag, no camera."

Fluxfilm No. 4:

**Disappearing Music For Face** (1966), Chieko Shiomi. 10 min. Silent. B&W. Entry by Maciunas: "Transition from smile to no-smile, shot at 2000fr/sec. Camera: Peter Moore." Camera shows only a CU of the mouth area.

Fluxfilm No. 5:

**Blink** (1966), John Cavanaugh. 2:30 min. Silent. B&W. Entry by Maciunas: "Flicker: White and black alternating frames."

Fluxfilm No. 6:

**9 Minutes** (1966), James Riddle. 9 min. Silent. B&W. Entry by Maciunas: "Time counter, in seconds and minutes."

Fluxfilm No. 7:

**10 Feet** (1966), George Maciunas. 12-2/3 sec. Silent. B&W. Entry by Maciunas: "Prestype on clear film measuring tape, 10ft. length. No camera." At the end of every foot of film numbers appear, 1, 2, etc to 10.

Fluxfilm No. 8:

**1000 Frames** (c. 1966), George Maciunas. 41-2/3 sec. Silent. B&W. Numerals on clear film from 1 to 1000.

Fluxfilm No. 9:

**Eyeblink** (1966), Yoko Ono. 1 min. Silent. B&W. Camera: Peter Moore. Entry by Maciunas: "High speed camera, 200fr./sec. view of one eyeblink."

Fluxfilm No. 10:

**ENTRANCE to EXIT** (1966), George Brecht. 6:30 min. Sound B&W. Entry by Maciunas: "A smooth linear transition from white, through greys to black, produced in developing tank. The "door sign" ENTRANCE fades in, white letters on the black background, stays for a few seconds, then slowly fades into white. Five-minute fade into black and the title EXIT, which stays for a few seconds then fades into white."

Fluxfilm No. 11:

**Trace #22**, Robert Watts. 1:15 min. Silent. B&W. Entry by Maciunas: "X-ray sequence of mouth and throat; eating, salivating, speaking."

Fluxfilm No. 12:

**Trace No. 23** (1966), Robert Watts. 3 min. Entry by Jon Hendricks: "Begins with a shot of a demarcation line on an asphalt tennis court. A hand points to the distant landscape, then numbers 408 and 409 appear on a female torso. The female then passes different decorated plastic hot dogs, banana shapes suggestively between her legs, through her arm pits, etc. Ends with an egg floating on water."

Fluxfilm No. 13:

**Trace No. 24** (1966), Robert Watts. 3 min. Silent. B&W. Entry by Jon Hendricks: "Begins with a picture of Marilyn Monroe, then shifts to a female body, shot from belly button down, which is wriggling under piles of cellophane."

Fluxfilm No. 14:

**One** (1966), Yoko Ono. 4:30 min. Silent. B&W. Camera: Peter Moore. Entry by Maciunas: High speed camera 2000fr./sec. match striking fire."

Fluxfilm No. 15:

**Eye Blink** (1966), Yoko Ono. 1 min. Camera: Peter Moore. Same as No.9, probably.

Fluxfilm No. 16:

**Four**, Yoko Ono. 5:30 min. Silent. B&W. With Susanna Campbell, Philip Corner, Anthony Cox, Bici Hendricks, Geoffrey Hendricks, Kyoko Ono, Yoko Ono, Ben Patterson, Jeff Perkins, Susan Polang, Jerry Sablo, Carolee Schneemann, James Tenney, Pieter Vanderbiek, Verne Williams. Camera: Jeff Perkins, Anthony Cox. Entry by Maciunas: "Sequences of buttock movement as various performers walked. Filmed at constant distance."

Fluxfilm No. 17:

**5 O'Clock in the Morning** (1966), Pieter Vanderbiek. 4:30 min. Silent. B&W. Camera: Peter Moore. A handful of rocks and chestnuts falling, filmed with high speed camera.

Fluxfilm No. 18:

**Smoking** (1966), Joe Jones. 6 min. Silent. B&W Camera: Peter Moore. Entry by Maciunas: "Sequence of cigarette smoke shot with high speed camera, 2000fr/sec."

Fluxfilm No. 19:

**Opus 74, version 2** (1966), Eric Andersen. 1:20 min. Silent. Color. Entry by Maciunas: "Single frame exposures, color. Different image each frame, various items in the room, etc."

Fluxfilm No. 20:

**ARTYPE** (1966), George Maciunas. 4:20 min. Silent. B&W. Entry by Maciunas: Artype patterns, intended for loops." Benday dot patterns. Dots, lines. Entry by Maciunas: "screens, wavy lines, parallel lines, etc. on clear film. No camera."

Fluxfilm No. 21:

**Untitled** (1966), Alyson Knowles. Baby footage. 30 sec.

Fluxfilm No. 22:

**Shout** (1966), Jeff Perkins. 2:30 min. Camera: Yoko Ono. Starring Jeff Perkins and Anthony Cox. Close-ups of two faces,

shouting at each other.

Fluxfilm No. 23:

**Sun in Your Head** (1963), Wolf Vostell. 6 min. Silent. B&W. Camera: Edo Jansen. Entry by John Hendricks: "Single Frame sequences of TV or film images, with periodic distortions of the image. The images are aiplaces, women men interspersed with pictures of texts like: 'silence, genius at work' and 'ich liebe dich.' The end credit is 'Television decollage, Cologne, 1963.'"

Fluxfilm No. 24:

**Readymade** (1966), Albert Fine. 45 sec. Silent. Color. Entry by Maciunas: "Color test strip from developing tank."

Fluxfilm No. 25:

**The Evil Faerie** (1966), George Landow. 30 sec. Silent. B&W. With Steven M. Zinc. A man on the roof making flying gestures with his hands. Film is preceded by a picture of an object of "L" shape shakingly moving. At the end of the film, image of "Kodak girl" briefly appears.

Fluxfilm No. 26-28:

Four films by Paul Sharits: **Sears Catalogue 1-3**—"pages from Sears catalogue, single frame exp."; **Dots 1 & 3**—"single frame exposures of dot-screens"; **Wrist Trick**—"various gestures of hand held razorblade, single frame exposures"; **Unrolling Event**—"toilet paper event, single frame exposures." 2 min. Silent. B&W.

Fluxfilm No. 29:

**Word Movie** (1966), Paul Sharits. 4 min. Color. Entry by Maciunas: "Single frame exposures of words, color."

Fluxfilm No. 30:

**Dance** (1966), Albert Fine. 2 min. Face Smiling. Hammering a brick. CU of an ear (moving?). Face twitching. Dancing on one leg. Rolls, twitches on the floor. Boxes the wall.

Fluxfilm No. 31:

**Police Car** (1966), John Cale. 1 min. Silent. Color. Entry by Maciunas: "Underexposed sequence of blinking lights on a police car."

Fluxfilm No. 36:

**Fluxfilm No. 36** (1970), Peter Kennedy and Mike Parr. 2:30 min. Sound. B&W. Entry by Maciunas: "Tips of feet walking at the edge of frame," all around the frame.

Fluxfilm No. 37:

**Fluxfilm No. 37** (1970), Peter Kennedy and Mike Parr. 2 min. Sound. Entry by Maciunas: "Face going out of focus by layering sheets of plastic between camera and subject."

Fluxfilm No. 38:

**Jen e vois rien Je n'entends rien Jen e dis rien** (1966), Ben Vautier. C. 5. min. 8 mm. Ben stands with ears, eyes, mouth bandaged. Entry by Maciunas: "Seeing, Hearing, Saying Nothing."

Fluxfilm No. 39:

**La traverse du port de Nice à la nage** (1963), Ben Vautier. C. 2 min. 8 mm. Ben swims across a bay in Nice. Entry by Maciunas: "swimming across Nice harbour fully clothed."

Fluxfilm No. 40:

**Fair un effort** (1969), Ben Vautier. C. 2 min. 8 mm. Entry by Maciunas: "Lifting and holding up a chest of drawers."

Fluxfilm No. 41:

**Regardez moi cela suffit** (1962), Ben Vautier. c. 3 min. 8 mm. Entry by Maciunas: "sitting on a promenade in Nice with a sign: Watch me, that's all."

## Special Film Presented on 16mm

Arnulf Rainer (1960), Peter Kubelka, 6 min. B&W

Arnulf Rainer represents what avant-garde filmmaker Peter Kubelka described as "metrical film." The film began as a commission by friend and Viennese painter Arnulf Rainer to make a color film documenting him at work. Integrating experimental techniques with the footage of Rainer, Kubelka ultimately abandoned the film's traditional concept for pure abstraction. Guided by an interest in graphic traditions of the 1920s, Kubelka reduces the film's content to just single alternating black and white frames, which produce a flickering effect, comparable to the flicker of a motion-picture projector. Solid black and white frames are presented in continuous sequences as long as 24 seconds to as short as a single frame, continually eliciting an immediate response from the viewer.

Thanks to all who have contributed to the preparation of the exhibition and the catalogue.

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Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center  
Gynėjų g. 14, Vilnius  
Lithuania 09601  
Tel:+370 5 211 2377  
Fax:+370 5 211 2502

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