

# IN THE SPIRIT OF FLUXUS

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

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

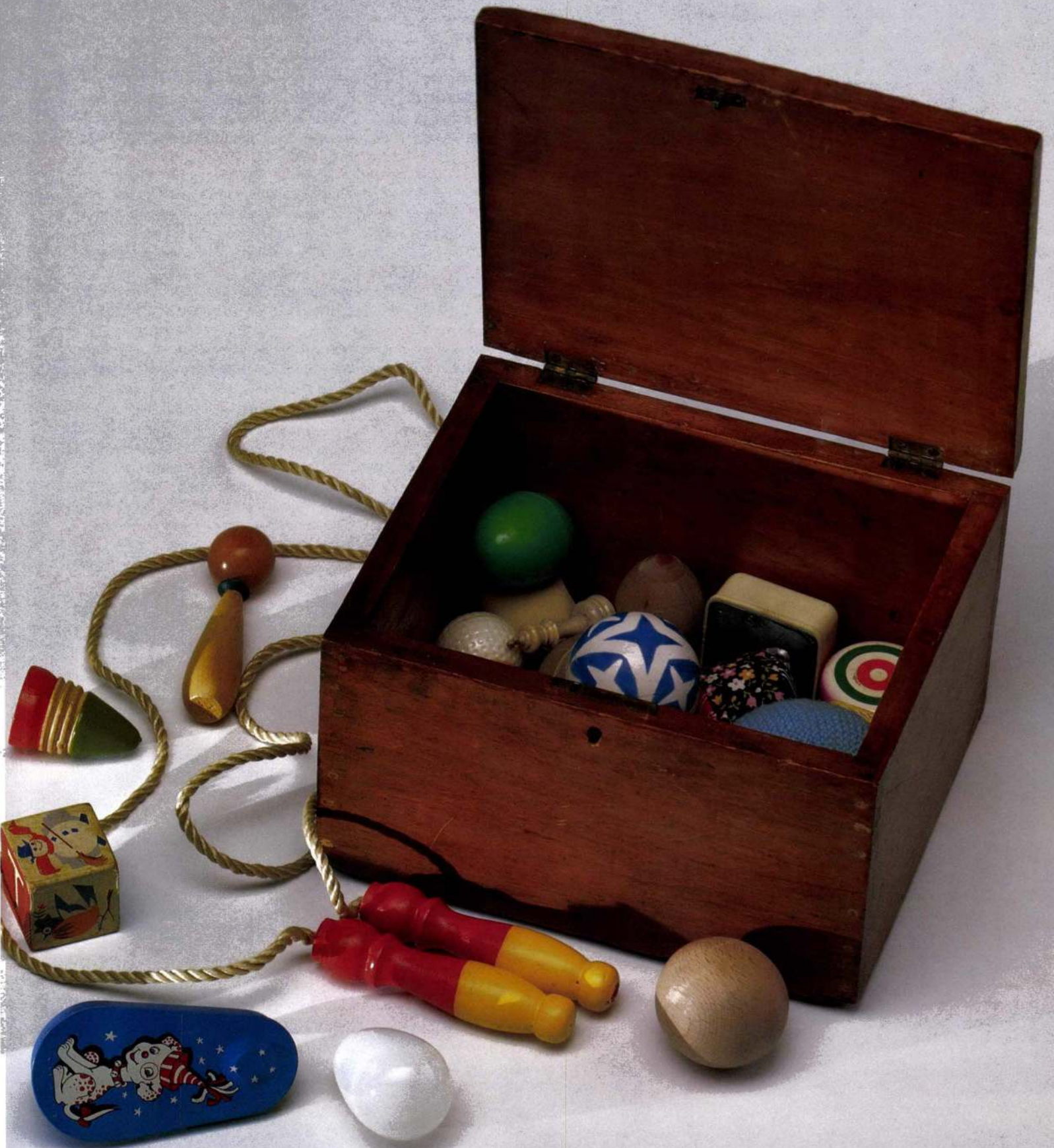
Walker  
Art  
Center  
Minneapolis





When they asked questions  
like how they were  
inventing Fluxus.

IN THE SPIRIT OF  
**FLUXUS**



# IN THE SPIRIT OF FLUXUS

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February 14–June 6, 1993

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New York, New York  
July 8–October 10, 1993

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# Caveat Lector

Attributing dates, dimensions, titles, and even authorship to Fluxus works is often a tricky affair. For these works are the product of a great number of artists living in a great many places, and they have been produced or performed in various incarnations over long periods of time. To complicate the situation further, Fluxus gave license to a collective spirit that encouraged free appropriation or interpretation of ideas among its participants, and it produced works that more often than not defy traditional classification. Thus a number of perplexing questions are raised: If an artist offers up the score of another artist as a part of his or her own work, who is its author? If an object conceived in 1964 is produced in varying form for more than a decade, how is it to be dated? If an artist creates a score for a film that is not made until years later—and then as a video—was the film “unrealized”? Careful consideration of such questions will yield conflicting opinions; many Fluxus artists would (and perhaps should) laugh at the exercise. But to vindicate the rigorous scholar who has combed the archives to secure the exact date on which members of an orchestra were first told to fall off their chairs, and the diligent registrar who has sifted through the detritus of a broken box, we offer the following explanation of the technical information provided in this book.

The date of a given score refers to the date of its creation, not to the first instance of its performance. Where possible, dates have been secured from original publications by the artist. When the date of the conception of a score is not available or is not ascertainable, no date is given. For objects, a single date indicates the first known date of production; where two dates appear, the first refers to the date of conception, the second to the date of first production, except where noted. Dimensions of objects are given in inches; height precedes width precedes depth. When the title of a score, an object, or a performance is in question, the title given is either the title that appears in the artist's original publication or the title referenced in primary source materials published during the period under discussion. For films, dates refer to dates of production; numbers, to the system devised by George Maciunas for compilation reels. Film titles derive from Maciunas' lists and from opening credits; where these are in conflict, the title is that which appears on the film or in the artist's own reference to the work in a publication. Countries, institutions, and personal names given are those in use during the period under discussion; festival and concert titles are also those that appear on programs and posters of the time, as determined in consultation with participants.

## CAPTIONS:

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

(FRONT COVER TEXT) EXCERPT FROM A TRANSCRIPTION OF THE VIDEOTAPE BY LARRY MILLER, “INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE MACIUNAS,” MARCH 24, 1978.

(FRONT ENDPAPER) ALISON KNOWLES AND BENJAMIN PATTERSON PERFORMING PATTERSON'S *SEMINAR 1*, NEW YORK CITY (1964). PHOTO © 1964, 1992 PETER MOORE.

(FRONT JACKET FLAP THROUGH HALF-TITLE PAGE TEXT) EXCERPT FROM DICK HIGGINS' “A CHILD'S HISTORY OF FLUXUS” (1979). FROM DICK HIGGINS' *HORIZONS: THE POETICS AND THEORY OF THE INTERMEDIA* (CARBONDALE, ILL.: SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1984). COPYRIGHT © 1984 BY RICHARD C. HIGGINS. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR.

(HALF-TITLE PAGE) OUTSIDE THE FLUXHALL/FLUXSHOP AT 359 CANAL STREET, NEW YORK CITY (1964). PHOTO © 1964, 1992 PETER MOORE.

(TITLE PAGE) GEORGE BRECHT, *VALOCHE/A FLUX TRAVEL AID* (1975). WOOD BOX WITH OBJECTS, 6 ½ x 10 ⅞ x 8 ½ OVERALL. COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER.

(BACK ENDPAPER) GEORGE MACIUNAS AT THE BANQUET IN HIS HONOR, NEW YORK CITY (1976). PHOTO © 1976 PETER MOORE.

(BACK JACKET FLAP TEXT) EXCERPT FROM BEN VAUTIER'S TEXT, “WHAT IS FLUXUS?” IN *FLASH ART*, NO. 84–85 (OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 1978).

(OPPOSITE) GEORGE MACIUNAS (TOP) PRESIDING OVER AN EVENT AT THE FLUXHALL, NEW YORK CITY (1964). PHOTO © 1964, 1992 PETER MOORE.



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## Acknowledgments

In 1989 Walker Art Center acquired a remarkable collection of more than five hundred Fluxus-related documents and objects. These boxes, books, manifestos, posters, photographs, films, and performance relics document the unconventional and largely underground activity of a wide-ranging group of artists who have been associated with Fluxus and whose art resides in the intermedia between painting, sculpture, poetry, music, and performed events. Our new collection provided the impetus for a large-scale exhibition of Fluxus. Furthermore, as a new generation of scholars has begun to explore the origins and import of Fluxus, it also seemed an appropriate time to publish a book focusing on this influential yet largely unacknowledged endeavor.

We were fortunate to receive funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, whose generous support enabled us to pursue a project of this scope. Additional support was provided by Northwest Airlines, Inc., the National Endowment for the Arts, the Lila Wallace–Reader’s Digest Fund, the Rockefeller Foundation, and Lila and Gilbert Silverman, Detroit, Michigan. This book also was made possible in part by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in support of Walker Art Center publications.

This publication and exhibition would not have been possible without the guidance and support of numerous individuals and institutions. First and foremost are the two major collections that serve as Fluxus archives. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection in Detroit, under the direction and care of its New York-based curator, Jon Hendricks, generously opened its holdings to our many research and loan requests. Inviting us to mine the contents of their encyclopedic collection, the Silvermans were our gracious hosts on several pilgrimages to Detroit. In New York and Detroit, Jon Hendricks was a patient and critical guide as we searched for a representative selection of objects and documentation. Both his expertise and his willingness to help this venture were crucial to its success. The Archiv Sohm, housed in the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, Germany, also has served as a major source of information and assistance for our project. This collection, which encompasses a wide range of objects and reference materials related to Fluxus and many other experimental art movements, was developed by the maverick collector Hanns Sohm. All those who have used the Archiv Sohm share our indebtedness to his intellectual curiosity, energy, thoroughness, and organizational ability. Under the guidance of its current director, Ina Conzen-Meairs, as well as its former director, Thomas Kellein, the Archiv Sohm readily made original source material available to our authors and curatorial staff, forming much of the groundwork for the discussions in this book and for the interpretive materials that appear in the exhibition.

We also wish to thank Barbara and Peter Moore. The value of their knowledge, insight, and firsthand experience of Fluxus and other experimental art of the period cannot be overstated. Barbara’s written and verbal accounts of Fluxus activity in New York, along with Peter’s exhaustive photographic archive of Fluxus and avant-garde performance from the 1960s to the present, constitute vitally important resources for anyone undertaking research in this area. We are grateful to them for their enthusiasm, professionalism, meticulous research, and memories.

During the early stages of our research, we invited several scholars with expertise in Fluxus to discuss our plans for this project. Karen Moss, Owen Smith, and Kristine Stiles met with members of our curatorial, educational, and editorial staff, and their initial comments and ideas helped shape this presentation. Karen has worked with us on the symposium that accompanies the exhibition and, with her assistant Jennifer Cahn, on the bibliography for this volume. Owen and Kristine have written essays for this publication; along with the four other writers who have contributed texts to this book—Simon Anderson, Andreas Huyssen, Bruce Jenkins, and Douglas Kahn—they have greatly enriched our understanding of Fluxus. In the course of their research, they have uncovered new or previously unknown materials for the book and have offered us continued guidance as the exhibition has evolved. We share with them gratitude to our editor, Janet Jenkins, whose insight, enthusiasm, and discernment served immeasurably to bring these diverse voices into harmony while retaining their strong individuality.



During the course of planning the exhibition, there were many other scholars, artists, archivists, curators, collectors, critics, gallerists, publishers, and friends of Fluxus whose contributions to the project were extremely helpful and whose acquaintance we value greatly: Salvatore Ala, New York; Erik Andersch, Neuss; Eric Andersen, Copenhagen; Michael and Ute Berger, Wiesbaden; René and Ursula Block, Berlin; Francesco Conz, Verona; Gino Di Maggio, Milan; Charles Dreyfus, Paris; Wolfgang Feelisch, Remscheid; Marcel Fleiss, Paris; Peter Frank, Los Angeles; Ken Friedman, Oslo; James A. Ganz, Philadelphia; Emily Harvey, New York; Geoffrey Hendricks, New York; Hannah Higgins, Chicago; Armin Hundertmark, Cologne; Jill Johnston, New York; Steven Leiber, San Francisco; James Lewes, Iowa City; Caroline Martin, New York; Henry Martin, Bolzano; Jonas Mekas, New York; Larry Miller, New York; Estera Milman, Iowa City; Stephen Nonack, Los Angeles; Kathy O'Dell, New York; Yoko Ono, New York; Nam June Paik, New York; Benjamin Patterson, New York; Knud Pedersen, Copenhagen; Frank Pileggi, New York; Marcia Reed, Los Angeles; Jock Reynolds, Andover; Ninon Robelin, Paris; Harry Ruhé, Amsterdam; Marvin and Ruth Sackner, Miami; Peter Schmieder, Dortmund; Christel Schüppenhauer, Cologne; Sara Seagull, New York; Carl Solway, Cincinnati; Jan van der Marck, Detroit; Ben Vautier, Nice; Kornelia von Berswordt-Wallrabe, Wiesbaden; Emmett Williams, Berlin.

Many of the above-named individuals generously parted with works from their collections for this exhibition. We are indebted, likewise, to the institutions that made major loans to our touring exhibition, including the Museum Wiesbaden; the University of California Library/Special Collections, Santa Cruz; and the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. We are grateful for their willingness to share important Fluxus works with a wide audience here and abroad.

The participation of the other arts institutions on the exhibition tour has extended the life of our project, and we are pleased to acknowledge and thank key participants at the following museums: David A. Ross, Lisa Phillips, and John Hanhardt, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Kevin E. Consey and Beryl Wright, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Robert Stearns and Sarah Rogers-Lafferty, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio; John R. Lane, John Caldwell, and Robert R. Riley, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Manuel Borja-Villel, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona; and Henry Pillsbury and Adam Weinberg, American Center, Paris. We greatly appreciate the support their trustees and staffs gave to this challenging undertaking. The Walker Art Center's board of directors also deserves special thanks for their commitment to this project.

In closing, we wish to thank our many colleagues at the Walker whose support made this project possible. We particularly wish to acknowledge the insight and discerning eye of Rosemary Furtak, the Walker's librarian, who, in the course of building up the library's holdings of Fluxus and related publications, first called our attention to the availability of the Fluxus collection that provided the impetus for this project. This material was originally gathered by Jeff Berner, a Bay Area writer who had been affiliated with Fluxus during the 1960s. We thank Martin Friedman, the Walker's former director, for his enthusiastic support of the acquisition of material that stimulated this exhibition, and his successor, Kathy Halbreich, who has been enormously supportive of the project in all its aspects. The museum's curator of performing arts, John Killacky, and curator of film/video, Bruce Jenkins, have worked closely with us to help make

this exhibition and its related events fully interdisciplinary; the success of this project is due in large part to their active collaboration. In the curatorial department, able research assistance was provided by Siri Engberg, Toby Kamps, and J. Fiona Ragheb. Sondra Anderson and Henrietta Dwyer provided invaluable help with myriad faxes, letters, telephone calls, and related correspondence that were necessary to complete this project. Walker curators Gary Garrels and Peter Boswell have offered much-needed advice throughout this process as well. Our design director, Laurie Haycock Makela, infused into this volume her own expertise and wonderful energy, which are fully evident in its pages. We thank her for sustaining that energy through the many stages of book and exhibition design. Design intern Mark Nelson and typographer Eric Malenfant, who both invested many hours in this project, deserve our thanks as well, as does Phil Freshman, the Walker's editor, whose interest and able advice supported this project throughout. We also are indebted to John Vinci for his sensitive contributions to the design and installation of the exhibition. Although he is not on the museum's staff, he spent a significant amount of time both at the Walker and at his architectural office in Chicago working on our project. We also thank Timothy Willette and the Walker's exhibition crew, under the direction of Cameron Zebrun, for overseeing this complex, multimedia installation. Finally, we salute our registrar, Tom Westbrook, for his patience, ingenuity, and good humor: he has undertaken what is surely the professional challenge of a career, overseeing the handling, packing, and shipping of more than a thousand Fluxus objects that, more often than not, defy classification. It is the unflagging support of these staff members and others in and out of the museum that has allowed us to entertain a project on the scale of *In the Spirit of Fluxus*.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes finally to the many other friends who have given both counsel and comfort during the course of our work on this book and exhibition. We are most especially grateful to our respective families, Daniel and Olivia Boone and Paul and Leon Shambroom, whose love, understanding, and support have sustained us during this project.

**Elizabeth Armstrong**  
**Joan Rothfuss**



BEN VAUTIER, *TOTAL ART MATCH-BOX* (1965), COMMERCIAL MATCHBOX WITH MATCHES, OFFSET ON CARD STOCK LABEL, 1½ x 2 x ½. THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

George  
Brecht  
Drip Music



## Foreword

As the museum approaches the end of the century and is engaged in reassessing its functions, its aesthetic values, its very place in society, Fluxus offers a useful model for considering such issues. Anticipating the directions that many cultural institutions would seek some thirty years later, it embraced a scope of activities that were at once international, innovative, and interdisciplinary. Fluxus dared to eschew the dominant aesthetic currency of the day, dispensing with the heroism of aesthetics and the individual artist and with the hegemony of painting and sculpture. Instead it mass-produced art in small boxes and alternative places as it broke down the barriers between traditional artistic disciplines.

The exhibition *In the Spirit of Fluxus* has challenged this institution in many ways. In its presentation and display, it has forced us to rethink the notion of installation. The Walker—wisely named not a “museum” but an “art center” for the ways in which films, books, music, and performances, as well as painting and sculpture, all resonate within its spaces—has a long history of encounters with challenging installations. But what to do with an exhibition that has no paintings to hang on the walls, one whose stock-in-trade rather consists of such items as a small box of dust or the instruction to “make a hole”? In this exhibition, images of light from a small projector fill a wall, the memory of a man who displayed himself in a window replaces sculpture, and a box with a hole in which to place one’s finger resists being frozen inside a vitrine.

Fluxus has challenged us as well to take another look at the history of art in this century, especially at the roots of artistic innovation. When what is considered innovative now, at the end of the twentieth century, is examined against the background of earlier avant-garde activity—against Dada at the beginning of the century, against Fluxus and its surrounding practices in the postwar years—we are forced to confront enduring questions about the nature of artistic inquiry, the relationship of art to society, and the role of innovation in the human enterprise.

Finally, Fluxus asks us to reconsider the idea of museum publication, with its usual checklist of objects, its artifacts of an exhibition that once took place. This book is not so much an exhibition catalogue as another *aspect* of the exhibition, an attempt to fill a gap in scholarship and to address Fluxus in another form. For both exhibition and publication in the “new museum” must address innovation not only in their presentation and form; they also must represent new

scholarship, new ways of thinking about their subjects. In her introductory essay, Elizabeth Armstrong sets the stage for this enterprise and introduces the other authors whose essays appear in this book. They have all bravely—and eloquently—set out to investigate a small, almost forgotten (non)movement whose simple and playful endeavor gives us occasion to consider some very serious questions about art, the museum, and life. If it is possible for the museum to be seen as something other than a temple of high culture, if it is possible to change people’s perceptions of art and of the institution, if it is possible for art scholarship to rethink its ways of seeing, and if it is possible for the museum to redefine itself, even on occasion to laugh at itself, then Fluxus is our nearest hope for achieving these goals.

Many of the works included in this exhibition were acquired for the Walker’s permanent collection under the inspired directorship of Martin Friedman, who understood better than anyone else in the museum field the overlapping power of film, performing, and visual arts to tell the story of life in the latter part of the twentieth century. However, it was Elizabeth Armstrong’s special commitment to the Fluxus artists and to their playfully subversive yet deadly serious challenges to the way museums have operated traditionally that has made this ambitious exhibition and publication possible. Her scholarship, persistence, humor, sense of urgency, and compassion have served the artists and this institution well.

**Kathy Halbreich**

Watts  
Boxes

tin cans

1972



ALISON'S GLOVES

V TRE

Future

ROPE

KOSUGI ANIMA LL



LL

Watts  
envelopes UK

# Fluxus and the Museum

by Elizabeth Armstrong



**Fluxus' goal was the journey but alas it became art.** – Willem de Ridder

On the stage in the auditorium of the Städtisches Museum in Wiesbaden, West Germany, Nam June Paik dipped his head, hands, and necktie into a bowl of ink and tomato juice, then dragged them along a length of paper (opposite). It was 1962, and Paik was a participant in what is often considered the first Fluxus festival, the Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik (Fluxus International Festival of Very New Music).<sup>1</sup> *Zen for Head* was his interpretation of a composition by fellow composer La Monte Young, whose 1960 score simply directed the performer to “Draw a straight line and follow it.” For pure shock value alone, *Zen for Head* is memorable. But this piece, which began as a composition, took form as a performance, and ultimately was preserved as an object in the Museum Wiesbaden (above), is most significantly a relic of its artistic meaning.<sup>2</sup>

The questions that *Zen for Head* raises about art are ones that this publication attempts to explore. They have to do with the role of art and artist; with the relationship between action and object, between object and museum, between art and life; and with how art is made, presented, and received. They also have to do with the boundaries of art—how these are determined and by whom.

So then, is *Zen for Head* a performance or an object? Should the work be attributed to La Monte Young, to Nam June Paik, or to both? Is anyone who interprets the Young score an artist? What was the meaning of Paik's performance? (Was it a critique of the gestural painting of an Abstract Expressionist such as Jackson Pollock? Could it be aligned with the iconoclastic performance work of the Japanese Gutai Group, some of whose members created paintings with their feet while suspended from a rope?) Is the “relic” of *Zen for Head* intrinsically valuable as a work of art and, if so, why? Paik's performance created an object that might be called a painting. But none of these terms satisfactorily describes *Zen for Head*, which falls outside of any single media category or art historical movement. The terminology needed to describe this new form—and much of the work created by Fluxus artists—has yet to be found or agreed upon, and it is one of the reasons that Fluxus has been notoriously difficult to discuss, collect, and display.

The conventions of artistic media had been in flux long before Fluxus, but one of the first to describe this development was the artist-theorist Dick Higgins. As a participant in proto-Fluxus activity in New York in the late 1950s, as well as in a number of Fluxus festivals in the early 1960s, Higgins had experienced the breakdown of traditional art forms—painting, sculpture, music, poetry—firsthand. In his landmark “Statement on Intermedia” of 1966 (pp. 172–173), he observed that contemporary artists were particularly challenged to respond to the dramatic changes in everyday life—not just in the content of their work, but in their chosen media. He created the term *intermedia* to describe a new site of artistic activity “between the media.” This notion assumed the blurring and dissolution of conventional forms of art that had begun early in the century with such movements as Futurism, Dada, and Russian Constructivism, and that had reemerged at mid-century in a diversity of movements, groups, and tendencies. These included *musique concrète*, action painting, constructionist dance, chance operations, Happenings, brutism, neo-haiku, automorphism, object music, concept art, and Fluxus.

(ABOVE) NAM JUNE PAIK, *ZEN FOR HEAD* (1962), INK AND TOMATO ON PAPER, 160 x 14. COLLECTION MUSEUM WIESBADEN.

(PRECEDING PAGE) STORAGE BOXES AND POSTERS IN THE FLUXHALL/FLUXSHOP AT 359 CANAL STREET, NEW YORK CITY (1964), PHOTO © 1964, 1992 PETER MOORE.



NAM JUNE PAIK PERFORMING LA MONTE YOUNG'S *COMPOSITION 1960 #10 TO BOB MORRIS* AS HIS *ZEN FOR HEAD* AT FLUXUS INTERNATIONALE FESTSPIELE NEUESTER MUSIK, WIESBADEN (1962). PHOTO DPA/PHOTOREPORTERS.

This bewildering array of notions and terms is found on a chart with the equally bewildering title *Diagram of Historical Development of Fluxus and Other 4 Dimensional, Aural, Optic, Olfactory, Epithelial and Tactile Art Forms* (1973).<sup>3</sup> This grandiose genealogical chart—continually under revision and always considered “incomplete” by its creator, George Maciunas—places Fluxus at the center of this century’s cultural and aesthetic upheavals. It traces a trajectory from Futurist theater to Marcel Duchamp to John Cage to Fluxus, construing twentieth-century avant-garde activity largely in terms of its relevance to Fluxus. As provocative as it undoubtedly was meant to be, the chart provides a fascinating view of artistic innovation and evolution in this century.

The name *Fluxus*, derived from the Latin word that denotes a continuous passing or flowing, suggests the fluidity between media that marks the artistic activity of the period. Called “the most radical and experimental art movement of the sixties,”<sup>4</sup> Fluxus was christened in 1961 by Maciunas. Between 1962 and 1978, the year of his death, he took it upon himself to coordinate the activities of a disparate group of artists and nonartists whose work, which drew on a multiplicity of forms and perspectives, might best be described as intermedia.

Maciunas brought enormous energy to the organization and dissemination of Fluxus: he backed and promoted its activities, marketed its ideas and objects, and gave it a wonderful name. He was also an obsessive correspondent, whose letters, lists, manifestos, and diagrams provide invaluable insight into the evolution of Fluxus.<sup>5</sup> A letter written in 1962 by Maciunas to La Monte Young (pp. 154–155), for instance, not only highlights many of the events that took place in Wiesbaden (describing Young’s score as the “line piece, which Nam June Paik performed in his usual improvisational manner”), but offers a private glimpse into the personality of its organizer and the spirit of the evening.

The *Diagram of Historical Development of Fluxus* . . . attempted to locate Fluxus in the context of avant-garde activity, but Maciunas was in fact more interested in the world outside art. Even in this chart, he considers the place of nonart forms: church processions, medieval fairs, international expositions, the three-ring circus, games, puzzles, and a “preoccupation with insignificances”—a phrase that might describe one’s first impressions of Fluxus. And in one of his most frequently quoted manifestos, “Fluxus Art-Amusement,” Maciunas states that Fluxus is “the fusion of Spike Jones, Vaudeville, gag, children’s games and Duchamp.”<sup>6</sup>

One of Maciunas’ ultimate objectives for Fluxus was to undermine the traditional role of art and artist. He hoped to demonstrate that everyone is an artist and that artists, therefore, are indispensable. His goals, from the beginning, were “social (not aesthetic)” and were concerned with “the gradual elimination of the fine arts,” which he saw as a waste of resources that could be put to more “socially constructive ends.”<sup>7</sup> The early manifesto “Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art” (pp. 156–157), first read in 1962 at the proto-Fluxus concert *Kleines Sommerfest: Après John Cage* (Little Summer Festival: After John Cage) in Wuppertal, West Germany, ends with a succinct summary of Maciunas’ agenda: “If man could experience the world, the concrete world surrounding him (from mathematical ideas to physical matter) in the same way he experiences art, there would be no need for art, artists and similar ‘nonproductive’ elements.”

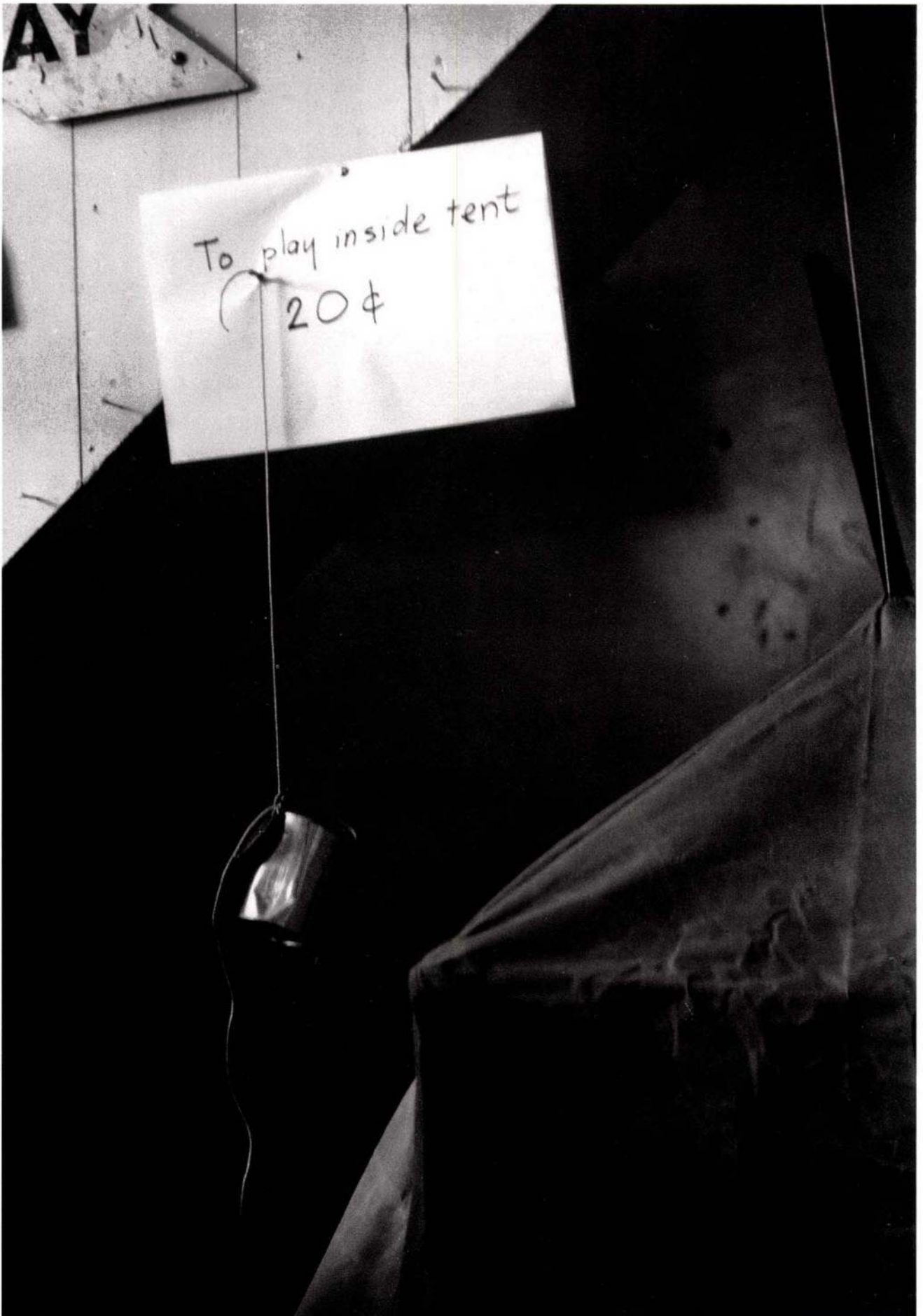
Maciunas hoped to bring the sensibilities of artistic life into the everyday. In order to close the gap between art and life—a concern shared in one form or another by many of the most creative minds of the period—he and many other Fluxus artists circumvented conventional institutions of art in an effort to reach the public directly. Working outside the “culture industry,” as it is sometimes called today, they succeeded in bypassing the museum and the art market, creating instead their own venues for performances, exhibitions, and the sale of their work. In so doing, however, they did not engage a wide audience or, what is perhaps more significant, a critical voice or champion. It has been suggested that this isolation from the artistic mainstream “reinforced the group identity of Fluxus and probably contributed to its remarkable longevity.”<sup>8</sup> A part of this longevity also may be due to the small but devoted following that has preserved, documented, and nurtured Fluxus. Ironically, the careful efforts of these collectors, exhibitors, and historians may have contributed to the almost reverential aura that has grown up around the body of Fluxus material and its history.

Given that Fluxus intentionally positioned itself outside mainstream art institutions, an endeavor in which it was extremely successful, it might seem even more ironic to present Fluxus in the museum. Thirty years later, however, museums are beginning to raise many of the same questions that have been asked by Fluxus artists, especially questions having to do with the nature of art and with previous cultural assumptions about artistic quality, value, and meaning. At the same time, the study of art has been undergoing a radical reevaluation. As art has moved away from traditional aesthetic concerns in the late twentieth century, as the conventions of artistic media have been strained and dissolved, art history has looked to other disciplines for methodology and critical approaches—becoming, in a sense, itself “intermedial.” Works like those created by Fluxus artists clearly defy traditional approaches. They call into question how quality is judged in art and, consequently, how art is defined. Fluxus thus becomes a provocative site for investigation not only by the museum, but by a new generation of art historians and scholars.

**BY THE PRESENT CERTIFICATE**  
**I BEN DECLARE AUTHENTIC**  
**WORK OF ART** .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
**DATE**                    **(I DONT SIGN)**

BEN VAUTIER, *BY THE PRESENT CERTIFICATE* (n.d., 1960s), OFFSET ON CARD STOCK, 2 1/8 x 2 1/8. THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.





AN ATTRACTION IN THE FLUXSHOP AT 359 CANAL STREET, NEW YORK CITY (1964). PHOTO © 1964, 1992 PETER MOORE.

The contributors to this publication draw on a wide range of methodologies as they explore Fluxus in relation to the larger complex of ideas, interactions, and events with which it is inextricably connected. Andreas Huyssen was asked to place Fluxus in the broader cultural context of the period, to look at the artistic, social, and political climate out of which Fluxus emerged. Four other writers—Simon Anderson, Kristine Stiles, Douglas Kahn, and Bruce Jenkins—were invited to think about Fluxus from the particular vantage point of their primary disciplines: visual arts, performance, music, and film. To introduce the Fluxus endeavor, Owen Smith was asked to provide a brief history of its activities.

Smith's chronology traces the unfolding of Fluxus performances and publications in the 1960s and 1970s, carefully reconstructing the complex itinerary of Fluxus events and inventorying its eclectic production. In the course of this chronological review, Smith examines the historical origins of Fluxus and the conceptual foundations on which it is based: its debt to Marcel Duchamp and John Cage, its relation to the postwar avant-gardes that precede and surround Fluxus, its commitment to collectivism and to decommo­difying and deaestheticizing art. Smith's text provides a point of reference for subsequent discussions of specific Fluxus activity in this book as it tours the myriad forms taken by Fluxus throughout its development.

As Smith points out, the first use of the word *Fluxus* was in reference to a publication. Although this was to have been a magazine of sorts, Fluxus publications came to include not only books and newspapers, but also a variety of multiples—three-dimensional objects produced in quantities, or editions. In his essay, Simon Anderson looks at the radicalism of Maciunas' approach to publication—from his very definition of the term to his idiosyncratic means of production and his subversive notions of distribution. Anderson argues that the history of Fluxus publications provides a mirror of the history of Fluxus undertakings and ideology in general.

Indeed, one of the most unique aspects of Fluxus—and one clearly reflected in Anderson's analysis of the Fluxus publications—was the "free license" that artists gave one another in interpreting their works. Many Fluxus performances and objects began as a text or composition—such as Young's "Draw a straight line and follow it"—which was open to interpretation by anyone at any time. In this spirit, Maciunas solicited artists' ideas, which he then published in a variety of forms as "Fluxus Art-Amusement." Over the years, dozens of artists submitted suggestions,<sup>9</sup> which he freely altered and produced in editions that were emphatically neither unique nor precious (qualities usually attributed to art). Ben Vautier, for example, the French-based artist described by Maciunas as "100% Fluxman," declared that "everything is art." Taking the notion of Duchamp's readymades to its logical conclusion, he made up certificates (p. 16) that could authenticate as art such mundane objects as empty wine bottles, dirty water, dust, blank postcards, holes, and even himself. Maciunas put such ideas into production, making objects in quantity from inexpensive, easily obtainable materials and offering them cheaply—practices meant to undermine the status of art as commodity. As Anderson suggests, Fluxus publications "in many subtle ways, rewrote the notion of conception, creation, and consumption."



BEN VAUTIER, *GOD* (CIRCA 1961), GLASS BOTTLE, GUMMED LABEL, INK, 11 ¼ x 3 ¾ x 3 ¾. A CONCEPTUAL PRECURSOR TO (FAR RIGHT) THE FLUXUS EDITION *FLUXBOX CONTAINING GOD*, PLASTIC BOX, OFFSET ON PAPER LABEL, GLUE, 4 x 4 ¼ x ¾. BOTH THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

While Anderson sites publishing at the core of Fluxus, Kristine Stiles argues that its roots are in performance, and that, over the years, an undue emphasis placed on Fluxus objects and publications has eclipsed its performative base. The aestheticization of Fluxus objects furthermore has threatened to "erase the critical social dimension of the Fluxus enterprise." One of Stiles' primary concerns is to restore the humanity inherent in Fluxus performance. In this context, she discusses the centrality of the body in the works of Fluxus artists, which prefigures the development of performance and body art, and she explores such vital human characteristics as race, gender, and humor. The fact that many Fluxus artists dealt with issues of race and gender in their work barely has been touched upon in previous studies of Fluxus. Stiles considers, for instance, how racism might have been affecting the work of Benjamin Patterson, an African-American artist who participated in the early European Fluxus festivals; she also discusses the work of Yoko Ono and Shigeko Kubota, two Asian women involved in Fluxus, in terms of its proto-feminist stance.

Humor was a "concern" shared by most Fluxus artists. Jokes and gags were especially prevalent in the work of male Fluxus artists (there's a sort of boys' juvenilia here) and key to the work of Maciunas. While the use of humor might be seen as an assault on conventions or an effort to break down audience (and participant) inhibitions, Stiles examines Fluxus humor primarily in terms of its ability to provide psychological insight and social critique. The mundane and ordinary acts of everyday life form an important base for Fluxus humor, and Stiles remarks on the ways in which Fluxus artists revealed "the extraordinary that remains latent in the undisclosed ordinary."

Stiles also examines the evolution of Fluxus performance as it moved from deceptively simple, focused actions to more complex and collective rituals and ceremonies. She muses that Fluxus might even include the activities of its collectors, recorders, and presenters, who have become something like an extended family—a view that recalls Maciunas' early ideals for the group, in which everyday tasks and livelihoods are considered as aesthetic acts.

In her attempt to uncover the social discourse of Fluxus, Stiles analyzes the philosophical moorings of its performance. In the process, she draws on a variety of disciplines including anthropology, sociology, psychology, Eastern religions, ethnology, and phenomenology. She discusses Fluxus in terms of a new cultural paradigm, related to the breakdown of boundaries between artistic media, cultural conventions, and even political states, that is part of a larger movement toward a global humanism.

In contrast to the wide-ranging approach Stiles takes in discussing Fluxus performance, Douglas Kahn's essay on Fluxus music examines the endeavor largely in terms of the evolution of twentieth-century audio art. He finds the roots for specific Fluxus performances in such early innovators as Erik Satie, Guillaume Apollinaire, Tristan Tzara, Marcel Duchamp, and Luigi Russolo, but his discussion focuses on the seminal influence of John Cage, a father figure to many Fluxus artists. Kahn suggests that Cage's concept of music, in which virtually every kind of sound could be potentially musical, was so radical as to have almost exhausted any further invention. This conceptual endgame to which Kahn refers, however, may have inadvertently freed Fluxus performers from the modernist treadmill of artistic innovation as they merrily participated in a hybrid form of performance that drew from and reacted against the strictures of music, theater, and the visual arts.



Kahn provides more than sixty examples of performances by twenty-two artists that stretch even Cage's definition of music. La Monte Young, for example, who had been an adherent of Cage's new theories and was something of a link between Cage and Fluxus, was willing to consider as music not only those sounds that are inaudible, but ones that are merely conceivable (the sound of a butterfly). Kahn notes that most Fluxus artists, however, were less interested in testing the limits of musical sound than in subverting the conventions of musical performance. Fluxus events were frequently referred to as "concerts," and the rituals of the traditional musicale were often observed only to be overturned. The Fluxus proclivity for sight gags is especially evident in this aspect of the work, as, for example, in a Robert Watts score that calls for small objects or fluids to fall out of a French horn when the performer takes a bow, or in a George Brecht solo musical composition that simply instructs a performer to polish a stringed instrument. Ultimately, Kahn concedes that Fluxus artists allowed any performance to fall under the rubric of music and that Fluxus concerts transcended the bounds of music altogether.

Bruce Jenkins also looks at Fluxus from the viewpoint of a single discipline—through the lens of its filmic activity. Perhaps the least-known aspect of Fluxus, film, he points out, is nonetheless the ultimate reproducible medium, with the closest ties of all artistic media to popular culture. It consequently held enormous appeal for George Maciunas, who devoted himself to the production and marketing of the Fluxfilms with the same zeal he brought to all Fluxus endeavors. As Jenkins suggests, the films are "a productive metaphor for articulating Fluxus strategies and principles." In the same way that Fluxus performances were technologically simple and emphasized everyday events, Fluxfilms attempted to pare down the filmmaking process to its most fundamental elements—light, film, motion, and sometimes image—and to focus on the commonplace. Jenkins describes Jackson Mac Low's idea for a film that simply involved setting up a camera on a tripod and focusing it on a tree (a mountain, a flower, or a lake would do equally well), turning on the camera, and leaving it for any number of hours. The de-emphasis of individual authorship and personal content was as much a challenge to vanguard film practice of the day as Fluxus performances were to such contemporaneous artistic experiments as Viennese Actionism and Happenings.

The form of Jenkins' essay, which tackles the subject of Fluxus film in three different chapters or "takes," itself questions the notion of authorship and the authority of any one interpretation. His first take looks at the Fluxfilms in the context of avant-garde cinema, which they may have influenced and which they surely parody. In a second take, Jenkins describes the mechanics and poetics of the films in production. His third approach considers the Fluxfilms as the birth of an entirely new form, in which a piece such as Nam June Paik's *Zen for Film* is seen as "an immaculate conception of the cinema."

In the final essay in the book, Andreas Huyssen attempts to put the activities of Fluxus into a broader context—provocatively glancing back to the early origins of Fluxus as he leaps forward to speculate on its current reception. As Huyssen explores the formative identity of Fluxus, he discusses three aspects of primary importance: its unique amalgam of German-American postwar sensibilities; its Dadaist heritage (due in part to the "rediscovery" of Dada in the 1950s) with its

rebellion against high art; and its roots in experimental music of the twentieth century, especially the influence of Cage. As Huyssen homes in on Fluxus as a postwar, intermedial avant-garde he fixes its position "in that crucial fluid space between modernism and postmodernism." Here he considers the paradoxical dilemma of an artistic non-movement that tried to elude its avant-garde heritage and meld with everyday life, but that now has emerged as a major influence on subsequent generations of aesthetic practitioners.

If Fluxus was "the most radical and experimental art movement of the sixties," as we have been told, why has it been virtually unacknowledged in art histories and cultural histories of the last thirty years? And, if its failure to be recognized was, as Huyssen suggests, its greatest success, what will happen to Fluxus as it is embraced by the museum? Hopefully this book and exhibition will offer insight into Fluxus without limiting it, and will open up new areas of study rather than putting them to rest. "The importance of our relationship," wrote Emmett Williams, the concrete poet who was one of the earliest participants in Fluxus, "lay in the way we were involved in developing something for the future, something that was directly connected to human society. . . . The form that Fluxus was trying to promote was first of all a form of openness: openness, you might say, practically to the point of dissolution."<sup>10</sup> The dissolution of boundaries between traditional art forms, between high art and low, between art and nonart, and, yes, between art and life, was prefigured by Fluxus and the welter of alternative movements, ideas, and tendencies that have fermented and emerged as this century has progressed. Along the way, Fluxus has become a fascinating paradigm of this artistic and cultural transformation.

**Elizabeth Armstrong, a curator at the Walker Art Center, is co-organizer of the exhibition *In the Spirit of Fluxus*. Other recent exhibitions she has curated include *Ann Hamilton/David Ireland*; *Cross-References: Sculpture into Photography*; and *Jasper Johns: Printed Symbols*.**



ALISON KNOWLES AND BEN VAUTIER PERFORMING KNOWLES' *MUSIC BY ALISON* AT STREET EVENTS IN NEW YORK CITY (1964). PHOTO GEORGE MACIUNAS, COURTESY THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

#### Notes

- 1 Paik credits Jean-Pierre Wilhelm, one of the "kingmakers of the German art world in the late 1950s," with making this group concert possible: it was Wilhelm who introduced George Maciunas, the festival's organizer, to the Städtisches Museum. See Nam June Paik, *Beuys Vox 1961–86*, exh. cat. (Seoul, Korea: Won Gallery and Hyundai Gallery, n.d.), p. 39.
- 2 The notion that a work of art need not be an aesthetic object (or even an object), but may be a "souvenir or relic of its artistic meaning" is proposed by Timothy Binkley in describing Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing*. See Binkley's "Piece: Contra Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 35, no. 3 (Spring 1977), p. 265.
- 3 A reproduction of this chart appears in Jon Hendricks, ed., *Fluxus Codex* (Detroit and New York: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1988), pp. 329–332.
- 4 This is the title of Harry Ruhé's early book on Fluxus, *Fluxus, the most radical and experimental art movement of the sixties* (Amsterdam: 'A', 1979).
- 5 Two collections serve as major archives of Fluxus documents and objects: the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection in Detroit, a comprehensive collection devoted exclusively to Fluxus, and the Archiv Sohm, a collection encompassing Fluxus as well as many other experimental art movements, developed by Hanns Sohm and now housed in the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.

- 6 George Maciunas, "Fluxus Art-Amusement" (1965); repr. in Jon Hendricks, ed., *Fluxus etc.: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, exh. cat. (Bloomfield Hills, Mich.: Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum, 1981), p. 9.
- 7 George Maciunas, in a letter to Tomas Schmit, quoted in Clive Phillpot and Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus: Selections from the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1988), p. 24.
- 8 Hannah Higgins, in her 1992 unpublished proposal for a Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, on the context and reception of Fluxus.
- 9 For a detailed compendium of Fluxus objects and projects—both realized and unrealized—see the listings contained throughout *Fluxus Codex* (supra, note 3).
- 10 Emmett Williams, "St. George and the Fluxus Dragons," in Klaus Schrenk, ed., *Aufbrüche—Manifeste, Manifestationen: Positionen in der bildenden Kunst zu Beginn der 60er Jahre in Berlin, Düsseldorf und München / Upheavals—Manifestos, Manifestations: Conceptions in the Arts at the Beginning of the Sixties, Berlin, Düsseldorf, Munich* (Cologne: DuMont, 1984), p. 29.





**Fluxus:  
A Brief  
History**

and Other Fictions

by Owen F. Smith

If the history of Fluxus is complex and its aesthetics and philosophy difficult to define, this condition is not entirely accidental. For Fluxus artists saw themselves neither as part of a movement nor as proponents of a specific style—possibly not even as a “group”—but principally as adherents of an alternative attitude toward art making, culture, and life. The intentional fuzziness of the boundaries of Fluxus was explained, in characteristically direct terms, by George Brecht, one of the important early Fluxus artists:

Each of us had his own ideas about what Fluxus was and so much the better. That way it'll take longer to bury us. For me, Fluxus was a group of people who got along with each other and who were interested in each other's work and personality.<sup>1</sup>

To compound the elusiveness of its composition and aims, Fluxus, which was most active between 1962 and 1978, underwent a continual process of evolution and change. Indeterminacy, in fact, was built into the name itself, coined by George Maciunas in 1961 as the title for a proposed magazine that would publish works by experimental artists, writers, and musicians,<sup>2</sup> but soon adopted to describe a range of performance, music, and other activities subsumed under the Fluxus rubric. Maciunas, the architect, designer, and principal organizer of many of the cooperative Fluxus activities,<sup>3</sup> often promoted Fluxus with a definition that highlighted its dynamic nature. In various early manifestos, Maciunas used the actual dictionary definition of *flux* as part of the definition of Fluxus: “Act of flowing: a continuous moving on or passing by, as of a flowing stream; a continuing succession of changes” (below).<sup>4</sup> Defined in this way, as a continually shifting process, contradictions that were inherent to all Fluxus activities and ideology became a natural part of its impulse.

*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 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.*

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 ro-in.

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

Maciunas and others used the name *Fluxus* both as a descriptive term for the collective activities of a varying community of individuals (which included not only visual artists, musicians, and performers, but the occasional chemist, mathematician, and economist) and as a term that expressed a generalized attitude regarding the relationship of life and art, the role of art and artists in society, and the nature of the art object itself—an attitude that not only shaped the activities of Fluxus, but influenced many surrounding and subsequent artists.

The development of Fluxus from the initial idea of a publication to a sponsor of performance activities and a producer of artists' works can, in the broadest terms, be broken into three somewhat overlapping chronological and conceptual stages: the proto-Fluxus period and the period of Fluxus festivals and event performances from 1961 to 1964; the period of Fluxus publishing and multiples from 1964 to 1970; and the period of late Fluxus performances from 1970 to 1978. These three phases of Fluxus should be seen as neither precise nor mutually exclusive, but as periods of primary emphasis. For in all these phases, performances were presented and publications or multiples were produced. It is the importance of George Maciunas' organizational activities that is the basis for ending an historical overview of Fluxus in 1978, the year of Maciunas' death. This does not suggest, however, that all Fluxus activity ceased in that year or that Fluxus as an artistic influence has indeed ended at all: some would contend that Fluxus, in effect, still lives on.<sup>5</sup>

**Proto-Fluxus and Early Fluxus Performance: 1961–1964**

Fluxus can be said to have begun before it officially started. For although Fluxus as a name associated with a group of artists and their activities did not begin to be used publicly until 1962, there were several significant events prior to this time, in 1960 and 1961, that must

(LEFT) GEORGE MACIUNAS, *MANIFESTO* (1963). OFFSET ON PAPER, 8 1/4 x 5 7/8. THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

(PRECEDING PAGE) GEORGE MACIUNAS AT THE BANQUET IN HIS HONOR, NEW YORK CITY (1976). PHOTO © 1976 PETER MOORE.





BENJAMIN PATTERSON PERFORMING HIS *VARIATIONS FOR DOUBLE BASS* AT KLEINES SOMMERFEST; APRÈS JOHN CAGE, WUPPERTAL (1962). PHOTOS ROLF JÄHRLING, COURTESY THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.



in some ways be considered a part of Fluxus history—not only because of the kinds of performances presented, but, more important, because these presentations brought together a number of artists who would later come to be associated under the Fluxus banner. These events in New York City included performances of the Audio Visual Group of Dick Higgins and Al Hansen; the Chambers Street series, organized by La Monte Young and held at the loft of Yoko Ono, that presented works by Henry Flynt, Jackson Mac Low, Philip Corner, and Toshi Ichiyanagi;<sup>6</sup> and performances held at George Maciunas' AG Gallery that included presentations by a number of the artists involved with the Chambers Street series, as well as by Higgins, and offered taped presentations of works by John Cage and the electronic composer Richard Maxfield. The very first use of the word *Fluxus*, in fact, was in the announcement for one of the AG Gallery events entitled *Musica Antiqua et Nova*: "Entry contribution of \$3 will help to publish FLUXUS magazine."<sup>7</sup>

The idea for a Fluxus magazine had been inspired in part by Maciunas' involvement in the preparation, during late 1960 and early 1961, of La Monte Young's *An Anthology*, a collection of experimental music and event scores, essays, and poetry eventually published by Young and Jackson Mac Low in 1963.<sup>8</sup> It was Maciunas' plan to produce a serial publication, similar in scope to the Young project, to be entitled

*Fluxus*. Before these plans could be further developed, however, Maciunas left the United States and traveled to Europe in the fall of 1961, where he worked as a designer for the United States Air Force.<sup>9</sup> He took with him the plans for the Fluxus magazine, including a large number of scores Young had collected but not included in *An Anthology*.

During the first several months of his European stay, Maciunas became exposed to the work of a wide variety of artists who were developing ideas and forms of expression similar to those of the artists with whom he had become acquainted in the United States. Through the musician (and later video artist) Nam June Paik, who was then living in West Germany, Maciunas was directly or indirectly introduced to a number of significant European musicians and artists including Karlheinz Stockhausen, Mary Bauermeister, Karl Erik Welin, Wolf Vostell, Jean-Pierre Wilhelm, and to the Americans Emmett Williams and Benjamin Patterson.

In June of 1962, Maciunas participated in two key proto-Fluxus performances in West Germany. *Kleines Sommerfest: Après John Cage* (Little Summer Festival: After John Cage) was a one-evening event held in conjunction with an unrelated exhibition of paintings at Rolf Jährling's Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal. The evening included the reading of Maciunas' text "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art" (pp. 156–157), the distribution of a "Brochure/Prospectus" detailing his publishing plans for Fluxus (p. 43), and the performance of new musical works by Higgins, Maciunas, Patterson (above), and others.<sup>10</sup> One week later, Maciunas participated in *Neo-Dada in der*



SIMULTANEOUS PERFORMANCE AT NEO-DADA IN DER MUSIK, DÜSSELDORF (1962). PHOTO © MANFRED LEVE.

Musik, organized by Nam June Paik at the Kammerspiele in Düsseldorf. The concert included several action music pieces by Paik, most notably his influential violin destruction piece *One for Violin Solo* (p. 118), as well as the simultaneous performance of a number of separate pieces (above) that included works by Paik, Maciunas, Vostell, Patterson, and Tomas Schmit, all of whom would later become active in Fluxus. These "concerts," as they were called, became very important to the development of the Fluxus group, partly for the performances they contained—examples of work then being developed in the United States, Japan, and Europe that the artists themselves called "action music"<sup>11</sup>—and, more important, because they helped to form a working relationship among Maciunas, Paik, Patterson, and Vostell.

In part because of his exposure to these expanding developments in music, poetry, the visual arts, and performance activities, Maciunas enlarged his idea for a Fluxus publication (which he now called Fluxus Yearbooks and, alternatively, Fluxus Yearboxes). Working principally with Paik in Europe and Dick Higgins through correspondence, in late 1961 he began to develop the idea of Fluxus as a sponsoring organization to support and present the new artistic developments worldwide, both in publications and in performance "festivals." He planned a series of concerts of "Very New Music" to be presented under the name of Fluxus, initially intended to be held in various cities in Europe, the United States, and Asia from 1962 through 1964 as a form of advertising for the Fluxus publications.

The European Fluxus festivals began with a month-long series of performances held in Wiesbaden, West Germany, in September 1962. It was in association with this series, consisting of fourteen concerts spread over four weekends and titled the Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik (Fluxus International Festival of Very New Music), that the word *Fluxus* was first used in reference to the organizing and sponsoring association of a public performance presentation. The poster for the event (p. 146) promised evenings devoted to "piano compositions," "compositions for other instruments and voices," "taped music and film," and "concrete music & happenings," and was to include performances of compositions by Higgins, Paik, Young, Brecht, Maciunas, and other key Fluxus artists (Robert Filliou, Alison Knowles, Emmett Williams, and Jackson Mac Low), as well as pieces by John Cage, Pierre Mercure, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, among others.<sup>12</sup> One of the most notorious performances, presented over the course of several evenings, was of Philip Corner's *Piano Activities* (pp.100–101), in which a group of participants took liberties with Corner's instructions for various manipulations of a grand piano, eventually dismantling it and auctioning off the pieces. Also notable was Paik's very physical interpretation of La Monte Young's spare score for *Composition 1960 #10 to Bob Morris* (p. 15).

# Festum Fluxorum FLUXUS

## MUSIK UND ANTIMUSIK DAS INSTRUMENTALE THEATER

Staatliche Kunstakademie  
Düsseldorf, Eiskellerstraße  
am 2. und 3. Februar 20 Uhr  
als ein Colloquium für die  
Studenten der Akademie

**George Maciunas**  
**Nam June Paik**  
**Emmet Williams**  
**Benjamin Patterson**  
*Takenbisa Kosugi*  
**Dick Higgins**  
**Robert Watts**  
Jed Curtis  
**Dieter Hülsmanns**  
*George Brecht*  
**Jackson Mac Low**  
**Wolf Vostell**  
*Jean Pierre Wilbelm*  
**Frank Trowbridge**  
**Terry Riley**  
**Tomas Schmit**  
*Gyorgy Ligeti*  
**Raoul Hausmann**  
**Caspari**  
Robert Filliou

**Daniel Spoerri**  
**Allison Knowles**  
**Bruno Maderna**  
*Mixed & Hanien*  
**La Monte Young**  
**Henry Flynt**  
**Richard Maxfield**  
**John Cage**  
Yoko Ono  
**Jozef Patkowski**  
**Joseph Byrd**  
*Joseph Beuys*  
**Griffith Rose**  
**Philip Corner**  
*Achov Mr. Keroochev*  
**Kenjiro Ezaki**  
*Jasuno Tone*  
**Lucia Dlugoszewski**  
**Istvan Anhalt**  
**Jörgen Friissholm**

**Toshi Ichyanagi**  
**Cornelius Cardew**  
**Pär Ahlborn**  
*Gberasim Luca*  
**Brion Gysin**  
*Stan Vanderbeek*  
**Yoriaki Matsudaira**  
**Simone Morris**  
**Sylvano Bussotti**  
**Musika Vitalis**  
**Jak K. Spek**  
**Frederic Rzewski**  
**K. Penderecki**  
**J. Stasulenas**  
*V. Landbergis*  
**A. Salcius**  
**Kuniharu Akiyama**  
**Joji Kuri**  
**Tori Takemitsu**  
**Arthur Kropcke**

GEORGE MACIUNAS, POSTER FOR FESTUM FLUXORUM, DÜSSELDORF (1963), OFFSET ON PAPER, 19 1/2 x 9 1/4. THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

After the performances in Wiesbaden concluded, the series of festivals realized by Maciunas continued—now under the title Festum Fluxorum—in Copenhagen (November 1962) (above, bottom right), Paris (December 1962), and Düsseldorf (February 1963) (above, left); other events were held in Amsterdam (Fluxus Festival, June 1963) (above, top right) and The Hague (Fluxus Festival, June 1963). They ended in the summer of 1963 with a week-long series in Nice entitled the Fluxus Festival of Total Art and Comportment.<sup>13</sup>

Uitnodiging

AMSTEL 47 PRESENTEERT

# FLUXUS FESTIVAL

THEATRE COMPOSITIONS  
STREET COMPOSITIONS  
EXHIBITS  
ELECTRONIC MUSIC

George Maciunas, Nam June Paik, Tomas Schmit, Emmett Williams, Robert Watts, Dick Higgins, Allison Knowles, Daniel Spoerri, George Brecht, Arthur Kropcke, Gyorgy Ligeti, Toshi Ichyanagi, Jackson Mac Low, Benjamin Patterson, La Monte Young, Richard Maxfield, Ben Vautier, John Cage, Walter de Maria, Bernd Reissmann, Peter Brötzmann, Manfred Laurens Montwé, Willem de Ridder

Slechts 2 manifestaties in Nederland  
ZONDAG 23 JUNI 1963 - AANVANG 8 UUR

Amsterdam - Hypokriterion Theater Roeterstraat (lijn 10)

VRIDAG 28 JUNI 1963 - AANVANG 8 UUR

Den Haag - Bleijenburg 16 (achter Stadsschouburg) (Lancetot Samson)

POSTER FOR FLUXUS FESTIVAL, AMSTERDAM (1963), OFFSET ON PAPER, 16 1/4 x 24 1/4. THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.



CARTOON OF FESTUM FLUXORUM (1962) FROM THE NEWSPAPER POLITIKEN (COPENHAGEN). THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

Posters and programs were printed for all of the Fluxus festivals of this period, listing the names of pieces to be performed and often the artists who were to perform them. The actual festivals, however, never followed the printed programs exactly, and their scope, as well as the nature of their content, changed across the course of the presentations. While the first festival in Wiesbaden had consisted of fourteen concerts, only five concerts were presented in Copenhagen and Paris; Düsseldorf consisted of two concerts; and one concert was presented in each of Amsterdam and The Hague. Starting out as presentations of new music, action music, happenings, events, and recorded or taped music, as the festival series progressed the works became much more tightly focused on events and action music, and the presentations became increasingly compact. In a letter to Paik, Maciunas enumerated the kinds of changes he felt were needed:



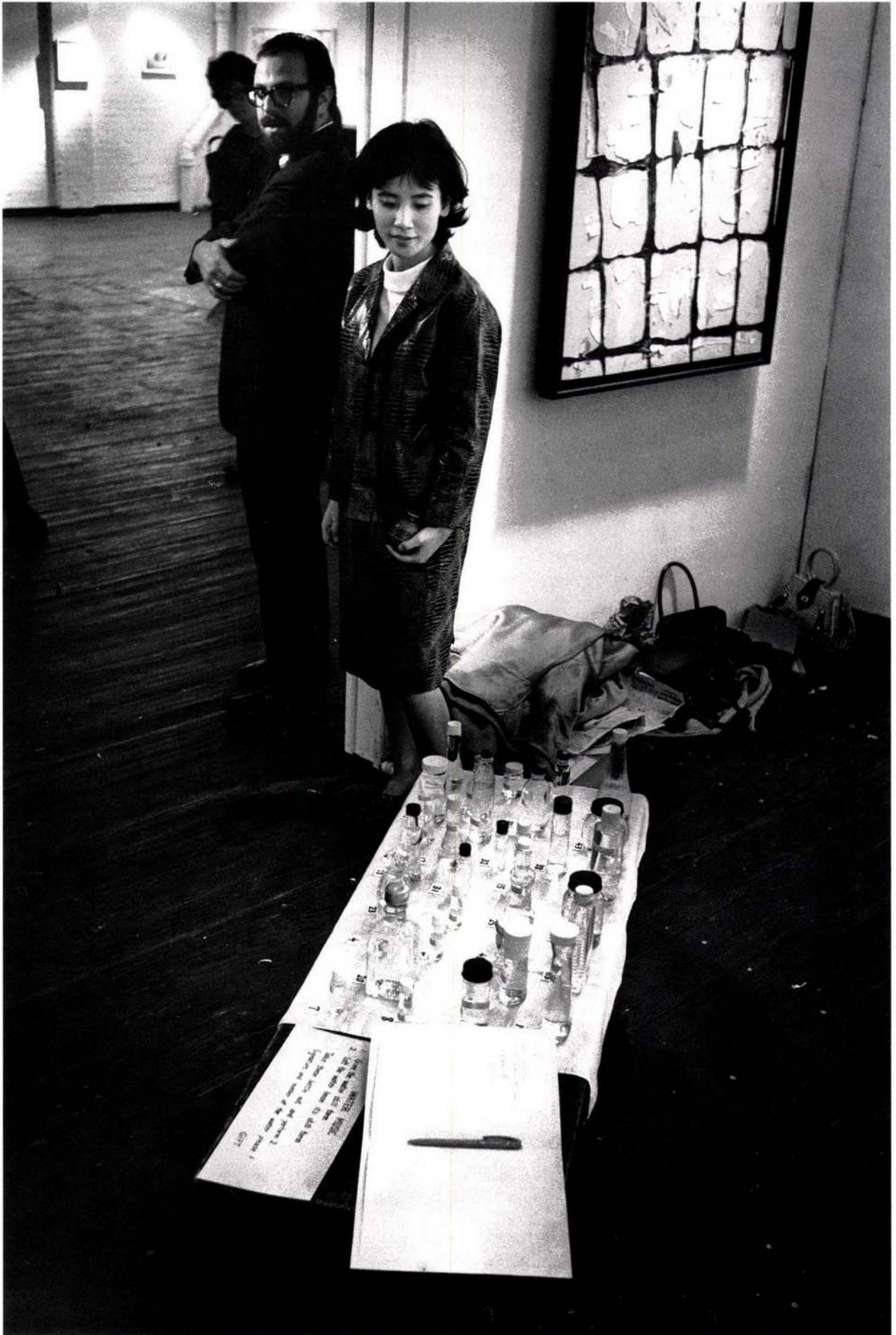
ALISON KNOWLES AND BEN VAUTIER PERFORMING TAKEHISA KOSUGI'S *ANIMA 1*, FLUXUS CONCERTS AT FLUXHALL/FLUXSHOP, NEW YORK CITY (1964). PHOTO © 1964, 1992 PETER MOORE.

I think Fluxus festivals and book must lean more towards neodada—action music—concrete music at least. Therefore, in future, I think we should eliminate all non-action, non neo-dada, non-concrete pieces. . . . We cannot include them all—so we must draw the borderline [*sic*] somewhere. . . . You will agree that fluxus is not interested in all that is produced today. Stockhausen may be as famous as Cage, but Cage has originality while Stockhausen has not. Fluxus is interested in originality, fresh thinking not imitations or overworked forms.<sup>14</sup>

The works that would become “standard” Fluxus pieces were mostly of a particular type—concrete, simply-structured events, dryly humorous, and unabashedly literal—such as George Brecht’s *Word Event* (in which the word *exit* was written or posted in the performance space) (pp. 140–141), Emmett Williams’ *Counting Songs* (in which the audience was counted in a variety of ways) (p. 109), and Robert Watts’ *2 inches* (in which a ribbon was stretched across the stage and then cut). Maciunas and the other artists associated with the organization of these concerts increasingly realized that it was important for the Fluxus festivals to present a strong focus on a particular performance form—the event. Additionally, in Nice, Maciunas, working with the artist and local organizer of the festival Ben Vautier, expanded the format to include events presented in street performances, rather than only in theater or staged settings.<sup>15</sup>

After Maciunas returned to New York City in the fall of 1963, he continued to organize and carry out a number of other presentations. A series of a dozen small-scale concerts, presented under the title Fluxus Concerts, was held in April and May of 1964 at the Fluxhall/Fluxshop on Canal Street. The twelve concerts included evenings devoted to the work of a single artist (Robert Watts, Dick Higgins, Ay-O, Nam June Paik), alternating with group presentations of works by various artists in the mode of the earlier European concerts (above). The following month, Maciunas organized the first Fluxus Symphony Orchestra Concert, held at the Carnegie Recital Hall on June 27. The program included more than two dozen orchestral works, performed by a group of tuxedoed Fluxus artists (the Fluxus Orchestra, later known as the Fluxorchestra) and conducted by the Japanese avant-garde composer and musician Kuniharu Akiyama. In the fall of 1964, the Perpetual Fluxus Festival opened at the Washington Square Gallery. The series was conceived as a year-long, ongoing event that would present the work of a different artist each night (opposite), as well as other presentations of “Fluxus movies” and “Fluxus Olympic Games.”

This initial period of Fluxus came to an end in 1964, partially as the result of growing tensions among some of the members of Fluxus. Particularly bitter was the controversy that stemmed from Maciunas and Henry Flynt’s picket against the “serious culture” represented by the performance of Stockhausen’s music-theater event *Originale* at the Second Annual New York Avant-Garde Festival in August of that year (despite the participation of a number of Fluxus-associated artists).<sup>16</sup> Several participants who previously had been active in Fluxus began to disassociate themselves, and the makeup of Fluxus dramatically changed by the end of the year, bringing the first phase of its development to a close.



MIEKO (CHIEKO) SHIOMI WITH HER *WATER MUSIC* DURING HER CONCERT AT THE PERPETUAL FLUXUS FESTIVAL, NEW YORK CITY (1964). PHOTO © 1964, 1992 PETER MOORE.

Fluxus, in this early period, was just one of a number of artistic groups—including Cobra, Letterism, International Situationism, Nouveau Réalisme, and Group ZERO in Europe, Gutai and Neo Dada Organizer in Japan, Happenings in the United States—that developed between the late 1940s and early 1960s as a response to, and reaction against, prevailing social, cultural, and artistic models. Numerous artists in all fields of creative expression had become increasingly dissatisfied with the current dominant forms of modernist expression and their underlying principles. They even began to question the very role of the artist and the nature of art works: Is an artist someone who has special talents that make her or him better than other people? Is a work of art intrinsically valuable? Does a work of art have to be made by an “artist”? Does a work of art have to be an object? The consideration of such questions was not new, but represented a reemergence, in somewhat altered form, of issues first raised by the avant-gardes of Futurism, Dada, and Surrealism in the first half of the twentieth century. As a result of the reexploration of such questions in the late 1940s and 1950s, ideas from the earlier avant-gardes formed a crucial theoretical background for the developments associated with Fluxus.

The Dadaists, in the early part of the century, believed that culture had become self-referential and limited by the underlying philosophical constructs of rational thought. Art and culture, in their estimation, had become disconnected from the freedoms inherent in life. It was their realization that the potential power of art existed in its very relationship to life—not to the comfortable life of the bourgeoisie nor to the life of rationalized cause-and-effect relationships, however, but to the ubiquitous contingencies of life: irrationality, chance, inherent contradiction. It was to the techniques of Dada for incorporating these aspects of life into art (but not to its content) that Fluxus responded.<sup>17</sup>

Especially influential to Fluxus were the ideas of the artist and philosopher Marcel Duchamp (associated both with Dada and Surrealism) and the composer and teacher John Cage (an admirer of Duchamp who maintained an interest both in Dada and in non-Western, nonrationalized thought, and who passed on these interests to a new generation of young, postwar artists). As Ben Vautier wrote:

Without Cage, Marcel Duchamp, and Dada, Fluxus would not exist. . . . Fluxus exists and creates from the knowledge of this post-Duchamp (the ready-made) and post-Cage (the depersonalization of the artist) situation.<sup>18</sup>

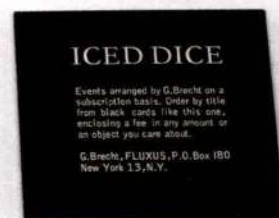
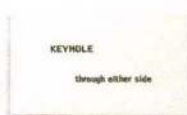
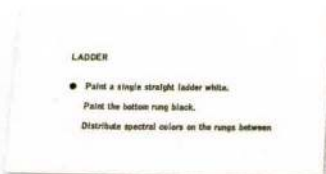
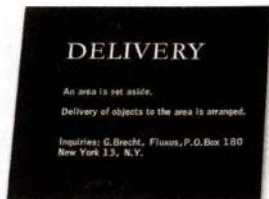
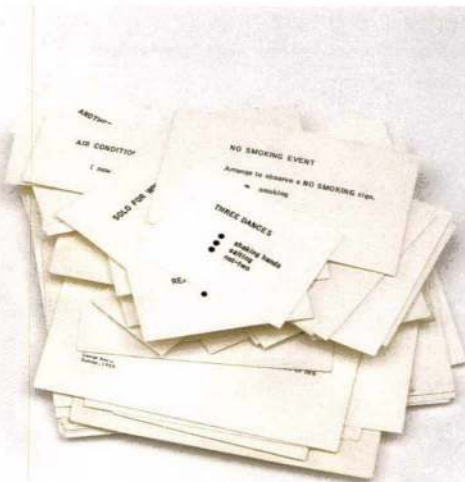
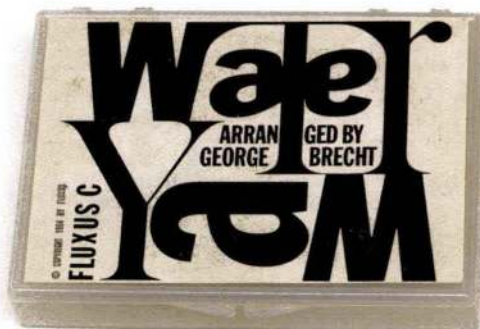
Although Duchamp and Cage shared a number of ideas about art and art making, their specific underlying concerns, in fact, differed. Dada, and especially Duchamp, had sought to problematize issues of art and art making; Cage instead sought new creative directions to replace the old. Duchamp sought to set in motion a never-ending process of questioning; Cage desired to make people aware of the power of looking at the world in an open-ended way. Duchamp came to his point of view through a skeptical reconsideration of the validity of Cartesian thought; and Cage came to his through the study of non-Western thought, particularly Zen. But their ideas converge markedly on two important points: first, that artists are not “advocates of high truth”; second, that the effect of personality and taste should be removed from the art-making process.

Such principles had formed the crucial core of what was developing in the 1950s and 1960s into a view of art based not on universals, but on a shifting core of ideas. Beginning in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Cobra Group explored the potential of antirationalist creation in painting and literature as a form of revolution. Letterism, on the other hand, sought to compress older forms of art, particularly poetry, music, and visual art, into newer, synthesized forms. In the mid- and late 1950s this amalgam of ideas was expanded: the political and social implications of art were developed by the Letterist International and International Situationism movements, while new, intra-arts forms and the nonrational were explored by Piero Manzoni in Italy, Yves Klein in France, and by Arman, Niki de Saint Phalle, and François Dufrene, who would later be grouped under the rubric Nouveau Réalisme.<sup>19</sup> Fluxus had not evolved directly from any of these groups, but artists associated with Fluxus later gave new forms of expression to many of their ideas.<sup>20</sup>

Despite its connections with surrounding practices, however, even in this early period Fluxus began to take on the characteristics that would increasingly set it apart from other new arts developments of the 1960s. Dick Higgins codified nine criteria for the Fluxus enterprise: internationalism, experimentalism, iconoclasm, intermedia, the resolution of the art/life dichotomy, implicativeness, play or gags, ephemerality, and specificity.<sup>21</sup> The early concerts of Fluxus performance marked out this distinctive terrain in each of its aspects: the artists who participated came not only from a range of backgrounds, but from a variety of countries including America, Japan, Germany, Korea, France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, and Czechoslovakia—this makeup representing not just a chance meeting of kindred spirits, but a conscious opposition within Fluxus to nationalistic tendencies; it operated freely in the “intermedia” as bodily presentation, sound, image, and language became the shifting sites of artistic exploration; the boundary between art and life narrowed as both the content of performance and the skills needed to execute it moved toward the everyday; and the event-structure became a simple vehicle for playfulness, humor, open-ended speculation, and presentation of the concrete.

### **Publishing and Multiples: 1964–1970**

Although Maciunas had developed extensive plans for a variety of publications during the first phase of Fluxus, it was not until 1964 and later that the majority of Fluxus objects was actually produced.<sup>22</sup> As the publication plans had developed, Maciunas began to shift the emphasis of the projects from collective, anthologized publications to works by single artists. Among the great variety of projects proposed were works by Ben Vautier, Robert Watts, George Brecht, Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi, Ken Friedman, Yoko Ono, Ay-O, Takako Saito, and Maciunas himself. Many of the earliest Fluxus publications such as Brecht’s *Water Yam* (1963) (opposite, top) or Shiomi’s *Events and Games* (circa 1964), while resembling objects or multiples, had been intended to be open-ended works that could be expanded: texts and scores were thus printed on individual cards and enclosed in boxes rather than printed and bound in more traditional publication forms. Even the most object-like works produced during this period, such as Friedman’s *A Flux Corsage* (1966/circa 1969) (opposite, bottom) or Vautier’s *Flux Mystery Food* (1963/1966), were seen as publications of sorts, or at least that was the operative principle of their production. Although the artists supplied the original ideas, it was Maciunas who designed and produced the array of objects, publications, and multiples (p. 32).



GEORGE BRECHT, *WATER YAM* (1963), PLASTIC BOX WITH OFFSET ON PAPER LABEL, CARDS, 5 1/2 x 7 1/8 x 1 1/8. COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER.



KEN FRIEDMAN, *A FLUX CORSAGE* (1966/CIRCA 1969), PLASTIC BOX WITH OFFSET ON PAPER LABEL, COMMERCIAL SEED PACKET WITH SEEDS, 4 3/4 x 4 x 3/16. COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER.

# FLUX SHOP & MAIL ORDER WAREHOUSE

### FLUX PRICE LIST



FUTURE FLUXSHOP TO OPEN IN SEPTEMBER 1965

FLUX - HQ MAILORDERS, FACTORY WAREHOUSE, FLUXFESTS P.O. BOX 180, CANAL ST. STATION NEW YORK, NY 10013

FLUXSHOP & FLUXFESTS - NEW YORK CINEMATIQUE

FLUXSHOP & FLUXFESTS - EUROPE NORTH WILLEM DE RIDDER, POSTBOX 2045 AMSTERDAM HOLLAND  
FLUXSHOP & FLUXFESTS - EUROPE SOUTH BEN VAUTIER, 32 RUE TONDOUTI DE L'ESCARENE NICE, FRANCE  
FLUXSHOP - JAPAN (PROVISIONAL) c/o KUNIHARU AKIYAMA, 3-814 MATSUBARACHO, SETAGAYAKU, TOKYO, JAPAN.

IMPORTANT! PERSONS WISHING TO REMAIN ON FLUX-MAILING LIST SHOULD CONFIRM BY WRITING TO FLUX - HQ

**FLUXUS 1**  
1964 ANTHOLOGY, book events, objects, compositions, essays by Ayo, George Brecht, comp. Robert Filliou, Dick Higgins, Joe Jones, Alison Knowles, Takekazu Kusunoki, Shigeko Kubota, Gyorgy Ligeti, George Moustakos, Jackson Mac Low, Ben Patterson, T. Tamas Schmitt, Chieko Shiomi, Ben Vautier, Robert Watts, Emmett Williams, La Monte Young.  
Limited edition of 100, hand assembled & bound with bolts. \$20



**FLUXUS 2** 1965 ANTHOLOGY, film film loops with eye film projector, sound objects, puzzles, ball games, paper events, toys, by Ayo, George Brecht, James Rieley, Walter de Maria, Willem de Ridder, Dick Higgins, Joe Jones, Frederic Liebman, Yoko Ono, Ben Patterson, Chieko Shiomi, Ben Vautier, Robert Watts.  
Limited edition of 100, available by Sept. in partitioned wood box, hinged top. \$30

## FLUX KIT



FLUXKIT containing following fluxus - publications: (also available separately)

- FLUXUS c WATER YAM, arranged by George Brecht (complete set of 68 events through 1964) in plastic box. \$5
- FLUXUS cc V TRE newspaper, edited by the Fluxus Editorial Council; past issues, ea. \$1 future issues, ea. 25¢
- FLUXUS d1 GEORGE BRECHT; ball puzzle. ea \$3
- FLUXUS d2 GEORGE BRECHT; name kit \$4
- FLUXUS d3 GEORGE BRECHT; cloud scissors. \$12
- FLUXUS d4 GEORGE BRECHT; card game event prospectus (omni cards) \$3
- FLUXUS d5 FLUXCHESS or FLUXORGAN \$20
- FLUXUS d6 CHIEKO SHIOMI; events in box. \$3
- FLUXUS d6a CHIEKO SHIOMI; water music, bottle \$1
- FLUXUS d6b NAM JUANE PAIK; zen for film 14mm tape, in plastic box. \$3
- FLUXUS d7 LA MONTE YOUNG; compositions 1961 \$1
- FLUXUS d8 BEN PATTERTON; instruction 2 \$3
- FLUXUS d9 DICK HIGGINS; Invocation of Caracas & Boulders; 16mm color film loop. \$10
- FLUXUS d10 ROBERT WATTS; card game set of 12 (4 suits of J, Q, K) \$1
- FLUXUS d11 ROBERT WATTS; pocketcards, ea. 10¢
- FLUXUS d12 ROBERT WATTS; Prospero's stamps, sheet of 100 different stamps. \$1
- FLUXUS d13 ROBERT WATTS; fingerpiano in box. \$2
- FLUXUS d14 GEORGE BRECHT; Las Olas; sheet of 12 (4 suits of J, Q, K) in plastic box. \$5
- FLUXUS d15 ROBERT WATTS; rocks in compartmented box, marked by their weight in grams. \$3
- FLUXUS d16 JOE JONES; mechanical music box. \$6
- FLUXUS d17 BEN VAUTIER; dirty water, 2oz. bottle \$1
- FLUXUS d18 BEN VAUTIER; collection of holes, \$3
- FLUXUS d19 ALISON KNOWLES; scanned tear rolls \$3
- FLUXUS d20 AYO; finger box. \$6
- FLUXUS d21 TAKEKAZU KUSUNOKI; events in box. \$2
- FLUXUS d22 ERIC ANDERSEN; 50 opera. \$4
- FLUXUS d23 BOX FROM THE EAST; ea. different. \$2
- FLUXUS d24 MYSTERIOUS ANIMAL; in bottle. \$10
- FLUXKIT all items in partitioned suitcase \$100

## FLUXCHESS



- FLUXUS 4 FLUXCHESS; pieces identified by sound or weight or smell etc.
- FLUXUS a1 small chess, liquids \$30
  - FLUXUS a2 small chess, solids \$30
  - FLUXUS a3 board chess, \$20
  - FLUXUS a4 weight chess, board as scale \$40
  - FLUXUS a5 jewel chess \$40
  - FLUXUS a6 nut & bolt chess \$20
  - FLUXUS a7 FLUXUS at bearing ball checkers \$30
  - FLUXUS m FLUXCHAIRS; 10 variant, \$30 to \$40



## GAMES

- FLUXUS d1 GEORGE BRECHT; ball puzzle. \$3
- FLUXUS d2 GEORGE BRECHT; name kit. \$4
- FLUXUS d3 GEORGE BRECHT; zen puzzle. \$3
- FLUXUS d4 GEORGE BRECHT; word puzzles. \$3
- FLUXUS d5 GEORGE BRECHT; board puzzle. \$3
- FLUXUS d6 GEORGE BRECHT; bread puzzle. \$3
- FLUXUS d7 GEORGE BRECHT; black ball puzzle. \$3
- FLUXUS d8 GEORGE BRECHT; inflated stone, puzzle in plastic box. \$3
- FLUXUS c3a GEORGE BRECHT, ball and entrance music, on tape \$2
- FLUXUS c3b GEORGE BRECHT, relocation, score-prospectus \$04

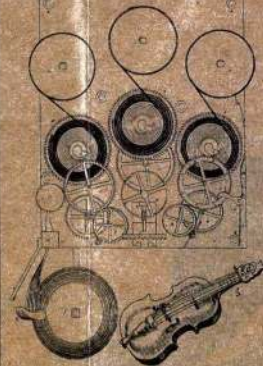
## CHIEKO SHIOMI

- FLUXUS 4 CHIEKO SHIOMI; "endless box" \$20
- FLUXUS 4b CHIEKO SHIOMI; spatial box, 70 word locations indicated by flags pinned to map board, not sold, but exchanged for objects.
- FLUXUS 4c LA MONTE YOUNG; music box in suitcase 10 different word movements. \$150
- FLUXUS 4d BEN PATTERTON; dance instructions \$2

## ROBERT WATTS

- FLUXUS 11 ROBERT WATTS; egg kit, egg making tools & materials in suitcase. \$10

## JOE JONES

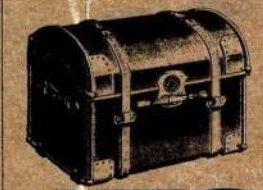


## MUSIC MACHINES

- FLUXUS m1 JOE JONES; music machines \$100
- FLUXUS m2 JOE JONES; music box w/ ratchet with crank \$100
- FLUXUS m3 JOE JONES; music box w/ 2 electric motors \$160

## MUSIC BOXES

- FLUXUS m1 JOE JONES; radio hats \$30 to \$80
- FLUXUS m2 JOE JONES; violin in bird cage \$50
- FLUXUS m3 JOE JONES; music box-tonal studies \$20



## AYO

- FLUXUS a AYO; hand-tied box \$20
- FLUXUS a1 AYO; finger box SUITCASE with 16 different wood finger boxes. \$120
- FLUXUS a2 AYO; air sculpture \$100
- FLUXUS a3 AYO; rain machine, 4 variants, \$50, \$100, \$150 & \$200
- FLUXUS a4 AYO; human body \$500

- FLUXUS 10a JAMES RIDGLE; mind event poster \$3
- FLUXUS 10b series - movies by GEORGE LANDOW \$50
- FLUXUS 10c ARE ERA; 3 min. film \$50
- FLUXUS 10d BUCK ROBEAT at the Playboy Club; 1.5 min. film \$40
- FLUXUS 10e INSPECTION; 100 8mm FLUXUS film FLEWING FALCON; 3 min. 16mm color, with sound. \$150
- FLUXUS 10f same movies made to order.

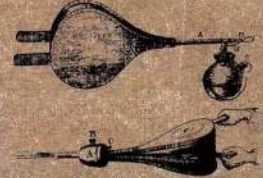
## BEN VAUTIER



- FLUXUS 11 BEN VAUTIER; DIRTY WATER; 2oz. bottle, \$5
- 1oz. bottle, \$5



## ALISON KNOWLES



## FLUXORGAN



- FLUXUS 1 manual, 20 sounds in suitcase. \$50
- FLUXUS 2 manual, 30 sounds in suitcase. \$90
- FLUXUS 3 electrical, 20 sounds in suitcase. \$150
- FLUXUS 4 electrical, 40 sounds in suitcase. \$250
- FLUXUS 5 portable console, keyboard \$250
- FLUXUS 6 console, keyboard. \$600



- FLUXUS 6 CHIEKO SHIOMI; disappearing music for tape. 1.5 min. film. 1 min. \$20
- FLUXUS 6a NAM JUANE PAIK; zen for film 16mm, 20 min. s.w. no sound. \$50

## NEW!

- 1965 PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE BY OCTOBER
- FLUXUS 11 RED CENTER; a bundle of events and exhibits or newspaper, wrapped in fabric-kerchief and rope, w/ Shigeko Kubota. \$4
- FLUXUS 12 BARBARA MOORE; flux rock pot, collection of ropes in a pot. \$4
- FLUXUS 13a DANIEL SPOERRI; landscape 21" x 25", full-size reproduction of each variation from the "21 Variations on a meal" in 1965 the following variations will be available: Arman, Duchamp, Patterson & Pollock/magnificence. Limited edition of 100, printed on linen. each tablet, one variation \$4

## NEW!

- ITEMS NOT IN STOCK, DELIVERY 1 TO 4 MONTHS
- FLUXUS 14 ERIC ANDERSEN; opera 48 \$5
- FLUXUS 15 ERIC ANDERSEN; opera 49, film \$30
- FLUXUS 16 ERIC ANDERSEN; opera 50, film \$40
- FLUXUS 17 ERIC ANDERSEN; opera 51, film \$100



## GEORGE BRECHT

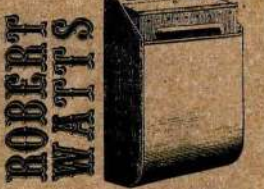
- FLUXUS 18 GEORGE BRECHT; semiotics \$30 and up, flags \$50 key, buttons, event objects, staff signs, oil of carves, mounted \$25 and up, set of two \$40
- Available with following legends: air, (arrow), set of 2; both neither, better guide, dance, set of 2; day night, dust, earth, meeting, edge memory, and exit, set of 2; fact, fiction, four, forget this, from, limit, listen, location, meeting, middle, mind shade, nine years, Monday, no smoking, no restrooms, no talk, question, rain rock, try, remember this, five was, room, silence, smoke, soap, start, surprise signs, set of 2; thing, thought, two, with.



- FLUXUS 19 GEORGE BRECHT; suitcase or trunk, packed, ready for traveling. \$50 and up
- FLUXUS 20 GEORGE BRECHT; furniture, with or without objects. \$100 prices on request
- FLUXUS 21 GEORGE BRECHT; hardware, supplied as is, ready for use. \$1 and up bolts, nails, brushes, brooms, laundry, house numbers, locks, toilet, floats, screws, tools, bathers, mousetrap, where practical. \$5 and up
- FLUXUS 22 GEORGE BRECHT; locator sign. Oil on canvas, with directions for use. \$40 specially painted or otherwise prepared, or otherwise prepared. \$150
- FLUXUS 23 GEORGE BRECHT; locator sign. Oil on canvas, 6" x 6", 12" x 12" & 18" x 18" \$35
- FLUXUS 24 GEORGE BRECHT; door events; complete doors, signs, locks, doorbells, contains 4 signs etc. prices on request
- FLUXUS 25 GEORGE BRECHT; rug; handwritten catalogue, illustrated \$10
- FLUXUS 26 GEORGE BRECHT; rug; handwritten catalogue, illustrated \$10
- FLUXUS 27 GEORGE BRECHT; card games \$100
- FLUXUS 28 GEORGE BRECHT; card games \$100



- FLUXUS 29 GEORGE BRECHT; boxes, some are containers and some aren't. Small, simple, standardized as a laboratory series of firm-wood, engraved-metal, leather etc. None are empty, though not all are filled. \$10 & up



## ROBERT WATTS

- FLUXUS 30 ROBERT WATTS; a to z series. (a) pens 25¢, (b) pencils 10¢, (c) photographs \$1 to \$2, 50 each \$1 & up, (d) tapes \$8, (e) yards \$2 & up, (f) tickets \$2 & up, (g) (h) (i) (j) (k) (l) (m) (n) (o) (p) (q) (r) (s) (t) (u) (v) (w) (x) (y) (z) (aa) (ab) (ac) (ad) (ae) (af) (ag) (ah) (ai) (aj) (ak) (al) (am) (an) (ao) (ap) (aq) (ar) (as) (at) (au) (av) (aw) (ax) (ay) (az) (ba) (bb) (bc) (bd) (be) (bf) (bg) (bh) (bi) (bj) (bk) (bl) (bm) (bn) (bo) (bp) (bq) (br) (bs) (bt) (bu) (bv) (bw) (bx) (by) (bz) (ca) (cb) (cc) (cd) (ce) (cf) (cg) (ch) (ci) (cj) (ck) (cl) (cm) (cn) (co) (cp) (cq) (cr) (cs) (ct) (cu) (cv) (cw) (cx) (cy) (cz) (da) (db) (dc) (dd) (de) (df) (dg) (dh) (di) (dj) (dk) (dl) (dm) (dn) (do) (dp) (dq) (dr) (ds) (dt) (du) (dv) (dw) (dx) (dy) (dz) (ea) (eb) (ec) (ed) (ee) (ef) (eg) (eh) (ei) (ej) (ek) (el) (em) (en) (eo) (ep) (eq) (er) (es) (et) (eu) (ev) (ew) (ex) (ey) (ez) (fa) (fb) (fc) (fd) (fe) (ff) (fg) (fh) (fi) (fj) (fk) (fl) (fm) (fn) (fo) (fp) (fq) (fr) (fs) (ft) (fu) (fv) (fw) (fx) (fy) (fz) (ga) 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## ERIC ANDERSEN

- FLUXUS 1 ERIC ANDERSEN; opera 48 \$5
- FLUXUS 2 ERIC ANDERSEN; opera 49, film \$30
- FLUXUS 3 ERIC ANDERSEN; opera 50, film \$40
- FLUXUS 4 ERIC ANDERSEN; opera 51, film \$100



## ARTHUR KOPCKE

- FLUXUS 1 ARTHUR KOPCKE; "bobas", picture riddle, mounted, colored \$50 & up
- FLUXUS 2 ARTHUR KOPCKE; "chessmates", picture riddle, painted, colored, \$50 & up
- FLUXUS 3 ARTHUR KOPCKE; The animals, "book 2", 20 pictures, colored, \$50 & up
- FLUXUS 4 ARTHUR KOPCKE; samples with no value painted, colored, \$50 & up
- FLUXUS 5 ARTHUR KOPCKE; essays, poems, letters, in German and Dutch. \$5
- FLUXUS 6 ARTHUR KOPCKE; films: copperplate et al. mesh milk mag. 1.5 min. 35 the day. 5 min. \$12 film, 3 min. \$12 parts in cross-sections, 3 min. \$12
- FLUXUS 7 surprises, chess, summons \$2
- FLUXUS 8 ARTHUR KOPCKE & ROBERT FILLIOU; pop-art \$10
- FLUXUS 9 WILHELM DE RIDDER; salt per sound \$3
- FLUXUS 10 WILHELM DE RIDDER; invitation for flower, prices on request \$100





SIMULTANEOUS PERFORMANCE OF YOKO ONO'S *SKY PIECE TO JESUS CHRIST* AND *PIECE FOR LA MONTE YOUNG* 1965 BY THE FLUXORCHESTRA AT CARNEGIE RECITAL HALL, NEW YORK CITY (1965). PHOTO © 1965 PETER MOORE.

During this period, Fluxus also produced nine issues of the newspaper *V TRE*; the *Fluxkit*, a collection of individual Fluxus works and publications contained in a briefcase; a series of Fluxfilms; and the anthology publications *Fluxus 1* and *Flux Year Box 2*, which had grown out of Maciunas' original plans for the Fluxus Yearboxes. Meanwhile, in New York, Fluxus concerts and performance events continued as well. In 1965, the second Fluxorchestra concert was held at the Carnegie Recital Hall (above) and Maciunas attempted to revive the Perpetual Fluxus Festivals (now called the Perpetual Fluxfests and held at the Film-Makers' Cinematheque). In Europe there were also a number of performances presented under the name *Fluxus* by Ben Vautier, Eric Andersen, Willem de Ridder, and others. Most of these presentations were a continuation of the concert format of the performances from 1963 and 1964.<sup>23</sup>

It was in this second phase that Maciunas and other artists began to develop a new distribution system in conjunction with Fluxus. At his Canal Street loft in New York City, Maciunas set up the first of several Fluxshops in order to sell the various publications being produced. The shop, however, was a rather unsuccessful venture: Maciunas later stated (perhaps hyperbolically) that not a single item was sold during the first year the store was open.<sup>24</sup> In an attempt to create a more viable means of distribution, Maciunas broadened his New York enterprise to include what he called a Fluxus Mail-Order Warehouse. In addition, he helped establish several Fluxshops outside New York: Willem de Ridder's European Mail-Order Warehouse and Fluxshop in Amsterdam (pp. 38–39); Ken Friedman's Fluxshop in California; and George Brecht and Robert Filliou's *La Cedille Qui Sourit*, a store in southern France that sold Fluxus publications and multiples, among other things. During this middle period of Fluxus, Maciunas also began another large-scale venture, the establishment of Fluxhouse cooperative buildings for artists in the SoHo area of New York, the first of which was opened in 1967 at 80 Wooster Street. Maciunas' plan was to buy older, rundown buildings and to rehabilitate them for artists' use. This was uniquely Maciunas' project, and while he did not consider it a part of Fluxus,<sup>25</sup> it did symbolize Maciunas' own view of a form of collective action and the kind of work an artist might accomplish in lieu of the "useless" production of art.

Fluxus, in effect, had begun as a collective—according to Dick Higgins, “because there were so few ways open to us to present our work.”<sup>26</sup> The necessity of collective functioning was of primary importance to Maciunas, who proclaimed in the mid-1960s:

Fluxus is not an individual impresario & if each does not help another collectively by promoting each other, the collective would lose its identity as a collective and become individuals again, each needing to be promoted individually.<sup>27</sup>

Many of the artists associated with Fluxus shared Maciunas’ notion that Fluxus should operate as a “united front,” and even though Maciunas’ personal vision of a more politicized Fluxus collective was never agreed to by a good number of the participants, Fluxus nonetheless operated collectively, as a “community,” with all participants helping to form its sensibilities and direct its development.<sup>28</sup>

The original impetus for the Fluxus publications (and, in a sense, the festivals themselves) was the dissatisfaction of many artists with available distribution mechanisms for their work. The various Fluxshops and Flux Mail-Order Warehouses were directly aimed at establishing new means for distributing works and publications. In a statement from 1978, Nam June Paik elaborated on the significance of Fluxus as a distribution mechanism:

Marx gave much thought about the dialectics of the production and the production medium. He had thought rather simply that if workers (producers) OWNED the production’s medium, everything would be fine. He did not give creative room to the DISTRIBUTION system. The problem of the art world in the ‘60s and ‘70s is that although the artist owns the production’s medium, such as paint or brush, even sometimes a printing press, they are excluded from the highly centralized DISTRIBUTION system of the art world.

George Maciunas’ Genius is the early detection of this post-Marxistic situation and he tried to seize *not only* the production’s medium *but also* the DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM of the art world. (Paik’s emphasis)<sup>29</sup>

The various distribution approaches used by Maciunas and Fluxus were direct attempts to circumvent what was felt to be the elitist nature of museum and gallery systems and to make Fluxus objects and performances potentially available to anyone.

Most of the artists associated with Fluxus shared the belief that the art world had become overly restrictive and too dependent on a social elite, that works of art had become commodities, and that the role of the artist had devolved into a mere profession. Even Jackson Mac Low, whose works were not overtly political, admitted in a letter to Dick Higgins that “serious culture” had become problematic:

I’m disgusted by its corruption & commercialization, & I agree that certain kinds of art, music & literature have acquired completely wrong kinds of prestige, & that far too many people have been bullied & bulldozed into trying to “succeed in the arts.”<sup>30</sup>

Fluxus represented for many artists (and not just the more politically concerned ones such as Schmit, Maciunas, Higgins, Paik, and Andersen) an egalitarian alternative to the then-current art scene—one that would be less ego-driven and more focused on producing

the kinds of works and events that could act as nonprogrammatic means of education. As Maciunas put it, in order to “establish [an artist’s] nonprofessional, nonparasitic, nonelite status in society, he must demonstrate own dispensability, he must demonstrate self-sufficiency of the audience, he must demonstrate that anything can substitute [for] art and anyone can do it.”<sup>31</sup>

Armed with this attitude, many Fluxus performances and objects sought to deconstruct established notions about the fine arts, both in the manner of their creation and in their manifestation. In addition to the depersonalization of the creative act and an emphasis on collectivism, many Fluxus works were consciously unpretentious as Fluxus artists endeavored to create works with “no commodity or institutional value.”<sup>32</sup> Performances, by nature, are difficult to view as commodities; but even Fluxus objects and publications were intended to be noncommodifiable in this sense—not to be made, bought, or sold as precious or unique objects. Maciunas’ hope, although he never achieved his intended level of production, had been to mass produce all of the Fluxus works so that it would be impossible, or at least very difficult, to commodify them—for the intention of most Fluxus artists was to produce works that would circumvent the traditional equation of art with rarity and uniqueness.

As a means of opposing art’s exclusiveness, Fluxus publications and works most often utilized commercially produced and found materials with few or no special qualities. Per Kirkeby’s *4 Flux Drinks* (1967) contains four Lipton or Lyons tea bags, Maciunas’ *Burglary Fluxkit* (circa 1970) contains an assortment of old found keys, and Robert Watts’ *Light Flux Kit* (1972) (below) contains a number of different light bulbs, among other things. These elements were all contained in commercially produced plastic boxes, with printed labels designed by Maciunas—and none possessed, either individually or in combination, the traditional artistic elements of craft value.

So while the second phase of Fluxus shifted its primary focus from performance to object, Fluxus principles remained constant: an international cast of participants, rejection of both the artist and art as privileged cultural entities, an insistence on the concrete relationship of art to life, eschewal of traditional boundaries between media, reliance on the minimal, and an affection for humor.



ROBERT WATTS, *LIGHT FLUX KIT* (n.d., 1960s). PROTOTYPE FOR THE 1972 FLUXUS EDITION, WOOD BOX, LIGHT BULBS, MIRROR, 4 x 15 ¼ x 2 ¾. THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.



PERFORMANCE OF GEORGE MACIUNAS' *BLOW SOCCER* (?) AT THE FLUX-MASS, FLUX-SPORTS, AND FLUX-SHOW, NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY (1970). PHOTO © 1970 PETER MOORE.

### Late Fluxus Performance: 1970–1978

The third phase of Fluxus was marked by a renewed focus on performance. This shift was again partially a result of a new influx of participants: Larry Miller, Geoffrey Hendricks, Sara Seagull, and others. Even though some new multiples and other objects were created and the previously developed offerings continued to be produced on demand, these activities became secondary to performance—but performance of a very different kind than that which characterized the earlier period. In contrast to the concerts of simply structured event pieces or action music of the early 1960s, performances of the later years drew less distinction between performer and audience, as more elaborate collective activities came to replace the individual, artist-scored event. These interactive presentations included such events as the three-part festival entitled Flux-Mass, Flux-Sports, and Flux-Show, held at Douglass College in 1970. They might even be extended to include such Fluxus object-events as the *Flux-Labyrinth*, a participatory maze constructed by George Maciunas and Larry Miller for the 1976 exhibition in Berlin, *New York-Downtown Manhattan: SoHo*, in which exhibition viewers themselves became participants in an ongoing performance of sorts.

The Flux-Sports activities (sometimes referred to as the Fluxolympics by Maciunas) consisted of such unorthodox events as a “100 yard race while drinking vodka,” a “100 yard candle carrying dash,” “crowd wrestling in confined spaces,” and “soccer with ping



NAM JUNE PAIK GIVING A FLUX-TOUR, NEW YORK CITY (1976). PHOTO © 1976 BARBARA MOORE.

pong ball pushed by blow tubes” (above, top), as well as a number of other events that were takeoffs on existing sports such as boxing and tennis.<sup>33</sup> Other Fluxus activities that were parodies of nonart performance included a series of Fluxtours in 1976 of curbs, public restrooms, and other sites in the SoHo area of New York City (above). This more open-ended view of late Fluxus performance was also manifested in a number of New Year’s Eve Fluxfests and other gatherings.



PERFORMANCE OF GEORGE MACIUNAS' UNTITLED MARCHING PIECE AT FLUX SNOW EVENT, NEW MARLBOROUGH, MASSACHUSETTS (1977). PHOTO © 1977 PETER MOORE.

Performance works that were at one time event pieces based on daily activities became supplanted in these late Fluxus actions by activities that, while making reference to the earlier event form, often became indistinguishable from daily life altogether. This quality is demonstrated in the description by Brian Buczak, one of the participants in some of these later Fluxus activities, of "events" that were enacted at the Flux Snow Event in January of 1977 (above):

My favorite event [was] the search in the snow for Jean Brown. Next came that great shopping trip with all those pickles.

Jean Brown's snow search piece was a perfect prelude to my get lost, you're all wet piece which I had planned for the next day. All went perfectly. I wasn't found and the ice gave way just as I had thought I had crossed the pond without falling in. . . . In a similar tone since then, I have performed two new pieces called "Falling down on the icy sidewalk" Parts one and two. They consisted of slipping and falling down on the sidewalk when least expecting to do so.<sup>34</sup>

The lack of framing in this piece, clearly evident in Buczak's statement, demonstrates the recognition in some later Fluxus actions and events of the performative aspects of *all* activity – even when such activity is not separated and presented as "performance." While at first glance some of the later Fluxus events seem to resemble semi-private activities or parties, it was precisely in these events and gatherings that the performance activities of Fluxus came closest to one of the central aims of its agenda: the merging of art and life, or the abandonment of art. With a minimum of self-conscious performance, these later Fluxus events became a celebration of the unpretentious pleasures to be found in life.

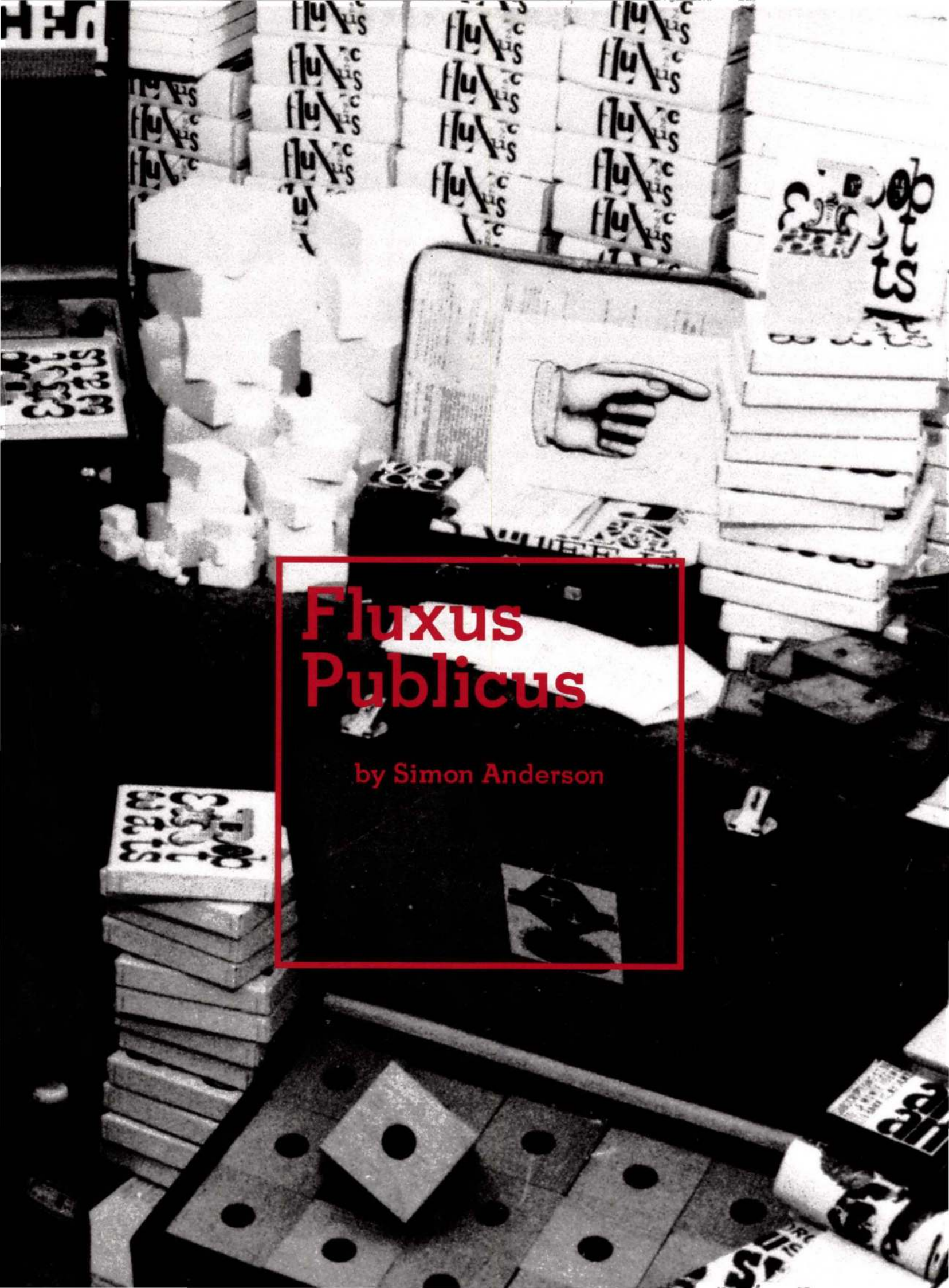
Even though a certain aspect of Fluxus activities does come to an end with the close of the third phase in 1978, it is wrong to state or to infer that all Fluxus activities ended in this year. Some Fluxus artists such as Ken Friedman would in fact argue that we are now in a fourth or even fifth phase of Fluxus. Whatever the case, it is true that Fluxus did not simply end in 1978. For Fluxus is more than a group of people, a type of object, music, performance, or film – Fluxus is also a world view. This conceptual aspect of Fluxus posits a view of the world and its operations that celebrates an absence of higher meaning or a unified conceptual framework, while simultaneously stressing the act of this very celebration. Ultimately, Fluxus does not refer to a style or even a procedure as such, but to the presence of a totality of social activities and a desire to participate in life without fixed goals or definitive characteristics. For many artists associated with Fluxus, their works and performances were intended to transgress boundaries, decentralize their own activities, and gradually lead to the elimination of the category of fine art. Fluxus was, and still is, a manifestation of the rejection of art as a profession or a means to make a living. Fluxus embodied the desire of artists to direct their energies toward the recognition and celebration of life, not art. As this attitudinal aspect of Fluxus developed it continuously moved toward a more open-ended enjoyment of life and, in this sense, Fluxus continues to the present.

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## Notes

- 1 From an interview with George Brecht by Irmeline Lebeer; repr. in Henry Martin, *An Introduction to George Brecht's Book of the Tumbler on Fire* (Milan: Multhipla edizioni, 1978), p. 86.
- 2 It is likely that the word *Fluxus* was taken from *fluxers*, a term used to refer to the pre-Socratic philosophers of ancient Greece, who conceived a world based on change. Among George Maciunas' papers are school notes from a class on ancient philosophy that touched on the pre-Socratic philosophers. Although the term *fluxers* does not actually appear in these notes, it was widely used in many texts on the subject, and was quite possibly encountered by the young Maciunas, resurfacing later as the name for a magazine embracing a range of experimental artistic endeavors. See Maciunas' notes in the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit.
- 3 Most of the "official" Fluxus activities from 1962 to 1978 have one historical common denominator: George Maciunas, who undertook an astonishing variety of projects for Fluxus and was its primary organizer and director. This is not to imply that Maciunas was Fluxus, but rather that Fluxus would not have been what it came to be or, possibly, would not have existed at all without him. Even though Maciunas was the organizer of most of the Fluxus events, festivals, and activities, the specifics of these ventures, as well as the general development Fluxus itself, was a result of all the artists involved. To understand the development of Fluxus, one must look not only at Maciunas, but at the work and ideas of a variety of artists: La Monte Young, Dick Higgins, Nam June Paik, George Brecht, Robert Watts, Geoffrey Hendricks, Larry Miller, Shigeko Kubota, Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi, and many others. Maciunas was also the designer and producer of almost all the Fluxus published materials, although at various times he was assisted by the artists Tomas Schmit, Larry Miller, and others in this production process. It is for this reason that, even though the Fluxus multiples were the work of different artists and reflect this conceptually, there was also a consistency of design in all the Fluxus publications and objects.
- 4 This so-called "Fluxus Manifesto" (1963) was distributed at the Festum Fluxorum in Düsseldorf at the suggestion of Joseph Beuys.
- 5 Several of the artists associated with Fluxus, including Eric Andersen and Ken Friedman, believe that marking an end to Fluxus with Maciunas' death is not only limiting, but too heavily tips the balance in favor of a reading of Maciunas "as" Fluxus, not just as a significant figure in its development. While this author is in agreement with such sentiments, it can nonetheless be said that although Fluxus as an idea did not end, the collective activities of Fluxus for the most part did.
- 6 These performances had no real name, but have come to be called the "Chambers Street" series because Ono's loft was located on Chambers Street in New York City.
- 7 George Maciunas, "Musica Antiqua et Nova," (n.d., circa March 1961), Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
- 8 For a more complete description of this publication and its development, see Jackson Mac Low, "Wie George Maciunas die New Yorker Avantgarde kennenlernte," in René Block, ed., *1962 Wiesbaden Fluxus 1982: Eine kleine Geschichte von Fluxus in drei Teilen*, exh. cat. (Wiesbaden: Harlekin Art and Berlin: Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD, 1983), pp. 110-125. This publication contains the original English version of Mac Low's essay that runs concurrently with the German version.
- 9 Although the reasons for his departure are somewhat unclear, it seems that Maciunas left the United States to escape debts that he had accrued at the AG Gallery and in several other failed business ventures. See the manuscript by Maciunas' mother recounting her remembrances of George's life and activities entitled "My Son" (1979), Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
- 10 Jährling had originally asked Paik to organize the Wuppertal evening, but Paik was too busy and suggested that Jährling contact Maciunas and Benjamin Patterson, who eventually organized the presentation. Because the works presented were similar to those later performed in many of the Fluxus festivals and because of the distribution of the Fluxus brochure, Jon Hendricks, the artist and curator of the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, has argued that Kleines Sommerfest: Après John Cage should be considered the "first" Fluxus performance.
- 11 It is because of the significance of new developments in music, as well as the fact that many artists who became associated with Fluxus were trained as musicians, that many of the event pieces presented in Fluxus "concerts" and festivals were at first referred to as "action music."
- 12 George Brecht, Jackson Mac Low, and La Monte Young were not themselves in Europe at this time. Their works and many of the others presented in this festival were performed by a core group of participants (Higgins, Knowles, Williams, Maciunas) who also went on to perform in the other European festivals.
- 13 In addition to these "official" Maciunas-organized events, a number of other concerts and festivals that included works by artists associated with Fluxus also took place during these early years. These included the notorious Festival of Misfits in the fall of 1962 in London, where Ben Vautier and Robert Filliou, who were to become major participants in Fluxus, performed; and a series of Fluxus concerts presented by Dick Higgins and Alison Knowles in Stockholm and Oslo in March 1963.
- 14 George Maciunas, letter to Nam June Paik (n.d., circa August 15, 1962). A photocopy of this letter is in the collection of the Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
- 15 Although Maciunas had been thinking of adding street performances to the activities of the Fluxus festivals as early as the winter of 1962-1963, this was the first occasion on which street performances were offered at a Fluxus festival.
- 16 For more information on this event and its repercussions, see Henry Flynt, "Mutations of the Vanguard: Pre-Fluxus, During Fluxus, Late Fluxus," in Gino Di Maggio, ed., *Ubi Fluxus ibi motus 1990-1962*, exh. cat. (Milan: Nuove edizioni Gabriele Mazzotta, in association with the Venice Biennale, 1990), pp. 99-128; and Dick Higgins, "Call it 'Something Else': Dick Higgins in conversation with Eric Mottram," *Spanner* 9 (1973), p. 160.
- 17 In the fall of 1963, Dick Higgins wrote to Wolf Vostell about his correspondence with one of the original Dadaists, Raoul Hausmann, and about the connection between Fluxus and Dada: "We are not dada. . . . Many of our techniques come from dada, but . . . what we are doing has nothing whatsoever to do with the content of dada (except for La Monte [Young]). This is because everything in America since Pollock is denounced as 'Pop Art' or as 'Neo-dada'" (Dick Higgins, letter to Wolf Vostell [n.d., circa October-November 1963], Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart).
- 18 Ben Vautier, "What is Fluxus?" *Flash Art*, no. 84-85 (October-November 1978), p. 52.
- 19 For more information on these other developments and groups of the period see Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Letterism to Class War* (London: Aporia Press & Unpopular Books, 1988); Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); and Jürgen Schilling, *Aktionskunst: Identität von Kunst und Leben?* (Lucerne: Verlag C. J. Bucher, 1978).
- 20 Fluxus, in fact, often acknowledged the importance of these other developments by including examples of their work in publications and activities. Isidore Isou, the founder of Letterism, and a number of the artists associated with Nouveau Réalisme were to be included in the third of a planned series of Fluxus publications on the arts in France.
- 21 Dick Higgins, "Fluxus: Theory and Reception" (unpublished manuscript, n.d. [1982]), Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, pp. 16-20. In the recently published version of this text, Higgins' nine criteria are slightly altered: experimentalism and iconoclasm appear together, and the important category of "minimalism or concentration" is added (*Lund Art Press* 2, no. 2 [1991], p. 33). Ken Friedman has suggested a slightly larger list of twelve criteria that includes: globalism, unity of art and life, intermedia, experimentalism and research orientation, chance, playfulness, simplicity and parsimony, implicativeness, exemplativism, specificity, presence in time, and musicality (Friedman, "The Twelve Criteria of Fluxus," *Lund Art Press* 1, no. 4 [Summer-Autumn 1990], pp. 292-296).
- 22 Maciunas had produced several works in 1963, such as George Brecht's event scores in a box titled *Water Yam*, La Monte Young's book *Compositions 1961*, and Daniel Spoerri and François Dufrene's book *L'Optique Moderne*. In addition to these works by individual artists, Maciunas had also designed several collective publications—the Fluxus *Preview Review* roll and the newspaper roll *Ekstra Bladet*—as a kind of advertising for Fluxus and the planned festivals.
- 23 There were some performances in this middle period of Fluxus that are less event works and more open-ended activities, such as Hi Red Center's *Hotel Event* (1966) and *Street Cleaning Event* (1966)—the first instances of a kind of performance that would come to dominate the late Fluxus period.
- 24 "Transcript of the Videotaped Interview with George Maciunas by Larry Miller, March 24, 1978," in Jon Hendricks, ed., *Fluxus etc./Addenda I: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, exh. cat. (New York: Ink &, 1983), p. 20.
- 25 Maciunas stated that the only connection between these Fluxhouse projects and Fluxus was that a Fluxshop would be located in one of the buildings (*Fluxnewsletter*, March 8, 1967, p. 3; repr. in Hendricks, ed., supra, note 24, p. 174).
- 26 Dick Higgins, letter to Jindřich Chaloupecký, September 9, 1965, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
- 27 George Maciunas, letter to Dick Higgins, April 22, 1963, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
- 28 The notion of Fluxus as a community was suggested by Etera Milman in a conversation with the author on April 21, 1991.
- 29 Nam June Paik, "George Maciunas and Fluxus," *Flash Art*, no. 84-85 (October-November 1978), p. 48.
- 30 Jackson Mac Low, letter to Dick Higgins, April 22, 1963, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
- 31 George Maciunas, "Fluxmanifesto on Fluxamusement" (1965); repr. in Hendricks, ed., supra, note 24, p. 8.
- 32 George Maciunas, "Art/Fluxus Art Amusement" (1965), unpaginated, in the collection of the author. This statement is also reproduced in Hendricks, ed., supra, note 24, p. 9.
- 33 George Maciunas, insert for the Fluxus newspaper no. 9 (misnumbered no. 8), *JOHN YOKO & FLUX all photographs copyright nineteen seVenty by peTer mooRE* (1970), unpaginated.
- 34 Brian Buczak, letter to George Maciunas, February 12, 1977, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.





# Fluxus Publicus

by Simon Anderson

**F**luxus was conceived as a publishing venture, and publishing is at its very heart. While the event structure it pioneered is fundamental, and live art is undoubtedly hugely important to any understanding of what Fluxus might be, the publications overseen by George Maciunas provide the key: their radicality, their attempt to subvert form in order to reflect content, the very method of their production and distribution, are determinative factors in the unique development of Fluxus.

The range of material “published” under the aegis of Fluxus is extraordinarily broad: from pamphlets and flyers to tablecloths and films; from luxurious, handcrafted furniture to deliberately flimsy throwaways; from vainly ambitious commercial projects to those that held darkly obscure and personal innuendos. There are any number of criteria over which to debate the “Flux-ness” of this dense variety of objects and proposals (giving rise to the kind of academic discussion that no doubt would have aroused, simultaneously, equal amounts of amusement and disgust among early Fluxus artists); but even within the area of general consensus, Fluxus gave identity and concrete form to a bewildering array of material. Apart from relatively conventional publishing projects such as the periodical *V TRE* and those boxed multiples most closely associated with the name Fluxus (both discussed below), a random sampling from sales propaganda shows more than three dozen types of objects prefixed with the ubiquitous “Flux,” including medicines, menus, radios, clothing, organs, hardware, flags, signs, clocks, rocks, medals, and cans. Despite the almost inevitable tendency of manifestos to exaggerate (with sound art-historical precedent) and Maciunas’ track record of sometimes “optimistic” aggrandizement, it can be shown that each of these various Fluxthings was in fact published—sometimes in impressively large editions, of beautiful quality, and, of course, with great wit and élan.

The variety of Fluxus publications is no coincidence: it was in part necessitated by the relatively large (and, again, arguable) number of artists involved, who were concerned with a wide spectrum of activities. Given that many of them were interested in overcoming the contentious boundaries of every artistic medium, the fields of available opportunity became wide open, and to them Fluxus offered the possibility of transforming the utilitarian world into an arena of aesthetic investigation. As an entity whose existence depended on ideas rather than on formal issues, and one that wanted to represent a commonality of concept instead of a particular style, Fluxus was deliberately eclectic. Maciunas supported and accepted people on the basis of their approach, their sensibility, and their enthusiasm rather than on the basis of their résumés.

The diversity of Fluxus objects does not, however, simply represent an equal number of artists: for each, and any, was capable of considering a multiplicity of ways to exemplify his or her concerns. The immensely prolific Robert Watts provides a case worth examining at some length. For while he generated a good number of “conventional” Fluxboxes (fingerprints, egg kits, light bulbs, and so on), he also was responsible for a great number of other items that ranged from stamp dispensers (opposite, right) to chrome-plated pencils.<sup>1</sup> Selling at prices between ten cents and four hundred dollars, Watts’ output—a huge number of objects and proposals that were the product of his own fecund imagination and of George Maciunas’ zeal—stands as a model for the entirety of Fluxus publications.

Watts’ hand-drawn money (which was produced subsequent to but is nevertheless very different from the dollars painted by Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein) was both graphic and political in nature. It was reproduced in quantities great enough to have presented export problems for Maciunas. (He planned to use human carriers rather than risk confiscation by postal or customs officials.) It can be seen as an attack on the value ascribed to art, as well as money<sup>2</sup>—a utopian project that stands as a paradigm of one stage in the political program of Maciunas and some of the other Fluxus artists, whose controversial plans once included the financial crippling of major museums through an anonymous C.O.D. postal assault.

Watts’ fabricated postage stamps (opposite, left), akin to the forged currency, offer a further glimpse into Fluxus operations, not only by virtue of the contingent method of their conscription into the Fluxus corps but also by their uses, their utilitarian value, their multivalence, and their very look. They had been created by Watts before his association with Fluxus, produced as part of his and George Brecht’s Yam Festival in May 1963, but were used extensively as Fluxus publications (even being reproduced, probably without permission, and distributed in the English publication *Fluxshoe Add End A*). Fluxstamps could subvert conventional bureaucracy if used illegally—which they were—in place of official postage stamps. They spread the name and, to some extent, the idea of Fluxus internationally (and illustrate the close ties between Fluxus and then-blossoming mail art networks); they are a simple framework for aesthetic invention, with images that range from soft pornography to hardware; they are humorous and cheap (fifteen cents each); and they are an attractive, effective contribution to the Fluxus mail-order catalogue.<sup>3</sup>

Although perhaps less conventional in publishing terms, Watts’ other output fitted equally well into the Fluxus ideology and sensibility. His tablecloths and place mats—trompe l’oeil articles that reproduced the illusion of naked female legs under the table or objects already on a dinner plate—can be likened, in some respects, to the “snares” of Daniel Spoerri, whose literally spiked humor also graced the Fluxus stable. Yet, while Spoerri offered potent narratives reconstructed from frozen residue, Watts’ items allow readings on levels more closely allied to Maciunas’ own ideas. First, and possibly most important, Maciunas, who also produced such items, recognized that the tablecloths produced a “very funny effect”<sup>4</sup>—and humor was a significant factor in the entirety of Fluxus publications. Second, they fitted Maciunas’ idea of functionalism: “I was interested in functionalism so therefore when I came and designed aprons, I designed aprons that had something to do with the shape that was going to cover you, so for instance one version was Venus de Milo (p. 44) . . . from neck to knee, you were covered with this Venus de Milo—photographic image. O.K. Or, another apron was [an] image of a stomach right on top of your stomach. So, I would call that functionalism.”<sup>5</sup> This perverse notion—no less interesting for the misapplication of logic—can also be applied to some of the printed clothing (T-shirts, underwear) Watts created, which had the added utilitarian bonus of being intended for use in some Fluxus performances.<sup>6</sup>





ROBERT WATTS, *YAMFLUG/5 POST 5* (1963), OFFSET ON GUMMED PAPER,  $10 \frac{1}{4} \times 8 \frac{1}{4}$ . THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

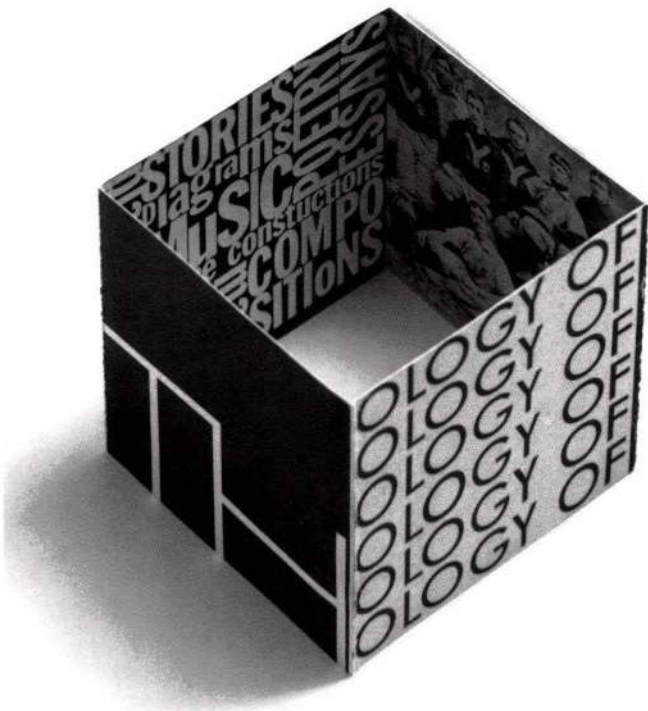
Watts' clothing, his numbered rocks, pre-dirtied switch-protectors, tools, egg boxes, and various kits were all ideally suited to Fluxus' idiosyncratic production methods. It seems that Maciunas produced objects on whim, based on suggestions made to him by chosen contacts, and subsequently fitted them into production schedules defined by demand, expediency, or the availability of funds. Actual manufacture was often a haphazard affair, adequate for the reality of a one-person operation, but less than the grandiose publicity would lead one to believe, and causing considerable difficulty in matters of cataloguing, dating, and attribution. There are objects offered in sales lists (p. 32) that were never produced; others whose existence is uncertain; items that differ distinctly within one "edition" (hardly surprising when one production "run" might take several years to complete); and articles offered under one artist's name that since have been claimed for another person, or that have been found to be the product of Maciunas' own imagination.

In physical terms, Fluxus publications can be crudely divided into three or four types: advertising material, printed event scores or instructions, graphic ideas, and objects. Of course, such approximate distinctions are blurred by an enormous variety within each category, as well as by the amorphous nature of the categories themselves: periodicals doubled as promotion and propaganda and additionally served as vehicles for documentation; Yearboxes and the various examples of the *Fluxkit* combined objects, images, and textual works. That Watts



ROBERT WATTS, *STAMP DISPENSER* (1963; THIS EXAMPLE 1982), COMMERCIAL STAMP DISPENSER, OFFSET ON GUMMED PAPER, CARDBOARD FOLDERS,  $17 \frac{1}{2} \times 8 \frac{1}{4} \times 6 \frac{1}{2}$ . THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

alone could have produced such a bewildering display of projects, proposals, and publications—and he was by no means alone in this eclecticism—is both a tribute to the inclusive and flexible nature of Fluxus and an opportunity for accusations of incoherence and fragmentation. The complexity can be resolved partly through a consideration of the progressive history of Fluxus: from the historical facts of its transition between concert organization and publishing house, from an idea for a magazine to a powerful influence for change in the arts.



GEORGE MACIUNAS, 1961 ANNOUNCEMENT FOR PUBLICATION OF *AN ANTHOLOGY*, OFFSET ON PAPER, 2 3/4 x 2 3/4 x 2 3/4. THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

From the very first announcement that mentions the word, Fluxus was planned as a magazine. It was, in fact, only to raise funds for this planned periodical that Maciunas arranged a series of lecture-demonstrations of “New Music” at the AG Gallery (which he ran with Almus Salcius) during the spring and summer of 1961 in New York City. This series was an accurate portent of the better-known Fluxus activity that was to follow, for it marked the initial impetus for an all-encompassing investigation into “the significance in music of realism, concretism and fusion of form and content as opposed to biomorphic illusionism.”<sup>7</sup> The series included medieval and Renaissance instrumentation, Surrealist film, and “very new music”—featuring later Fluxus stalwarts such as Dick Higgins, Toshi Ichiyanagi, and Jackson Mac Low. The first set of announcements for the series (opposite, top) also contained the seeds of a design style that Maciunas was to refine and perfect during the following decade.

The announcement is a double square of black-and-white contrasts, with a cubic division of text within. This “functional” layout is one that served Maciunas repeatedly, as did the ubiquitous typeface of the text and the quixotic decorative arrangement of the title, where the words *Musica Antiqua et Nova* are positioned with more concern for aesthetics than legibility: hence proportional distortions to achieve rhythmic repetitions, geometrical patterns, and an idiosyncratic use of the space, typically filled to capacity. Such typographic manipulation appears repeatedly in Fluxus documents, particularly in the name cards Maciunas later designed for Fluxus editions that reuse black-on-white or white-on-black squares. The cubic device also featured prominently in Maciunas’ style: one announcement for *An Anthology* was designed to fold into an open, 3-D cube with printing on both sides (above); *Fluxus 1* (p. 56) was presented in a square format, as was *Flux Year Box 2* (p. 59); and the shape was used repeatedly in other areas of his design and even in his home life.<sup>8</sup>

The period of presentations for the AG Gallery marked Maciunas’ conversion to the esoteric world of new music, electronic sound, experimental poetry, and action-oriented art. It was his introduction to the core of Fluxus-to-be and to his role as promoter, publisher, publicist, and producer of the avant-garde (a term I use despite Maciunas’ rejection of it). Prior to this time, his part in the gallery appears to have been restricted to design and the import of reproduction musical instruments. It was only after taking Richard Maxfield’s classes in electronic music at the New School for Social Research, where he met La Monte Young, that his activities mushroomed, throughout 1961, into his involvement with the publication of *An Anthology*, one of the crucial documents of this germinal period for the American vanguard.

In terms of its content, form, method, and procedure, *An Anthology* represents another step toward the style with which Fluxus has become closely associated. While officially edited and published by La Monte Young, it was actually a collaborative effort by Young, Maciunas (who offered initially to publish it and who was responsible for much of the early work, especially the design), Jackson Mac Low, and other friends from a small coterie of New York poets, artists, and musicians.<sup>9</sup> The material originally had been collected for a proposed issue of Chester Anderson’s East Coast version of *Beatitude*, but after a series of delays it was published separately in 1963.<sup>10</sup>

*An Anthology* sets the tone for Fluxus publications, in one sense because of its eponymous anthological nature—surely a cornerstone of Fluxus philosophy—and again because of the unexplained (inexplicable?) radicality of its contents. It contains many works unusual to find in published form, including a number of unconventional additions—cut cards, tipped-in envelopes, and loose inserts. The form gives a hint of Maciunas’ publishing ambitions, and it suggests the reinforcement of his personal graphic style—once again based on a square format, a reliance on his IBM typewriter with its Gothic sans serif condensed font, and the agglomeration of words and letters into pattern as much as text.

*An Anthology* was seen as being the first in a series: “The initial plan was just to do another, like a second Anthology book except graphically it would have been a little more, uh, less conventional than the first one, which means it would have objects and you know, a different kind of packaging. So really the idea germinated to use the whole book as bound envelopes.”<sup>11</sup> The necessarily complicated and protracted preparations for such a publication provided impetus for the multifarious activities of Fluxus. As with the first suggestion for a Fluxus magazine, Maciunas needed to raise funds for and interest in his proposed venture, and so again turned to the notion of concerts and presentations: “The idea was to do concerts as a promotional trick for selling what we were going to publish or produce. That’s how the Wiesbaden series came about.”<sup>12</sup>

In 1961 Maciunas traveled to West Germany, where he worked for the U.S. Air Force as a designer. He took with him some of the material originally intended for the second issue of *An Anthology* and there set about organizing what were to become the Festa Fluxorum: a grand tour of Europe promoting all aspects of the avant-garde.

**FESTIVAL OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC AT AG**  
AG 505 MADISON AV (73 ST) 8PM

**WORKS BY RICHARD MAXFIELD**  
MAY 7  
BUTTERFLIES 1959  
NATIONAL SYMPHONY '99  
COUGH MUSIC, later used as  
ITALIAN FOLK MUSIC, 1960  
SHORT MUSIC 1960

**MAY 21**  
PERIPIATEA 1961  
RIND 1961  
PERSPECTIVES 1962  
PIANO CONCEPT 1963

**MAY 28**  
RADIO MUSIC 1961  
CLARINET MUSIC 1961  
WATER MUSIC 1961  
ELECTRIC CONCEPT '61  
PRICE FOR LA MONT YOUNG  
MUSICA ANTIOVA 1961

**June 4, 8pm**  
works by john cage  
WILLIAMS MIX (1953)  
POTENTIAL MIX (1959)  
MUSIC FOR THE MARRYING MADEN? (1960)

**June 11, 8pm**  
works by storm de hirsch  
JOURNEY AROUND A ZERO  
in three movements

**June 18, 8pm**  
works by dick Higgins  
Symphony no. 3, "In the Context of Music" (Musical composition no. 5, December, 1949)  
Composition no. 2, Aug. 1959  
Composition no. 3, 4, Oct. 1960  
Composition no. 7, 9, Oct. 1960  
Year Composition, Jan. 1961  
"The Sound of the Antenna" Opus 13 in One "Historical Process no. 2"  
Dance Music no. 2, May 1961  
To Everything its Season, Historical Process no. 1, 2, 3, 1958  
Big Composition no. 3, May 1960  
Composition no. 4, July 1960  
in Memoriam, Oct. 1960  
Flynt's Descriptions, Jan. 1961  
Concept for Politics & Emotions  
\* World premier

**June 25, 8pm**  
works by JACKSON MAC LOW  
3 short compositions: water (20min), forest (20min), street (20min)  
EARLE BROWN - piano, 1953  
JOHN SUE BOWELL  
Music for a 10th, 12min.  
DAVID JOHNSON  
Music for tape, 10min.  
Cello/Double Bass, Viola, Clarinet/Double Bass, etc.

**June 10**  
works by toshi ichiyanagi  
MUSIC FOR PRIMO:  
mediums: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7  
played by composer and others.

**June 17**  
works by jackson mac low  
POETRY  
Dialogues (3 readers)  
Homage to Jackson Mac Low  
(several readers)  
MUSIC FOR VOICES:  
talk-to (solo voices)  
Saxophone (2 solo voices and  
white instruments)  
Dieter Hulsmans and  
white instruments)  
MUSIC FOR INSTRUMENTS:  
A Spring (Saxophone, double bass,  
trumpet, trombone, piano, bass,  
drums, 4 flutes, 3 clarinets, percussion)

**June 24**  
works by joseph byrd  
Dieter Schobel  
K. Stockhausen  
Karl-Erik Wehlin  
K. Wippen  
M. Baumeister  
Oyvind Fahlström  
W. Gull  
K.O. Goetz  
Kirchgässler  
J. Mekas, et al.  
to be determined  
H.K. Metzger  
M. de la Motte  
Franz Mon  
Wolff Vostell  
Wolff Vostell, ed.  
G. Maciunas  
Günter Bock  
C. Caspari  
John Jameson  
Fehér  
Heussner  
Werner Ruehau

**WORKS BY LAMONTE YOUNG**  
COMPOSITION no. 7, July 1960  
JULY 9  
COMPOSITION no. 3, May 1960

**WORKS BY HENRY FLYNT**  
JULY 15  
"Exercise Anarchism - States"  
Sweet  
Flutes  
Explicit directions  
and instructions.

**WORKS BY WALTER DEMARIA**  
JULY 23  
Program to be decided on basis of audience reaction to July 15 meetings. For my comfort, only notes under 40 when I will not recognize them, not spoken to, but printed out to read are needed. Available by the July 16 meeting, 8P.

**NOTHING BY RAY JOHNSON**  
JULY 30

GEORGE MACIUNAS, ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR EVENTS AT THE AG GALLERY (1961). COLLECTION ARCHIV SOHM, STAATSGALERIE STUTTGART.

**EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:**

**CHAIRMAN:** George Maciunas  
**U.S. SECTION:** La Monte Young, Jackson Mac Low, Dick Higgins, Philip Corner, Jonas Mekas  
**GERMAN SECTION:** Manfred de la Motte, Jean-Pierre Wilhelm, Heinz Klaus Metzger, Nam June Paik  
**SCANDINAVIAN SECTION:** Wolf Vostell  
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**EUROPEAN SECTION:** Josef Patkowski, Marie Josjuna\*, Andrei Volkonski\*, Akosk Csernus, Toshi Ichiyanagi, Pierre Mercure

**JAPANESE SECTION:** \* being consulted

**CANADIAN SECTION:**

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** for each yearbox standard Fluxus 20 NF, 16 DM, \$4.00, Fluxus Fluxus (with inserts of originals) 40 NF, 32 DM, \$8.00

**FORMAT:** 150 to 200 pages, 20 cm x 20 cm x 3 cm

**ADDRESS:** FLUXUS, J.S. Bach Str. 6, 6-2 Wiesbaden, Germany

**FLUXUS NO. 1, U.S. YEARBOX - AUG. 15, 1962**  
English & German Editions

Events: scores and other occurrences  
George Brecht  
Joseph Byrd  
Philip Corner  
L. Diugoszewski  
Henry A. Flynt, Jr.  
Dick Higgins  
George Maciunas  
R. Maxfield  
Simone Maris  
all editors

**COMPOSITIONS:**  
6 Exhibits, 3 telephone events  
Conversation between Diane & Jerry stimulated by one hundred ones  
Lopsiglyps, Sestina  
Chirographic piano piece, Tower Music, etc.  
Portrait of John Cage  
Portrait of the school of Cage, Caged (to be determined)  
A1 Hansen  
Larry Eigner  
Henry Flynt  
Dick Higgins, ed.  
Spencer Holst  
Terry Jennings  
Dennis Johnson  
Allan Kaprow  
Ailson Knowles  
Jackson Mac Low

6 Exhibits, 3 telephone events  
Conversations between Diane & Jerry stimulated by one hundred ones  
Lopsiglyps, Sestina  
Chirographic piano piece, Tower Music, etc.  
Portrait of John Cage  
Portrait of the school of Cage, Caged (to be determined)  
A1 Hansen  
Larry Eigner  
Henry Flynt  
Dick Higgins, ed.  
Spencer Holst  
Terry Jennings  
Dennis Johnson  
Allan Kaprow  
Ailson Knowles  
Jackson Mac Low

Class Oldenburg  
Ben Patterson  
Larry Poons  
Griffith W. Rose  
Stanley Vanderbeek in flip book (to be determined)  
Universal & generative poems  
String Trio, Death Chant (scores)  
Poems (2)

**FLUXUS NO. 2 GERMAN & SCANDINAVIAN YEARBOX**  
German & English Editions

T. W. Adorno  
H.K. Metzger  
J.P. Wilhelm  
Dieter Rot  
Prof. Bönne  
Dieter Hulsmans  
M. Kapel  
M. Koenig  
Nam June Paik  
Dieter Schobel  
K. Stockhausen  
Karl-Erik Wehlin  
K. Wippen  
M. Baumeister  
Oyvind Fahlström  
W. Gull  
K.O. Goetz  
Kirchgässler  
J. Mekas, et al.  
to be determined  
H.K. Metzger  
M. de la Motte  
Franz Mon  
Wolff Vostell  
Wolff Vostell, ed.  
G. Maciunas  
Günter Bock  
C. Caspari  
John Jameson  
Fehér  
Heussner  
Werner Ruehau

being consulted  
Max, Stiller, Cage... is Anarchism anachronize?  
Winfried Gull - Dialogue avec le néant  
poetry machine & essay  
poetry machine (being consulted)  
La Sacrification S'Alanguit dans le centre  
being consulted  
Automation in electronic music production  
Apology of John Cage  
Towards the New Ontology of Music  
Several studies  
Ode to Chen-chu or to Dmitri Karamazov and  
Zex exercises (record)  
being consulted  
New possibilities in the interpretation  
of Cage and his followers  
Music Machine  
Towards the new Ontology of Painting  
molded plastic relief composition (insert)  
Possibilities of Electronic Television  
(plans for electronic TV studio in Stockholm)  
Color in new art  
Electronic painting and its programming  
Experimental Film with Ossirograph  
(painting with printing press) (fold out)  
Experiments in cinema  
Swedish art machines  
Horst Egon Kalinowski  
Brüning and Twombly  
Bernard Schultze  
Decollage (inserts, originals)  
collected visuals  
Hydrokinetic - osmotic painting (original insert)  
to be determined  
Labyr... absolute architecture  
Ontology of possible architectural critique  
Surrealization of City  
Indeterminate theatre  
Indeterminate & immaterial theatre

Programme of FLUXUS festival of new music (insert)  
Newspaper fold out  
Chronicle - calendar of events  
Index - directory of new art, music, literature & cinema  
Reviews - of books, magazines, etc.

GEORGE MACIUNAS, TWO PAGES OF THE BROCHURE/PROSPECTUS FOR FLUXUS YEARBOXES (VERSION 1, 1962), OFFSET ON PAPER, 8 x 17 OPENED. COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER.



GEORGE MACIUNAS, *VENUS DE MILO APRON* (CIRCA 1970), SCREENPRINT ON VINYL, 35 7/8 x 16. PHOTO SCOTT HYDE, COURTESY THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

# LE THEATRE TOTAL

**"REALITE" - LE SEUL SPECTACLE  
CONTENANT UN LANGAGE THEA-  
TRAL NOUVEAU (LE HAPPENING  
- ZEN) A L'ARTISTIQUE, 27, Bd  
DUBOUCHAGE, LE 24 JANVIER 1964  
A 20 H. 30 - PRIX UNIQUE 3 F**

(imp. ROBAUDI) — NICE

BEN VAUTIER, *LE THEATRE TOTAL* (1964), SCREENPRINT ON PAPER, 15 1/8 x 15 1/8. COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER.

Advertising materials give some hint as to the nature of the series. Where Maciunas exercised some control (pp. 27 and 146), posters continued his established design format, with its telltale sans serif typeface, geometrically distorted headers with occasional vertical inserts, and, in some cases, white-on-black contrasts. Outside his jurisdiction, the design was both less coherent and sometimes more conventional. For example, publicity for the misnamed Festival of Misfits<sup>13</sup> included an almost Constructivist typewriter poem-program by Dick Higgins and a handbill with a positively pseudo-Dada text. In Nice, Ben Vautier continued to use the poster style associated with the Théâtre Total (with a very bold and basic sans serif font) (above); and there was a similar local consistency in publicity overseen in the Netherlands by Willem de Ridder.

Although some restraint was exhibited in posters for the Festa Fluxorum (if not in the festivals themselves), Maciunas, even as the tour was progressing, was making plans for an expansion, in both form and content, of Fluxus publications. Two benchmark publications are the *Preview Review* roll (p. 47) and the Brochure/Prospectus for Fluxus Yearboxes (p. 43), both of which heralded the future of Fluxus as a radical, international, inclusive, common front of experimentation. The Brochure is a simple sheet that folds into a square and uses the



PERFORMANCE OF GEORGE MACIUNAS' *IN MEMORIAM TO ADRIANO OLIVETTI* AT FESTUM FLUXORUM, DÜSSELDORF (1963). PICTURED ARE (LEFT TO RIGHT) TOMAS SCHMIT, NAM JUNE PAIK, ARTHUR KOEPCKE, WOLF VOSTELL, DANIEL SPOERRI, EMMETT WILLIAMS, FRANK TROWBRIDGE(?), AND BENGT AF KLINTBERG. PHOTO © MANFRED LEVE.

# Preview Review

Eric Andersen, April 1963  
 Sit down during Dec. 11, 1963 from 7 PM to 8.03 PM  
 (Danish time) and think about the people over the whole world,  
 who may be performing this composition.

## WORD EVENT

● EXIT

E. Brech, 1961

John D. Cale: from *Outdoor pieces* for Robin Page, Summer 62  
 2. Make love to a piano without arms.  
 8. Follow the wind and listen to it.



Robert Filliou: 13 Facons d'Employer le Crane de Emmett Williams, 1963

Dick Higgins: *Danger Music No. 28*, Koeln 2/10/63.  
 Not-smile for some days.

Dick Higgins: *Yellow Piece*, 2/13/63.  
 When you finish reading this, stop performing this piece.

Dick Higgins: *Bubble Music*, March 21st, 1963.  
 Whip up soapsuds—dissolve very well—or substitute glycerine.  
 With vacuum cleaner blow into soapsuds as long as desired/  
 till there is none left.

Toshi Ichijyano: *Piano Piece No. 5* (fluxus variation for "no performer"). Upright piano is positioned on stage with its profile facing the audience, pedal affixed in depressed position. Performer in wings (not seen by audience) throws darts to the back of piano according to time and dynamics in score indications.

Alison Knowles: *Shuffling piece*, 1960  
 Listen to the people walking on the floor above you.

Takehisa Kosugi: *Micro I*.  
 Wrap a live microphone with a very large sheet of paper.  
 Make a tight bundle. Keep the microphone live for another 5 minutes.  
 Anima I.  
 Performer rolls on the floor winding on his body a 700meters long cord thus mummifying himself.

Arthur Karpcke, 1963:  
 Close eyes, open window, open eyes - if daylight is not satisfactory, close eyes again, close window, try another window.

Jackson Mac Low: *Social Project 1*, 29 April 1963  
 Find a way to end unemployment or  
 Find a way for people to live without employment  
 Make whichever one you find work.

Jackson Mac Low: *Social Project 2*, 29 April 1963  
 Find a way to end war.  
 Make it work.

Jackson Mac Low: *Social Project 3*, 29 April 1963  
 Find a way to produce everything everybody needs and to get it to them.  
 Make it work.



FLUXUS a - Monthly Review of the University of Avant-Garde  
 Hindustani, edited by Nam June Paik \$8 per year  
 The time of day and day of year, this very interesting time  
 measure which disappeared with gregorian chart, shall be  
 intensely developed and exploited in the post music of Nam  
 June Paik - The Fluxus Review - University of Avant-Garde

familiar graphic devices of contrasts, condensed IBM script, and a block of distorted text, which, when deciphered, is as clear a manifesto of Fluxus as the dictionary definition that accompanies it. Proclaiming "anti-art, concept art, indeterminacy, concretism, lettrism, nihilism, automatism, bruitism, happenings, dance, theatre, poetry and philosophy" (among other things), it announced an impressive editorial committee and a projected seven Fluxus Yearboxes: it stands as a testament to the bravura and ambition of early Fluxus.

The *Preview Review*, published in 1963, began a new chapter for Fluxus, ostensibly heralded by both the Brochure and the Festa Fluxorum. It lists an already modified editorial committee and lacks the inclusive block of interests and influences divulged in the Brochure. Even its format, a long thin strip of glossy paper tightly rolled into a scroll, seems particularly appropriate in light of the unfurling, ever-surprising genesis of Fluxus. The obverse of the roll includes event scores and documentary photographs from the festival series, all placed in scrupulously democratic alphabetical order—beginning with Eric Andersen and closing with Emmett Williams. The reverse, headed by a typographic arrangement of the word *Fluxus*, continues with a repeat of the dark and somewhat sinister dictionary definition of the word, followed by details of works available for sale by some core members of the group—if the term *group* is not too contentious.<sup>14</sup> It is here that Maciunas' occasionally inconsistent system of assigning letter codes for artists began, and here also that one can see the essentially printed nature of intended Fluxus publications. (Objects are offered only by Daniel Spoerri and Robert Watts, and a few scattered sound-tapes and films are available from others.)

The notion of a scroll format for this item may have come from a general, shared interest in Eastern culture, or it may have been an echo of Maciunas' own performance event *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* (1962) (far left), which relied on the reading of adding-machine rolls. This piece had been featured during some of the Fluxus concerts and was documented photographically on the *Preview Review* roll; it may well have suited Maciunas' impish humor to have readers of the roll looking at pictures of readers reading a roll. On a more prosaic level, it may have been suggested by the 1961 West German publication of *Kalendar Rolle*, whose format is identical. Nevertheless, the roll—subsequently used to great effect in several later Fluxus publications, including Alison Knowles' *Bean Rolls* (1963) and the entirety of the abortive *Fluxpack 3*—was deemed successful enough to be used for the next Fluxus propaganda piece, known as *Ekstra Bladet* (*Fluxus Newspaper Roll*). Slightly larger than the *Preview Review*, it was a multilingual, multidirectional collage of European press reviews and photographs. Apart from the tight geometrical jigsaw of the various texts, manipulated to fit the elongated rectangle of the roll, it bears no unique Fluxus flavor, although it was later overprinted and used as a poster to announce the entry of Fluxus into the United States.

GEORGE MACIUNAS, FLUXUS *PREVIEW REVIEW* ROLL (1963). OFFSET ON PAPER, 65 1/4 x 3 15/16 UNROLLED. COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER.





Maciunas' return to America in 1963 marked the beginning of a frenetic period of publishing activity. While there had been much preparation and even some printing up to that point, with few exceptions Fluxus had existed as performance or promise: the publications either did not exist, were as yet incomplete, or were artist-produced items co-opted onto the Fluxus roster—a practice that continued throughout Fluxus history. In New York City, however, Maciunas was able to concentrate on reassessing his ventures, to reestablish personal contact with American allies, and to begin molding Fluxus around the variety of experiences and influences that had surfaced during the previous two years. To facilitate this, the idea of a periodical was rejuvenated.

A magazine provided an ideal vehicle for the kind of work that Fluxus promoted. Before multiples or artists' books were accepted as viable media, the magazine was an established format: not only the "highbrow" little magazines of poetry, prose, and criticism, such as *Transition* and *Partisan Review*, but also the small-circulation art magazines often connected to particular movements, such as Dada/Surrealism's *Cannibale*, *Littérature*, and *291*.

Fluxus' "house magazine," entitled *V TRE* (the name came, apparently, from a faulty neon sign), began in 1963—outside the aegis of Fluxus—as a cheaply made anthological sheet produced and published entirely by George Brecht from his home in New Jersey. Contributions were from Jackson Mac Low, Dieter Roth (a.k.a. Diter Rot), and others on the fringes of the Fluxus circle, and these were interspersed with Brecht's own selection of photographs, newspaper clippings, and illustrations.

During 1963 *V TRE* was integrated into Fluxus, leaving Brecht temporarily as editor. Maciunas had assured Brecht that he need not fear editorial interference: "Fluxus newspaper is entirely your creation! You should not try to achieve any revolutionary nor any other aspect that would make your point diffuse."<sup>15</sup> The first four editions carry the prefix code "cc," indicating under Maciunas' system their association with Brecht, and were indeed sold as his creations. However, when the first "official" Fluxus *V TRE* appeared, Brecht was credited only as coeditor, and a "Fluxus Editorial Council"—probably meaning Maciunas—was listed.

Larger than the pre-Fluxus *V TRE*, the twelve issues published during the following sixteen years were all close to newspaper size (no. 11 being a tabloid), and early issues approximate newspaper layout, at least on their covers. Presumably, this was to disassociate the enterprise from precious magazines, or maybe to infer some news content (despite the preponderance, in the first four issues, of material culled from other sources). They were printed on newspaper stock and sold at realistically cheap prices.<sup>16</sup>

The first Fluxus issue (opposite and pp. 164–165) was published in January 1964, and it reflected the tone of the first phase of Fluxus in both its content and style—a mixture of antique photographs (the "New Fluxus Editorial Council" is depicted as six mustachioed worthies in frock coats), illustrations of a pseudo-scientific or medical nature, cuttings from professional journals, and arbitrary news items. In addition to the random selection of statements and headlines (e.g., "All telephone numbers have been changed"), there is a request to "Send those \$ to Fluxus" and a list of twenty-three Fluxus editions for sale—some of which actually existed. This issue also gives notice of a Fluxus festival in New York City from March to May 1964; contains an "editorial" by Brecht consisting of scores, jokes, quotations, proverbs, and "other occurrences"; and presents a selection of event scores by

Dick Higgins, Takehisa Kosugi, Tomas Schmit, Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi, and others, as well as a long score by Györgi Ligeti and a work by Alison Knowles that are set sideways along the bottom of the main body of the text.<sup>17</sup> The back of the issue continues the compendium of scores and cartoons, offers an advertisement for *An Anthology*, and presents two relatively contemporary images: a portrait of Jean Tinguely and a photograph of a work by Christo. These tacit acknowledgments of other movements presumably suggest the "common front" of Fluxus that Maciunas had proposed and which subsequent Fluxus publications tried—albeit sporadically—to achieve.

The second issue (cc *V TRE*, February 1964) is similar to the first in format, content, and price. Inside, however, an editorial by George Brecht hints at an explanation of Fluxus, the first since the "assisted" dictionary definition printed on the *Preview Review* roll:

#### TEN RULES: NO RULES (EDITORIAL)

forgoing intention: nothing unaccomplished  
 forgoing needs: no requirement unfulfilled  
 forgoing satisfaction: no favoring  
 forgoing judgment: no inappropriate action  
 forgoing comparison: exact oneness  
 forgoing attachment: nothing to eliminate  
 no true generality  
 no progress, no regression: static change, complete punctuality  
 no coming, no going  
 no grasping

The statement is redolent of Eastern enigma, and it is a reminder of the influences of Zen Buddhism—or at least some facets of it—on many Fluxus artists. Whether it is sufficient to explain the content of the issue is another matter: among the illustrations and event scores that fill the inside pages are an image of Joe Jones wearing one of his musical instruments (p. 51); Brecht, Knowles, Watts, and Lette Eisenhower pictured in their *Blink* show; a couple of Ben Vautier pieces; and the same kinds of unconnected cartoons and meaningless texts that appeared in the earlier issue. Once more, artists only peripherally involved with Fluxus are included: Diter Rot, included in *An Anthology* and close to Fluxus but never accredited, is represented by a "Poem Machine";<sup>18</sup> and a photograph of a 1950 *décollage* by Raymond Haines and Jacques de Villeglé is featured in almost exactly the same position as Christo's in the first *V TRE*—surely representing another nod toward the French Nouveaux Réalistes.

The inexplicable predominates in the first two issues and creates a similarity between them; together they mark a certain direction in the rapid development of Fluxus, which, by the issue of the third *V TRE* (cc *Valise eTRanglE*, March 1964), was becoming evident. Although it still bears the code-letter "cc," Brecht is no longer credited as editor,<sup>19</sup> and the percentage of reportage, documentation, and advertisements for Fluxus (these being more typical of Maciunas) far outweighs the sprinkling of block illustrations and newspaper clippings typical of the first two issues.

Page two of cc *Valise eTRanglE* offers, for the first time, photographs of some of the Fluxus publications and objects for sale at the newly opened Fluxhall/Fluxshop on Canal Street, and it begins a trend toward turning *V TRE* into a vehicle for sales and propaganda, documentary information, and advertisement that is consolidated in the next several issues. Notable exceptions to this increasing—if somewhat deviant—commercialism adorn the cover of *FLuxus cc five ThReE* (issue no. 4, June 1964) (p. 166): a three-quarter page essay by Nam June Paik entitled "An Exposition of Experimental Television," which explicates his philosophy and describes his recent exhibition in West Germany; and Brecht's remarkably cogent analysis of how Fluxus was perceived—by some of those involved—entitled "Something About Fluxus."



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In addition to promotion and documentation (nos. 6 and 7, for instance, are mixtures of calendar and photo review), *V TRE* offered an opportunity to exhibit graphic projects by Fluxus artists: 3 newspaper events for *The pRicE of \$1* (no. 7, February 1966) is given over almost entirely to three artists, each taking a complete page. Yoko Ono, under the title *Do It Yourself Fluxfest*, presents the instructions for fourteen day-long events, each illustrated by Maciunas with an obsessive image (p. 53). If the images themselves are not overtly perverse, their treatment, isolation, or adjacency to other sadistic or exotic illustrations—mostly woodblocks—lends a malign ambivalence to them all. So strong is the influence of Maciunas' imagery that it alters the tenor of Ono's text. For example, the instructions for day thirteen ("Wait. Color yourself. Wait for the spring. Let us know when it comes. Send dance report.") are stripped of their pastoral innocence by the drawn finger-in-anus that accompanies them, in turn causing the surrounding illustrations to appear more bizarre and suspect than they otherwise would. In contrast, the other two projects, Vautier's *Fiftyeight Propositions for One Page* and Jim Riddle's *One Hour*, are given straight and innocent graphic treatment—a shift in design technique that heightens the enigma of all three.

The next issue, *Vaseline sTREet* (no. 8, May 1966) (left), is a compendium of Maciunas' design techniques. The device on the cover forces readers to squint, stare, twist their heads, and concentrate. Hi Red Center's *Hotel Event* is advertised with a host of medical or pseudo-scientific block-prints, photogravures, and illustrations from antiquity to the present that again submerge the information beneath a slightly malevolent air—an air that is continued by Wolf Vostell's *Yellow Pages or An Action Page* (p. 71), a dense, diagrammatic, and political attack on American consumerism.<sup>20</sup>

Although there were to be three more issues of *V TRE*, *Vaseline sTREet* seems to signal the end of a Fluxera. While no reliable date can be fixed, Maciunas had become involved in property deals and a "wage-earning-time killing job" during 1966;<sup>21</sup> there was a general decrease in Fluxus activity; and the next *V TRE*, entitled *JOHN YOKO & FLUX all photographs copyright nineteen seVenty by peTer mooRE*, did not appear until four years after *Vaseline sTREet*. Consisting of 123 documentary photographs from various Fluxfests of 1970, the typical Maciunas typography and the favored IBM typeface are the only reminders of past *V TREs*. Furthermore, since it is dedicated to documentation, its historical significance is of a different order. This was the last issue Maciunas edited: the final two were published by other Fluxists in his honor—the last one, posthumously.

Each issue of *V TRE* was unique, but the underlying drift corresponds approximately to changes undergone by Fluxus. Initially a fairly random compilation of wacky occurrences interspersed with eclectic examples of unconventional and innovative art, *V TRE* progressed—under the ostensibly functionalist editorial control of a single-minded idealist—through rapid stages of regimentation to become, by turns, a sales catalogue, a promotional tool, a diary of events, and a carefully designed record of Fluxus activity. In some senses it provides a template for Fluxus history. As an idea, Fluxus was seized by Maciunas, who realized the potential of an organized avant-garde and named, nurtured, financed, and promoted it. By this altruism, he transformed the original notion beyond recognition. "If it hadn't been for Maciunas," George Brecht stated in 1972, "nobody might ever have called it anything. We would all have gone our own ways, like the man crossing the street with his umbrella, and a woman walking a dog in another direction. . . . The only reference-point for any of this bunch of people who liked each other's work, and each other, more or less, was Maciunas."<sup>22</sup>



JOE JONES WEARING HIS MECHANICAL MONKEY HAT. PUBLISHED IN *CC V TRE* (FLUXUS NEWSPAPER NO. 2, 1964). PHOTO GEORGE MACIUNAS, COURTESY THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

While it is easy to overestimate Maciunas' importance to the development and influence of Fluxus, it is probably true to state that without him, it would not have existed as it did. As befits the creator of any entity, he reflects its paradoxes: he was an extremely hardworking designer in a chaotic venture who directed all his serious concentration to Fluxus-Art-Amusement; a dictator in a cooperative that he founded; a political activist and joker; a utopian with pretensions to functionalism; a nonsmoking teetotaler amid a bunch of bacchanals. His idiosyncratic logic was freely applied to everything from the production of artworks to the "excommunication" of dissident colleagues. Each eccentricity in the appearance of a Fluxus publication was supported by a deliberate rationale, often based on that most practical necessity, money. Maciunas reckoned that ninety percent of his wages went to support his project, in the almost certain knowledge that he was unlikely to recoup his losses. Nevertheless, his efforts were ceaseless and untiring. He spent "whole nights producing posters and sorting out programmes (which never seemed to have very much to do with the programme that was actually performed). . . . He was an ascetic who put all his money, and as far as his job and health permitted, all his time and energy into painstaking and hard (unfortunately, partly unnecessary) work for Fluxus. . . . The arranging of festivals was not all. There was also some publishing: first of all enormous lists, horns of plenty which stayed as good as empty."<sup>23</sup>

(OPPOSITE) GEORGE MACIUNAS, ED., *VASELINE STREET* (FLUXUS NEWSPAPER NO. 8, 1966). OFFSET ON PAPER, 22 x 17 CLOSED. COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER.



GEORGE MACIUNAS IN 1976. PHOTOS © 1976 PETER MOORE.

In light of the actual number of Fluxus objects produced, this last criticism seems somewhat harsh, for although there were production problems aplenty, the examples of Flux that most influenced the wider world—far more so than the festivals—were undoubtedly the series of Fluxyearboxes and the *Fluxkit*, with the wealth of diverse experimentation that each contained.

It is often difficult to establish a true chronology for the production of the various editions, and the reasons for this are actually integral to the Fluxus method of, or attitude toward, publication. Maciunas planned the first Fluxyearbox (p. 56) (known variously as *Fluxus 1*, *Fluxyearbook 1*, etc.)<sup>24</sup> in West Germany early in 1962; it was to be the first in a series of seven that would cover the world of experimental activity both geographically and historically. Editions planned included those for Eastern and Western Europe, Japan, and the United States, as well as for Fluxus forbears such as Dada.<sup>25</sup>

The actual publication of *Fluxus 1* consisted of a number of large manila envelopes, bolted rather than stitched together, interspersed with printed leaves, and generally housed in a stenciled wooden box that acted as a mailing receptacle. Within each envelope was the work of an individual artist whose piece defied normal—even perhaps abnormal—binding processes. Such pieces included cut cards, gloves, records, large folded sheets, and tapes. More conventional material included photographs, texts, Maciunas-designed name cards for artists, and documentation of Fluxus performances. Some of this material had been printed in West Germany, some in the United States, and despite a very tight initial deadline (a common feature of Maciunas' methods), delays in production—due to illness or shortage of funds—were such that *Fluxus 1* was not published until 1964.

This first Yearbox represented a kind of experimental sampling that was not unique to Fluxus; indeed, the notion of artists' yearbooks stretches back to Die Brücke and beyond. Nor was there simply historical precedent: the 1960s opened with a torrent of experimentation with the form of the book/periodical, often centered around concrete poetry. As early as 1956, Wladimir Dias-Pino produced a startling book with perforated, strung pages; Henri Chopin's *Cinquième Saison* and OU both manipulated the idea of "publication" to include recordings and poetic texts; Pol Bury's *Daily Bul* (begun in 1957) similarly attempted to anthologize otherwise marginalized activity; and the Situationists anticipated Fluxus in experimental packaging, in political utopianism, and in internationalism.<sup>26</sup>

Fluxus also was predated or paralleled by the work of artists under the Fluxus umbrella: despite Maciunas' pleas for a sacrifice of individual identities in the name of common unity, there were few artists who ceased to work with other publishers, or to publish their own material. Wolf Vostell, whose ideological soundness and influence within Fluxus is beyond doubt, nevertheless began his periodical *dé-coll/age* even as the first Fluxus anthology was being assembled, using some of the same personnel with whom Maciunas had worked in Europe. *Dé-coll/age*, although perhaps more textual than any Fluxus publication, similarly expanded to include foldouts and multiples, and Maciunas found it hard to forgive Vostell for the apparent encroachment and subversion of Fluxus. He saw *dé-coll/age* as a manifestation of ego, rather than as simply another aspect of a whole movement of revolutionary expansion in publishing, poetry, and international aesthetic communications of which Fluxus was but a part.

The same is true of Dick Higgins' Something Else Press (p. 55), which apparently was born in 1964 out of impatience with Fluxus publishing problems, and grew to be one of the most important disseminators of experimental activity of the 1960s and 1970s. In some ways, Something Else Press stayed closer to the original ideas of Maciunas than did Fluxus, publishing large and beautiful editions concerning Happenings, poetry, Dada, events, architecture, art theory, music, and literature. A mixture of analysis, original work, documentary, and history, Something Else Press publications, including influential works such as George Brecht and Robert Filliou's *Games at the Cedilla* (1967), Daniel Spoerri's *An Anecdoted Topography of Chance* (1966), and Al Hansen's *A Primer of Happenings & Time/Space Art* (1965), gave a much-needed context to the work of an entire generation of artists who had begun dissolving the barriers between the arts. It is clear that Fluxus played a major part in spreading such new ideas and that it was immensely influential; but it was neither alone nor necessarily more advanced in its field: it was an addition—albeit a radical, prolific, and long-lived one—to a plethora of experimentation being undertaken on an international scale.

(OPPOSITE) YOKO ONO, *DO IT YOURSELF FLUXFEST* (1966). DESIGNED BY GEORGE MACIUNAS, PUBLISHED IN 3 NEWSPAPER EVENTS FOR THE PRICE OF \$1 (FLUXUS NEWSPAPER NO. 7, 1966). COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER.



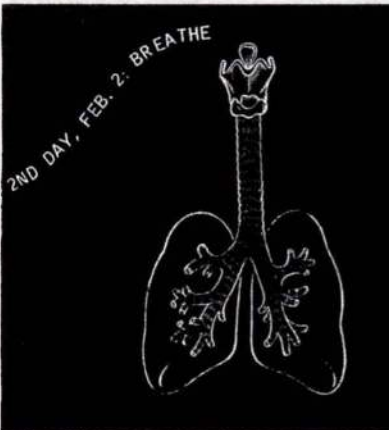
DO IT YOURSELF  
FLUXFEST  
PRESENTS

# YOKO ONO

## & DANCE CO.



1ST DAY: BREATHE

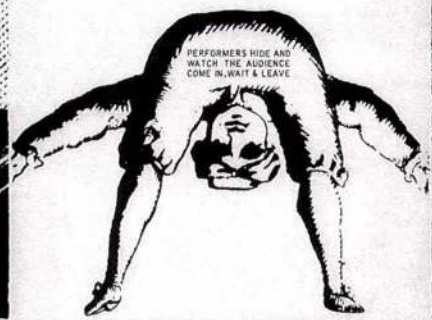


2ND DAY, FEB. 2. BREATHE



3RD DAY  
FEB. 3  
BREATHE

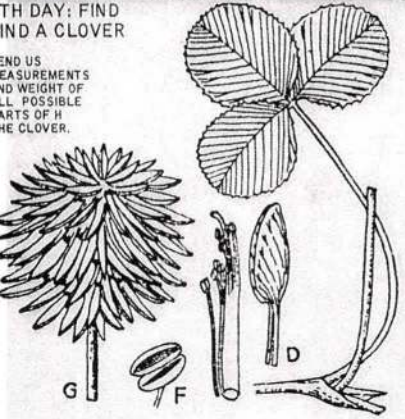
FOURTH DAY, FEBRUARY FOURTH, 9 TO 10 P.M.  
AT CANAL STREET IND SUBWAY STATION: WATCH



PERFORMERS HIDE AND  
WATCH THE AUDIENCE  
COME IN, WAIT & LEAVE



5TH DAY  
WATCH THE SKY  
DRAW A LARGE CIRCLE IN THE SKY  
LET US KNOW THE DIAMETER  
OF THE CIRCLE AND/OR  
THE QUANTATION OF  
YOUR WATCH.  
SEND INSTRUCTION ON FLOAT



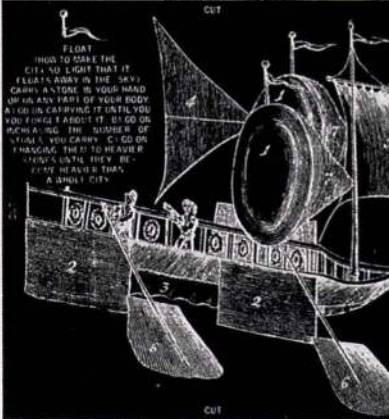
6TH DAY: FIND  
AND A CLOVER

SEND US  
MEASUREMENTS  
AND WEIGHT OF  
ALL POSSIBLE  
PARTS OF H  
THE CLOVER.

EIGHTH DAY, FEBRUARY EIGHTH, TUES. 8:30 PM.  
AT 252/H ELIZABETH ST. AT E. HOUSTON: TAKE  
PERFORMER WEARS ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING  
BROUGHT THAT IS NOT PHYSICALLY DANGEROUS



9TH DAY:  
SHAKE



10TH DAY: SWIM  
SWIM IN YOUR DREAMS AS FAR AS YOU CAN



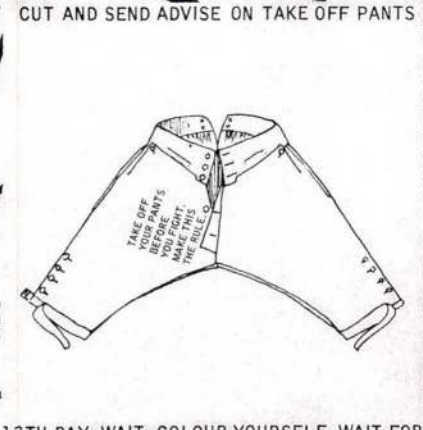
11TH DAY: SWIM  
SWIM IN YOUR DREAMS AS FAR AS YOU CAN

11TH DAY, FEBRUARY 11: KEEP LAUGHING A DAY



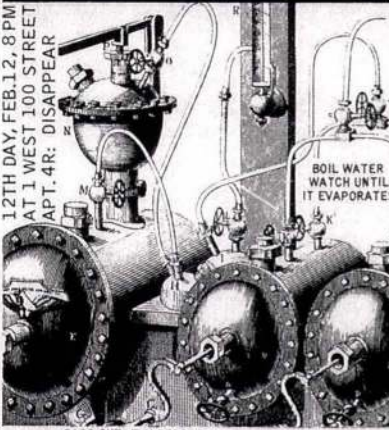
FACE  
FACE THE WALL AND IMAGINE  
THROUGHOUT THE YEAR BANGING  
YOUR HEAD AGAINST IT!  
A) SLOWLY  
UNTIL THE WALL COLLAPSES  
B) VIOLENTLY  
UNTIL YOUR HEAD IS GONE

SEND  
INSTRUCTION  
OF FACE



12TH DAY: SWIM  
SWIM IN YOUR DREAMS AS FAR AS YOU CAN

12TH DAY, FEB. 12, 8 PM  
AT 1 WEST 100 STREET  
APT. 4R: DISAPPEAR



13TH DAY: WAIT. COLOUR YOURSELF. WAIT FOR  
THE SPRING. LET US KNOW WHEN IT COMES.



14TH DAY: SWIM  
SWIM IN YOUR DREAMS AS FAR AS YOU CAN

HIDE MOUTH. HIDE YOUR MOUTH AT  
ALL TIMES. THE GOVERNMENT  
SHOULD OUTLAW SUCH IN-  
DECENT EXPOSURE

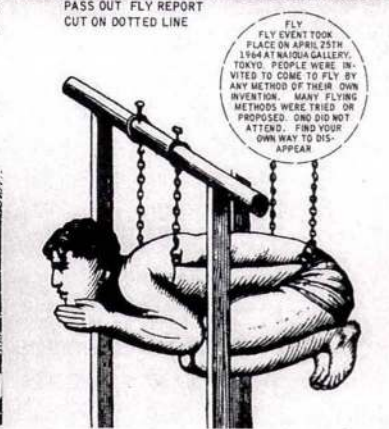


DANCE REPORT  
IN THE OLD EAST THERE  
WAS A DANCE IN WHICH YOUNG GIRLS  
AT THE AGE OF 12 OR 13 WORE SPECIAL  
INTOXICATING FLOWERS INDUCING THEM TO SLEEP  
WHILE STANDING. THE GIRLS WENT ON  
STANDING FOR HOURS WHILE  
PEOPLE WATCHED



15TH DAY: SWIM  
SWIM IN YOUR DREAMS AS FAR AS YOU CAN

15TH DAY, FEB. 15, 8 PM  
AT 1 WEST 100 STREET  
APT. 4R: DISAPPEAR



16TH DAY: SWIM  
SWIM IN YOUR DREAMS AS FAR AS YOU CAN

16TH DAY, FEB. 16, 8 PM  
AT 1 WEST 100 STREET  
APT. 4R: DISAPPEAR



AY-O, *FINGER BOX SET (NO. 26)* (1964), MIXED MEDIA IN WOOD BOXES IN VINYL BRIEFCASE, 12 1/2 x 17 3/4 x 3 3/4 OVERALL. COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER.

*Fluxus 1* was assembled by Maciunas as individual orders arose, and it was available from 1964 to the mid-1970s—facts that help to explain the numerous differences within the contents of each copy, although the core of artists represented remained fairly stable. Naturally, across a span of a dozen years, new artists became attached to Fluxus as others moved apart. Even as the first Yearbox was being assembled, Fluxus was growing and changing, and Maciunas became aware of the need for an even less conventional type of publishing to accommodate ideas and actions that made the nonstandard Fluxbook format redundant. His response to this new situation was to concentrate on the production of multiple editions by individual artists<sup>27</sup> and then to continue the tradition of anthology by combining the multiples into various versions of the *Fluxkit* (p. 58).

Each *Fluxkit* was a separate assembly of items, with a number of constant factors: an attaché case or a wooden box with a silkscreened label, compartmentalized to contain from twenty to forty or more individual items (event scores, texts, and a selection of plastic Fluxboxes). Most versions carried similar works by a core group of artists: Brecht's *Water Yam* was almost always included in each *Fluxkit*, as were Ay-O's *Finger Box*, and one of several noisemakers by Joe Jones. It seems that later kits carried a greater number of smaller boxes by more artists. Again, the temporal span of production and the expedient assembly practice would seem to account for most of the

differences, for versions of the *Fluxkit* were available from 1964 to at least 1970. The *Fluxkit* editions represent the best-known aspect of Fluxus, and, as they consisted of samplings of work that date back to 1961, they also amount to miniature histories in themselves.

The *Fluxkit* centered around that most exemplary of Fluxus publications, the Fluxbox. Fluxboxes are basically games, puzzles, events, or ideas given concrete form and contained within a small plastic box. They are a crucial component of the movement, partly because they allow the enormous personality differences and cultural variety of Fluxus a semblance of cohesion and conceptual unity. The boxes might contain anything. But their commonality of form, their inexpensive availability, a certain requirement for "audience participation," and a shared belief in the power of humor—combined with Maciunas' unifying graphic style—all mark these many and varied objects as Fluxus and separate them from the mass of other multiples produced during the 1960s. These elements are all central to the Fluxus program of demystifying art and, simultaneously, raising the conscious activity of participators.

The physical and mental activity required to "complete" Fluxboxes often goes beyond the sensations of internal or external dialogue that accompany confrontations with more conventional art. The act of examining a Fluxbox lends an extra dimension that is necessary to interact successfully with—and thus understand—the piece. Such

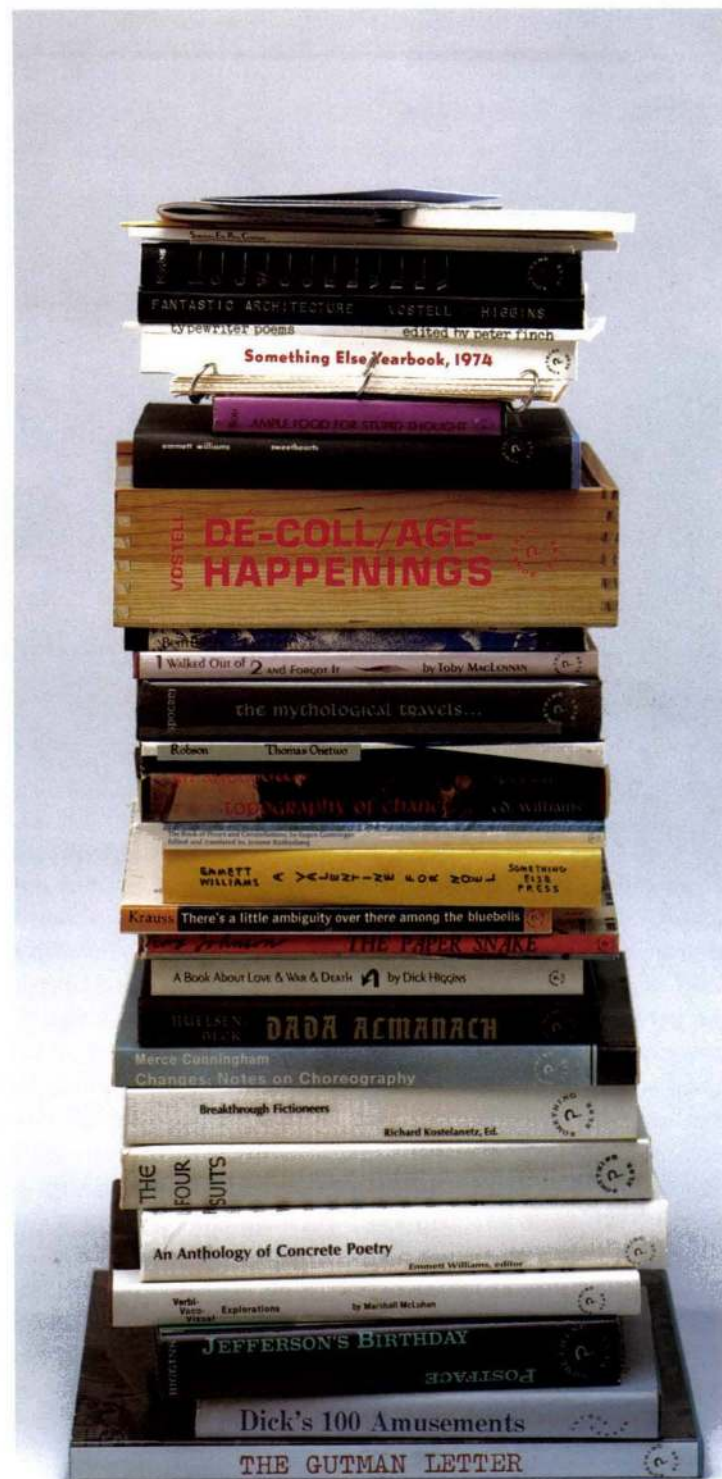
works as Brecht's enigmatic bead puzzles, Yoshimasa Wada's *Smoke Fluxkit* (1969), or Benjamin Patterson's washing sets (p. 57) require playing with, burning, using, or handling before they can be said to be complete. This rule applies across a whole spectrum of items by dozens of artists, whether inspired by Zen, Dada, politics, or chemicals; the result is a destabilization of the balance between author and receptor. Because these pieces undermine this normal hierarchy and replace the conventional relationship with a more complex, ambiguous status quo, artistic responsibility for the works becomes uncertain.

This problem is further exacerbated by the method of construction of the boxes. In many cases, an artist would simply suggest an idea to Maciunas, who would then assume responsibility for design and publication. Ken Friedman's *Flux Clippings* (1966/circa 1969) (p. 57) is a collection of fingernail (or toenail or bunion?) cuttings in a box whose cover reproduces a medieval beheading. The sinister associations are manifold: a venerable reliquary of Flux-martyrdom; voodoo power over a body by virtue of control over its parts; the connection between clipping, cutting, and death emphasized by the label. All of these associations are darkly meaningful and entirely in accord with Maciunas' attractions toward pain, torture, antiquity, and anything esoteric. It is, however, somewhat at odds with Friedman's original intent, which was simply to make a box of press clippings—no less complex or potentially ambivalent, but given a peculiar twist through Maciunas' intervention.

Not all publications suffered such radical transformation, but at many levels, Maciunas' role injected a consistency—in graphic quality as well as in content—sufficient to make conceptual sense of a collection such as the *Fluxkit* but relaxed enough to allow each artist's personality to shine through. Because of this, it remains relatively easy to distinguish Fluxus publications from those of its contemporaries but equally easy to follow any individual's progress within Fluxus.

Maciunas' supervisory capacity makes it attractive to imagine some kind of subtext for Fluxus, based on the inclusions and exclusions in the various anthologies. Given the inconsistencies of any artist's representations in each *Fluxkit*, and Maciunas' notoriously volatile temper with regard to his colleagues' Flux-standing, one might suppose that every kit could be read as symbolic of the editor's perception of Fluxus. Indeed, this may be the case with regard to a few artists. Ultimately, however, such a reading would be indefensible, if only because hard facts about the timing of each production are lacking. Maciunas was known to have kept large stocks of material around, and it is just as likely that the assembly of each kit depends less on ideology than on factors as banal as closeness to hand.

Although he would appear to have retained ultimate control over production, in fact, Maciunas had few qualms about delegating his responsibilities when necessary. He sent much material to Willem de Ridder at the European Fluxshop in Amsterdam (pp. 38–39), leaving him to compile kits as and when orders came in. Despite their use of standard constituents, the products of the European operation were often subtly different. The absence of Maciunas' singlehanded involvement in such cases attests to the extent of his influence and reveals an important aspect of Fluxus publishing. Maciunas' role as compiler, in tandem with his other duties as editor, visualizer, constructor, participant, and, in some ways, censor, meant that he was subverting and revolutionizing the role of publisher, even as the publications themselves were transforming the concept of publication—of sculpture, game, music, of art itself. Not content with rewriting the rules of publication and distribution, Fluxus, in many subtle ways, rewrote the notion of conception, creation, and consumption.<sup>28</sup>



VARIOUS PUBLICATIONS OF DICK HIGGINS' SOMETHING ELSE PRESS (1964–1974). COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER.



FLUXUS 1, VARIOUS EXAMPLES (CIRCA 1964–1978). PHOTO BRAD IVERSON, COURTESY THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

Production planning for a second Yearbox began in 1965, to accompany an accelerating schedule of events and productions throughout the early 1960s. Of course, the same kinds of problems that dogged every other project delayed actual publication until late 1967 or early 1968. Some of this was financial trouble resulting from the fact that the few distribution outlets that accepted Fluxus material demanded objects on consignment; this meant that money had to be spent on an entire production run before there was any possibility of recouping cash through sales, slim though that chance actually was. Another problem, more specific to *Flux Year Box 2* (p. 59), was that it was originally intended as “a kind of GAME BOX,”<sup>29</sup> an anthology of small objects, flip-books, and films. The films—each an 8mm loop—were to be viewed using a hand-held toy, and both items, in comparison with the normal accessories and industrial detritus that went into Fluxboxes, were relatively expensive.<sup>30</sup> Once again, the design, compilation, and actual assembly of each box was in Maciunas’ hands, and the extent of his control can be judged from a letter to Ben Vautier suggesting that he submit a film. “Just send me ‘script’ or tell me what to do,” he wrote, “and I can have the film made. O.K.”<sup>31</sup>

*Flux Year Box 2* was sold in specifically designed wooden cases with a typical multi-font title silkscreened on the lid. Inside were compartments that held three, sometimes four Fluxboxes; printed matter such as Robert Watts’ playing cards or an assortment of name cards; and the film viewer with a selection of 8mm film loops around a central core. As with *Fluxus 1* and the *Fluxkit*, many permutations were possible, although there were, again, some constant factors. Brecht, Friedman, de Ridder, Vautier, and Shigeko Kubota were consistently represented by boxes or objects, and the film selection remained relatively regular (works of a dozen or so artists, including Yoko Ono, Paul Sharits, Stan Vanderbeek, and Maciunas himself, whose films were later included in the Fluxfilm package). Aside from these, content was variable; anywhere between nine and thirteen artists would contribute eighteen or nineteen pieces, with a number of found or anonymous articles such as used and outdated tickets thrown in for good measure.

Like its predecessors, *Flux Year Box 2* represented the changing face of Fluxus. Less, perhaps, than the all-encompassing survey originally intended, it was nevertheless a fascinating and unconventional response to contemporary developments in experimental art activity. If it fell short of Maciunas’ early intentions, it was still a remarkable achievement that remains radical, innovative, and as pertinent today as when it was first conceived.

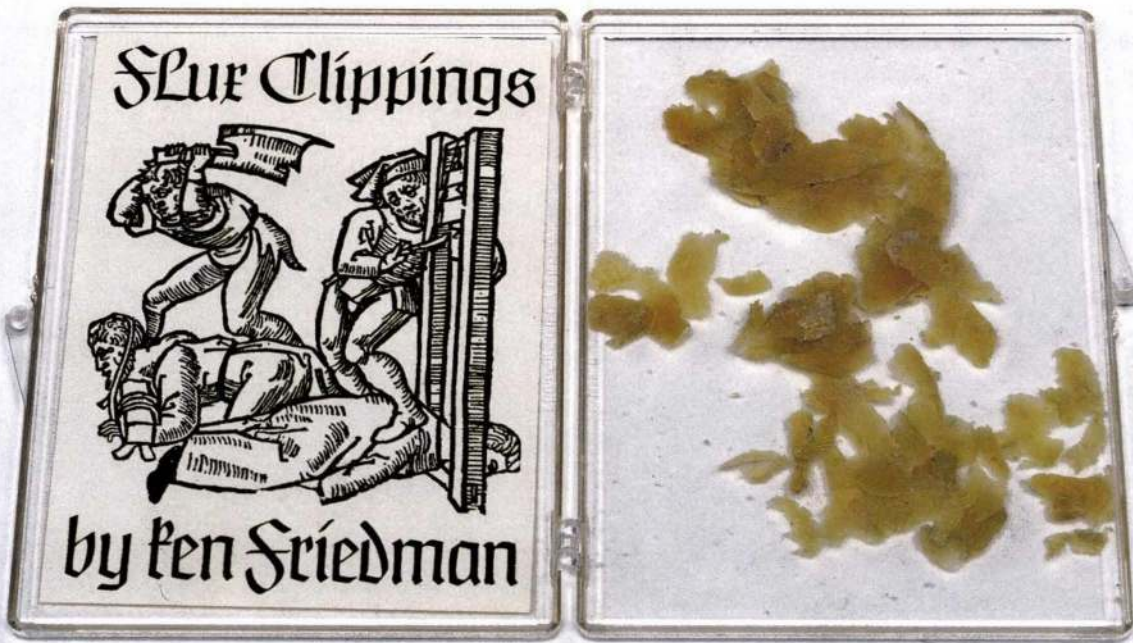
Not content to let dust settle, Maciunas began making calls for contributions to a third Yearbox as soon as *Flux Year Box 2* was complete. Originally visualized as a flat package of games, stamps, stationery, household items, and wearable goods, the eventual format was a cardboard tube with objects rolled inside. Plans for this project progressed very slowly—partly because of a decline in Fluxus activity, and partly because Maciunas turned his attention to other collective activities. By 1972, with much of the material prepared, Maciunas consigned assembly and publication to Giancarlo Politi (the editor of *Flash Art*, whose sympathy with the Fluxus project was proven by his republication in the early 1970s of the collected *V TRE*). After a subsequent—unexplained—transfer to Gino Di Maggio’s *Multhipla*, *Fluxpack 3*, as it was to be called, was ready for publication by 1975. Due to circumstances beyond Maciunas’ control (1975 was the year he was beaten almost to death), *Fluxpack 3* failed to materialize and was never available commercially.

If this last failure reinforces a belief that the history of Fluxus publications was a series of utopian fantasies interspersed with sporadic, uneven productions and held together by the overweening ambitions of a fanatically flawed genius—it is because that is how it was. And yet . . .

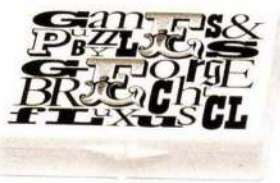
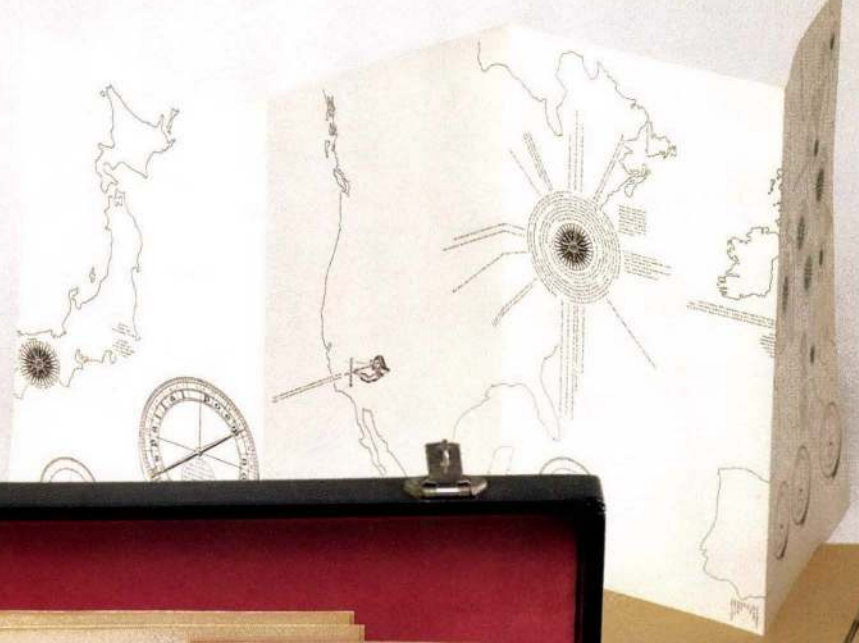


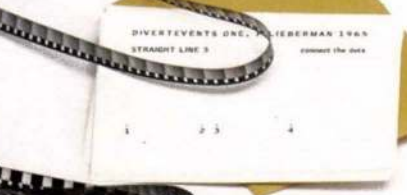
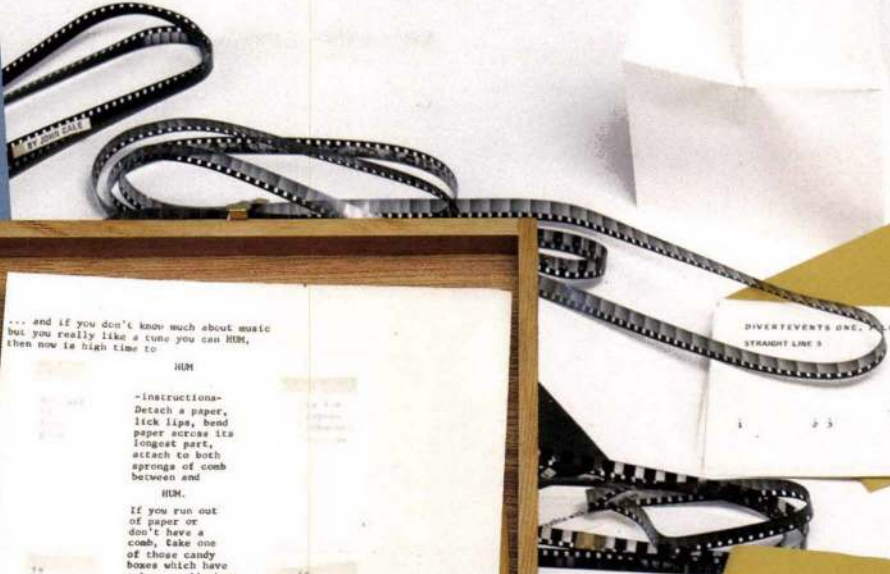
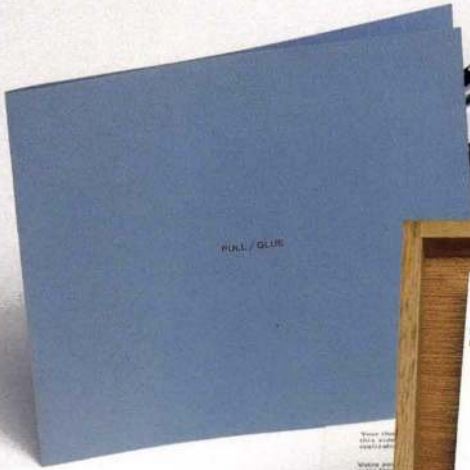


(LEFT TO RIGHT) GEORGE BRECHT, *GAMES AND PUZZLES/NAME KIT* (CIRCA 1965), PLASTIC BOX, OFFSET ON PAPER, PLASTIC DICE, ROCK, RUBBER,  $4 \times 4 \frac{3}{4} \times 1 \frac{1}{8}$ , COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER; BENJAMIN PATTERSON, *INSTRUCTION NO. 2* (1964), PLASTIC BOX, OFFSET ON PAPER, SOAP, INK ON PAPER TOWEL,  $4 \times 4 \frac{3}{4} \times 1$ , COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER; YOSHIMASA WADA, *SMOKE FLUXKIT* (1969), PLASTIC BOX, OFFSET ON PAPER, INCENSE, RUBBER, LEATHER, ROPE, ORANGE PEEL, CEREAL FLAKES,  $4 \times 4 \frac{3}{4} \times 1$ , THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.



KEN FRIEDMAN, *FLUX CLIPPINGS* (1966/CIRCA 1969), PLASTIC BOX, OFFSET ON PAPER, BUNIONS,  $4 \frac{3}{4} \times 4 \times \frac{3}{8}$ , THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.





... and if you don't know much about music but you really like a tune you can HUM, then now is high time to

HUM

-instructions-  
Detach a paper, lick lips, bend paper across its longest part, attach to both sprongs of comb between and

HUM.

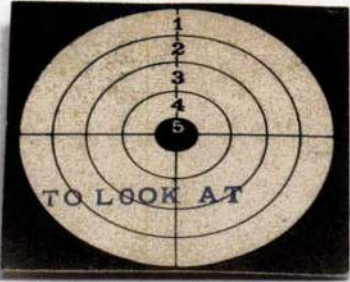
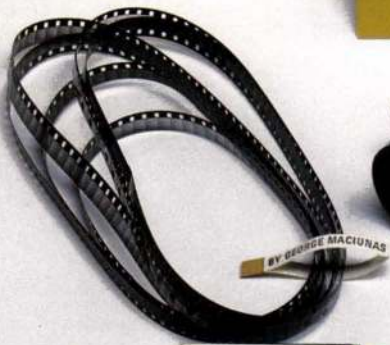
If you run out of paper or don't have a comb, take one of these candy boxes which have a large cellophane transparency, bend one end very slightly, blow and

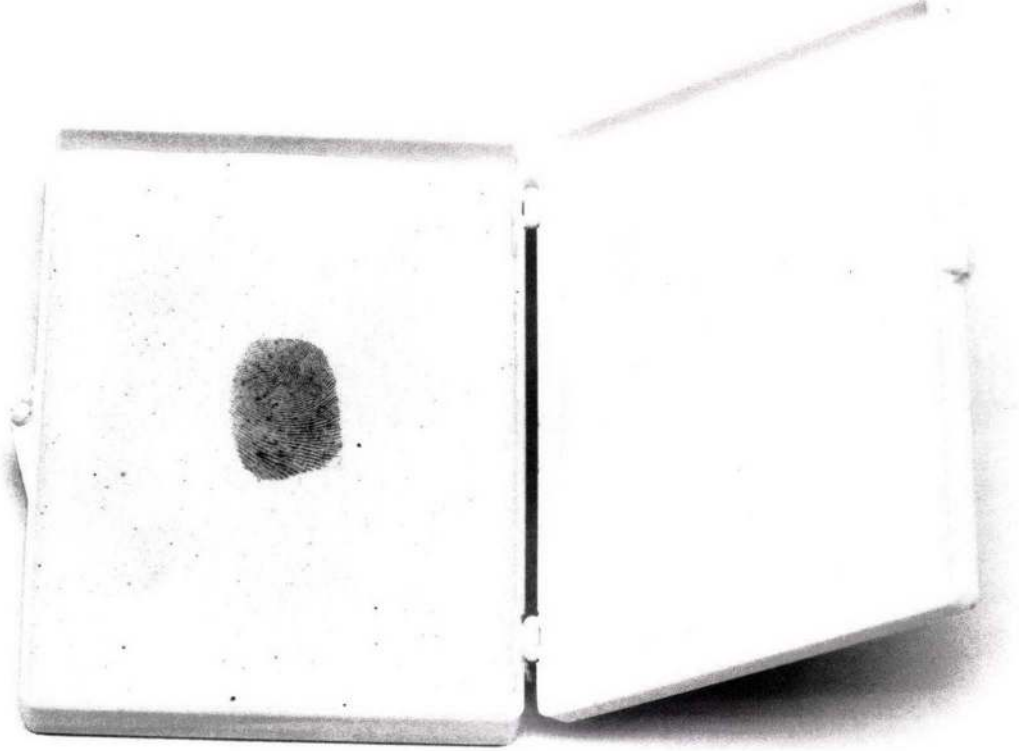
HUM.

And when you don't have any of these go right ahead and

HUM.

In genuine expression, HUM can be done by any number of people.  
Bob Sheff,  
Ann Arbor, 1965.





ROBERT WATTS, *FINGERPRINT* (CIRCA 1965), PLASTIC BOX, OFFSET ON PAPER, PLASTER, INK, 4 x 4 3/4 x 1. COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER.

And yet it was, and remains, more than that. Fluxus was the scene of a compromise between the idealistic desires of several dozen experimenters in culture, and the unknowing and possibly uncaring masses that constituted their potential audience. The idea of "art for all" is an essentially utopian fantasy, particularly when that art is one that aims for an approach unhindered by historical prejudice; one that strives to avoid the mysteries, the myths, the egotism of the individual artist; and one that attempts to strike simply at the heart of everyone's everyday experience. Maciunas, obsessive to the point of impossibility, was the stage manager of that preposterous drama, a tireless promoter who was consistently generous with time, ideas, money, and encouragement in pursuit of the perfect production.

Yet again, Fluxus was more than Maciunas: he was a cipher, a vessel in which Fluxus was distilled. Fluxus as it is known would have been impossible without him, but it would be equally unrecognizable without the intellect and enthusiasm of Higgins, the laconic humor of Brecht, the energy of Friedman, the creative genius of Watts, the contrariness of Vautier, the conscience of Vostell—in fact, without the wit and wisdom of Ay-O, Filliou, Andersen, Schmit, and the dozens of others who contributed to any and every publication.

Fluxus exists only as a matrix between this anarchic, international, and occasionally paradoxical host of complex personalities. It deliberately experimented with, ignored, and tore down so many of the barriers and hierarchies of contemporary culture that no analogy suffices: it defies description, a condition that is perhaps its most potent source of strength.

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(P. 58) *FLUXKIT* (1964; THIS EXAMPLE 1966), VINYL CASE WITH MIXED MEDIA, 12 x 17 1/2 x 5 OVERALL. THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

(P. 59) *FLUX YEAR BOX 2* (1966; THIS EXAMPLE 1968), WOOD BOX WITH MIXED MEDIA, 8 x 8 x 3 3/8 OVERALL. THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

## Notes

1 In 1967 Watts and Maciunas collaborated with Herman Fine to set up Implosions, a company whose purpose was to produce and distribute novelties in the spirit of Fluxus—although they apparently hoped it would be more commercially viable. Watts was a great source of ideas for Implosions, whose range consisted mostly of stick-on decals such as medals, tattoos, disfiguring marks, and jewelry. The exact relationship between Fluxus and Implosions is not clear (Maciunas thought of one as subsidiary to the other), but Implosions seems to have been established to spread the idea of Fluxus, to broaden its commercial base, and to recoup some personal investment. Equally, it speaks to the fact that Fluxus' aim was to dissolve the artificial barriers between art and entertainment—between high and low culture, between leisure, pleasure, and aesthetics—and that Fluxists realized there were many ways to achieve this aim, including the wide span of publishing ventures they undertook.

2 See Jon Hendricks' comments in his *Fluxus Codex* (Detroit and New York: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1988), p. 535.

3 Maciunas not only imported what was essentially a Yam Festival idea into the Fluxus stable, he also used the format himself, producing several different sheets of Fluxstamps. It is a device that subsequently also has been used by some mail artists.

4 Letter from Maciunas to Ben Vautier, August 7, 1966, quoted in *supra*, note 2, p. 532.

5 Maciunas in "Transcript of the Videotaped Interview with George Maciunas by Larry Miller, March 24, 1978," in Jon Hendricks, ed., *Fluxus etc./Addenda 1: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, exh. cat. (New York: Ink &, 1983), p. 15.

6 It is ironic that items reminiscent of the Venus apron and Fluxus anatomical clothing can now be found in street markets around the world, produced without knowledge of the artistic impulse that had inspired the original objects. Like the Futurists and Constructivists before them, Fluxists (particularly Flynt and Maciunas) argued for a new, functional style of clothing. Unlike Futurist proposals for asymmetrical attire, Fluxus ideas for sweat suits and other sportswear to replace formal and everyday clothing have actually, if inadvertently, entered the mores of popular dress.

7 Quoted as the subject of Maciunas' lectures on the first announcement of *Musica Antiqua et Nova*, AG Gallery, March–May 1961. For a reproduction of this announcement see Hanns Sohm, ed., *happening & fluxus*, exh. cat. (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1970), unpaginated.

8 Maciunas designed a cubiform storage space for his apartment consisting of a wall unit with open and closed cubes, their fronts variously decorated with the same kind of fragmentary photographic enlargements found scattered throughout Fluxus boxes, newspapers, and announcements.

9 See Jackson Mac Low, "Wie George Maciunas die New Yorker Avantgarde kennenlernte," in René Block, ed., *1962 Wiesbaden Fluxus 1982: Eine kleine Geschichte von Fluxus in Drei Teilen*, exh. cat. (Wiesbaden: Harlekin Art and Berlin: Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD, 1983), p. 115.

10 These delays were themselves typical of Fluxus, and were mainly caused by financial insecurity, an occasionally casual stewardship of the original contents, and the obvious problems inherent in employing a conventional printer to produce unconventional and meticulously designed material.

11 "Interview with George Maciunas," *supra*, note 5, p. 15.

12 *Ibid.*

13 It was originally to be called *The Misfits Fair*, a rather more punning title.

14 Fluxists have consistently denied constituting a movement, and they cavil at terms that group them too closely together. Peter Frank's solution, calling Fluxus a "tendency," seems most appropriate in general; however, for the sake of clarity and because surely in those early European days there was an element of coherence to Fluxus, it seems reasonable to use such descriptions as "group"—provided one uses them advisedly.

15 Maciunas continued: "Fluxus is not 'proletarian dictatorship' with inflexible 'party programme'. It is a *collective* in the true sense of the word . . . when you edit newspaper you should infuse your point (of view) . . . even though your views may be apolitical, I think they are more politically potent or rather *applicable*, than Henry Flynt's." Postcard from Maciunas to Brecht, October 1963, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.

16 Issue nos. 1 and 2 retailed at eighty cents, nos. 3 and 4 at twenty-five cents. The others were not priced, except no. 11, which sold for two dollars.

17 When used in a later issue of *V TRE* (no. 3, March 1964), this design feature was intended to "disassociate them [in this case, a press release and essay by Henry Flynt] from the content of the rest" (*Flash Art*, no. 84–85 [October–November 1978], p. 49). Whether such disassociation was intended for the Knowles and Ligeti pieces (the latter, even by 1964, seems somewhat outside the Fluxus canon) is open to speculation.

18 Reminiscent of other Rot pieces, this "poem" requires the destruction of the issue to be "read" properly: it necessitates cutting a hole in the center of a photograph of Rot's head. This casual attitude toward the magazine as an object is repeated in *Fluxus Vaudeville TouRnamEnt* (no. 6, July 1965), in which the center pages are a circular calendar device, with a pointer to be cut out and affixed so that it swings like a compass needle to appropriate dates. Surely this indicates the essentially functional, as opposed to aesthetic, purpose of *V TRE*.

19 Some authorities attribute editorship to Maciunas alone in all but issue nos. 1, 10, and 11; and it is clear that Maciunas quickly assumed responsibility for the majority of the visual, if not textual content. It seems likely that Brecht relinquished control, if he ever had any, some time before the periodical ceased to carry his letter code (no. 4, June 1964, is the last to be prefixed with "cc") and that he remained an occasional contributor who did not retain the responsibility for continuous output—if the ever-widening gaps (up to three years!) between issues actually can be said to be "continuous."

20 For a description of this event, see Kristine Stiles' essay in this book, p. 70.

21 *Fluxnewsletter*, March 8, 1967; repr. in Hendricks, ed., *supra*, note 5, p. 172.

22 "George Brecht—An Interview with Robin Page for Carla Liss (Who Fell Asleep)," *Art & Artists* 7, no. 7 (October 1972), p. 33.

23 Tomas Schmit, "If I Remember Rightly," *Art & Artists* (*supra*, note 22) p. 37.

24 Hendricks, ed., *supra*, note 2 (pp. 101–110), lists more than twenty-five nomenclatures for this item.

25 The Fluxus-inspired magazine *Schmuck*, published by Beau Geste Press in Cullompton, Devon, England, during the early 1970s, was to come a little closer to realizing this ambition.

26 In terms of packaging, Jørgen Nash's 1961 *Hanegal* came wrapped in wire mesh, and while the *Internationale Situationniste* was presented very conservatively, it offered many calls for the overthrow of established culture—with varying degrees of success. *The Situationist Times* dedicated different issues to different cultural centers.

27 Maciunas wrote to Philip Kaplan in 1963 that "we are also concentrating our effort more on Fluxus solo editions," indicating that this direction was, if not deliberate, then at least noted.

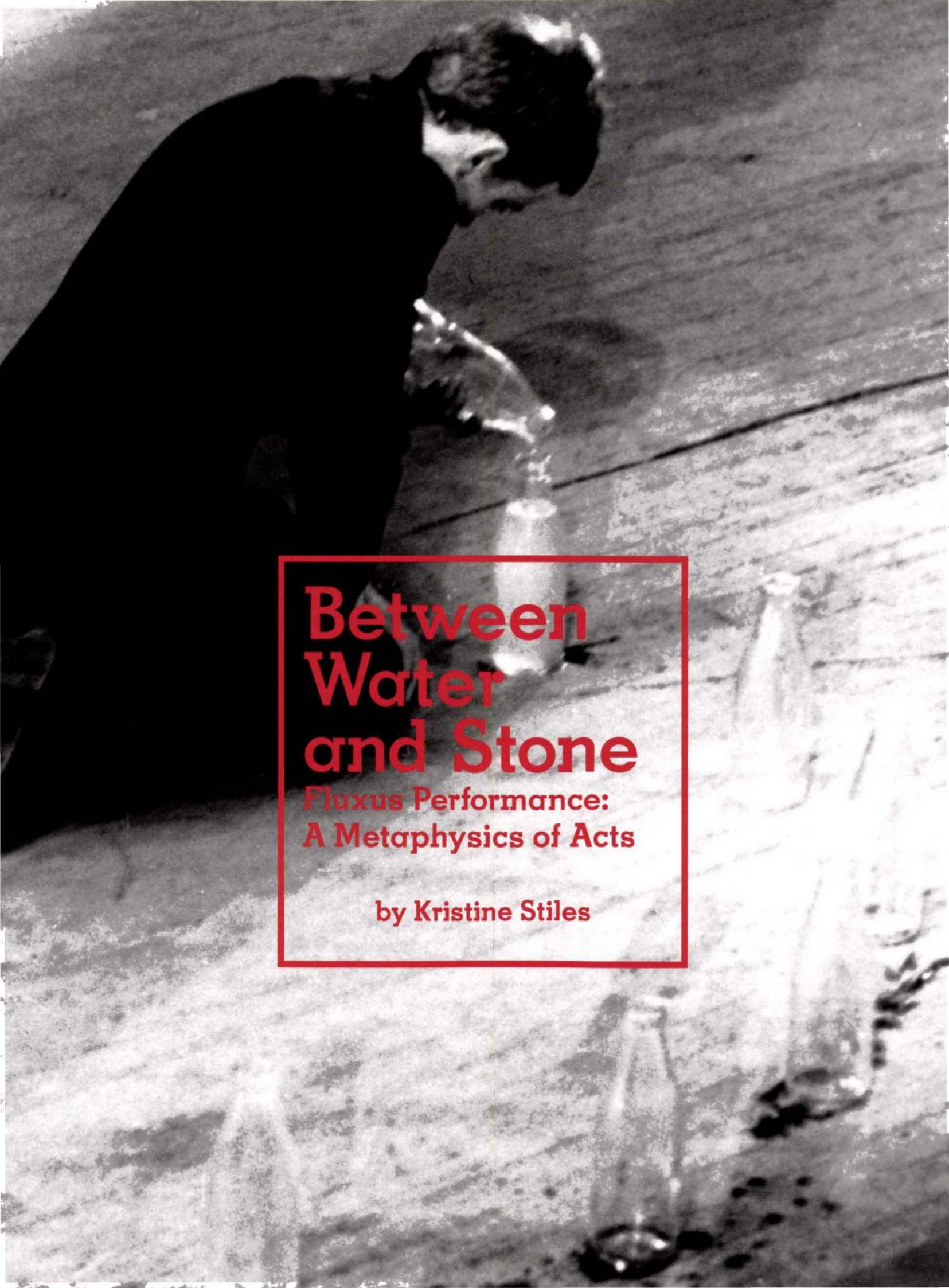
28 A similar attempt—albeit on a somewhat more limited scale—was made by Wolfgang Feelisch, whose Vice Versand Editions ("Topical art for your home") published witty, powerful, and beautiful multiples by artists such as Joseph Beuys, Dick Higgins, Wolf Vostell, and Stefan Wewerka. Remarkably inexpensive, and confounding the conventions of much contemporary work, they too were mail-order articles, made up specifically as orders came in. Feelisch, like Maciunas, was capable of simply issuing labels and instructions when necessary—and it was indeed necessary, considering the delicate nature of some of the pieces.

29 Letter from Maciunas to Ben Vautier, January 23, 1965, quoted in Hendricks, ed., *supra*, note 2, p. 122.

30 Fluxus films, Maciunas' own film theories, and the variety of their screenings—from the hand-held toys of *Flux Year Box 2* to the multi-screen environments for which they were otherwise intended—are worthy subjects for investigation. For writing on Fluxus films, see Bruce Jenkins' essay in this book and Tod Lippy, "Disappearing Act: The Radical Reductivism of Fluxus Film," in Cornelia Lauf and Susan Hapgood, eds., *FluxAttitudes*, exh. cat. (Ghent: Imschoot Uitgevers, 1991), pp. 35–41.

31 Letter from George Maciunas to Ben Vautier, January 10, 1966, quoted in Hendricks, ed., *supra*, note 2, p. 123.





**Between  
Water  
and Stone**

**Fluxus Performance:  
A Metaphysics of Acts**

**by Kristine Stiles**

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

### A Performance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



### The Performative Conditions of Fluxus

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Scored Events

### MUSIC WHILE YOU WORK, 1962

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

Arthur Koepcke

### VOICE PIECE FOR LA MONTE YOUNG, 1963

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

Emmett Williams

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

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

#### THREE AQUEOUS EVENTS

- ice
- water
- steam

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

## “What Ism Fluxism?”

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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

Both Joseph Beuys, who openly acknowledged that his beliefs about the political and social dimension of performance originated in the context of the general politics of action that developed in Fluxus and the performance practices of the late 1950s and early 1960s, and Wolf Vostell, whose *dé-coll/age* happenings mediate between Fluxus and surrounding practices, are interesting cases to consider when examining the boundaries of Fluxus performance and the limitations of Maciunas' exclusionary model. Beuys himself stated that his "Fluxus activities began in 1962 when I spoke with Nam June Paik . . . and met with Maciunas"<sup>33</sup> and he remembered performing his first action, *Composition for Two Musicians*, during the Festum Fluxorum at the Staatliche Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf in 1963.<sup>34</sup> This simple, single-action event in which Beuys stepped forward, wound up a musical toy with two mechanical musicians, and watched them play until the toy wound down, represented the kind of minimal event that eventually would be favored in Fluxus performance. The second night of the festival, however, Beuys performed the first movement of his *Siberian Symphony*, a complex ritual action in which many of the basic symbols of his celebrated performances of the next twenty years were already present: a chalkboard, dead hare, a piano, electrical wire, etc. (above). His action, Beuys stated, was intended as "a contextual reference to expression, to birth and death."<sup>35</sup> Beuys' name ceased appearing on "official" Maciunas-authored programs soon after this performance. Nevertheless, as late as 1966, programs such as that printed for a series of performances organized at the René Block Galerie in Berlin identified Beuys as "Fluxus."<sup>36</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



OR AN ACTION PAGE BY WOLF VOSTELL, 1966

New York City's Area Code is 212

Table of Yellow Pages listings for various businesses and services, including Grocers, Bakeries, and other food-related establishments.

"Where To Buy It"

NEIGHBORHOOD GUIDE. A map of Manhattan showing various neighborhoods and their corresponding grocery store locations. Includes a legend for neighborhood names and a list of store names and addresses.

848 Grocers

Table listing 848 grocers in the area, including store names, addresses, and phone numbers.

LEBENSMITTELKARTE (RATION CARD). A coupon-based grocery list for the month of January 1966. Includes categories like MEAT, VEGETABLES, BREAD, MILK, EGGS, and various cereals. Each item has a designated weight and a coupon number.

TAKE THIS PAGE AS AN INSTRUCTION PLAN WITH YOU AND DURING ONE MONTH BUY THE QUANTITIES OF GROCERIES INDICATED IN THE LEBENSMITTELKARTE (RATION CARD) AT THE DESIGNATED GROCERS. TRY TO SUBSIDIST THAT MONTH WITH THESE COMESTIBLES ONLY. INDICATED WEIGHTS ARE FOR EACH COUPON

## Fluxus Performance and Humor

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

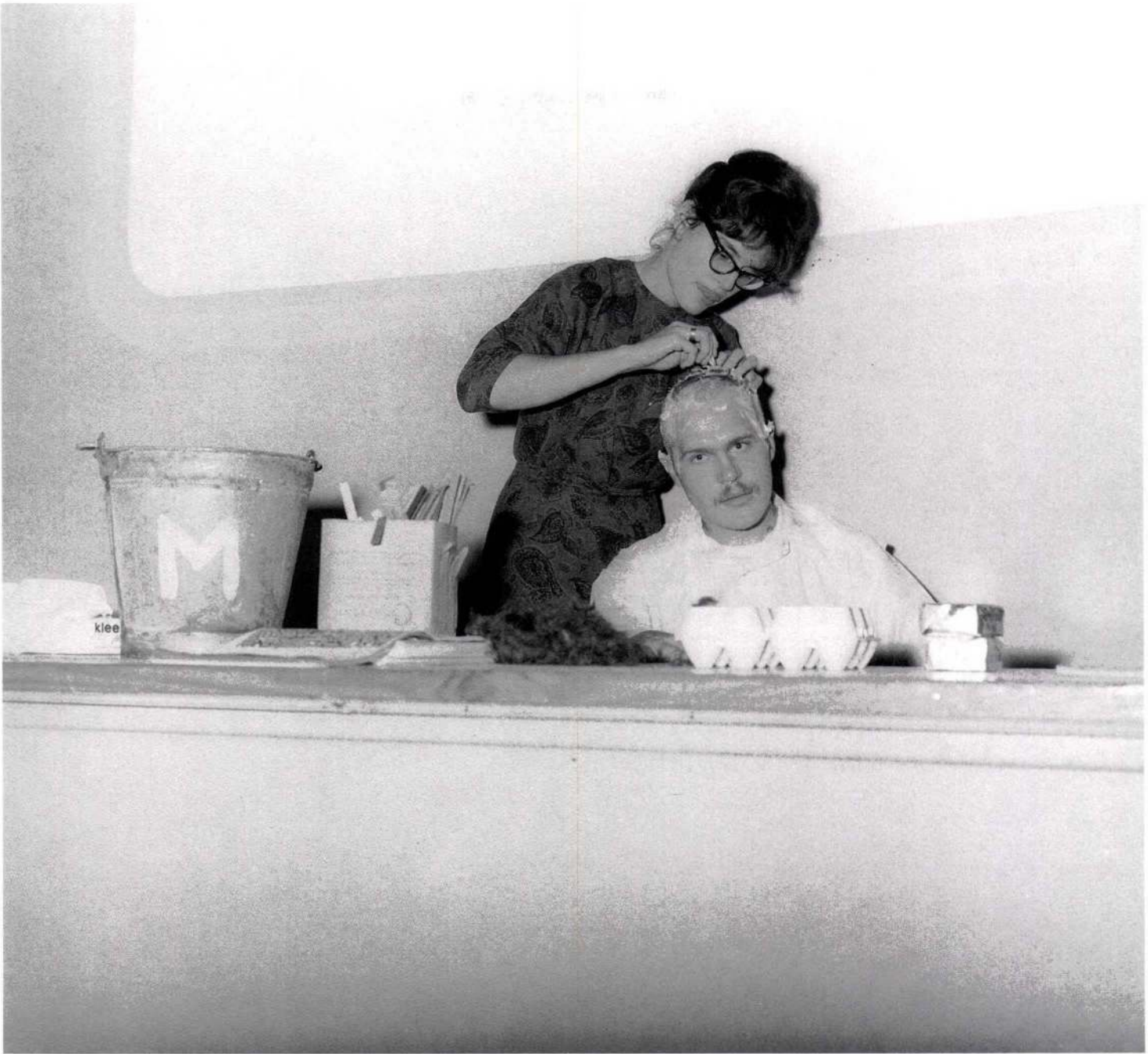
Flynt asserted "just-likings" as themselves defensible and performable cultural forms, and he devised activities through which to heighten them.<sup>51</sup> His own *brend* consisted of studying, writing, lecturing, and engaging in political activities that sought to aestheticize personal and intimate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

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

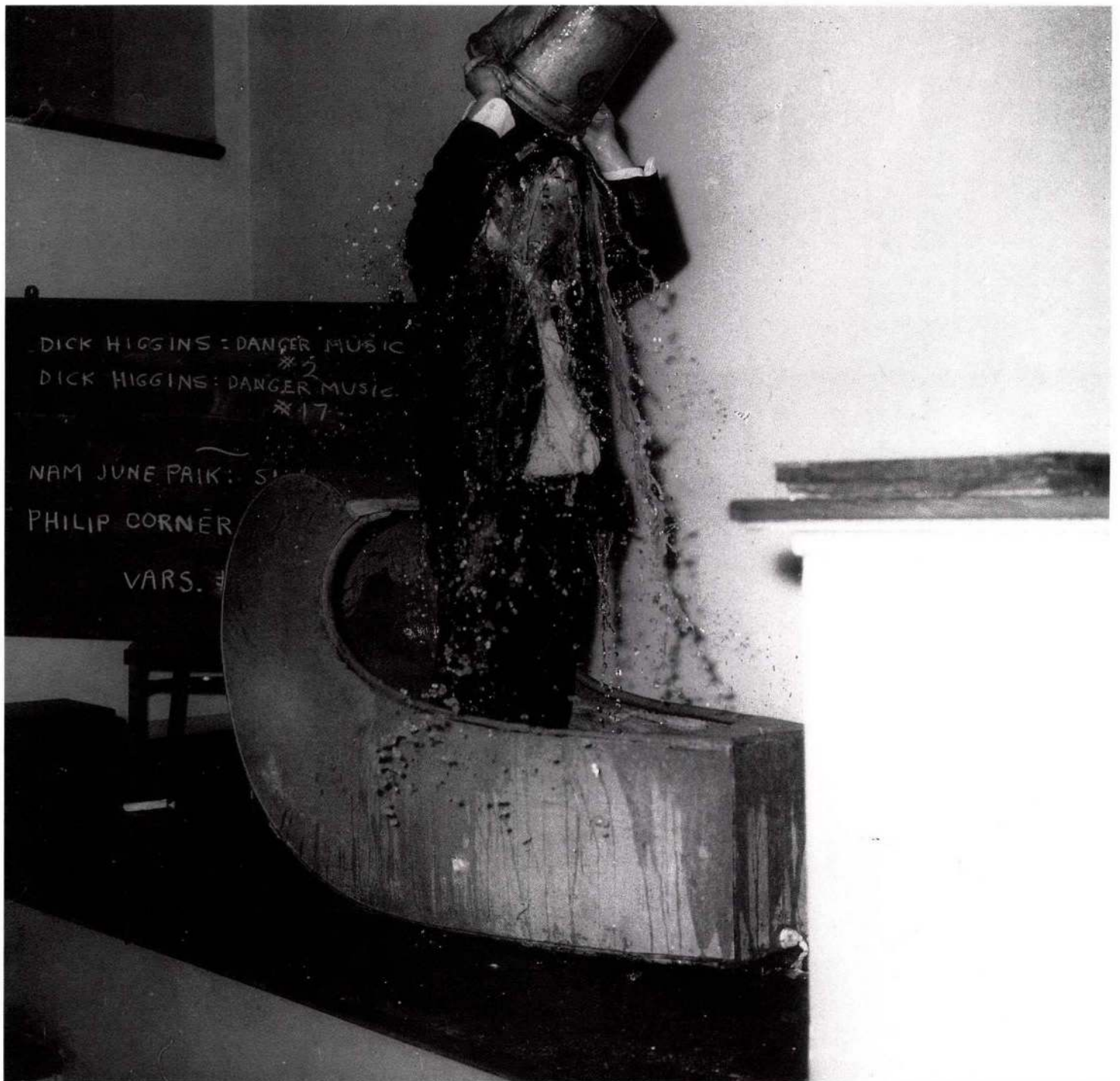
Fluxus humor can be unpredictable, has the appearance of chaos, is unpretentious and nonconformist, and often very dry. "There's Music—and Eggs—in the Air!" Richard O'Regan's review of one of the first Fluxus concerts, offers a marvelous sense of a Fluxus festival of events:

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





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



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



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

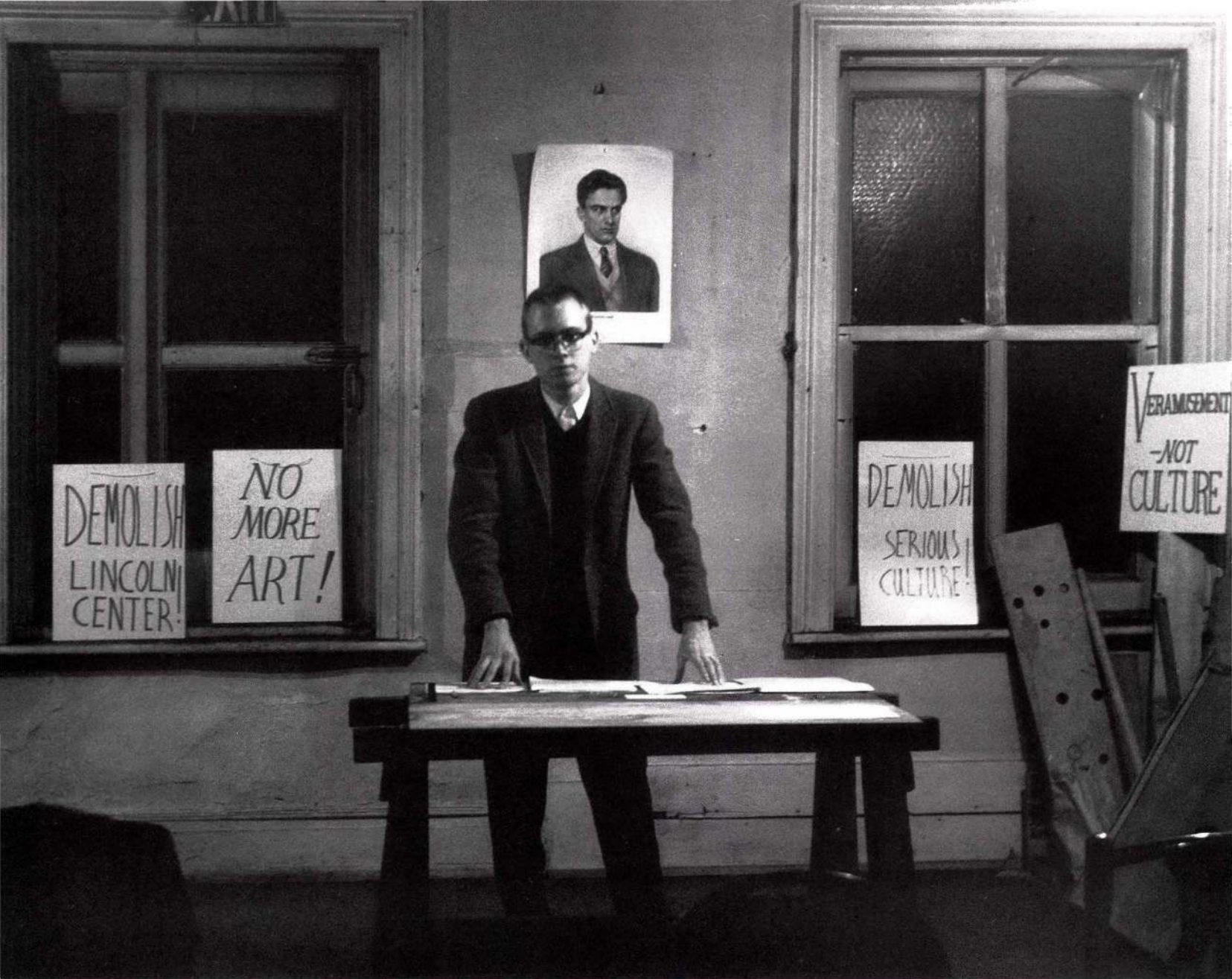
At its best, the humor in Fluxus performance is of an entirely different order than either the self-satisfied satire, irony, and parody characteristic of modernism or the self-aggrandizing superiority and cynical pastiche claimed for postmodernism. Filled with the marvel of a sense of discovery and release,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

### Race, Gender, and Sex in Fluxus Events

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

## FIRST SYMPHONY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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





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

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

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

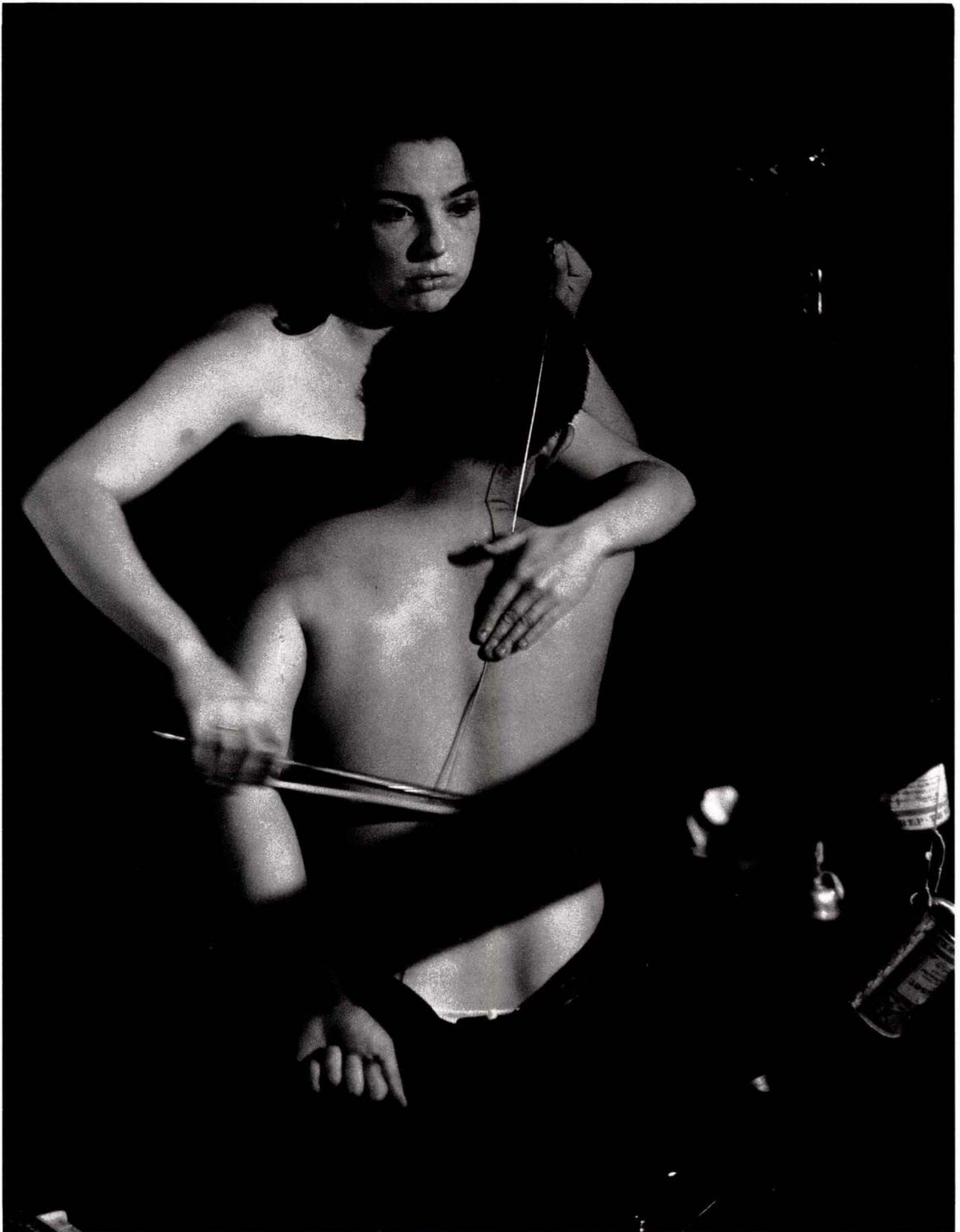


SHIGEKO KUBOTA PERFORMING HER *VAGINA PAINTING* AT PERPETUAL FLUXFEST, NEW YORK CITY (1965). PHOTO GEORGE MACIUNAS, COURTESY THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Objects and Affective Presence

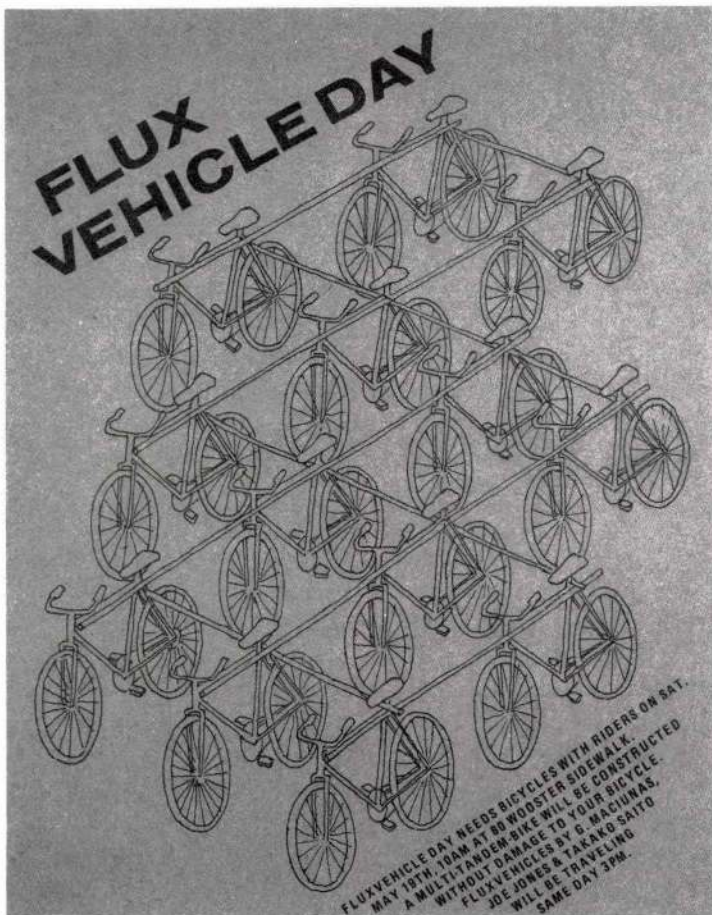
Objects motivate behavior in Fluxus performances and, conversely, behavior endows objects with a performative "presence." Brecht chose the title *Toward Events* for his 1959 exhibition of objects at the Reuben Gallery in New York City, where his show immediately followed Kaprow's *18 Happenings in Six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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

1. something with everything
2. something with nothing
3. something with something
4. everything with everything
5. everything with nothing
6. nothing with nothing<sup>87</sup>

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

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

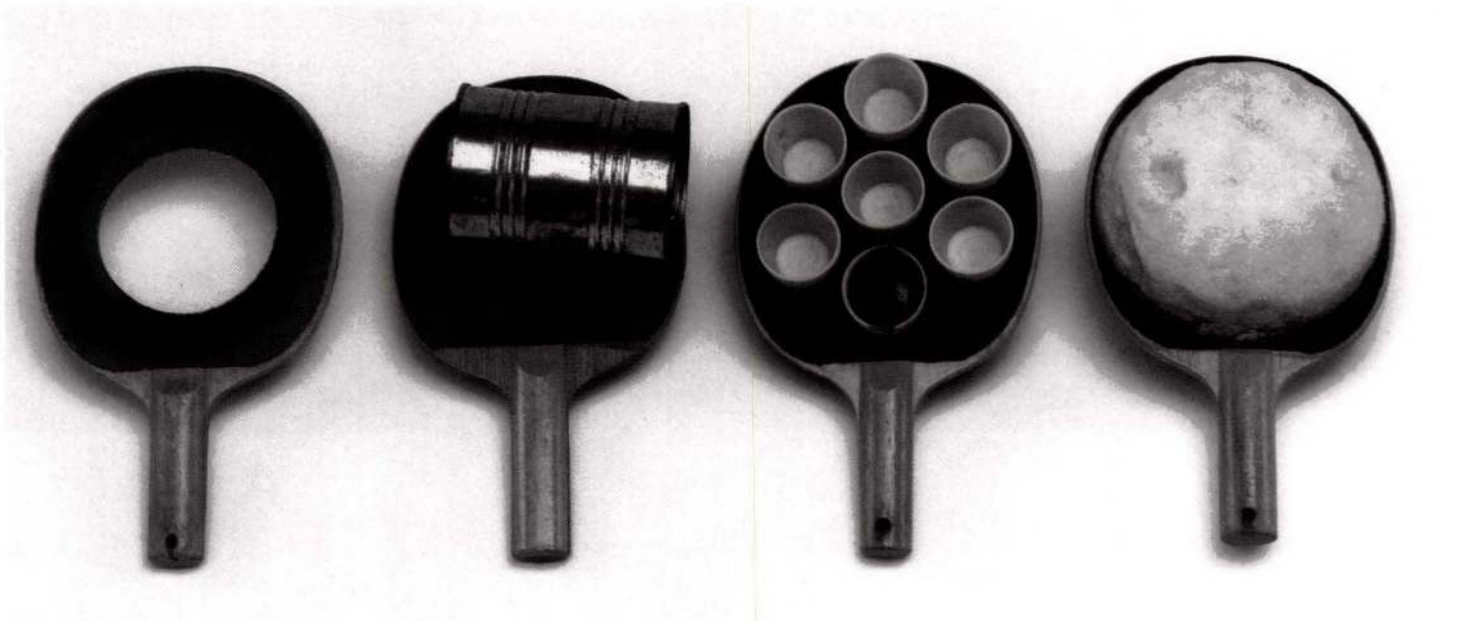
Fluxus events explore the image-making process that creates purposes and use for things, experiences for thought, and alternative behavioral performances; and every Fluxus object provides valuable insights into the performative relations it maintains with the body. Geoffrey Hendricks’ many “cloud” works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

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

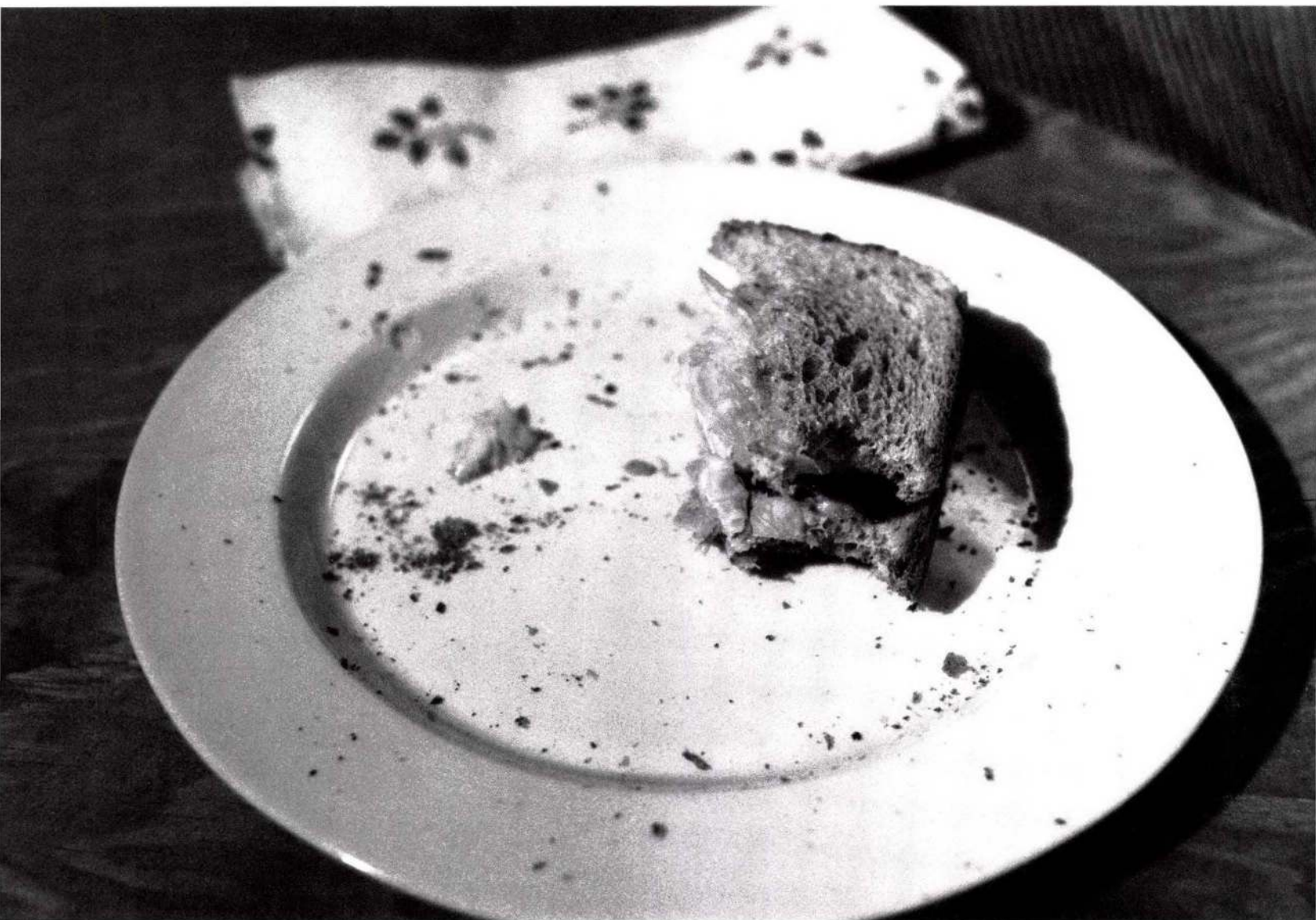
Masks were occasionally worn in Fluxus events for the same purpose. In 1963, Wim T. Schippers, Willem de Ridder, and Tomas Schmit appeared masked in smiling grins to perform de Ridders’ *Laughing* (1961) in Amsterdam (opposite, top). The representation or image of an emotive mood was literally strapped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



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



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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### The Voluntary Association or Community of Fluxus

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

### Fluxus Performance, a Model for Social Praxis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

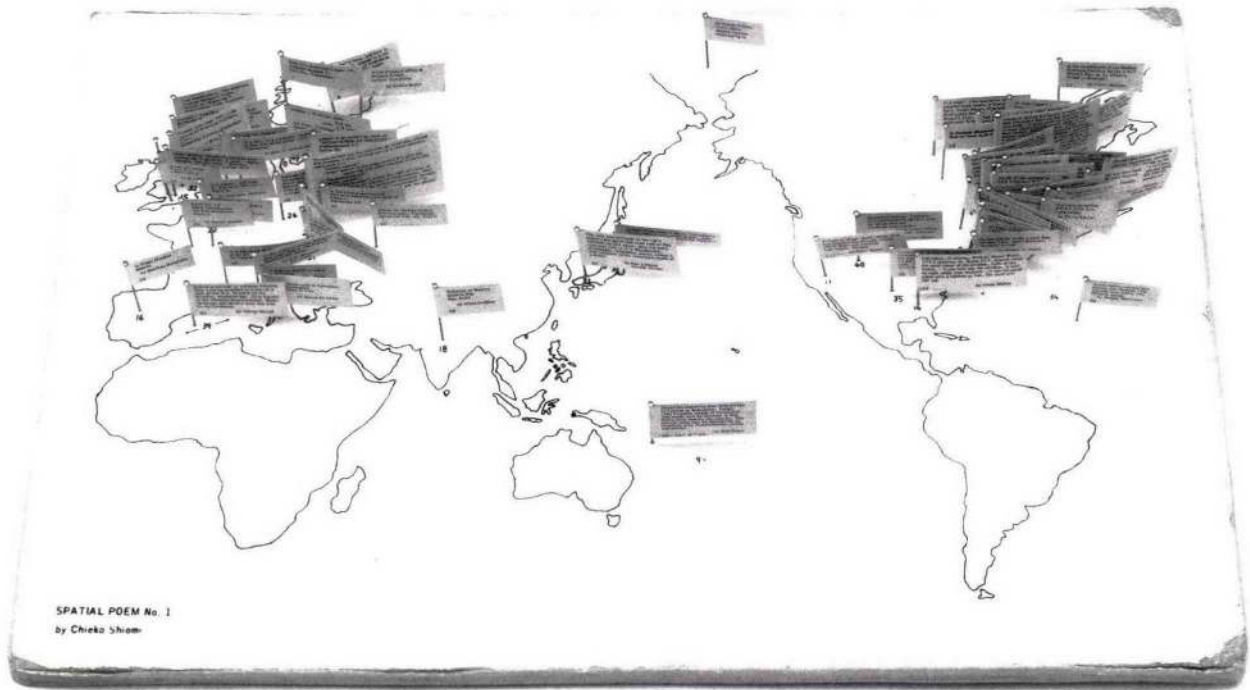
As discussed earlier in this essay, a deeply polarized debate formed in Fluxus around the question of whether performative actions should be aimed at direct cultural intervention and aggressive agitprop activities (as Maciunas, Flynt, and Schmit argued in 1963) or, as Brecht later articulated in a 1979 interview, in accordance with long-term paradigm shifts.<sup>116</sup> Brecht's kind of view ultimately prevailed<sup>117</sup> and, with it, a notion of change that requires reform in ways of thinking—what Brecht described as the necessity for a new "history of mind."<sup>118</sup> Such a history would indicate complex, interrelated, and uneven transitions of thought and points of exchange or anomalies where thinking alters ways of being and doing. As Brecht cautioned:

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

**Falling Event. Various things were let fall: Vytautas Landsbergis caught a pike at the lake of Aisetas, cleaned its entrails and threw them into a pit towards the center of the earth. Then he cut the pike into pieces and let them fall onto a frying pan. July 31, 1966.**<sup>122</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## Notes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 *Ibid.*, p. 407.

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

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

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

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

15 *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

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

21 *Ibid.*, p. 135.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

66 Ibid, p. 300.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

83 Ibid, p. 5.

84 Ibid, pp. 5–6.

85 Ibid, p. 7.

86 Ibid, p. 13.

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

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

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

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

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

92 For an early publication on Maciunas' enterprise, see *Loft Building Co-Operative Newsletter No. 7* (1966), in Hendricks, ed., supra, note 91, p. 170. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit, contains many unpublished and unresearched documents on Maciunas and Watts' real estate ventures. I believe that when these documents are carefully examined, it will be possible to expand greatly our understanding of both the political and social performative dimension of Fluxus.

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

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





# The Latest: Fluxus and Music

by Douglas Kahn

**F**luxus was the most musical of the avant-garde (or experimental or neo-avant-garde) art movements of this century. Surrealism had gone as far as working up an antipathy toward Western art music; other avant-gardes incorporated music but rarely created it; and, with the exception of Italian Futurism, achievements in music certainly could not stand next to those of the visual arts, literature, performance, and cultural thinking in general. Fluxus became the beneficiary of this “tardiness of music with respect to the arts” John Cage once noted,<sup>2</sup> a tardiness stemming from the relatively minor role music played in the important avant-gardes that preceded it.

Fluxus was the first of the avant-garde movements to have counted among its members so many involved in musical composition and performance, and key participants such as La Monte Young, Nam June Paik, and Benjamin Patterson were, in fact, highly trained. Many of the acknowledged influences on the formation of Fluxus were events conducted under the auspices of music, ranging from Cage’s legendary classes at the New School for Social Research in the late 1950s to the numerous musical performances associated with the string of events at the loft of Yoko Ono (married at the time to the composer Toshi Ichiyanagi), at George Maciunas’ AG Gallery, and elsewhere. The inaugural Wiesbaden festival was presented under the guise of “new music,” and many of the Fluxus events that followed were billed as “concerts.” Even the eventual major split in the Fluxus ranks was understood as having been occasioned by a music-world controversy—the protest over the 1964 New York performance of Karlheinz Stockhausen’s music-theater event *Originale*.

That it was more musical than its predecessors, however, is not to say that Fluxus itself should be considered predominantly musical. Much of the Fluxus corpus defied categorization along the lines of established artistic disciplines—music, performance, and the written word often coalescing into hybrid forms, exchanging places, or fitting themselves into the cracks between existing media. But because its ostensibly “abstract” nature provided good ground for a malleability of meaning, because the highly codified nature of its practice served as the perfect foil for an anti-practice, and because it was historically unexploited, music played a central role in the overall conception and evolution of Fluxus; and ideas about music, especially those that concerned the relationship of art to nature, society, mass media, and the everyday, played a significant part in the formulation of theoretical positions in important Fluxus documents.

### The Limits of Avant-Garde Music

The strategy that had propelled music into an avant-garde practice in the first place was the progressive incorporation of extramusical sounds into the circumscribed materials of music. Based on a response to existing conceptions of what was and what was not a musical sound, it asked the questions: Which extramusical sounds should be imported into the domain of music? and How should such an importation be accomplished? Within this inquiry, there was a presumption that the central component of music was its sonicity—that composition was to start with a notion of sound. This may seem a fairly mundane proposition, but in the context of Western art music at the time and to a surprisingly great extent today, it was very radical, set as it was against the entrenched conservatism of musical thought

and practice. Western art music had treated musical sound in an unproblematic way: the range of instruments and the types of sounds the instruments were supposed to make did not vary fundamentally from one composer to the next or from one generation to the next; the primary task at hand was how to organize this finite set of sounds. Why these sounds should be privileged to the exclusion of all other possible sounds was of little or no concern.

The Italian Futurist Luigi Russolo inaugurated avant-gardism in music when he questioned the nature of musical materiality. In his famous 1913 manifesto “Art of Noises” (and 1916 book of the same title) he proposed that, because musical sound was self-referential and thereby had no link with the world and its sounds, music had stood still and become self-occupied, while everything that happened in life all around it had energetically advanced into the modern world. His stated goal was to open up music to all sounds, the “subtle and delicate noises” of nature and rural settings, the brutal noises of the modern factory and city. But he also stated, both in his writings and in the way he designed his class of *intonarumori*, the noise-intoning instruments he built to play his music (opposite, left), that he wished to avoid *imitation* of these worldly sounds. It is hard to have it both ways, to invoke the sounds of the world—say, by phonographically reproducing them, by bringing the actual sound-making device or event into the concert hall, or by simulating them through other means—without to some degree being imitative. Thus Russolo’s embrace of “all sounds” became conditional upon the tenacious requisites of musical signification. If he had chosen to create a compositional and performance practice based upon the tension between sound and musical sound, he might have created a (relatively) autonomous *art* of noises. Instead, his “great renovation of music”<sup>3</sup> became one that would not confound the representational bounds of what stood as musical sound. For the next half-century it represented the strategy propelling or repelling composers with avant-garde motives. They, too, were allured by extramusical sounds but refused to become too associative, too referential. Edgar Varèse’s “liberation of sound” actually domesticated the implications of Russolo’s radicalism enough to be ushered into mainstream orchestral practice, while Pierre Schaeffer’s *musique concrète*, with its notion of *acousmatiques*, served only to repeat the general presuppositions of Russolo’s project.

It was Cage (opposite, right) who took Russolo’s impulse to its logical conclusion when he proposed that any sound can be used in music; there need not be even any intention to make music for there to *be* music, only the willingness to attune to aural phenomena. In other words, sounds no longer required any authorial or intentional organization, nor anyone to organize them—just someone to listen. This new definition of music served to extend the range of sounds that could qualify as musical raw material as far as possible into the audible, or potentially audible, world. Categories like dissonance and noise became meaningless, and the line between sound and musical sound disappeared; every sound had become musical sound.

(PRECEDING PAGE) PERFORMANCE OF PHILIP CORNER’S *PIANO ACTIVITIES* AT FLUXUS INTERNATIONALE FESTSPIELE NEUESTER MUSIK, WIESBADEN (1962). PICTURED ARE (CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT) ALISON KNOWLES, GEORGE MACIUNAS, DICK HIGGINS, UNKNOWN, BENGT AF KLINTBERG (?), EMMETT WILLIAMS. PHOTO DPA/PHOTOREPORTERS.



FILIPPO MARINETTI, UGO PIATTI, AND LUIGI RUSSOLO WITH *INTONARUMORI* (1914).

In practice, however, Cage (like Russolo) could go only so far if he was to remain within the bounds of music. Despite the expansiveness of his theoretical program, he too had to keep sounds from referring to phenomena too far afield from the restricted realm of musical sound.<sup>4</sup> When he used recorded or radiophonic sound, for instance, he manipulated it either in order to decrease or destroy its recognizability (as in *Williams Mix*, 1952) or to decrease or destroy any context that might make a sound, or set of sounds, sensible in other than a received musical way (as in *Variations IV*, 1964). His famous *4'33"* (1952) silenced the expected music altogether and thus tacitly musicalized the surrounding environmental sounds—including the sounds of an increasingly restless audience.

To musicalize sound is just fine from a musical perspective, but from the standpoint of an artistic practice of sound, in which *all* the material attributes of a sound, including the materiality of its signification, are taken into account, musicalization is a reductive operation, a limited response to the potential of the material. For Cage himself, the reductions and impositions that came with the musicalization of worldly sound were at odds with the core precepts of his own aesthetic philosophy, especially as expressed in his famous axiom "Let sounds be themselves." To ask, as Cage did, for sounds bereft of their associations was to dismiss the vernacular, deny experience, and repress memory—for there are no sounds at the material



JOHN CAGE PREPARING A PIANO (BEFORE 1950). PHOTO COURTESY CUNNINGHAM DANCE FOUNDATION.

level heard by humans that are *heard* outside culture and society. There are no sounds heard through a pure perception—only an apperception "contaminated" by sociality. Cage's ideas, in fact, can be understood as protecting Western art music against an aurality that, during this century, had become increasingly social.

Sounds have always carried a multiplicity of extant and potential, real and imaginary associations and codifications, changing all the time with different contexts and through different modes of transformation. But with the advent of the acoustic and electronic mass media, the number of sounds and their associations actually accumulated, proliferated, and became accelerated; what once may have been assuredly "natural" sound, for instance, might have become both common and oblique, immediately familiar but ultimately understandable only at the end of a fairly fragile, long string of associations.<sup>5</sup> This was certainly the state of aurality by the 1950s, for there had been more than two decades of sound film and radio broadcast, and television was on the rise. This was also the time during which Cage's ideas on sound were first registered in any pronounced way and the time that served as an incubator for the Fluxus artists.

It was Cage, in fact, who exerted the greatest initial influence on that loose, continually reconfiguring group of individuals associated with Fluxus. Indebtedness to Cage was widely and freely proclaimed—Nam June Paik confessing, for instance, that "my past 14 years is nothing but an extension of one memorable evening at Darmstadt '58."<sup>6</sup> La Monte Young also had become well aware of Cage while he was studying with Stockhausen in Darmstadt (his important "Lecture 1960" derives from Cage's own "Indeterminacy" lecture, published in 1959 in Stockhausen's journal *Die Riehe*) and the stark conceptual reductions of his early events resonate with the theatrics of Cage's *4'33"*. In the historical genealogies that George Maciunas (and others)

drew up for Fluxus, Cage is positioned as the bridge between the avant-garde of the earlier part of the century and artists of the post-war period. Maciunas, in fact, devised one genealogical chart for Fluxus structured specifically by the influences on Cage himself:

We have the idea of indeterminacy and simultaneity and concretism and noise coming from Futurism, theater, like Futurist music of Russolo. Then we have the idea of the Ready-made and concept art coming from Marcel Duchamp. Okay, we have the idea of collage and concretism coming from Dadaists. . . . They all end up with John Cage with his prepared piano, which is really a collage of sounds.<sup>7</sup>

After funneling all these historical moments into the person of Cage, Maciunas attributes successive developments to his singular influence: "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 formed after his visits."<sup>8</sup> While in New York, Cage faithfully attended many performances of lesser-known artists, who often looked upon him—with his pedigrees from North Carolina's Black Mountain College and elsewhere—as a father figure. His classes at the New School for Social Research attracted the likes of George Brecht, Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, Allan Kaprow, and Jackson Mac Low, all of whom went on to participate centrally within Fluxus and/or associated activities.<sup>9</sup> In one of the classes led by the electronic composer Richard Maxfield, who had taken over for Cage, George Maciunas met La Monte Young and was thus introduced to the new music, performance, and intermedia scene he later helped to transport to Wiesbaden and beyond. "That the introduction of Fluxus at Wiesbaden was presented as a 'Festival of New Music,'" the writer Bruce Altshuler has noted, "points to a critical influence from this [Cagean] direction. And the equipment list for the subsequent 1962 concerts in Copenhagen and Paris—with its radios, candles, broken glass and junk metal, wooden blocks and vacuum cleaner—displays as much as anything else what came out of the [Cage classes at the New School]."<sup>10</sup>

To have freshly confronted the Cagean aesthetic in the late 1950s would have been both exhilarating and frustrating: so much was allowed that nothing, it might seem, was left to be set free. "Every young artist tried to define himself/herself as going past Cage but this was very difficult because the Cagean revolution was very thorough," recalls the composer James Tenney, citing an influence so total as to have "created a situation where we don't have to kill the father anymore."<sup>11</sup> Yet it was no accident that Nam June Paik, in an act of symbolic emasculation, chose to cut off Cage's tie as part of his performance *Etude for Pianoforte* (1959–1960), for throughout Fluxus literature and activities there are repeated attempts to supersede or escape the Cagean aesthetic, to get to the point somehow of being "post-Cage."

Teased by Cagean avant-gardism, and simultaneously provoked by the difficulty of advancing a musical practice based upon its expansive rhetoric of *all sound*, Fluxus artists chose to exercise a number of strategic options. These break down into two general, often related categories, the first concerned explicitly with the sonic materials of music, and the second with the relatively unexplored territory of musical practice and performance. Both were grounded in an exploration of the boundaries of music—the inside-outside dilemma—that had challenged the musical avant-garde from Russolo through Cage.

## Fluxus and the Properties of Sound

The first strategy that informed the Fluxus aesthetic was a response to the difficulty of conjuring up and recuperating into music the figure of a *plenitude* of sound that exists on the outside of music. Rather than focusing on the expanse of all sounds, one group of artists who were influential in the early formation of Fluxus concerned themselves with the more circumscribed investigation of sound in its singular, existential, and elemental state, concentrating on questions of *border cases* of sound production and audition, of the integrity of the various integrities of a sound per se. Thus, the historically earlier question of What sounds? receded in Fluxus and was replaced with questions such as Whether sounds? or Where are sounds in time and space, in relation to the objects and actions that produce them? or What constitutes the singularity of "a sound"?

Cage had already thrown the last dirt on dissonance and noise: in the Fluxus venture the question of noise was forgotten once and for all, and musical sound and sound moved very close to each other. However, Fluxus questions about sound were framed almost entirely in terms of its acoustic, physiological, and kinesthetic properties. Focusing on these states and activities did little more to challenge the status of musical materials as entities divorced from their worldly associations than had the practice of Cage and his predecessors.<sup>12</sup> So although the exploration of the "borderline," as it was called in the Fluxus vernacular, did not introduce fundamentally new artistic aural practices, it did extend existing processes and configurations and produced a number of compelling pieces, with La Monte Young's foray into sustained sounds, in particular, pointing to a rich and unexplored artistic area of sonic spatiality in relation to physical acoustics.

One way Fluxus explored the margins of musical sound was to separate these sounds from their normal connections. In the performance of music, the making of a sound is always connected with a task. For example, sounds will always occur if the task is to play a violin or smash it. But the converse—that every task produces a musical sound—is not always true. There are many tasks executed in the midst of an orchestral performance from which no sounds are supposed to emanate. Fluxus took the next logical move: whereas these small or silent sounds in an orchestra are repressed in favor of the production of the musical work, in Fluxus sound-producing tasks do not need to produce musical sound each and every time, or even produce audible sound, in order to produce works. Some sounds, for instance, are produced only "incidentally," as in George Brecht's *Incidental Music* (1961) (opposite):

### INCIDENTAL MUSIC

**Five Piano Pieces,  
any number playable successively or simultaneously, in  
any order and combination, with one another and with  
other pieces.**

1.  
**The piano seat is tilted on its base and brought to rest  
against a part of the piano.**

2.  
**Wooden blocks.  
A single block is placed inside the piano. A block is placed  
upon this block, then a third upon the second, and so forth,  
singly, until at least one block falls from the column.**

3.  
**Photographing the piano situation.**

4.  
**Three dried peas or beans are dropped, one after another,  
onto the keyboard. Each such seed remaining on the key-  
board is attached to the key or keys nearest it with a sin-  
gle piece of pressure-sensitive tape.**

5.  
**The piano seat is suitable [*sic*] arranged, and the per-  
former seats himself.<sup>13</sup>**





PERFORMANCE OF GEORGE BRECHT'S *INCIDENTAL MUSIC* AT FLUXUS INTERNATIONALE FESTSPIELE NEUESTER MUSIK, WIESBADEN (1962). PHOTO GEORGE MACIUNAS, COURTESY THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

Brecht himself described the incidentalness:

What you're trying to do is to attach the beans to the keys with nothing else in mind—or that's the way I perform it. So that any sound is incidental. It's neither intentional nor unintentional. It has absolutely nothing to do with the thing whether you play an A or C, or a C and a C sharp while you're attaching the beans. The important thing is that you are attaching the beans to the keys with the tape.<sup>14</sup>

Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi referred to incidentalness a few years later in her *Boundary Music* (1963):

**Make the faintest possible sound to a boundary condition whether the sound is given birth to as a sound or not. At the performance, instruments, human bodies, electronic apparatus or anything else may be used.**<sup>15</sup>

La Monte Young's *Piano Piece for David Tudor #2* (1960) made use of an incidental sound connected with the normal act of playing a piano and sequestered it, through the skill of the performer, so that the small

sound produced by this act would become perceptible only to the performer, and not the audience. The point of the piece, in fact, was to eliminate even this remaining degree of incidentalness.

**Open the keyboard cover without making, from the operation, any sound that is audible to you. Try as many times as you like. The piece is over either when you succeed or when you decide to stop trying. It is not necessary to explain to the audience. Simply do what you do and, when the piece is over, indicate it in a customary way.**<sup>16</sup>

Young's *Composition 1960 #5* (1960), known as "the butterfly piece," split the tasks of sound production and sound perception between species, further isolating the question of audibility by eliminating the human performer altogether. In this case, the human listener must consider that sounds may exist even though humans may not be able to hear them unaided:

**Turn a butterfly (or any number of butterflies) loose in the performance area.**

**When the composition is over, be sure to allow the butterfly to fly away outside.**

**The composition may be any length but if an unlimited amount of time is available, the doors and windows may be opened before the butterfly is turned loose and the composition may be considered finished when the butterfly flies away.<sup>17</sup>**

Audibility, for those who dare wonder, is usually the absolute minimum requirement for the existence of music. The music semiotician Jean-Jacques Nattiez has written, for example, that "we can . . . allow (without too much soul-searching) that sound is a minimal condition of the musical fact."<sup>18</sup> In this respect Young's *Composition 1960 #2* (below), written concurrently with the butterfly piece, was easier to think of as music since the work, "which consists of simply building a [small] fire in front of the audience"<sup>19</sup> at least produced sounds that would go in and out of audibility. (As Satie wrote, "Here, we are in pyrophonics.")<sup>20</sup> Yet, according to Young,

I felt certain the butterfly made sounds, not only with the motion of its wings but also with the functioning of its body and . . . unless one was going to dictate how loud or soft the sounds had to be before they could be allowed into the realms of music . . . the butterfly piece was music as much as the fire piece.<sup>21</sup>

Young's line of reasoning marked a departure from Cage's ideas about what music requires in order to exist. For Cage—firm in the belief that there is no such thing as silence and following a strategy of *all sounds*—to bring certain small sounds into audibility through amplification was to bring them into music. He was even willing to entertain the idea that sounds produced by molecular vibrations might one day be amplified and musicalized, echoing the conjecture of a 1933 Italian Futurist radio manifesto:

The reception amplification and transfiguration of vibrations emitted by matter Just as today we listen to the song of the forest and the sea so tomorrow shall we be seduced by the vibrations of a diamond or a flower.<sup>22</sup>

Cage's interest in amplified small sounds went back to 1937, when in his essay "The Future of Music: Credo" he called for "means for amplifying small sounds," and can be found later scattered in various of his scores and writings.<sup>23</sup> It is no coincidence that he cited amplified small sounds in referring to his *0'00"* (1963), for this work can be considered Cage's response to the Fluxus developments of that time, especially to its emphasis on performance and everyday life.<sup>24</sup>

*0'00"*. . . is nothing but the continuation of one's daily work, whatever it is, providing it's not selfish, but is the fulfillment of an obligation to other people, done with contact microphones, without any notion of concert or theater or the public, but simply continuing one's daily work, now coming out through loudspeakers.<sup>25</sup>

Cage claimed that "the piece tries to say . . . that everything we do is music, or can become music through the use of microphones. . . . By means of electronics, it has been made apparent that everything is musical."<sup>26</sup>

But while Cage was saying that the amplification of a small sound to make it audible creates music, Young was beginning to say, with respect to *Composition 1960 #5*, that any sound could be music as long as the existence of sound was conceivable; in other words, the arbitrary limitations of the human ear or technology (imagine the difficulty of placing a microphone on the butterfly) should not define the bounds of music. Young was nevertheless still quite Cagean in the way he argued for musical sound existing apart from human audition. Like Cage, he said he did not want to impose sense upon sounds because that would be anthropomorphizing them—"the usual attitude of human beings that everything in the world should exist for them."<sup>27</sup> But he was willing to think of the butterfly sounds as music, as though music were somehow not exclusively a human activity but practiced by other species as well.

GEORGE BRECHT PERFORMING LA MONTE YOUNG'S *COMPOSITION 1960 #2*, FLUXUS CONCERTS AT FLUXHALL/FLUXSHOP, NEW YORK CITY (1964). PHOTOS © 1964, 1992 PETER MOORE.



Small sounds were on the mind of Milan Knížák when he composed a Flux-radio piece in 1963 that, barring wind, would be very quiet: "Snowstorm is broadcast."<sup>28</sup> The previous year Alison Knowles, in her *Nivea Cream Piece for Oscar* [Emmett] Williams (1962), had already used the microphone to amplify the small sound of a daily task:

**First performer comes on stage with a bottle of Nivea Cream or (if none is available) with a bottle of hand cream labeled "Nivea Cream." He pours the cream onto his hands and massages them in front of the microphone. Other performers enter, one by one, and do the same thing. Then they join together in front of the microphone to make a mass of massaging hands. They leave in the reverse of the order in which they entered, on a signal from the first performer.<sup>29</sup>**

The fascination with small sounds and sounds going in and out of audibility has a definite fetishistic quality about it. Any attempt to possess a sound, to become engrossed in it, however, will be frustrated by the very transience and ephemerality of sound itself. The problem in such an enterprise, then, becomes how to hold onto a sound, keep a sound around long enough to hear it truly; to make the minute, fleeting, and banal into something captivating or even profound. Both Young and Takehisa Kosugi attempted to address this problem of "holding on" to a sound by experimenting with techniques of repetition and sustainment. Breaking through traditional notions of the integrity of a single sound, their work in this area demonstrated that any single sound contained exceedingly complex processes of production, of internal configuration; that a single sound's interaction with corporeal and environmental space transformed it from one moment to the next; and, therefore, that a simple musical structure of repetition or sustainment was not simple at all.

Perhaps the most outstanding repetition piece was Young's *X for Henry Flynt* (1960), in which a loud sound is repeated steadily every one to two seconds, a great number of times, with instrumentation and the number of repetitions left unspecified. While repetitive works such as Satie's *Vexations* (1893) and *Vieux sequins et vieilles cuirasses* (1913) have often been cited as precursors of *X for Henry Flynt*, there

were, in fact, significant differences in the enterprises. Satie's works repeated units of organized musical sounds (not individual sounds, as did Young's), and thus any attempt to perceive the interiority of a sound first had to contend with how that sound might relate to others. (This condition also pertains to the subsequent "minimalist" work of such composers as Philip Glass, Steve Reich, and Terry Riley.) Young's piece, moreover, made evident the fact that, despite attempts at repeating a sound, true repetition is actually impossible: factors of performing the task, of the physics of the instrument, the acoustics of the setting, the vicissitudes of listening, and the resonant complexity of the chosen sound itself forbid it. And, although repetition may have been understood by some individuals with a certain religiosity to enable access to a sonic "essence," a piece like Young's confirmed that no such thing as essence or identity could exist: even the mechanical act of skipping a record will fail to yield such an inviolable musical entity. Thus, the repetition of a single sound, as it invokes the influences of all those external factors usually overlooked or excluded from consideration, is neither repetitious nor singular, nor conducive to possession.

Through its simplicity, one of the factors that *X for Henry Flynt* highlighted was the disciplined, task orientation of the performance. Kosugi's Fluxus events, such as *Theatre Music* (circa 1964) — "Keep walking intently" — integrated this type of performance with aural aspects, in this case the sound of the repetition of footsteps. But Kosugi also created an intermediary form — set between the techniques of repetitive sounds and sustained sounds — that employed the idea of gradual processes. Perhaps the best-known gradual process pieces were his *South No. 1 to Anthony Cox*, in which the word *south* is pronounced for a "predetermined or indetermined duration," and *South No. 2 to Nam June Paik*, which more specifically instructs the



performer to prolong the task of pronunciation for a minimum of fifteen minutes. Shiomis's *Disappearing Music for Face* (1964), a performance, film, and flip-book that all involve a smile very gradually dropping (over the course of about five minutes in performance to twelve minutes in film) to no smile, employs a similarly slow transformation, no matter how mute. Shiomis's "music" was entirely visual, and thus it could be filmed at high speed to extend its duration. But in the Kosugi process pieces, slowing down the utterance "south," using the technology of that time, would have altered the pitch beyond recognition. The yogic discipline of Kosugi's pronunciation of "south" over a very long duration derived from an unusual vocal technique that turns in on its own minute operations, a rough technology that allowed a possible phonetic interior of the word to be divulged and further revealed that this interior was comprised not of syllabic segments but of an interpenetration between and among sounds. The entirety of the sound "south"—its integrity—was shown to be at once indivisible and exceedingly complex, and thus the specific integrities of other sounds or other things, like the words that roll so easily off the tongue, were revealed to be potential worlds in themselves.

Kosugi's gradual process takes place in a temporal dimension, its duration unfurling like the distance traveled (south). Sustaining an individual sound for a long period, on the other hand, promotes an experience of time decidedly different from the measured time of traditional music, including that of Cage, who preferred rhythm to harmony and championed Satie the "phonometrist."<sup>30</sup> It was not until several years after Young's *Composition 1960 #7* (1960), in which a B and an F sharp are "held for a long time," that Cage himself began to depart from measured time. As he described it:

[0'00", *Variations III*, and *Variations IV*] have in common no measurement of time, no use of the stopwatch, which my music for the previous ten years had—the structure of time, or the process of time; but in these pieces I'm trying to find a way to make music that does not depend on time.<sup>31</sup>

Young's *Composition 1960 #7*, however, was so much within time, so drastically simplified, that the very idea of time (measured or nonmeasured) in the conventional sense was dislodged and removed altogether. Time could no longer be measured as units of sound passed by, nor could any sequential organization of sound exist. The idea of a "single sound" that would normally have some type of morphological standing ceased to exist and was replaced by an emphatically phenomenal and experiential situation, as attention shifted fully onto the interior, vertical dynamics of the sound and upon the act of listening.

Practically any sound contains elements within it that may need a duration longer than the life of the sound itself to come into being and to interact with other elements of a sound; sustaining a sound allows these activities to exist. The sustained sound, in all its dynamics, is not only to be heard but also to be transformed by the act of listening itself, with changing positions of the head, with the more noticeable thresholds and durations of attention. The unfolding of the dynamics of the sound within a particular space, relative to the heightened experience of a constantly modulating mode of listening,

provided the markers for this new sense of time. The diminishment of time also accentuates the spatiality of sound. Sustained sound can occupy and be heard differently in different rooms and from different places within a room, and it also may "drift" from one spot to another. A space "filled" with an almost palpable sound develops around one's body, thereby heightening a sense of corporeality, especially when the body is vibrated by amplified sound.

Thus the turning inward on sound that constituted the strategic impulse of Fluxus to this point *inverts* with Young's sustained sounds from the fetishistic preoccupation with the constitution of the isolated, ever-smaller unit to the general structure of the entire work based upon time that has no meaning, to the expanses of spaces and mobility of bodies, to an autonomy of internal dynamics. In other words, a sound turns inside out. In relation to avant-garde practice from Russolo through Cage, this is an extremely important moment: a self-exhausting, inward-directed trajectory that suddenly creates, in its paradigmatic state, an entirely new form, signaling an end with elegance, a beautiful flourish as the last device. But as it marks such an end, Young's *Composition 1960 #7* at the same time makes possible music and acoustic works based upon new elaborations of space and the body (factors also repressed within the traditions of Western art music). Although Young and a few other composers and artists have continued to pursue this area, it remains largely unexplored.

### Practicing the Practice of Music

As Fluxus activities took shape in the early concerts and performances, attention extended beyond the question of what may constitute the sonic material of music to include every other aspect of music as well. For music is not just the innocent perception of musical sound in an inert setting. It also includes performances, objects and bodies, technologies, texts, discourses, and institutions that have varying, often only indirect, relationships to actual sound. This shift away from sound as music's *raison d'être* was the reason, for instance, that Cage considered Nam June Paik more a performance artist than a composer. Paik, a provocative and prolific composer, ironically was not responsible for introducing a new sonic experience, as the frequent use of familiar pieces of classical music in his work attests.

Yet, just as music does not exhaust sound, neither does sound exhaust music. Fluxus in essence asked why, given the array of factors that comprise music, should sound be given the decisive role in determining what is and what is not music, or what may or may not direct its development? Fluxus artists systematically isolated various extra-aural aspects of music as moments that could themselves undergo artistic transformation just as easily as any sonic material. The Western art music orchestra in particular, when placed under scrutiny, seemed already overridden with the most bizarre and poetic performances and objects ready to be isolated in Duchampian style, and its multitude of practices provided fertile terrain for a variety of artistic forays. Fluxus turned inward upon Western art music practice in order to recuperate the seemingly extramusical elements and activities already existing within the belly of conventional musical practice. In so doing it produced a fetishism of objects expressed through adoration and destruction, a performance not so much *of* music but *within* musical practice, and, ultimately, a categorical imposition of the name of music that, by embracing all the artistic variants that emerge within musical practice proper, extended the notion of music to all manner of phenomena.



EMMETT WILLIAMS (RIGHT) PERFORMING HIS *COUNTING SONG FOR LA MONTE YOUNG* AT FESTUM FLUXORUM, DÜSSELDORF (1963). PHOTO © MANFRED LEVE.

Perhaps because it had escaped serious damage from the earlier avant-garde, Western art music remained, into the postwar period, exceedingly loyal to a set of tightly controlled and very arbitrary rituals. Now as then, there are plenty of performances, events, and sounds within a traditional orchestral concert that are simply suppressed or ignored. Throats, for example, are regularly cleared as needed in many vocal styles worldwide, while in the West the tiniest of coughs from either performers or audience is held back under risk of public censure and respiratory damage. Consider as well all the performances of silence that occur while certain performers await their time to play; the only difference between these performances and David Tudor playing Cage's *4'33"* is that orchestral performers do not have the opportunity to play their silent pieces as a solo. Such a hothouse of repression was ripe for Fluxus exploitation, for it found in these worldly elements contaminating the ostensible purity of music things to be emancipated or ridiculed. There was no need to venture outside music proper to the world of *all sounds* because a whole world was there; all that was needed was a little amplification.

To produce a Fluxus work from this perspective was first a matter of isolating specific performative, graphic, iconographic, object-oriented, audience-oriented, and institutional elements of conventional musical practice, and then steering this new raw material into missions of poetry, critique, parody, or comedy. In this way, the Fluxorchestra

(which presented concerts of various Fluxus works in 1964 and 1965) offered up new ritual behavior from the old. Emmett Williams' *Counting Song for La Monte Young* (1962) (above) instructs the performer to use a finger to count the audience, while during Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi's *Falling Event* (1963), programs are distributed from the balcony as folded paper airplanes or as catapulted paper wads. In George Brecht's *Symphony No. 3, Fluxversion I* (1964) orchestral performers, upon the signal of the conductor, all fall off their chairs (p. 111); and in his *Symphony No. 1, Fluxversion I* (1962), the performers play through cutouts in a life-size photograph of another orchestra. The orchestra members performing a version of Takehisa Kosugi's *Organic Music* all breathe in unison following the conductor's instruction, with instruments "used incidentally," and if smoke or smoking instruments are used then the resultant work is *Smoking Music*. The conductor in George Maciunas' *Solo for Conductor* (1965) takes a deep bow, and in the middle of it busies him- or herself with small activities attendant upon the floor or shoes, rising out of the bow to end the performance. The performers in Robert Watts' *Trace for Orchestra* set matches to their scores, which are made of flash paper; and, to end an evening, Ben Vautier's *Secret Room* leads the audience members out to a "secret" area, which turns out to be the back exit onto the street.<sup>32</sup>

Brecht's *Entrance-Exit* (1962) was a sophisticated (for that time) computer-generated audiotape piece, produced by James Tenney when he worked at Bell Laboratories in New Jersey, and quite uncharacteristic of Brecht's normal atechnological, quotidian disposition. The entrance consisted of white noise gradually changing toward a sine tone, chaos to order; the exit was the tape played in reverse, back to chaos. The piece was frequently used to frame Fluxus concerts, much in the way that the house lights, bookend bows of the conductor, noise of the audience entering, and welcoming applause eventually subside into the musical tone of the traditional concert and then reverse themselves as the concert ends and the audience leaves.

Paik, in his *Serenade for Alison* (1962) (p. 112), had in mind the manner in which a concert plays again in the press when he instructed Alison Knowles, among other acts, to:

**Take off a pair of nylon panties, and stuff them in the mouth of a music critic.**

**Take off a pair of black-lace panties, and stuff them in the mouth of the second music critic.**

**Take off a pair of blood-stained panties, and stuff them in the mouth of the worst music critic.<sup>33</sup>**

Tomas Schmit would not even let the audience in, according to his proposal for the sixth evening of a "Grand Fluxus Festival" in 1963—"the doors of theatre are locked-up, an immense noise is to be heard from inside (tape recorded hand clapping, music, shouting, noises, etc.)"<sup>34</sup>—as though Satie's mythical concert cancellation, "Relâche," were raised to the next level of anxiety or as though a door had come between the audience and the phonographic simulation of an orchestra that had been proposed in George Antheil's unfinished work *Mr. Bloom and the Cyclops* (1925), based on James Joyce's phonograph-ridden *Ulysses*.

Paik proposed that one performance be nested within another ongoing performance. The allemande of his *suite for transistor radio* (1963) takes place between the first two movements of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5: "the conductor wipes the sweat on his fore-head, the hornist shakes the spittle out of horn, the deeply impressed audience whispers and rustles." Then, just as the second movement begins, the performer is instructed to "play a transistor radio—not very loudly."<sup>35</sup> If the courage is lacking, the performer may use a remote control. This piece is not just about the inevitable disruption such an act would produce; it could also provoke, depending upon what was on the radio, a fortuitous demonstration that both high and low cultures traffic in the same banal rhythms of programming.<sup>36</sup> In a more hard-hearted or puerile mood, Maciunas printed a proposal (either by Henry Flynt or himself) in the *Fluxus News-Policy Letter No. 6*, for disrupting "'sensitive' moments" of concerts "with 'smell bombs,' 'sneeze bombs' etc."<sup>37</sup>—a proposal that, with the other transgressive posturing that accompanied it, was bitterly critiqued on political grounds by Jackson Mac Low in the next issue of the newsletter.

Fluxus also singled out as an element for exploitation the orchestra's remarkable suppression of water and fluids. Unlike music in a number of other cultures, Western art music was incredibly dry; nowhere among the animal, vegetable, and mineral materials that make up instruments, nor the wind that propels many of them, was water used to aid or power the generation of sound or to elicit the sounds of water itself.<sup>38</sup> But while the orchestra passively excluded most water from its production and repertoire, it actively suppressed the water that existed within the plumbing of brass instruments; this abject bodily

substance was meant to be silently and politely discharged. In a 1965 interview in the *Tulane Drama Review* John Cage spoke of his own fascination with trombone spittle, and what he said became legendary:

Even a conventional piece played by a conventional symphony orchestra [is a theatrical activity]: the horn player, for example, from time to time empties the spit out of his horn. And this frequently engages my attention more than the melodies.<sup>39</sup>

But it was Fluxus artists who most ardently latched onto this spit in practice. Robert Watts, in his *Duet for Tuba* (1963), modified the instrument "so that it dispenses coffee from one spit valve and cream from the other," and in different versions of his *f/h trace* (1963) various dry substances spill out of the bell of a French horn as the performer takes a bow. The score for George Brecht's *Drip Music* (1959) (p. 113) specifies:

#### **DRIP MUSIC (DRIP EVENT)**

**For single or multiple performance.**

**A source of dripping water and an empty vessel are arranged so that the water falls into the vessel.**

**Second version: Dripping.<sup>40</sup>**

Another version, found in *Water Yam* (1963), reversed the flow such that water was poured from a tall ladder back into the bell of a French horn or tuba. Brecht's background in chemistry, a science utilizing multiple pipettes and flasks, accounts for yet another performance version that employed eyedroppers as well as several objects and drawings. Water could also be heard in Tomas Schmit's well-known *Zyklus* (1962), in Brecht's *Three Aqueous Events* (1961), and in Shiom's *Water Music* (1964). Maciunas attempted to codify the process:

#### **DUET FOR FULL BOTTLE AND WINE GLASS (1962)**

shaking  
slow dripping  
fast dripping  
small stream  
pouring  
splashing  
opening corked bottle  
roll bottle  
dropp [sic] bottle  
strike bottle with glass  
brake [sic] glass  
gargle  
drink  
sipping  
rinsing mouth  
spiting [sic]<sup>41</sup>

Nam June Paik got a lot of play from water and from a recognition of its abject status within the orchestra. In *Simple* (1961) he climbed into a bathtub of water; Charlotte Moorman, who founded the New York Avant-Garde Art Festival and frequently collaborated with Paik, did the same in a piece during which Saint-Saëns' *The Swan* was played; in another she played an ice cello; and Paik's *suite for transistor radio* includes the following:

**in amsterdam channel, or in middle small river,  
burn a violin, and throw it to the river.**

**connect a thread at a transistor radio singing.  
put it into the water very slowly.**

**lay a transistor radio in a plastic basin,  
let it float in the middle of channel  
for many days and nights.<sup>42</sup>**



LA MONTE YOUNG CONDUCTING A FLUXORCHESTRA REHEARSAL OF GEORGE BRECHT'S *SYMPHONY NO. 3, FLUXVERSION I* AT CARNEGIE RECITAL HALL, NEW YORK CITY (1965). PHOTO © 1965 PETER MOORE.

Interestingly, Paik places water, in the form of the abject discharge of pissing, near the center of his musical aesthetic when he cites as an example of his *PHYSICAL MUSIC* the *Fluxus Champion Contest* (1962) (p. 114):

**Performers gather around a large tub or bucket on stage. All piss into the bucket. As each pisses, he sings his national anthem. When any contestant stops pissing, he stops singing. The last performer left singing is the champion.<sup>43</sup>**

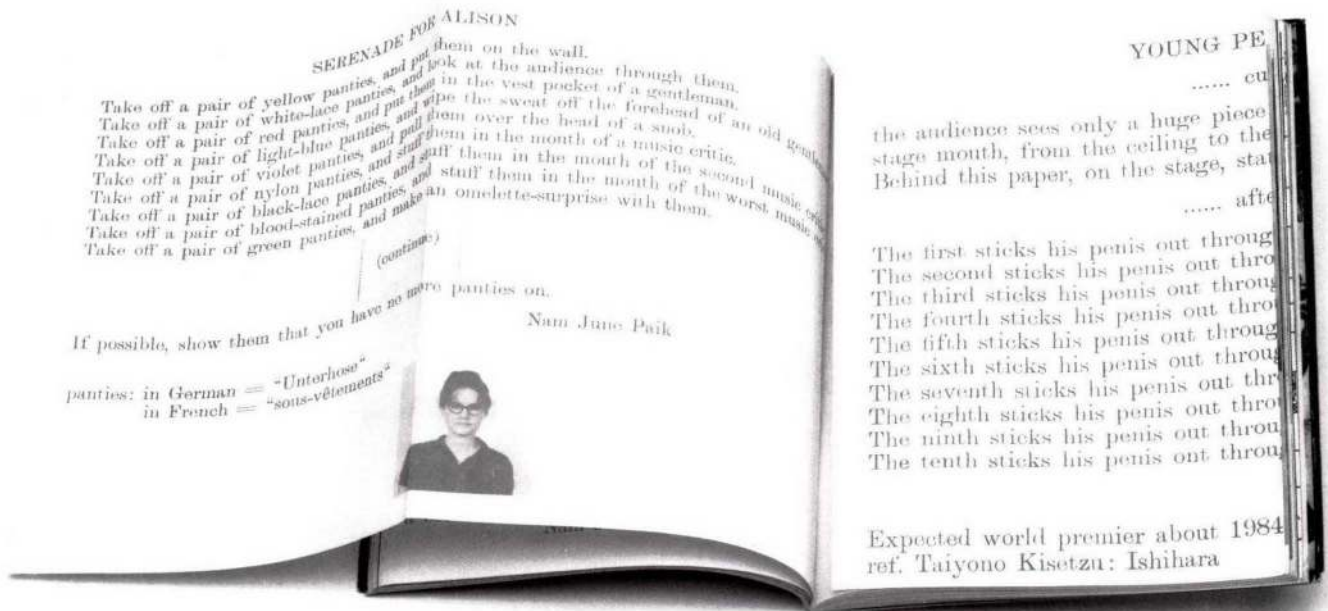
Here Paik satirizes the expressive athleticism of virtuosity so dear to Western art music, while at the same time using urine to spit on the nationalism that had plagued music from Arnold Schönberg's hopes for a Teutonic aesthetic preeminence to Erik Satie's French quest to rid music of sauerkraut. All the while, Paik remains very much within the avant-garde tradition introduced, via Robert Motherwell's anthology *The Dada Painters and Poets*, by the poet Tristan Tzara when he stammered, "we demand we demand the right to piss in different colors."<sup>44</sup>

Paik was not alone. Larry Miller urinates on an egg in *Patina* (1968), Robert Watts' *Washroom* (1962) has the "local national anthem or another appropriate tune . . . sung or played in the washroom under the supervision of a uniformed attendant,"<sup>45</sup> and Yoko Ono lets the plumbing itself resound in her *Toilette Piece* (1971).

The process of turning in on music and musical culture produced a full range of often concurrent and contradictory dispositions toward music, from the adoration and fetishism of sounds, instruments, and rituals on the one hand, to their destruction and disruption on the other. Recognition of the fetish quality of the musical object was not original to Fluxus. As early as 1921, the Italian Futurists F. T. Marinetti and Gianni Claderone had proposed a fetishized scenario for the piano in their theater piece *Music of the Toilette*:

**A black upright piano has its pedals slipped into two elegant, gold, women's shoes. An actor, the piano's maid, removes the dust from the keyboard, playing on it distractedly with a duster. At the same time, a second actor (2nd maid) rubs the teeth of the piano with a toothbrush, while a bellboy in red livery rubs the gold shoes of the piano with a woolen cloth.**

**CURTAIN<sup>46</sup>**



NAM JUNE PAIK, SCORE FOR *SERENADE FOR ALISON* (1962). PUBLISHED IN *DE-COLLAGE 3*. COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER.

Many of Paik's works were explicit in their fetishism and sexuality. "'Feticism [sic] of Idea' seems to me the main critical criteria in the contemporary art," he wrote, and "SEX is very underdeveloped in music, as opposed to literature and optical art."<sup>47</sup> Practical examples include his body used as a cello by Charlotte Moorman (p. 83) (who, as the score prescribes, protests his attempts to look under her TV bra); *Young Penis Symphony* (1962), in which the length of penises when stuck through holes in a roll of paper might determine whether whole or quarter notes are denoted; *Listening to Music through the Mouth* (1963), in which he fellates a phonograph tone arm to hear bone-conducted music (Edison similarly used to bite the horn to compensate for his deafness); or his *Symphony No. 5* (1965), in which a male performer plays the piano with his "old impotent penis" and a "very beautiful girl" holds a violoncello bow with her "beautiful vagina." Paik's cellos for Moorman derive from a long tradition of equating the body of the instrument with the female body—notably expressed in the avant-garde iconography of Salvador Dalí's *Concert*, Man Ray's famous photograph *Le violon d'Ingres* (1924) (in which f-holes have been drawn on the model Kiki's back) (p. 115), and in those images dubiously generated by the phonic proximity of the words *viol* (rape) and *violon* (violin) in the French language. The male part in *Symphony No. 5*, on the other hand, was prefigured by the early work of the musical parodist and band-leader Spike Jones, who "would occasionally play the xylophone with one of his private parts—he'd use it as one of the hammers."<sup>48</sup>

There are a number of Fluxus pieces in which instruments are wrapped in one manner or another; here, the very isolation of the instrument from the act of producing music marks a fetishism that exists apart from any other preoccupation of the works. Robert Bozzi, in *Music Piece for Erik Dietman* (1966), instructs orchestra members to "cover their instruments with bandages or adhesive tape," while the score for Dick Higgins' *Judgement for String and Brass* (1963) provides the following directives:

1. **A brass musical instrument, string, and a performer are required for this piece.**
2. **The performer slowly wraps the brass instrument in the string, exercising the greatest economy of movement.<sup>49</sup>**

As if to certify their objecthood, instruments in Fluxus performances were often accompanied by non-instrumental objects. In La Monte Young's *Piano Piece for David Tudor #1* (1960), a bale of hay is brought to a piano, the composer's workhorse. Bengt af Klintberg's first of *Twenty-five Orange Events* (1963–1965), on the other hand, gives priority to the object that accompanies the instrument:

**Try to find out which musical instrument you would first connect with an orange. Play it, as long as you like. Or pretend to play it for the corresponding time.<sup>50</sup>**

Benjamin Patterson's response to fetishism in music was of a more rarified nature, and focused on the aesthetic act itself. His *Methods & Processes* (1962) includes the instructions to "discover interesting sound, capture it, preserve it, perform it."<sup>51</sup> In a related vein, Brecht's *Solo for Violin, Viola, Cello, or Contrabass* (1962) (p. 116)—the score reads simply "polishing"—provided a performance in which concentrated and caring attention to attaining luster becomes the sole objective of the enterprise. Virtuosity in this endeavor is attainable by even the untrained performer. The piece offers a number of potential interpretations: it suggests that preparation for a performance is a performance as well; it stands as a parody of the theatrical affectation

(OPPOSITE) GEORGE MACIUNAS PERFORMING GEORGE BRECHT'S *DRIP MUSIC* AT FESTUM FLUXORUM, DÜSSELDORF (1963). PHOTO © MANFRED LEVE.







PERFORMANCE OF NAM JUNE PAIK'S *FLUXUS CHAMPION CONTEST* AT FESTUM FLUXORUM, DUSSELDORF (1963). PHOTO © MANFRED LEVE.

associated with the performance of Romantic musical pieces (here, instead of bow and head hairs in disarray, the resonance, brilliance, halo effect, and shimmer are the products of meticulousness); and the incidental sounds it produces, which may or may not be audible to the audience members, may signal the true sound of the instrument's materials and form. In fact, *Solo for Violin* . . . can be all of these simultaneously; and, in their oscillation, they set up a signifying vibration as successfully as would any organized set of sounds.

The gamut of precious and destructive acts is explored in pieces such as Philip Corner's *Piano Activities* (circa 1962) (pp. 100–101): performers are assigned different activities applied to various positions on the piano, from the direct manual manipulation of the strings (introduced earlier in the century by Henry Cowell), to manipulation of the strings by objects. During the Wiesbaden Fluxus events, the performers went beyond Corner's own expectations, violently dismantling the piano with crowbars, saws, and hammers. As it was performed in Wiesbaden, Corner's *Piano Activities* is something of a realization of Apollinaire's apocryphal 1914 account of Alberto Savinio's piano playing: "following each composition they took away the pieces of the upright piano he had broken and brought him another one, which he immediately broke as well."<sup>52</sup>

The twenty different instructions of Maciunas' *Solo for Violin, for Sylvano Bussotti* (1962) range across a similar span of tasks: from innocently "hold bow to shoulders and bow with violin" or "loosen strings and pluck" to destructively "bite violin," "drill violin," or "throw violin or parts of it to the audience." Paik's heavily ornamented *Klavier Integral* (1958–1963) (p. 119) is an icon to this conflicting array of adoration and abuse, but his *One for Violin Solo* (1961) (p. 118) becomes

resolutely violent. Here, as the performer raises a violin overhead at a nearly imperceptible rate until it is released full-force downward, smashing it to pieces, we explicitly recall Tzara's Dada instructions from 1918: "MUSICIANS SMASH YOUR INSTRUMENTS."<sup>53</sup> In a similarly destructive mode, Robin Page's *Block Guitar Piece* (1962) requires that the instrument be kicked off stage, outside, around the block, and back inside and up on the stage again, while in Maciunas' *Piano Piece No. 13 for Nam June Paik* (a.k.a. *Carpenter's Piano Piece*) (1964) (p. 121), all the keys of the piano are nailed down, adding the effect of one more hammer to the piano's already existing array.

Violence against an instrument can be understood solely as an affront to music, harking back, say, to the Surrealist antipathy to music expressed in the scene from Luis Buñuel's film *L'Age d'Or* (1930) in which a violin is kicked down the sidewalk. Or it could be the revenge of the avant-garde, its negative aspects set loose within music after decades of restraint. But there are any number of other factors at play in the Fluxus act of violence. Maciunas, in his essay "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art" (1962), explains the root of damage and destruction as a moment of candor, something set against illusion and arbitration while remaining faithful to the concrete and material:

Thus a note sounded on a piano keyboard or a bel-canto voice is largely immaterial, abstract and artificial since the sound does not clearly indicate its true source or material reality—common action of string, wood, metal, felt, voice, lips, tongue, mouth etc. A sound, for instance, produced by striking the same piano itself with a hammer or kicking its underside is more material and concrete since it indicates in a much clearer manner the hardness of hammer, hollowness of piano sound box and resonance of string.<sup>54</sup>



CHARLOTTE MOORMAN PERFORMING WITH NAM JUNE PAIK'S *TV BRA FOR LIVING SCULPTURE*, NEW YORK CITY (1969). PHOTO © 1969 PETER MOORE.

Violence also serves as sacrifice, not just of the physicality of the instrument but also of the ephemeral traces of the dead music of the instrument's past or the potential music of its future. Depending upon the specific instrument, it could be a fitting finale for something that could never benefit from age, the ostensibly supreme sacrifice of a prized instrument, or a parody in the vein of the scripted instructions for the opening titles of the 1959 television special "Kovacs on Music": "Man's feet stomp on a Stradivarius . . . sign next to demolished violin: \$25,000."<sup>55</sup> This connection between adoration and violence (as well as the recuperative power of commodity culture over everything) was demonstrated recently when the guitar Jimi Hendrix smashed at a 1967 concert sold at a 1991 Sotheby's auction for \$45,600.<sup>56</sup>

The act of violence might also represent the culmination of a treasured twentieth-century art music exercise—namely, the extension of the tonal, timbral, and affective range of instruments, heralded in the first note of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps* (1913). The whole practice of extended techniques had greatly increased the vocabulary of orchestras. Damage and destruction promised to extend this practice: if the instrument could be extended no further, parts and pieces of it still could be. As an added benefit, the Fluxus destruction performance required no special training—and certainly none of the virtuosity demanded by contemporary extended techniques.

The sound of total destruction is fleeting and cannot be repeated, recalling the intrinsic ephemeral property of all sound. Neither can it be played back by the reconfigured technology of the damaged instrument. So, on a larger social scale, the act of violence also reasserts (against technology) the connection between body, action, and sound that had been severed with the blinded media of the phonograph and radio.



MAN RAY, *LE VIOLON D'INGRES* (1924). GELATIN SILVER PRINT FROM THE ORIGINAL PHOTO-COLLAGE, 14 7/8 x 11 1/2. © 1992 MAN RAY TRUST - ARS, NY/ADAGP, PARIS. PHOTO COURTESY ROBERT MILLER GALLERY, NEW YORK.

Finally, the destruction of instruments can be understood in the context of frustrated attempts to supersede Cagean musical precepts—a frustration that could vent itself only upon the messenger. The *last sound* of an instrument may be but a punctuation mark on Cage's emancipatory endgame, for the notion of the *last sound* itself is prefigured in his monadic disposition toward sounds "themselves." For Cage, a sound is heard "in itself" against the relational tension of the inevitable sounds to follow. With Fluxus, however, the sound of an instrument in destruction marks the point where there are no further relations, and the only recursiveness is from a performative silence, perhaps a stunned one. Thus, over all, when violence is inner-directed, coursing through the confines of music, it secures the fetish of a single sound and, thereby, the operations of aurality. What occurs in Fluxus music makes forcefully problematic both the *task* of hearing a single sound and the *status* of singularity itself. The latter ultimately presents a possible existence of the interior of a sound, divulged and given up to inspection, delectation, contemplation, and so on, through techniques of repetition and continuation. It is at this point that the first Fluxus strategy connects with the second: a progressively intense focusing-in on music leads ultimately to the fetishism of the most minute attributes of sonic materiality and apperception, until the borderline of the musical conceptions of nomenclature and audibility are reached—the point at which Paik's *One for Violin Solo* meets Young's *X for Henry Flynt*.



Fluxus also found performance lying within the pages of conventional musical scores. Instructions that denote tempo, dynamics, technical procedures, and affective character—everything, in other words, not indicated in the notation of pitch and duration—are called performance marks. Isolate the instructions that occur in the form of words from the rest of the score and the result would be a “word score,” the most common form of notation in Fluxus music, conceptual music, musical performance, performance art, cinema, radio art, and so on. Erik Satie had played with such instructions—in *Le Fils des étoiles* (1891), for example, the performer is to “Fall until weakening” and “Ignore your own presence”—but they are elevated to the level of a full artistic practice in Fluxus. Because the word scores are usually very short in their instructions and realization they beg comparison with haiku, Italian Futurist *sintesi*, sight gags, and advertisements. However, in their realization, they can often be extremely long. Yoko Ono’s *Laugh Piece* (1961) instructs the performer to “keep laughing a week”; in *Cough Piece* (1961) to “keep coughing a year”; and in *Tape Piece I* (1963), the “Stone Piece,” to “take the sound of the stone aging.” Paik and others proposed performances lasting days, months, and years.

In Fluxus word scores, the usual ties that performance marks establish between composer, score, musician, instrument, and musical sound are arbitrary and may indeed be broken for the purposes of composition. The composer nearly disappears altogether in a Brecht word score, like many in the collection *Water Yam*, because the instructions are so nonspecific that a performer has complete latitude in interpretation. So, for example, in his 1962 work *3 Piano Pieces*, the score provides no instructions beyond “standing,” “sitting,” and “walking,” while the score for his well-known work *BACH* consists solely of the instruction “Brazil.”

Kosugi takes the opposite tack by leaving no room for interpretation; instead, certain of his scores require musicians who will blindly do whatever they are told. It takes extra-obedient performers to execute his *Music for a Revolution* (1964): “Scoop out one of your eyes 5 years from now and do the same with the other eye 5 years later.” Several of the *Danger Music* scores by Dick Higgins are similarly difficult to perform. *Danger Music Number Nine (for NJP)* (1962), for example, instructs Nam June Paik to volunteer to have his spine removed (a fairly easy task because the act of volunteering does not necessarily mean that Paik will find a willing physician or that he will show up for the scheduled surgery). In turn, Paik’s *Danger Music for Dick Higgins* (1962) calls for the performer to climb into the vagina of a live whale. This is definitely more difficult and would probably stand as a Fluxus virtuoso piece, if Fluxus believed in virtuosity—but it is not impossible, merely highly improbable. For a work to be truly impossible, it must be impossible to realize in a phenomenal sense; the instructions must elude even the most hypothetically dedicated and suicidal performer or have some essential element that makes the realization of the music truly impossible, as with some works in the historical tradition of conceptual music by such notables as Guillaume Apollinaire, Marcel Duchamp, Velimir Khlebnikov, and Raymond Roussel.<sup>57</sup> If the realizable Fluxus word-scored events find in their short form the sight gags of vaudeville, the films of Buster Keaton, and the early television of Spike Jones and Ernie Kovacs, the impossible scores find their gags in the impossible physics and physiologies of animated cartoons, which are rife with their own history of new and conceptual instruments.

Many activities are named *music* in Fluxus word scores. This impulse might well derive from certain categorical conceits of Western art music itself. There is the idea, for instance, that music—because the character of musical signification is to lack specificity—is a proper name for things that cannot be readily named. The inability to be articulate, in any of its forms, is thus valorized as the civilizing and sublime practice of music in Fluxus performance. The latest aesthetic of Western art music, the Cagean enterprise, provided further rationale for subsuming a range of activities under the rubric of music: if all sounds can be musical sounds, then this fruitful premise might be transferred readily from the realm of audible or potentially audible sounds to any realm whatsoever. We find this strategy operative in a class of word scores that invoke, with humorous intent or not, a type of neo-Pythagorean musical totalization that incorporates so much activity under its own name that we reach the boundaries of either parody or megalomania. So, one of Eric Andersen’s 1961 *Opera Instruction* pieces asks the performer to “do and/or don’t do something universally” while another notes that “an occurrence or part of an occurrence is recorded and played back.” George Brecht’s *Event Score* (1966) contains the instructions, “Arrange or discover an event. Score and then realize it.” La Monte Young’s *Composition 1960 #13 to Richard Huelsenbeck* (1960) specifies that “the performer should prepare any composition and then perform it as well as he can.”

In a more elliptical way, discourses on theatrical performance current at the time of Fluxus supported the idea that any performance could be “music” as they sought support in music to explain the performances that were occurring. Michael Kirby (in the same issue of the *Tulane Drama Review* that presented Young’s “Lecture 1960” and a Fluxus foldout by Maciunas) spoke of “matrixed” and “non-matrixed” performance in this way:

Acting might be defined as the creation of character and/or place: details of “who” and “where” the performer is are necessary to the performance. The actor functions within subjective or objective person-place matrices. The musician, on the other hand, is non-matrixed. He attempts to be no one other than himself, nor does he function in a place other than that which physically contains him and the audience.<sup>58</sup>

To explain the discreteness (the “no one other than himself”) of the new actor-performer and the transparency of place and audience outside the intervening complexities of culture and politics in this way—that is, in terms of the supposed unity and candor of a musical performance—is to perform the same type of reduction that accompanies the musicalization of sound in general. The categorical imposition of names by Fluxus that tagged the moniker *music* onto activities having little to do with music may, in fact, have functioned as an emblem marking the limits of musical avant-gardism itself, the way to incorporate everything after everything audible had already become musical—an emancipation into living under another name.

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## Notes

Some of the ideas in the present essay first appeared in my essay "The Sound of Fluxus," in Cornelia Lauf and Susan Hapgood, eds., *FluxAttitudes*, exh. cat. (Ghent: Imschoot Uitgevers, 1991), pp. 43–48.

1 Erik Satie, "Memories of an Amnesic (Fragments)" (1912–1913), in Robert Motherwell, ed., *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1951), p. 18. The reader can assume that much of the content of this important book was familiar to many who were vital to the formation of Fluxus.

2 John Cage, "Happy New Ears," *A Year from Monday* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1963), p. 31. However, in the same essay, Cage says in a deterministic spirit that "changes in music precede equivalent ones in theatre, and changes in theatre precede general changes in the lives of people." Historically, the term *avant-garde music* is almost entirely oxymoronic for the first half of this century. The mythic audiences that rioted at performances of compositions by Schönberg or Stravinsky were too bourgeois to represent an honest reaction. Other activities within the *avant-garde* (such as painting, performance, and writing) did not require the big technology of a symphony orchestra in order to be realized; all they needed was the modest technology of paint and a brush, a pen, an audience. Most composers, with only a few exceptions such as Antheil, Matiushin, Satie, and Varèse, had little regular contact with the *avant-garde*.

3 Luigi Russolo, "The Art of Noises, Futurist Manifesto," *The Art of Noises*, trans. Barclay Brown (New York: Pendragon Press, 1986), pp. 23–30. The main source on Russolo is G. F. Maffina, *Luigi Russolo e L'Arte dei Rumori* (Torino: Martano Editore, 1978). Russolo's tactic was to provide extramusicality, noise, and the realm of worldly sound by providing an expanded timbral range. For many timbral effects, even those residing unused within conventional orchestration, had themselves been restricted within Western art music. This strategy allowed him to make a discursive appeal outside the confines of musical materiality while, at the same time, not fundamentally disrupting those confines.

4 See Douglas Kahn, "Track Organology," *October* 55 (Winter 1991), pp. 67–78; and Frances Dyson, "The Ear That Would Hear Sounds in Themselves: John Cage, 1935–1965," in Douglas Kahn and Gregory Whitehead, eds., *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).

5 Because of the climate of repetition established by the mass media, metonymic snatches of sound could stand for an instance, class, or context of sounds (and not just those in the mass media proper) and replace these at a greatly increased pace. Sounds, in other words, could be perceived at shorter and shorter durations and, thereby, in a compositional respect, citation could occur at an elemental level and not, as was the case in musical practice, only at an organizational level, as in a melodic fragment. Cage's ideas at this time—his desire for a comprehension of a greater range of sounds (not just musical sounds) and for an apprehension of their singular integrity—are thus part of an understanding of this fundamental social transformation in aurality as delimited by the theoretical vein of Western art music.

6 Nam June Paik, "Letter to John Cage" (1972), in Judson Rosebush, ed., *Videa 'n' Videology: Nam June Paik (1959–1973)*, exh. cat. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Everson Museum of Art, 1974), unpaginated. Paik first met Cage in 1958 in Darmstadt, the center for musical experimentation that included the circle of the composer Karlheinz Stockhausen. For a discussion of the "major sensation" Cage created at Darmstadt with his new ideas on music, see Andreas Huyssen's essay in this book, p. 148.

7 "Transcript of the Videotaped Interview with George Maciunas by Larry Miller, March 24, 1978," in Jon Hendricks, ed., *Fluxus etc./Addenda I: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, exh. cat., (New York: Ink & Co., 1983), p. 12.

8 *Ibid.*

9 See Bruce Altshuler, "The Cage Class," in Cornelia Lauf and Susan Hapgood, eds., *FluxAttitudes*, exh. cat. (Ghent: Imschoot Uitgevers, 1991), pp. 17–23.

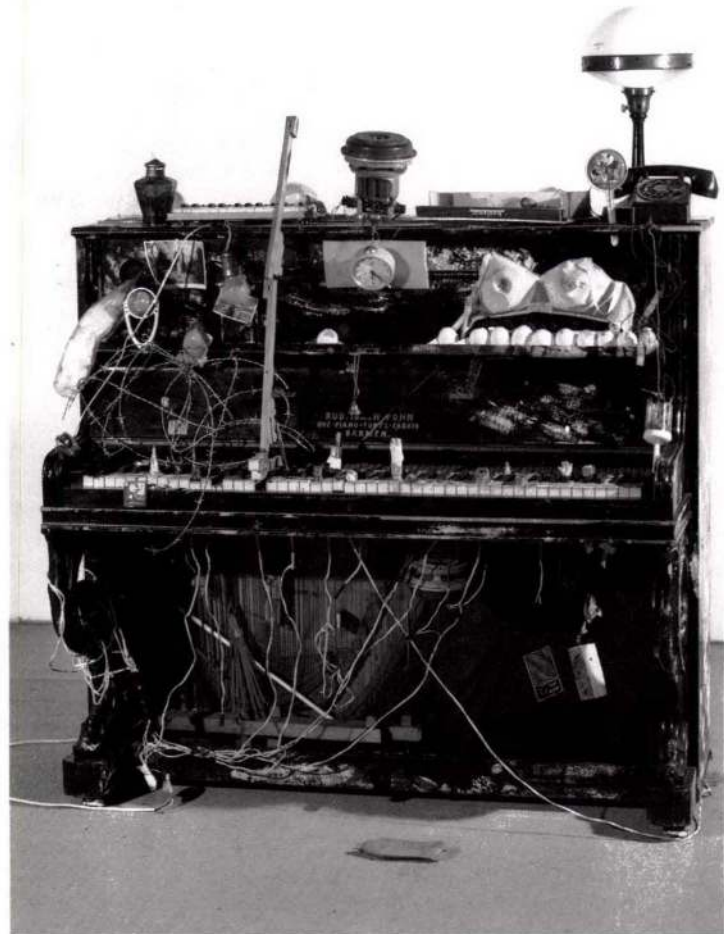
10 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

11 James Tenney, interview with the author, March 21, 1991.

12 Russolo's strategy had been possible only because Western art music excluded whole classes of sounds—and Cage's only because Russolo had settled for timbre and not for a general sonicity. Fluxus, in turn, was possible only because Russolo and Cage were not directed inwardly upon the unexploited ground of traditional Western art music.

13 George Brecht, *Water Yam* (1963) (Brussels and Hamburg: Edition Lebeer Hossmann, 1986).

14 Michael Nyman, "George Brecht: Interview," *Studio International* 192, no. 984 (November–December 1976), p. 257.



NAM JUNE PAIK, *KLAVIER INTEGRAL* (1958–1963), PIANO WITH OBJECTS, 53 1/2 x 55 x 17 3/4. COLLECTION MUSEUM MODERNER KUNST STIFTUNG LUDWIG, VIENNA, FORMERLY SAMMLUNG HAHN, COLOGNE.

15 Repr. in Ken Friedman, ed., *The Fluxus Performance Workbook*, special edn. of *El Djarida* magazine (Trondheim, Norway: Guttorm Norda, 1990), p. 47.

16 La Monte Young, ed., *An Anthology* (New York: La Monte Young and Jackson Mac Low, 1963), unpaginated.

17 *Idem*, "Lecture 1960," *Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 2 (Winter 1965), pp. 73, 83.

18 Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 43.

19 *Supra*, note 17, p. 75.

20 *Supra*, note 1, p. 18.

21 *Supra*, note 17, p. 75.

22 F. T. Marinetti and Pino Masnata, "La Radia," in F. T. Marinetti, *Teoria e Invenzione Futurista* (Verona: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1968); repr. trans. by Stephen Satarelli, in Kahn and Whitehead, eds., *supra* note 4, pp. 176–180. Cage's conjectures also recall Thomas Edison's "molecular music," the sound inadvertently produced when the carbon button amplified the stressed movements of the early telephone handle. Edison's assistant Francis Jehl described the amplification capacity of the carbon button: "The passage of a delicate camel's hair brush was magnified to the roar of a mighty wind. The footfalls of a tiny gnat sound like the tramp of Rome's cohorts. The ticking of a watch could be heard over a hundred miles" (Francis Jehl, *Menlo Park Reminiscences*, vol. 1 [Dearborn, Mich.: Edison Institute, 1937], p. 140).

23 Cage's magnetic audiotape piece *Williams Mix* (1952), for example, calls for "small sounds requiring amplification to be heard with the others" as one of the six categories of sonic raw material, and *Cartridge Music* (1960) requires "amplified small sounds." In a rumination on the sound of mushroom propagation he proposed the following: "That we have no ears to hear the music the spores shot off from basidia make obliges us to busy ourselves microphonically" (supra, note 2, p. 34). "The Future of Music: Credo" (1937) is included in *Silence* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961).

24 What was often termed "everyday" in the Fluxus vernacular, however, oddly denied the increasing incursion of media technologies and mass media into daily life. The Fluxus events taken to be emblematic of the everyday were in fact reduced to a generally asocial state in the same way that the Cagean aesthetic promoted a reduction of worldly sound to musical sound.

25 John Cage, quoted in Richard Kostelanetz, ed., *Conversing with Cage* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1988), pp. 69–70.

26 Ibid, p. 70.

27 Supra, note 17, p. 75. We should probably look to Satie for the final word: "We cannot doubt that animals both love and practice music. That is evident. But it seems their musical system differs from ours. It is another school. . . . We are not familiar with their didactic works. Perhaps they don't have any" (Satie quoted in John Cage, "Erik Satie" [1958], in supra, note 23, p. 77).

28 Hendricks, ed., supra, note 7, p. 194.

29 Supra, note 15, p. 33.

30 Russolo addressed complex sounds in the way he designed his *intonarumori* (noise-intoning instruments), basing them on a rotary action that could *sustain* sounds hurdy-gurdy style. Other sustained sounds were decidedly mechanical. For example, Russolo tuned the exhaust manifolds of the airplane of the aviopoet Fedele Azari while, elsewhere in Italian Futurism, motorcycles were used in a theatrical setting for their sustained raucousness. Varèse's klaxons or Cage's test-tone records, instead of rotating to hear a sound, were used to build a better glissando. Today, sustained sounds are regularly heard in motors, fans, transformers, and the like.

31 Cage quoted in supra, note 25, pp. 69–70.

32 The examples here are taken from "Fluxorchestra Circular Letter No. 2," "Proposed Program for a Fluxfest in Prague, 1966," "Proposed Program for Fluxorchestra Concert at Cinematheque, March," all repr. in Hendricks, ed., supra, note 7, pp. 160, 163, 185; and in supra, note 15, p. 37.

33 Published in *dé-coll/age* 3 (Cologne, 1962) and repr. in Wulf Herzogenrath, ed., *Nam June Paik: Werke 1946–1976, Musik-Fluxus-Video* (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1977), p. 50.

34 *Fluxus News Letter* No. 7, May 1, 1963; repr. in Hendricks, ed., supra, note 7, p. 157.

35 Nam June Paik, "My Symphonies," *Source, Music of the Avant-Garde* 6, no. 1 (1972), p. 77.

36 This potentially positive incursion of media into music was repeated again in the television that breaks into the music of Paik's compositions for Charlotte Moorman in the form of video bras and cellos. As he said, "My TV is NOI the expression of my personality, but merely a "PHYSICAL MUSIC" (Nam June Paik, "afterlude to the EXPOSITION of EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION 1963, March. Galerie Parnass," *FLUXUS cc five ThReE* [June 1964]; repr. in Rosebush, ed., supra, note 6).

37 From Maciunas' *Fluxus News-Policy Letter* No. 6, April 6, 1963; repr. in Hendricks, ed., supra, note 7, p. 156.

38 The organ's origins were hydraulic; the predecessor of Ben Franklin's mesmeric armonica was the "glass music" played on a series of wine glasses (*verrillon*); Handel had his *Water Music*; and there was water, water everywhere in program music. Outside the realm of music, acts relating sound to water occurred in avant-garde and modernist literature and radio art, as wireless telegraphy and radiophony collapsed the vast distances that lay between points on the globe. Among Kurt Schwitters' 1920 conjectures for the Merz stage were included the "tones and noises capable of being produced by . . . a stream of water" and "a water pipe [that] drips with uninhibited monotony" (Kurt Schwitters, "Merz," in Motherwell, ed., supra, note 1, pp. 62–63). And there was plenty of musical water to be found in clown music, vaudeville, and movie sight gags that eventually leaked, during the 1950s and early 1960s, into the television shows of Spike Jones and Ernie Kovacs; the latter set the life span of a drop of water to music by Erik Satie. Satie himself, in the short meditation "Water Music" (1914), noted that the expanding use of noise within music, as evidenced by the increased incidence of percussion, should extend to water sounds (Erik Satie, *Ecrits* [Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1981], pp. 140–141). But the most recognized introduction of wetness into music came relatively recently with the percussion music of the 1940s, especially that of John Cage and his water gongs. By 1952 whistles were submarined in his *Water Music*, and by 1958, at the chronological doorstep of Fluxus, he premiered the highly theatrical and aqueous *Water Walk* on an Italian television quiz show.

39 Michael Kirby and Richard Schechner, "An Interview with John Cage," *Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 2 (Winter 1965), p. 50.

40 Supra, note 15, p. 13.

41 Ibid, p. 38, and in Jon Hendricks, ed., *Fluxus Codex* (Detroit and New York: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1988), p. 336.

42 Supra, note 35, p. 77.

43 Supra, note 15, p. 44.

44 Tristan Tzara, "Zurich Chronicle (1915–1919)," in Motherwell, ed., supra, note 1, p. 236. In good Dada stead, he also demands "No more urinary passages!" (p. 98).

45 Supra, note 15, p. 55.

46 "Marinetti's Short Plays," trans. Victoria Nes Kirby, *The Drama Review* 17, no. 4 (December 1973), p. 125.

47 Supra, note 36.

48 Jordan R. Young, *Spike Jones and His City Slickers* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Disharmony Books, 1982), p. 21.

49 Supra, note 15, p. 24.

50 Ibid, p. 26.

51 The score appears in Gino Di Maggio, ed., *Ubi Fluxus ibi motus 1990–1962*, exh. cat. (Milan: Nuove edizioni Gabriele Mazzotta, in association with the Venice Biennale, 1990), p. 243.

52 Cited in Willard Bohn, *Apollinaire and the Faceless Man* (Rutherford, N. J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1991), p. 78.

53 Tristan Tzara, "Seven Dada Manifestos," in Motherwell, ed., supra, note 1, p. 82.

54 George Maciunas, "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art" (1962), reproduced on pp. 156–157 of this book.

55 Diana Rico, *Kovacsland: A Biography of Ernie Kovacs* (San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990), p. 249.

56 Sotheby's (London) auction, August 21, 1991, as reported in *USA Today*, August 23, 1991, "Life" section, p. 1. Peter Townshend of The Who related his own "auto-destructive" art of guitar smashing to Gustav Metzger. See Simon Frith and Howard Horne, *Art into Pop* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 100.

57 See Douglas Kahn, "Conceptual Instruments," *Experimental Musical Instruments* 6, no. 3 (October 1990), pp. 17–20.

58 Michael Kirby, "The New Theatre," *Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 2 (Winter 1965), pp. 25–26.

(OPPOSITE) GEORGE MACIUNAS PERFORMING HIS PIANO PIECE NO. 13 FOR NAM JUNE PAIK (A.K.A. CARPENTER'S PIANO PIECE), FLUXUS CONCERTS AT FLUXHALL/FLUXSHOP, NEW YORK CITY (1964). PHOTO © 1964, 1992 PETER MOORE.









**Fluxfilms  
in Three  
False  
Starts**

by Bruce Jenkins

# 1. Metro George Maciunas<sup>1</sup>

Let's have some new clichés. — Samuel Goldwyn

The realm of jokes knows no boundaries. — Sigmund Freud

There are at least two Fluxus cinemas: one consisting of forty-odd short films, most dating from the mid-1960s; the other, potentially open-ended, embracing virtually any motion picture seen in a Fluxus way. Jonas Mekas, the indefatigable chronicler of the history of American avant-garde filmmaking and a coeditor of *Film Culture*, the main journal for independent filmmakers, described an instance of the latter in recollecting George Maciunas' response to Vittorio De Sica's *Miracle in Milan* and its Fluxus event—peasants watching a sunset.<sup>2</sup>

Maciunas seems to have divided his cinematic attentions between overseeing production on the various reels of Fluxfilms and monitoring the wider arena of Fluxus activity on-screen. Included in the extraordinary paper trail that constituted his real lifework are files on "films liked and noted," clippings of ads for "Used 8mm Silent" films (including such standards as *The Birth of a Nation* and *Tarzan of the Apes*, starring Elmo Lincoln), listings for prints of a wide range of silent comedy (early Chaplins, later Keatons, and even the less heralded work of Chester Conklin, Snub Pollard, and Mack Swain), and a pastiche of offerings for railroad movies, Pearl White serials, war documentaries, and vintage sports films. Found in the same files are mail-order ads (below) for the 8mm viewers, film splitters, reels and cans, and other low-end devices and materials that were employed in the making, packaging, and marketing of the Fluxfilms.

Maciunas' fascination with film and film history—the "pre-history" of the Fluxfilms, as it were—was apparent in the aesthetic genealogies he often crafted for the movement at large. In these graphic time lines charting the cultural milieus and artistic practices he thought to have prefigured Fluxus, Maciunas typically invoked a wide range of film forms—from mainstream "Walt Disney Spectacles" and the comedies of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton to the latest

avant-garde works of Ed Emshwiller, Takahiro Iimura, Ken Jacobs, and Stan Vanderbeek.<sup>3</sup> Like *Film Culture*, with which Maciunas maintained a long association as a graphic designer, his passion for film was strong enough to embrace both the classic and the contemporary, the studio feature and the experimental short.

Cinema frequently served for Maciunas as an antecedent art form and at times as a productive metaphor for articulating Fluxus strategies and principles. Films could be invoked to clarify key aspects of Fluxus practice. In an analysis of monomorphic structure—the "single, simple form" that underlay many of the early Fluxus scores and performances—for example, Maciunas cited comic strategies in the film work of Keaton and countered with the Marx Brothers (opposite):

**8mm.**  
**BALA SLITTER**



Cuts 16mm. (double 8) stock into standard 8mm. width in process of re-winding.

38-22, 8-ozs. ... **\$5.49**



**IT'S A GIFT starring SNUB POLLARD**

Snub Pollard first gained the spotlight in the movies as a featured player in the early Hal Roach Comedies which starred Harold Lloyd. When, in the early 1920's, Lloyd switched to feature productions, Roach inaugurated a series of one-reelers starring Snub.

Pollard's comedies were long on gadgetry, and *It's a Gift* is certainly typical of them. *It's a Gift*, in Blackhawk's version, is presented much as it was at the time of its initial release by Pathe on Oct. 13, 1923. We recommend it!

810-410, 8mm. silent version, about 175-feet, 11-ozs. .... **\$5.98** ◀

(ABOVE AND RIGHT) REFERENCE CLIPPINGS ON INDEX CARDS (CIRCA 1965-1966) FOUND IN GEORGE MACIUNAS' FILES. THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

(PRECEDING PAGE) PETER MOORE FILMING JOE JONES IN A PRODUCTION STILL FROM JONES' *SMOKING* (1966). PHOTO CHRISTOPHER MOORE (?). COURTESY PETER MOORE.

**A BEST BUY!**

**8mm. FILM REELS and CANS**

Fine quality reels and cans made of heavy gauge steel and finished in silver-gray hammerloid. Packed three reels and three cans (total of six pieces) to carton. Reels and cans not so'd separately, and different sizes sold in units of this standard pack.

**ON SALE THROUGH MAY 7!**

51-18, assortment of three 200-ft., 8mm. reels and three 200-ft., 8mm. cans, reg. 3 for \$1.79, 2-lbs., on sale at ..... **\$1.66**

51-19, assortment of three 300-ft., 8mm. reels and three 300-ft., 8mm. cans, reg. 3 for \$2.19, 2-lbs., on sale at ..... **\$1.99**

51-20, assortment of three 400-ft., 8mm. reels and three 400-ft., 8mm. cans, reg. 3 for \$2.39, 3-lbs., on sale at ..... **\$2.19**

51-32, assortment of three 400-ft., 16mm. reels and three 400-ft., 16mm. cans, reg. 3 for \$2.69, 3-lbs., on sale at ..... **\$2.39**



BUSTER KEATON IN *SEVEN CHANCES* (1925). THIS SCENE ODDLY PREFIGURES PERFORMANCES OF GEORGE MACIUNAS' *IN MEMORIAM TO ADRIANO OLIVETTI* (P. 46).

Watch Buster Keaton. He'll never have two gags at the same time. They follow one another very quickly, but they will not be simultaneous. And if they're simultaneous, usually they're bad gags. That's one reason I think Marx Brothers are not that good on gags because they just overcrowd them.<sup>4</sup>

But what finally may have linked the cinephilia of Maciunas to the cultural intervention of Fluxus were the populist roots of film and the central role of humor in both enterprises. The appeal of humor for Maciunas ("I was mostly concerned with humor, I mean like that's my main interest, is humor")<sup>5</sup> seems to have been grounded, at least partially, in early cinematic models. Like other anti-art movements in this century, the burgeoning Fluxus enterprise recognized in these popular entertainments not only the aggression endemic to every comedic form but also a distinctly antisocial, antibourgeois sensibility at play in the physical humor, sight gags, caricatures, and parody of classic silent comedy.

As Maciunas seemed well aware, film comedy illuminated an inverted world in which the weak triumphed, hypocrisy was unmasked, and the maintenance of law and order fell onto the sloping shoulders of the blundering cops at Keystone. Comedy's corrosive external gaze was matched in the work of artists such as Chaplin and Keaton by reflexive strategies that bared formal aspects of the medium. Sight gags revolved around the limited palette of black-and-white filming, spatial distortions intrinsic to the medium's two-dimensionality, or reversals of motion and direction that derived from shifts in the movement of the filmstrip. These were privileged moments in which the sight gag made visible the mechanics of film and, for a moment, granted us participatory entry into the making of the work.

Of the new movies (mostly silent and black-and-white) that Maciunas commissioned, collected, and often completed under the Fluxfilm imprimatur, many can be described as comedies, and they share with their more mainstream predecessors both an outward parodic focus and an inward reflexive gaze. In Maciunas' hands, however, the reflexive aspect of silent comedy assumed a concrete and often punningly literal form in works in which parody is enacted on the material level rather than within a fiction. His brief *10 Feet* (Fluxfilm no. 7, 1966), for example, transforms the filmstrip into a



THE MARX BROTHERS IN *A NIGHT AT THE OPERA* (1935).

ruler calibrated to the titled ten feet. Similarly, James Riddle's lengthier study *9 Minutes* (Fluxfilm no. 6, 1966) shifts the screen into a flashing digital clock that progresses second-by-second for its titled duration. In *End after 9* (Fluxfilm no. 3, 1966), an unattributed short made by Maciunas, the title not only predicts the content but, in a comic reversal of the relationship between text and title, also makes up the main portion of the film, which ends after a split-second montage of the numbers one through nine (p. 127). Even Yoko Ono's politically engaged *No. 4* (Fluxfilm no. 16, 1964/1965) maintains a punning relationship with the medium. While its title is suggestive of Maciunas' purely functional numbering system, the *four* proves a remarkably perspicuous figure in describing the content of the film—a series of buttocks in motion shot in close-up to create mobile compositions of quartered biomorphic masses (p. 135).<sup>6</sup>

A fuller figure of the performer emerged in a subgenre of "comedies" that embraced the more performative aspects of Fluxus. In the silent film *Shout* (Fluxfilm no. 22, 1966), attributed to Jeff Perkins and photographed by Yoko Ono, the filmmaker squares off with fellow artist Anthony Cox in a shouting match that—given the limitations of the silent cinema—is comically incomplete. The relationship of performance to the visual boundaries of the medium is wryly explored in the untitled Fluxfilm no. 36 (1970), made by the Australian artists Peter Kennedy and Mike Paar. Here, a performer is visible only below the ankles against a backdrop of bare floor seen from directly overhead. As the feet slowly begin to edge clockwise around the frame of the film, we hear the coaching directions ("Lovely, keep going") of an offscreen partner, who assists in the completion of this circuit. Not unlike Marcel Duchamp's critique of the medium in his film *Anemic Cinema* (1926) (consisting of rotoscopes embossed with nonsense texts that alternate with depth-producing spiral forms), the film creates a ludicrous spectacle of the conflation of the space of performance with the material limits of the film frame.

Less formal but more parodic in its humorous assault on the poetic impulse was Dick Higgins' sole film for Fluxus, *Invocation of Canyons and Boulders for Stan Brakhage* (Fluxfilm no. 2, 1963) (left). The title punningly invokes two avant-garde filmmaking icons: Brakhage, through the double designation of his name and adopted hometown, Boulder, Colorado; and Baillie, by reference to his hometown, Canyon, California, and his independent film-distribution service, Canyon Cinema.<sup>8</sup> In a perverse variation of both Brakhage and Baillie's strikingly visual, highly personal autobiographical mode—a neo-Romantic exploration of the inner psyche that venerates the external gaze of the camera (and sets in motion the "I/eye" paradigm of visionary filmmaking)—Higgins films himself simply in facial close-up in the act of chewing. While only a few seconds long, and consisting of a series of extreme close-ups of his masticating mouth in motion, the film was made to be shown in endless looped versions. According to one account, "Higgins' movie . . . started at 8 p.m. and at 1 a.m., when I left, it was still running."<sup>9</sup>

Jackson Mac Low's 1961 score for the unrealized Fluxfilm *Tree\* Movie* similarly parodied the romantic imagery of the poetic film while challenging the claims of personal authorship and the visionary experience. His film score (not unlike other early Fluxus event scores) involved a simple three-step production:

**Select a tree\*. Set up and focus a movie camera so that the tree\* fills most of the picture. Turn on the camera and leave it on without moving it for any number of hours. If the camera is about to run out of film, substitute a camera with fresh film. The two cameras may be alternated in this way any number of times. Sound recording equipment may be turned on simultaneously with the movie cameras. Beginning at any point in the film, any length of it may be projected at a showing.**

**\*) for the word "tree," one may substitute "mountain," "sea," "flower," "lake," etc.<sup>10</sup>**

Maciunas embraced this impersonal encounter between the camera and the natural world and included the idea for the Mac Low feature among his earliest proposed festivals of Fluxfilms, advising presenters to "just film from tripod a tree for an hour or so."<sup>11</sup> Mac Low's work, along with the Higgins film, later served Maciunas in a critique of another major avant-garde film practitioner of the period, Andy Warhol. As Maciunas complained: "[Warhol's] *Sleep, 1963-4* . . . to begin with is a plagiarized version of Jackson Mac Low's *Tree Movie, 1961* just as his *Eat, 1964* is a plagiarized version of Dick Higgins' *Invocation*."<sup>12</sup> Whether or not he was inspired by Mac Low's concept, Warhol's underground movies of the mid-1960s and the experimental films of Fluxus existed in mutually exclusive arenas. Despite formal similarities and a shared contempt for the poetic cinema, Warhol's work, produced in the context of Pop Art, was predicated on voyeurism and the fetishistic power of the moving image, while a film like *Tree\* Movie* was rooted in a desire to dematerialize the medium in order to bridge the gap between art and life. And, of course, most notably, Warhol's work actually was realized; Mac Low's did not even need to be.<sup>13</sup>

The decentralization and democratization of the production process implied by Maciunas' approach to presenting (and creating) *Tree\* Movie* represented a transgression of the highly individualistic, personal, and handcrafted "style" of then-current avant-garde practice. For Maciunas, film was—much as the critic Walter Benjamin had described it nearly three decades earlier—the archetypal mechanically reproducible medium and, as such, an ideal medium for the multiple.<sup>14</sup> Like the array of plastic boxes that served as supports for the Fluxus editions of games and scores, paperworks, and appropriated readymades, the celluloid-based medium embodied in its own material origins the industrial, impersonal facticity of the age of reproduction. Or to put it in more practical terms, with film, Fluxus art could be produced literally by the yard.



FLUXBOX (CIRCA 1964) CONTAINING DICK HIGGINS' *INVOCATION OF CANYONS AND BOULDERS FOR STAN BRAKHAGE*, PLASTIC BOX WITH OFFSET ON PAPER LABEL, STRIP OF 16MM FILM, 4 3/4 x 4 x 1. THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

The target of Fluxfilm humor, however, was often directed less at the medium in general or the social order per se and more at the hierarchies internal to the contemporary art world—especially the deadly earnest, serious film culture represented by the leading form of avant-garde filmmaking of the day, the personal and poetic (or, more properly, "mythopoetic") cinemas of artists such as Kenneth Anger, Bruce Baillie, and Stan Brakhage.<sup>7</sup> These anti-art-film strategies employed by the Fluxfilms were multiple; they ranged from jettisoning the personal or visionary content of the poetic films to dispensing with significant aspects of their formal innovations, particularly the complex editing schemes and expressive cinematography that marked the intervention of the personal into this most impersonal of media. In place of personal content, the Fluxfilms countered with the institutional, the functional, and/or the minimal. Some of the films, such as Nam June Paik's *Zen for Film* (Fluxfilm no. 1, 1962/1964), made of a roll of clear leader, or John Cavanaugh's flickering Fluxfilm no. 5 (1965), eliminated the image completely; others, the "readymades" such as Robert Watts' moving X-ray study *Trace No. 22* (Fluxfilm no. 11, circa 1965) or Albert Fine's loop of a color test strip in Fluxfilm no. 24 (1966), consisted solely of found footage. Maciunas himself developed one of the more effective means to make "cameraless" movies by applying art type directly onto the filmstrip (as in his *Artype*, Fluxfilm no. 20, 1966). Still others—Joe Jones, Yoko Ono, and Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi—subverted the motion of motion pictures by producing unedited, fixed-frame, slow-motion portraits of mundane activities.

Tied to these unorthodox productions were equally unconventional distribution plans and modes of exhibition. Maciunas intended many of the Fluxfilms to be cut into small-format (8mm) loops for inclusion in Fluxyearboxes or inexpensively sold along with hand-held viewers (far right). Others were produced in various static forms. These were printed as serial stills, as with Higgins' *Invocation . . .*, or proto-flip-book imagery (dubbed "poor man's movies"), as with Shiomi's *Disappearing Music for Face* (Fluxfilm no. 4, 1966)—and marketed along with the boxes and scores.<sup>15</sup> Still others were designed to be "expanded" into multimedia environments replete with design plans and suggested sound components, all under the rubric of Film Wallpaper. While plans for such room-sized projections appeared frequently in Fluxus publications and newsletters, the only documented presentations of such pieces were a two-screen projection by Paul Sharits (1966) (p. 132) and a smaller, "capsule" version in a three-foot cube created for the Fluxfest presentation of John Lennon and Yoko Ono in 1970.<sup>16</sup>

The role of the individual Fluxus artist was diminished by these production and presentation methods, but Maciunas' involvement remained very much hands-on. He rented the camera equipment, purchased the film stock, shot the title sequences, placed the lab orders for prints and paid the bills, spliced together the programs, and personally prepared and mailed prints to film festivals in the United States and Europe. It was his numbering system that identified the films and his imprimatur that could either embrace or exclude the work from Fluxus. He ordered and reordered the versions, creating a packaged short program and a companion selection that extended it to feature length.

Despite his efforts, the films received only scant critical attention and limited public screenings. The 1965 Ann Arbor Film Festival, the venue Maciunas had selected for the first public screening of a short program of Fluxfilms, accorded the artists and their work recognition in the form of the Moss Tent Award, a lightweight, high-count poplin mountain tent.<sup>17</sup> Other minor awards followed, including the Tracy Atkinson Award of fifty dollars from the Milwaukee Art Center and modest fees for screenings at a few university and film-society venues.<sup>18</sup> Maciunas loaned a print to the Fluxus artist Ken Friedman for West Coast screenings, shipped another to Milan Knížák in Prague, and eventually deposited a long and a short program with the Film-Makers' Cooperative in New York.

Critical recognition for the Fluxfilms was forthcoming neither from the champions of the cinematic avant-garde nor from mainstream reviewers: the former regarded the work as "subversive," and the latter regarded it not at all.<sup>19</sup> The only significant acknowledgment of the work and of Maciunas' central role as the producer of Fluxfilms during this period came in the fall of 1968 from the Friends of New Cinema, an organization that provided experimental filmmakers with small but strategic funding.<sup>20</sup> As the award letter stated,

The Friends of New Cinema has undertaken to award a grant for your support and encouragement in your work in experimental films. The Friends expect to be able to send you the sum of \$40.00 per month for the period of twelve months. . . . Best wishes for your continued good work.<sup>21</sup>

Enclosed was a check for forty dollars made out to George Maciunas.

END AFTER 9

END AFTER 9

END AFTER 9

1

2

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END

END

END



(ABOVE) 8MM FLUXFILM LOOPS AND 8MM HAND-HELD VIEWER. COURTESY ROBERT WATTS STUDIO ARCHIVE, NEW YORK.

(LEFT) GEORGE MACIUNAS, *END AFTER 9* (1966). FRAME ENLARGEMENTS.

# 2.

## The Fluxfilms: (no) Lights, (no) Camera, (no) Action

All of the beautiful and poetic young filmmakers of the new American cinema have been making dirty, nude movies lately because we are told not to—naughty aren't we?—Jack Smith

The movies are a Revolution.—Taylor Mead

In the 1960s the arena of alternative filmmaking was alive with possibilities—new forms, new subjects, new techniques. The critic Annette Michelson, in a landmark lecture given at the 1965 New York Film Festival, distinguished within the new cinemas two aspects of “the radical aspiration”: the political and the formal.<sup>22</sup> In his influential midstream survey of the new forms of American cinema, the critic Sheldon Renan pared the movement into several contrasting forms beginning with “sexy films and sexless films.”<sup>23</sup> Jonas Mekas, then a film critic for the *Village Voice*, suggested in a 1964 review a simpler polar division between “two extremes: The slow and the quick,” as exemplified on the one hand by the long-take features of Andy Warhol and on the other by the kinetic, highly edited work of Stan Brakhage.<sup>24</sup>

Within this formally and ideologically bifurcated arena of “other” cinemas, enter the Fluxfilms, forty or so short experimental films produced by two dozen or so artists associated with Fluxus. While few of these artists were filmmakers—several were composers and musicians, a few writers and poets, and the rest a mixture of lapsed scientists, graphic designers, and painters—their work, although indelibly “Fluxus,” flowed in several of the critical crosscurrents charted by Mekas, Michelson, and Renan. A sizable portion of the films seemed to fit the Mekas model, while the paradigm advanced by Michelson could be seen in certain ideological thrusts (leftist, anti-establishment, antibourgeois) whose radicalism, however, was signaled more by bared bottoms and the accompanying formal baring of the device than by clenched fists. As Renan noted, the *derrière* was often at the forefront of the new cinema.<sup>25</sup>

Formally, the Fluxfilms tended to cluster around the polar extremes of the Mekas model. The “slow” included several minimalist works, such as Nam June Paik’s *Zen for Film* or George Brecht’s *Entrance–Exit* (Fluxfilm no. 10, 1962/1965) that relied on unvaried (or very gradually developing) presentations of basic film materials—clear leader, black leader, sound, silence.<sup>26</sup> Another significant group of “slow” films, made by the participants in a remarkable single production session that took place in 1966 at the apartment of the Fluxus artist and photographer Peter Moore, made use of a high-speed, slow-motion camera to produce works that, when projected at normal speed, resulted in highly distended portraits, performances, and motion studies.

The first of these, *Disappearing Music for Face*, was based on a performance score by the Japanese artist Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi that read simply, “Performers begin the piece with a smile and during the duration of the piece, change the smile very gradually to no-smile.”<sup>27</sup> The film version, shot by Moore, featured one performer, Yoko Ono (p. 130). In an image oddly reminiscent of Fernand Léger’s fragmented film portrait of the French model Kiki in his *Ballet*

*mécanique* (1924), Ono’s face is segmented and seen only in an extreme close-up of its lower portion (mouth, chin, and cheeks) (p. 131). The Shiomi score’s gradual shift from smile to “no-smile”—filmed by Moore in eight seconds of real time—is distended into just over eleven minutes of screen time. The slightly off-center framing captures the infinitesimal movements of lips and teeth, chin and cheeks, that coalesce in the return to an expressionless lower face.<sup>28</sup>


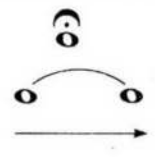

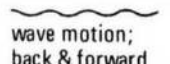

As if the camera merely tilted up, *Eyeblink* (Fluxfilm no. 9, unattributed) takes as its subject the upper-right portion of Ono’s face. As in *Disappearing Music for Face*, the action consists in a single facial activity—here the blinking of an eye, perhaps the ultimate monomorphic act; and again, this action is distended. Despite the slow motion, the blink is relatively brief, and the film ends as it began with a long stare into the camera, an act that transgresses a long-standing cinematic taboo and, in so doing, bares the contradictory positions of viewer and viewed (spatially adjacent but temporally disjunct) while miming the monocular lens and eyepiece of the film camera.<sup>29</sup>

Ono’s final contribution to these productions, her own film *No. 1* (Fluxfilm no. 14), presents a lyrical, slow-motion study of a burning match that vividly references both the classic motion-study experiments of still photographers such as Harold Edgerton and the nature studies of filmmakers such as Jean Painlevé, whose work was done in the service of both science and the spectacle. More in the mode of the pseudo-scientific is Pieter Vanderbeek’s *5 O’Clock in the Morning* (Fluxfilm no. 17), a slow-motion, balletic display of a quartet of potato-shaped rocks and a foursome of chestnuts falling onto a flat white surface. Over the course of five minutes, the bounces and rotations of these forms gradually dissipate, and the film concludes only after all movement has lapsed into a fixity of chance composition. And finally, the scientific merges with the personal in Joe Jones’ *Smoking* (Fluxfilm no. 18), a monomorphic self-portrait of the artist exhaling (pp. 122–123).



**GEORGE MACIUNAS (DEC.5,1969): SOME COMMENTS ON STRUCTURAL FILM BY P.ADAMS SITNEY (FILM CULTURE NO.47, 1969)**

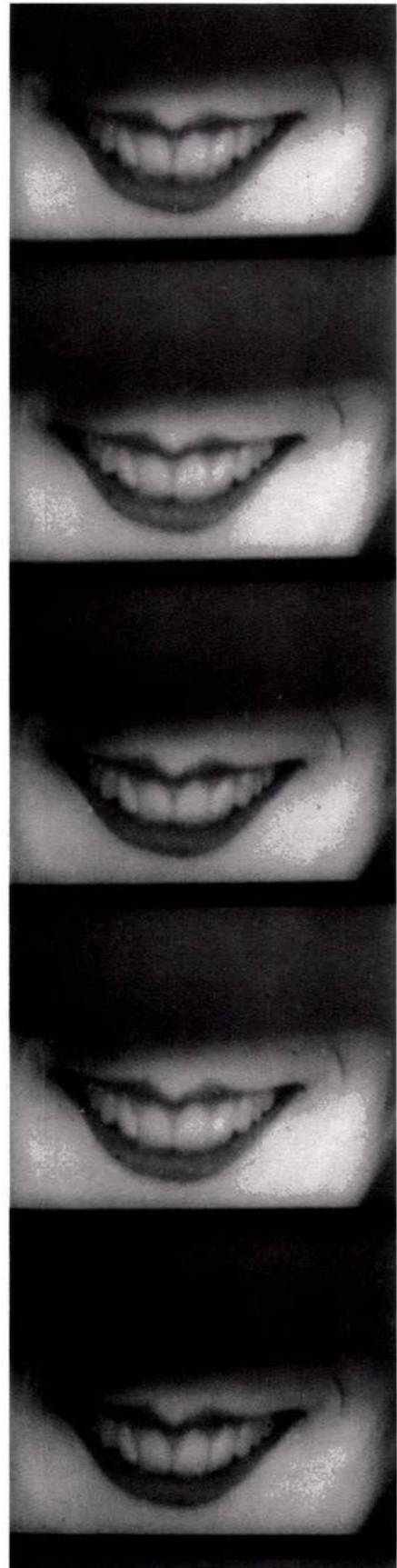
We have heard of 3 *EMPTIES* and 3 *NOTHINGS* (response of Vietnamese villagers), 3 *HOLIES*, 3 *TRUTHS*, etc. and now P.Adams Sitney has contributed 3 *ERRORS*: (wrong terminology, wrong examples-chronology and wrong sources for origins).

category	error	cause of error	proposed correction of error
terminology	Term of <i>Structural Film</i> is semantically incorrect, since structure <b>does not</b> mean or imply simple. Structure is an arrangement of parts according either to complex or simple design, pattern or organization. <b>Complex structures:</b> fugue, sonata, serial form, indeterminate statics of concrete frame, desoxyribose nucleic acid molecule. <b>Simple structures:</b> continuous crescendo, pivot support beam, helium molecule, <i>So Sho</i> painting, <i>Haiku</i> , held tone, etc.	Misplaced dictionary and ignorance of recent <i>art-philosophy</i> such as definitions of <i>Concept-art</i> and <i>Structure-art</i> by Henry Flynt in his <i>General Aesthetics</i> , or <i>Concept Art</i> essay in <i>An Anthology, 1963</i>	(As proposed in <i>Expanded Arts Diagram</i> , by G. Maciunas, <i>Film Culture No.43, 1966</i> ) <b>Monomorphic structure</b> (having a single, simple form; exhibiting essentially one structural pattern) <b>Neo-Haiku</b> . This monomorphism tends to border on <i>Concept-art</i> , since it emphasizes an image or idea of generalization from particulars rather than particularization (arrangement into particular design or pattern) of generalities. In <i>Concept-art</i> realization of form is therefore irrelevant, since it is an art of which the material is <i>concepts</i> (closely bound with language), rather than particular form of film, sound, etc.
chronology of each category  single staccato	no examples given	Cliquishness and ignorance of film-makers outside the <i>Coop.</i> or <i>Cinematheque</i> circle.	George Brecht: <i>Two Durations, 3 lamp events, 1961</i> Dick Higgins: <i>Constellation no.4, 1960; Plunk, 1964</i> Eric Andersen: <i>Opus 74, 1965</i> Anonymous: <i>Eye Blink, 1966</i>
 linear progress, held image, tone, straight development.	Andy Warhol: <i>Sleep, 1963-4; Eat, 1964.</i> John Cavanaugh: <i>The Dragon's Claw, 1965</i> Paul Sharits: <i>Ray Gun Virus, Piece Mandala, N.O.T.H:I:N:G.</i> Joyce Wieland: <i>Sailboat, etc. 1967</i>	same as above	La Monte Young: <i>Composition 1960 No.9</i> , realized in 1965 Jackson Mac Low: <i>Tree Movie, 1961.</i> Nam June Paik: <i>Zen for Film, 1962-4.</i> Dick Higgins: <i>Invocation of Canyons &amp; Boulders for Stan Brakhage, 1963</i> (endless eating motion of mouth) Brion Gysin: <i>Flicker machine, 1963-4.</i> George Brecht: <i>Black Movie, 1965</i> Paul Sharits: <i>Sears, 1965</i> (single frame exposure of Sears catalogue pages), <i>Wrist trick, Word Movie, etc.</i> John Cavanaugh: <i>The Dragon's Claw, 1965</i> (flicker) Milan Knizak: <i>Pause, 1966</i> James Riddle: <i>9 Minutes, 1966</i> George Maciunas: <i>10 feet, 1000 frames, Artype (lines) 1966</i>
 arithmetic or algebraic progression. transition, zoom f stop or focus change; crescendo or decrescendo	Tony Conrad: <i>The Flicker, 1966</i> Michael Snow: <i>Wavelength, 1967</i> Ernie Gehr: <i>Wait, Moments, etc. 1968</i> George Landow: <i>Bardo Follies</i>	same as above	Nam June Paik: <i>Empire State Building, 1964</i> (f stop change) George Brecht: <i>Entry-Exit, 1962</i> realized in 1965 (black to white transition, either by f stop change or devel.) Takehisa Kosugi: <i>Film &amp; Film for Mekas, 1965</i> Chieko Shiomi: <i>Disappearing Music for Face, 1965-6</i> Tony Conrad: <i>The Flicker, 1966</i> George Maciunas: <i>Artype (dots), 1966</i> Michael Snow: <i>Wavelength, 1967</i> , Ernie Gehr films, 1968, George Landow: <i>Bardo Follies</i> , Ayo: <i>Rainbow, 1968-9.</i> (color wheel: yellow to green)
 wave motion; back & forward	no examples given		Paul Sharits: <i>Dots, 1965</i> Yoko Ono: <i>Number 4, 1965</i> (buttock movement of walker) Michael Snow:  , 1968
readymades & found film	George Landow: <i>Fleming Faloan, 1965</i>		Nam June Paik: <i>Zen for Film, 1962-4</i> (film with dust) George Landow: <i>Fleming Faloan, 1965</i> Albert M. Fine: <i>Readymade, 1966</i> (color test strip)
origins and precursors	Peter Kubelka: <i>Arnulf Rainer, 1958</i> , which is not monomorphic but polymorphic (complex) in structure. Andy Warhol: <i>Sleep, 1963-4</i> , which to begin with is a plagiarized version of Jackson Mac Low's <i>Tree Movie, 1961</i> just as his <i>Eat, 1964</i> is a plagiarized version of Dick Higgins' <i>Invocation...</i> or his <i>Empire, 1964</i> a plagiarized version of Nam June Paik's <i>Empire State Building</i> .	Ignorance of precursory monomorphic examples in other art forms, such as music, events and even film.	Zen chant, Haiku poem, <i>So Sho</i> painting, Eric Satie: <i>Vexations</i> John Cage: <i>4'3", 1952</i> (silence) Yves Klein: <i>Monotone Symphony, Blue Movie etc. 1958</i> La Monte Young: <i>Composition 1960 No.7 &amp; 9, etc.</i> (drawn continuous line, held tone, etc.) George Brecht: <i>Drip Music, 1959; Direction (-&gt; &lt;-), 3 Yellow events</i> (for slide projector), <i>Word Event (Exit), 2 Vehicle events (start, stop)</i> & many other 1961 pieces. Ben Vautier: <i>Intermission</i> , & many other 1961 pieces. Nam June Paik: most of his 1960-61 compositions. Robert Morris: <i>Print</i> (till ink runs out) Walter De Maria: <i>Beach Crawl, 1960.</i> Etc. etc. etc. etc.





MIEKO (CHIEKO) SHIOMI, *DISAPPEARING MUSIC FOR FACE* (1966), FRAME ENLARGEMENTS.



FERNAND LÉGER, *BALLET MÉCANIQUE* (1924), FRAME ENLARGEMENTS.

(OPPOSITE) PETER MOORE FILMING YOKO ONO IN A PRODUCTION STILL FROM MIEKO (CHIEKO) SHIOMI'S *DISAPPEARING MUSIC FOR FACE* (1966). PHOTO CHRISTOPHER MOORE (?), COURTESY PETER MOORE.



PAUL SHARITS. IMAGES FROM *WRIST TRICK* AND *DOTS 1 & 2* IN A PERFORMANCE AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY (1966). PHOTOGRAPHER NOT IDENTIFIED, PHOTO COURTESY THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

In contrast to the distended actions of these “slow” films, several artists, including Fluxus impresario George Maciunas, the German visual and performance artist Wolf Vostell, the Danish composer Eric Andersen, and most especially the young American filmmaker Paul Sharits, experimented with single-frame filmmaking to produce an array of “quick” works. Their films—which make use of animation, pixilation, collage, *décollage*—exhibited brevity in both their rapid-fire montage and brief running times. Based on single, one-twenty-fourth of a second exposures that pressed against the boundaries of the visible, these films both parodied and exceeded the visual velocity of even the “quickest” of the personal and poetic films of the time. Yet, like the static films of Jones, Ono, and Shiomi, the transgression was not limited to the formal but readily extended to the subjects and narratives advanced in the work. The ecstatic pace of the imagery opened onto neither autobiography nor revelation nor an approximation of the visionary experience. In their stead the quick films proffered pages from the Sears catalogue, pixilated portrayals of proper toilet use, the interior decor of a cramped 1960s apartment, and fragments from a day of German television.

Among the earliest completed pieces in this group was Wolf Vostell’s pioneering *Sun in Your Head* (Fluxfilm no. 23, 1963). Working with broadcast material shot by a film camera directly off the television screen, Vostell’s work subverts the givens of then-current personal film practice by eschewing the personal and the cinematic and embracing instead the impersonal and videographic. At the same time, he subverts the intention of the original material by transforming it into a cinematic object. Consisting of “TV screen distortions and

interferences,”<sup>30</sup> the film includes not only examples of the material support—the thick dark raster bar and electronic screen—but also a sampling of the genres that dominated television programming of the period. Included are pixilated news footage of a space capsule splashdown, fragments from a program called “Magazin der Woche,” and further news segments that mix reportage of a massive street demonstration with a gathering of business and/or government leaders. The film concludes with an extended, though highly edited montage of scenes from a standard World War II documentary on the U.S. Air Force—replete with close-ups of pilots, gauges, and propellers—inflected with Vostell’s videographic interventions.

A companion piece of sorts to Vostell’s inventory of the typical contents of television is Eric Andersen’s *Opus 74 version 2* (Fluxfilm no. 19, 1965). This very brief film presents a rapid-eye tour in single-frame exposures of the view, so to speak, from the other side of the television screen—the reverse field of the room that is adjacent to the on-screen world of the TV set. In four-second cycles, Andersen inventories the rectilinear environs of an apartment from kitchen to living room, dining table to bookshelves, hi-fi and records, paintings on the wall, jeans hanging in the closet, and many other quotidian details. The effect of this rush of imagery—barely comprehensible even after several repetitions in the course of the film—is to mark out an ironic space between the exhilaration of the technique and the deadpan nature of the imagery. Andersen challenges the expressivity of this form of filmic self-portrait and counters the attendant visionary experience with a cascade of the commonplace.





YOKO ONO, *NO. 4* (1964/1965), FRAME ENLARGEMENT.

The radical aspiration Renan cited—the uninhibited representation of human sexuality—found its proponents within Fluxus as well. Robert Watts' *Trace No. 22*, for example, features a detailed view of the human anatomy—so detailed that we are privy (via its use of X-ray footage) to the intimate workings of mouth and tongue, jawbone and esophagus, in vivid portrayals of sipping, chewing, panting, and speaking. More graphic, though less penetrating, are the fleshy portraits presented in Watts' *Trace No. 24* (Fluxfilm no. 13, circa 1965) and *Trace No. 23* (Fluxfilm no. 12, circa 1965) that are reminiscent of the appropriated soft-core pornographic imagery that recurs in his collages, objects, and installations. The first of these begins, like Vostell's film, with material filmed directly off the television screen—here, two static images of Marilyn Monroe in Billy Wilder's *The Seven Year Itch*. Monroe's public display of sexuality is given a more graphic, private articulation in the succeeding imagery shot by Watts: the shadowy interior of a loft space strewn with sheets of plastic and inhabited by a naked woman writhing half-hidden in the translucent debris (left).

In *Trace No. 23*, Watts' most ambitious Fluxfilm, sexual imagery is embedded within a formal examination of the relation of the rectangular film frame to the space defined by the circular movements of the camera. The film opens with a series of pans that follow a painted white line (perhaps the service line of an outdoor tennis court) first past a white cutout of the numeral four and then, in succession, past a hand pointing to the line, a hand and a foot pointing, and an outstretched arm, now situated in a meadow, that seems to be directing

the camera's movement toward a scenic view. In the main body of the film, the camera moves past a woman reclining nude on the grass, a chair, a hot dog-like object, and more cutout numbers. Shifting from the formal to the venal, the woman begins a series of suggestive actions, sliding the hot dog-like object between her legs and, in a reversal of that movement, pulling up a polka-dotted wiener and pulling a series of wieners from under one armpit. The film concludes with a perverse sexual pun as an egglike object (the apparent product of the actions in the previous scene) is shown floating down a leaf-strewn stream.

Multiple nudity in the service of the political is the subject of Fluxus' magnum opus of up-frontness, Yoko Ono's *No. 4* (above). Bringing together a number of artists both from within Fluxus (Geoffrey and Bici Hendricks, Benjamin Patterson, and Ono herself) and from without (Carolee Schneemann, James Tenney, Pieter Vanderbeek, and Anthony Cox), the film focuses on the bared bottoms of these performers walking in place. As Ono's actors go through their paces, the work begins to open onto subtle questions of sexual identity, the physiology of gender cues, and the shifting codes of sexual difference. In the end, this fusion of gender opposition bespeaks a more global desire for cultural rapprochement. *No. 4* seems to locate in the body stripped bare a common ground upon which the various forms of cinematic radicalism can come together—the formal in league with the political, the static melding with the kinetic, the sensual embracing the ideational.

# 3.

## Somewhere over the Rainbow Movie

Even the shock of discovering that the Wizard was a humbug was a shock I felt as a child,  
a shock to a child's faith in adults. —Salman Rushdie

My TV is not always interesting,  
but not always uninteresting.  
As nature,  
who is beautiful,  
not because it changes beautifully,  
but because it  
simply changes.  
—Nam June Paik

One of the least assimilable legacies of Fluxus activity is a set of forty-odd experimental films produced in the 1960s. Viewed as a group a quarter-century after they were made, these films contest easy description, shifting incongruously between a pared-down formalism and broad parody, alternately cerebral and sentient. Yet despite the extremes of their surface variation, they reveal fundamental affinities. As Jonas Mekas, then himself an aspiring experimental filmmaker, noted in one of the earliest reviews of this new expanded media scene: “Light is there; motion is there; the screen is there; and the filmed image, very often, is there; but it can not be described or experienced in terms you describe or experience the Griffith cinema, the Godard cinema, or even Brakhage cinema.”<sup>36</sup>

Mekas' characterization proved in many ways to be prophetic, for Fluxfilms represented nothing less than a paradigm shift in what the Soviet filmmaker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein had called “the film sense.” As such, the films were misdescribed, improperly experienced, generally maligned by critics, and virtually ignored by every segment—straight or hip, mainstream or avant-garde—of the film-going public.<sup>37</sup> Their degree of “otherness” was all the more striking given the enormous changes wrought in the early part of the decade through the work of Jean-Luc Godard, who had opened up the narrative feature film to varied new content (political analyses, cinephilic homages, reflexive exercises of and on the medium) and Brakhage, who had redirected the medium inward toward the personal, private realms of intimate experience (birth, sex, death) and the visions of the camera I/eye. Godard and Brakhage spearheaded new cinemas—the *nouvelle vague* in France and the New American Cinema in the United States, respectively—that embraced surprisingly heteroclitic practices and yet could be accounted for by the form and extent of their rejection of classic narrative cinema.

So in the beginning there were “the movies,” and they were good (according to Godard) and bad (according to Brakhage). Then, unburdened by either the seriousness of the Godardian intervention or the shame of the Brakhagean attitude toward mainstream media, came the Fluxfilms, which maintained an immaculate conception of the cinema that was at once childlike and cunning. Listen again to Jonas Mekas: “Naum [sic] Paik, Peter Kubelka, George Maciunas have made movies where they did away with the image itself, where the light becomes the image.”<sup>38</sup> Of this group, it was Paik who made the first Fluxfilm and who attempted to make of his *Zen for Film* an archetypal first film through a gesture that seems both infantile and *recherché*: he took a roll of 16mm clear leader and projected it as a film.

In much the same way that *The Jazz Singer* has been mythologized as the first sound motion picture, the Fluxfilm was born on the evening of May 8, 1964, at the Fluxhall on Canal Street with the first public screening of Paik's *Zen for Film* (opposite). Conceived sometime in 1962, the film gestated until that day in 1964, when, at Maciunas' invitation, Paik showed it as part of the six-week Fluxus Concerts series of performances and events. The new work emerged on-screen slightly undersized, barely filling out half of a home movie-sized screen that was positioned at the front of the loft space adjacent to an upright piano and a double bass. Visible already were the scratches and dust particles that would continue to accumulate on the print, injecting new content into and onto subsequent screenings.

The product of both Duchampian appropriation and a childlike desire for immediate gratification, *Zen for Film* was a model Fluxus work that effectively fixed the material and aesthetic terms for the production of the subsequent Fluxfilms. Quickly and inexpensively produced by circumventing the standard technologies of production (camera, lights, sets) and post-production (editing, opticals, sound mixing), the film consisted of about a thousand feet of 16mm clear leader with a running time of nearly thirty minutes. With one simple gesture, Paik had opted out of the duplicity of the representational by making an aggressively presentational, imageless, and anti-illusionist work. While his film foregrounded the materials of the medium by presenting on-screen the generally unseen—that is, repressed—physical support of cinema (i.e., blank celluloid), *Zen for Film* marked a more radical intervention into the nature of a medium that seemed no longer stable, fixed, “finished.”





WORLD PREMIERE OF NAM JUNE PAIK'S *ZEN FOR FILM*, FLUXUS CONCERTS AT FLUXHALL/FLUXSHOP, NEW YORK CITY (1964). PHOTO © 1964, 1992 PETER MOORE.

*Zen for Film* subtly shifted the intrinsic temporality of the film medium, instilled a performative aspect into the screening context, and, in the process, liberated the viewer from the manipulations of both the commercial *and* the alternative cinema. In contrast to the "pastness" of filmic representation, with its indexical claims to capturing actual, preexisting phenomena, Paik posited a concrete "present" in his moving-image tale of the celluloid's journey through the transport mechanism of the projector. And in contrast to the frozen discourse of more traditional forms of cinema, this tale would be unique in each telling. Like some Heisenbergian allegory, *Zen for Film* was visibly changed by each viewing and maintained on its celluloid surface a record of those observations and screenings in the form of accumulated scratches, dust, dirt, rips, and splices.

With this shift came a correspondingly fundamental change in the position of the spectator. Redirecting attention toward what had previously seemed distinctly background features of the medium—the arena of visual noise—*Zen for Film* indulges and exposes our primal, mothlike fascination with this luminous medium and playfully modulates the range of attraction from the micro level of constant frame-by-frame change to the macro level of a seemingly static blank screen. Paik seems to have isolated this distinctive feature of the medium and displayed it with such brute facticity that the film could, at once, both invite intensive scrutiny and elicit absolute boredom. In this way, *Zen for Film* sacrificed the spectacle in the name of the spectator and empowered the viewer by exposing the emptiness of cinema's sound-image wizardry.

Like much Fluxus work, Paik's film challenged conventional notions about the standard practice and appropriate content of the cinema. In the process, *Zen for Film* domesticated the power of this powerful medium, reducing the silver screen to the proportions of the home movie and offering the viewer control over the parameters of the film experience. George Brecht advised practicing this mastery over the moving image, suggesting that one go to see Paik's movie and "then go to your neighborhood theater and see it again."<sup>39</sup> Maciunas expanded such options by offering a boxed version of *Zen for Film* that ensured both mastery and (partial) ownership of the medium. With its oppositional stance toward mainstream and avant-garde cinemas alike, *Zen for Film* prefigured much of Fluxus filmmaking and posited a "Fluxus cinema" that exists whenever artistic control—whether by force of laughter or logic—shifts back to the viewer.

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## Notes

This essay, false starts and all, would not have been possible without the advice and assistance generously provided by Jonas Mekas and Anthology Film Archives, Barbara and Peter Moore, and Jon Hendricks and the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection.

1 The comparison to the Hollywood studio system implied by this section's title is suggested in part by the role Maciunas assumed in the production of the Fluxfilms—a role not unlike that of a producer. The comparison also has been invoked by Jonas Mekas, quoted in Tod Lippy, "Disappearing Act: The Radical Reductivism of Fluxus Film," in Cornelia Lauf and Susan Hapgood, eds., *FluxAttitudes*, exh. cat. (Ghent: Imschoot Uitgevers, 1991), p. 35.

2 Jonas Mekas in conversation with the author at Anthology Film Archives, New York, June 1991.

3 See "Expanded Arts Diagram," *Film Culture*, no. 43 (Winter 1966), p. 7; "Fluxus (Its Historical Development and Relationship to Avant-Garde Movements)" (circa 1966), repr. in Jon Hendricks, ed., *Fluxus Codex* (Detroit and New York: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1988), p. 350; and "Diagram of Historical Development of Fluxus and Other 4 Dimensional, Aural, Optic, Olfactory, Epithelial and Tactile Art Forms," repr. in *ibid.*, pp. 329–332.

4 "Transcript of the Videotaped Interview with George Maciunas by Larry Miller, March 24, 1978," in Jon Hendricks, ed., *Fluxus etc./Addenda I: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, exh. cat. (New York: Ink &, 1983), p. 27.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

6 For a sense of the political underpinnings of the piece, see Ono's notes on her expanded remake of *No. 4* in "Yoko Ono on Yoko Ono," *Film Culture*, no. 48–49 (Winter–Spring, 1970), p. 32: "This film, in fact, is like an aimless petition signed by people with their anuses."

7 The definitive account of this tradition of experimental filmmaking is P. Adams Sitney's appropriately entitled *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

8 For an account of Brakhage's life and work in Boulder, see his interview in the Maciunas-designed special issue of *Film Culture*, no. 30 (Fall 1963). For a brief account of Baillie's early activities in Canyon, see "A Brief History of Canyon Cinema" in *Canyon Cinema Catalog 6* (1988), p. v.

9 *Film-Makers' Cooperative Catalogue*, no. 5 (New York: New American Cinema Group, 1971), p. 153.

10 Hendricks, ed., *supra*, note 3, p. 399.

11 Letter from Maciunas to George Brecht, July 21, 1964, quoted in *ibid.*

12 Maciunas was not only challenging the originality of Warhol's underground-film aesthetic but also calling into question the claims of P. Adams Sitney's then-influential essay "Structural Film." At the end of a revised version of that essay, published in P. Adams Sitney, ed., *Film Culture Reader* (New York: Praeger, 1970), pp. 326–348, Sitney included Maciunas' "Some Comments on *Structural Film* by P. Adams Sitney (*Film Culture* No. 47, 1969)," a chartlike rebuttal of his own critical models (p. 349). Maciunas' chart is reproduced here on p. 129.

13 Mac Low eventually did produce three versions of *Tree\* Movie* but not until 1971 and 1972, and on video, not film. The videotaped realizations (consisting of a mimosa tree on the rooftop garden of the filmmaker Shirley Clarke's Chelsea Hotel suite, a sugar maple on a Pennsylvania farm, and a tree in Central Park) were shown in two four-hour programs at the Anthology Film Archives in New York City on January 25 and 26, 1975. See Jackson Mac Low, "Wie George Maciunas die New Yorker Avantgarde kennenlernte," in René Block, ed., *1962 Wiesbaden Fluxus 1982: Eine kleine Geschichte von Fluxus in drei Teilen*, exh. cat. (Wiesbaden: Harlekin Art and Berlin: Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD, 1983), pp. 123–125.

14 As Benjamin notes: "In the case of films, mechanical reproduction is not, as with literature and painting, an external condition for mass distribution. Mechanical reproduction is inherent in the very technique of film production. This technique not only permits in the most direct way but virtually causes mass distribution." See "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), p. 244.

15 See a 1962 Fluxus newsletter on the plans for "Fluxus Yearbook-Box," in Hendricks, ed., *supra*, note 4, p. 140.

16 Maciunas wrote to Ken Friedman in the summer of 1967 that twenty of the films would be available in loop form for Film Wallpaper. Information about creating such wall environments was published in the Fluxus newsletters of January and December 1968 and in an announcement for Flux Fest Kits of December 1969. See Hendricks, ed., *supra*, note 3, pp. 64–65.

17 This initial program may have contained as few as eight of the Fluxfilms, the number listed for screening a few months later, in early February, at the program's New York City debut at the Film-Makers' Cinematheque (from a photocopy in Barbara Moore's files). The Ann Arbor award was duly noted in Maciunas' file on the Fluxfilms (now in the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit) and used in the *Film-Makers' Cooperative Catalogue* to promote the rental of the short (approximately forty-minute) version. In these first catalogue listings, Maciunas (under F for Fluxus) is given the designation d/b/a ("doing business as") to indicate his unique role as entrepreneur in the Fluxfilms venture.

18 In the *Fluxnewsletter* of March 8, 1967, Maciunas reported that the program "was already exhibited in several places in U.S.A. (New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boulder, Ann Arbor etc.) France and Czechoslovakia." Cited in Hendricks, ed., *supra*, note 4, p. 172.

19 In discussing the subversive nature of the Fluxus films (as compared to the structural film), P. Adams Sitney, in a postscript to his revised "Structural Film" (*supra*, note 12, p. 346), suggests that the Fluxus works are mere "tautologies."

20 In Sheldon Renan's classic book *An Introduction to the American Underground Film* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1967), the Friends of New Cinema is briefly acknowledged in a section on "financing," midway between a listing of major foundation support (e.g., Ford, Rockefeller, Guggenheim) and novel individual contributions ("Robert Nelson received a check for \$2,500 in a box of jelly beans, sent by a woman in Pennsylvania who admired his films") (p. 220).

21 This letter is in Maciunas' alphabetical files (from his estate, part of which is now on deposit at Anthology Film Archives, New York) inside the first folder marked "misc."

22 See Annette Michelson, "Film and the Radical Aspiration," *Film Culture*, no. 42 (Fall 1966), pp. 34–42, 136.

23 Renan, *supra*, note 20, p. 17.

24 See Jonas Mekas, *Movie Journal: The Rise of a New American Cinema, 1959–1971* (New York: Collier, 1972), p. 158.

25 "Much of the popularity of underground films is based on the expectation that they will include large dollops of sex" (Renan, *supra*, note 20, p. 31).

26 George Brecht incorporated a simple electronic score for the audio portion of *Entrance–Exit* that shifted in tone from a sine wave to white noise (as the film image shifts from white to black). For a fuller treatment of the Brecht audio score, see Douglas Kahn's essay in this book, p. 110.

27 See "Fluxorchestra Circular Letter No. 2"; repr. in Hendricks, ed., *supra*, note 4, p. 160.

28 For a description and analysis of this work, see Douglas Kahn's essay in this book, p. 107.

29 In the version of this film deposited at Anthology Film Archives, New York, there are several significant differences from the print in the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection described here. First, the image is flipped left to right. More serious is missing footage at the head and tail of the film that produces an opening image of Ono with eye closed and an ending image abruptly cut to black, plunging the screen into a darkness recalling the closed-eye performer at the beginning.

30 This is part of the standard description of the work written by Maciunas (circa 1966) for a distribution circular offering the Fluxfilms for rental (photocopy in the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit).

31 While never elaborated as a priori for Fluxfilm production, these principles were invoked by Maciunas in "Some Comments on *Structural Film*," *supra*, note 12.

32 From his address to the Fourth International Experimental Film Competition in 1967 at Knokke-Le-Zoute, Belgium, as cited in Paul Sharits, "Notes on Films: 1966–1968," *Film Culture*, no. 47 (Summer 1969), p. 13.

33 In his essay "Disappearing Act" (*supra*, note 1), Tod Lippy discusses the impact of Fluxfilms on the development of the various forms of "structural" and "structural-materialist" filmmaking during the late 1960s and early 1970s in the United States and Western Europe.

34 This aspect of Vostell's work, particularly in relation to his use of video, is examined in John G. Hanhardt, "Video in Fluxus," *Art & Text*, no. 37 (September 1990), pp. 86–91.

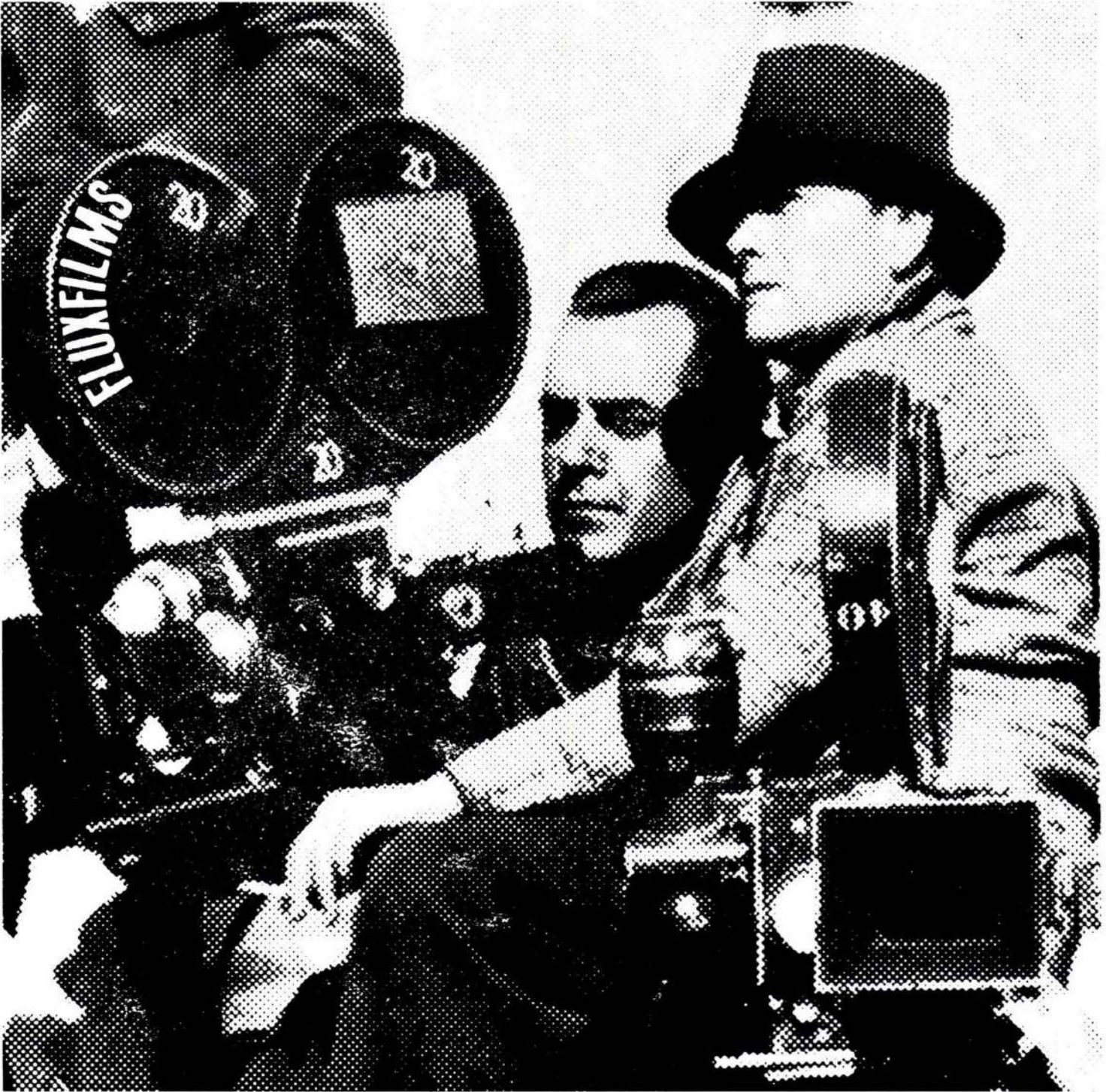
35 *Canyon Cinema Catalog 5* (1982), p. 239.

36 "Movie Journals by Jonas Mekas," *Village Voice*, November 11, 1965; repr. in *Film Culture*, *supra*, note 3, p. 11.

37 In one of the few critical appraisals of the Fluxfilms, P. Adams Sitney inaccurately described one of the three films he invokes ("*End After 9 . . .* is simply academy leader from 1 to 9") and concludes by dismissively labeling the Fluxfilms "subversive." See Sitney's postscript to his "Structural Film," *supra*, note 12, p. 345–346.

38 Review, *Village Voice*, June 25, 1964; repr. in *Film Culture*, *supra*, note 3, p. 11.

39 Brecht's statement appeared originally in "Something About Fluxus," *FLUXUS cc five ThReE* (Fluxus newspaper no. 4, June 1964); repr. in this book on p. 166.



FLUXFILMS LABEL, DESIGNED BY GEORGE MACIUNAS, OFFSET ON PAPER,  $3 \frac{1}{4} \times 3 \frac{1}{4}$ . COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER.





**Back to  
the Future:**  
Fluxus in Context

by **Andreas Huyssen**

one of the sparks for european f.-activities was the encounter of american lack of style and european fatigue with style,

american bricolage and european phantasy, american insouciance and european logic. – Tomas Schmit

Fluxus is still needed, in a world of pretension and falseness, grandiosity and humorlessness. – Dick Higgins

## Beginnings

**F**luxus, in the early 1960s, was a groundbreaking and idiosyncratically imaginative avant-garde with a prehistory in the experimental music and the concrete poetry of the 1950s and a posthistory in Minimalism, concept art, and performance art of the 1960s and 1970s.

While the boundaries of Fluxus as an avant-garde are as porous in terms of origins as in terms of membership at any given time, the consensus, as reflected in the essays in this book, is that Fluxus “began” with a series of concerts organized by Lithuanian-born George Maciunas at his AG Gallery in New York City in 1961 and with the plans to publish a journal called *Fluxus*. Instead of a publishing venture in the United States, however, Fluxus first took shape as a sort of improvisational clearinghouse for artistic events and activities in Western Europe, a kind of on-the-road and in-time production of concerts and event pieces, many of which were never recorded. Fluxus gained its momentum when Maciunas, its obsessive and dedicated impresario, left New York City and went to live in West Germany. There he began organizing a series of concerts that started in Wiesbaden in September 1962 and moved on to Paris, Copenhagen, and Düsseldorf. These concerts, often poorly attended and rarely well-publicized, proved seminal for the emergence of a whole new art scene in the 1960s.

The German-American connection thus seems crucial to the rise of Fluxus in the early 1960s. The New York–Wiesbaden constellation indeed provided something like a frame within which a loose association of artists from Korea, Japan, Denmark, France, West Germany, and other countries began to play their Fluxus parts. At a time when dominant art movements were still tied to a place (the New York School, l’Ecole de Paris), Fluxus was international and not easy to contain geographically; and it never even came close to being a “school.”

One may even be tempted to say that Fluxus is not, nor has it ever been, an “art movement” in the traditional sense. Somehow it failed, but its very failure now turns out to have been a success of almost mythic proportions. For if the worst that can happen to an avant-garde is to be co-opted, collected, “musealized,” then Fluxus, until recently, was a resounding success—precisely because, unlike Pop Art, it *failed* to be successful. Apart from a small coterie of aficionados, it even managed to be—almost—forgotten, a fact that somehow has guaranteed its long afterlife in artistic practices and that provides excitement for its current rediscovery. Conversely, if the best that can happen to an avant-garde is that it creates a vital tradition while escaping the fate of dogmatic ossification, then Fluxus has

been extremely successful as well: many of its early practitioners have embarked on new but still Flux-inspired projects, and it has left significant traces in the aesthetic practices of many other subsequent movements and individual artists.

Some have even claimed that none of the art movements of the 1960s and 1970s would have been possible without the initiating spark of Fluxus. If one proceeds to pin down a particular artist or work as Fluxus-related, however, standards of purity and exclusion are brought to bear by interested former participants that make the phenomenon of Fluxus elusive to the vanishing point. Thus Dick Higgins has listed nine criteria for the Fluxus work that, depending on how one interprets them, are so broad as to include or, for that matter, exclude practically everything under the sun that is postmodern;<sup>1</sup> and Robert Watts has cynically suggested that “the most important thing about Fluxus is that nobody knows what it is.”<sup>2</sup> But then Fluxus is either the master-code of postmodernism or it is the ultimately unrepresentable art movement—postmodernism’s sublime, as it were. Neither of these two views is really satisfactory.

## Fluxus as Neo-Dada

The paradox today is that Fluxus, at age thirty-plus, is just now being defined. The traces it has left are being recovered and Fluxus is being collected and validated as an avant-garde. It is becoming successful in market and museum terms, and it is beginning to share the fate that has befallen all other earlier avant-garde movements: codification through archive, museum, scholarship. It will not even help much to remember that Fluxus’ *spiritus rector* and would-be dictator, George Maciunas, once emphatically rejected the notion of Fluxus as an avant-garde altogether and described the sparse, minimalist Fluxus event, in contrast to Allan Kaprow’s much more theatrical Happenings, as a rear-guard practice.<sup>3</sup> Maciunas, in fact, was perfectly aware of Dada as predecessor when in 1962, in one of his earliest programmatic statements, he described Fluxus as “Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art.”<sup>4</sup>

Today, of course, in an age when the ethos of avant-gardism no longer has the same claim on art that it used to have even in that earlier post-World War II period, rear-guardism itself has become a quite privileged strategy. But already by the early 1960s the avant-garde was inevitably rear-guard: it had become tradition itself and thus self-contradictory—the tradition of the new, as Harold Rosenberg disparagingly called it;<sup>5</sup> a mere repetition, if not a fraud or a self-delusion, as Hans Magnus Enzensberger claimed in his perceptive 1962 piece “The Aporias of the Avantgarde.”<sup>6</sup>

(PRECEDING PAGE) NAM JUNE PAIK PERFORMING HIS *SONATA QUASI UNA FANTASIA* AT NEO-DADA IN DER MUSIK, DÜSSELDORF (1962). A REALIZATION OF GEORGE BRECHT’S *WORD EVENT* APPEARS ON THE BLACKBOARD. PHOTO © MANFRED LEVE.



ARTHUR C. CASPARI READING GEORGE MACIUNAS' MANIFESTO "NEO-DADA IN MUSIC, THEATER, POETRY, ART" AT KLEINES SOMMERFEST: APRÈS JOHN CAGE, WUPPERTAL (1962). PHOTO ROLF JÄHRLING, COURTESY THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

And yet there was a difference in these new avant-gardes, rather than only a belated and regressive repetition. The anger and contempt voiced by former Dadaists such as Raoul Hausmann, Richard Hülsenbeck, Hans Richter, and Marcel Duchamp over neo-Dada, Nouveau Réalisme, and Pop Art at the time testifies to that difference as much as the outrage that Fluxus and other more or less simultaneous phenomena of the late 1950s and early 1960s (such as the provocations of the Vienna Group, the group Spur in Munich, or Allen Ginsberg and the Beats) generated among the genteel guardians of culture on both sides of the Atlantic. This difference can be described in aesthetic terms as well as in broader historical and political terms.

Fluxus emerged from a unique constellation in the early 1960s that had been years in the making and at the core of which there was something like a chance montage of European-American incompatibilities and approximations. In both West Germany and the United States the emergence of Fluxus coincides with the ending of periods of restoration and conservatism that were accompanied by the shift to a new politics and a new culture. In America, the prematurely celebrated "affluent society" of the staid but stable Eisenhower years gave way, with John F. Kennedy's election in 1960, to a sensibility of exuberant optimism, which soon ended in political crisis (the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban missile crisis), assassinations (JFK, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King), campus turmoil, and ever-increasing protests against the Vietnam War. In West Germany, the smugness and self-satisfaction of the "economic miracle" of the Adenauer years was increasingly contested, beginning with the 1961 elections and

leading eventually, after student movement and extra-parliamentary opposition during the "great coalition" of the two major parties (1965–1969), to the election by the end of the decade of the first social democratic chancellor since the war.

But since Fluxus (despite George Maciunas' ambition to create something like a left front of the arts on the model of the post-Russian Revolution LEF group in the Soviet Union) did not place itself in the tradition of political avant-gardism of the 1920s, its relationship to the new politics of the 1960s remains tenuous at best. To establish a direct link between Fluxus events and the protest politics of the 1960s, at any rate, would be to falsify the historical record. While it is true that the anarcho-cultural sensibility articulated in Fluxus concerts did in the arts what later strategies of cultural protest carried into the public sphere, by the time the student movement exploded in Berkeley in 1964 and in Europe shortly thereafter, Fluxus had already entered its second, less productive phase. An event such as Maciunas and Henry Flynt's public protest of a Stockhausen concert in New York City in 1964 (Stockhausen was accused of continuing to produce high art) demonstrates that their attempt to politicize Fluxus in the name of an ill-defined Marxism had actually failed: major figures of the Fluxus group who participated in Stockhausen's concert did not heed the protest of the Fluxus leader.

This failure was symptomatic, and points to the overall closeness of Fluxus to the nonpolitical and allegedly nonideological 1950s. Of course, the abstention from politics and ideology in art after the McCarthy years was itself deeply ideological: the very notion of the "end of ideology" functioned as one of the major weapons in Cold War anticommunism. For a historical understanding of Fluxus, it is significant to note that this end-of-ideology politics held sway much more strongly in the two frontline countries of the Cold War confrontation—the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States—than it did in France or England, where the political and intellectual left was still a palpable presence. This would explain why Fluxus had its major force fields in the United States and West Germany, whereas Sartre's existentialist Marxism and the Situationist International's radical critique of consumerism and the society of the spectacle dominated in France,<sup>7</sup> and England produced an early pop culture whose political edge was always more pronounced than that of Pop Art in the United States.

Aesthetically, however, it was the rediscovery of Dada (opposite) on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1950s that provided the key to further developments in the arts. This rediscovery was not just an archaeological phenomenon. Dada was immediately reinscribed into the cultural politics of the 1950s as an antidote to an increasingly canonized modernism in poetry, narrative, and painting. In the United States, Robert Motherwell's documentation of 1951, *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, was as influential as the 1956 Schwitters retrospective in Hannover's Kestner Gesellschaft and the Düsseldorf Dada exhibition of 1958 were in West Germany. In both countries, this rediscovery had the aura of the new: in West Germany the repression and persecution of avant-gardism during the Third Reich had produced a generational forgetting; and in the United States, it was only since the 1950s that a Dadaist attack on art as institution ("high art" as canonized by museum, gallery, scholarship, and criticism) made any sense at all. The prevailing Anglo-American view of modernism had not paid much attention to either Dada or to Surrealism—not until the 1961 Museum of Modern Art show *The Art of Assemblage* incorporated at least the formal aspects of Dada into the canon of the modern.

Perhaps the postwar reception of Dada in Europe was more emphatically coded by the literature of absurdism (Beckett, Ionesco) and by the shadow that Auschwitz cast over any cultural enterprise after 1945. The Dada reception in the United States, in turn, may be said to have been more playful, provocative, less weighted down with metaphysical residues, and simply oblivious to those memories of political terror and the Holocaust. So while the cultural environment for this repetition of Dada, a repetition with a difference, is not the same in both countries, the Dada *effect* can be said to have been quite similar.

Like Dada, and certainly unlike Pop Art, Fluxus worked out of an aesthetic of negation: negation of the art market; negation of the notion of the great individual creator, the artist as hero or redeemer; negation of the art object as reified commodity; negation of traditionally defined boundaries between music, literature, and the visual arts. But this was also the negation of an emphatically subjective aesthetic of negation, of existentialist suffering and alienation as it characterized much of the late modernism of the 1950s in music, painting, and literature; and rejection, finally, of the privileging of deep meaning and learned interpretation as Susan Sontag attacked them in her seminal 1964 essay "Against Interpretation."<sup>8</sup>

Fluxus is part of that avant-gardist tradition of anti-art, but from its beginnings in its American manifestations, which were eagerly absorbed especially in West Germany, Fluxus also expounded an affirmative aesthetic: affirmation of the emphatic presence of the intermedia event; affirmation of fun and enjoyment of performers and audience as against the sublime seriousness of high modernism; affirmation of the simple and habitual events of everyday life and their inherent relation to art; affirmation of the concrete and minimal object-event that was intended to loosen up the ingrained mechanism of Western high cultural codifications like a bad tooth (as Walter Benjamin once characterized the Surrealist privileging of dreams).<sup>9</sup> Susan Sontag understood this new practice in the arts when she called for a new audience response: "We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more."<sup>10</sup> There is, of course, a certain political naïveté to this affirmative aesthetic, nowhere more visible than in Dick Higgins' claim in the *Something Else Newsletter* of February 1966: "The social problems that characterize our time . . . no longer allow a compartmentalized approach. We are approaching the dawn of a classless society, to which separation into rigid categories is absolutely irrelevant."<sup>11</sup>

While this leap from Higgins' notion of intermedia experimentation in the arts to the delusion about a classless America is perhaps best forgotten, in their aesthetic practices, Fluxus artists were indeed working on the threshold between art and its negation—without, however, simply reviving the Dadaist semiotic dismantling and disruption of traditional forms of bourgeois art. The Futurists and Dadaists had attacked the shallow forms of an Arnoldian or Wilhelminian high culture, the class culture of the Belle Epoque that, for good reason, had not survived World War I. Even though such an attack on institutionalized culture was again plausible in the late 1950s, it had to face two difficulties: the Dadaist forms of attack were themselves being canonized as legitimate art during the 1950s, and the institutionalization of art in postwar Western societies seemed less immediately class-bound, operating increasingly through new public agencies of cultural administration. The proverbial attempt to *épater les bourgeois*, which only the philistines held to be the central concern of the avant-garde, was no longer even pertinent in an age of mass cultural consumption and "musealized" avant-gardism.

If Dada had questioned the status of art, genius, and art object as they had informed nineteenth-century bourgeois culture, however, that critique was by no means obsolete after 1945, as traditional notions of culture were happily being reconstructed: in the United States a notion of high culture took root for the first time on a broader basis, and in war-ravaged Europe conservative notions of culture had their last fling, both in terms of a turn to national traditions and in terms of a conservative codification of modernism itself. Thus versions of neo-Dada were perhaps not a major advance in the sense of the formal development of artistic strategies, but they certainly had a place in expressing the rebellion of a new generation of artists against the administered culture of the 1950s, in which a domesticated and moderate modernism served as an ideological prop to the Cold War. But as the major neo-Dada phenomenon in that transitional period, Fluxus also attempted to put something new in the place of the rejected old.

What, then, is that new element that distinguishes neo-Dada from Dada, and what are its central aesthetic aspects? Fluxus, one hears, is a tendency, an attitude, a way of life as in Fluxfests, Fluxweddings, and Fluxfoods, which were as important as Fluxconcerts, Fluxevents, and Fluxboxes. This attempt by Fluxus to bridge the gap between art and life would seem to relate it again,





OPENING OF THE ERSTE INTERNATIONALEN DADA-MESSE (FIRST INTERNATIONAL DADA FAIR), BERLIN (1920). PHOTO COURTESY BILDARCHIV PREUSSISCHER KULTURBESITZ, BERLIN.

and quite explicitly, to the art-life problematic of the historical avant-garde as embodied in Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, and the Soviet avant-garde of the 1920s—a relationship that Maciunas went to great and often absurd lengths to chart, label, and administer. But while the earlier Dada played itself out in close proximity *and* antagonism to political vanguardism and revolution, which were then capturing the imagination of artists everywhere in Europe (just think of the proximity of Dada's Cabaret Voltaire to Lenin's hideout in Swiss exile in Zurich's Spiegelgasse or of Berlin Dada's close relationship to the Communist Party), the almost obsessive and fetishistic Fluxus emphasis on redoing everything under the sun in its own name seems more like an anticipation of the apolitical life-style obsessions of later decades (the difference being that life according to Fluxus was not supposed to be commercialized at all). Fluxus actually resisted commodification quite consciously, but in retrospect, the absence of a political radicalism rooted in reality can be said to have been both an aesthetic weakness and a sign of political insight at a time when the left cultural politics of the 1920s no longer offered any solutions.

Perhaps nothing else, nothing more radical, was possible around 1960. The superpower confrontation of the 1950s had severely limited the space in which a novel and productive encounter between aesthetics and politics could have emerged. A major aesthetic and political rupture of representational strategies had occurred in the arts earlier in the twentieth century, and such breaks cannot simply be willed into existence—even less so at a time when the great utopian visions of a socialist or communist society were no longer believable and when totalitarian cultural politics had made the incompatibility of political vanguardism and aesthetic avant-gardism more than clear. The target of an avant-garde in the 1950s, it seems, could no longer be a fairly coherent system of representation and culture. At best, an avant-garde could challenge the ways in which the avant-gardist ruptures with that system were being domesticated, institutionalized, and commodified in the general climate of restoration that characterized the age of Eisenhower, Adenauer, and de Gaulle. Fluxus thus offers a symptomatic case of what separates the postwar avant-gardes from their predecessors in the age of heroic vanguardism.



# THERE'S MUSIC-AND EGGS-IN THE AIR!



RICHARD O'REGAN. "THERE'S MUSIC-AND EGGS-IN THE AIR!," STARS AND STRIPES, OCTOBER 21, 1962. REVIEW OF THE FLUXUS INTERNATIONALE FESTSPIELE NEUESTER MUSIK, WIESBADEN (1962). THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

## An Avant-Garde Born out of the Spirit of Music

The archaeology of Fluxus gives us a very striking picture of its beginnings. At a time when the Central Intelligence Agency, in order to stem the paranoically feared influence of Soviet cultural politics on America's allies, secretly funded all kinds of cultural activities in Western Europe, including the importation of American-style modernism (the New York School), a couple of American artists very unconvincingly used the American bases of the United States military forces in West Germany to undermine the domination of the very modernism that Cold War cultural politics was promoting as the proper free art of the West. Emmett Williams, based in Darmstadt, worked for the American Army paper *Stars and Stripes*, and George Maciunas made a living by doing design and signs for American PX stores at the Wiesbaden Air Force base.

But these beginnings of Fluxus are marked by a yet larger constellation that explains the explosive energy released by these encounters. In 1962, a United States avant-garde met a European avant-garde. The locale of the meeting was a totally unimportant, but now historical, provincial museum in Wiesbaden, where the first of a series of Fluxus festivals was staged (above and opposite). The

# Fluxus International

## FESTSPIELE NEUESTER MUSIK

### IM HÖRSAAL DES STÄDTISCHEN MUSEUMS, WIESBADEN

SAMSTAG	KONZERT NR.1, KLAVIERKOMPOSITIONEN - U.S.A., K.E.WELIN UND F.RZEWSKI - PIANISTEN, JOHN CAGE, 31'57.98"41 / PHILIP CORNER, KLAVIER TATIKENEN (FÜR EIN KLAVIER UND VIELE SPIELER) / KAFKA UND FORM NR. 7.14 / TERRY RILEY, KONZERT	1.	FÜR 2 PIANISTEN UND TONBAND / T.JENNINGS, KLAVIER STÜCKE / JED CURTIS, KLAVIER STÜCK / GRIFFITH ROSE, 2. ENNEAD / 1963	DICK HIGGINS, CONSTELLATION NR.1 (FÜR 2 KLAVIERE UND 3 RADIOS) / LA MONTE YOUNG, "364" FÜR HENRY FLOWYER UND KLAVIER	UND DREI KLAVIER STÜCKE 1962
14-30 UHR	STÜCKE FÜR DAVID TUDOR NR.2 / GEORGE BRECHT, FÜNF KLAVIER STÜCKE 1961	UND	STÜCKE FÜR DAVID TUDOR NR.2 / GEORGE BRECHT, FÜNF KLAVIER STÜCKE 1961	UND	DREI KLAVIER STÜCKE 1962
SAMSTAG	KONZERT NR.2 KLAVIERKOMPOSITIONEN - JAPAN, K.E.WELIN - PIANIST, TOSHI ICHIHANAGI, MUSIK FÜR KLAVIER, NR.3 BIS NR.7 / YORIKI MATSUO, INSTRUKTIONEN FÜR KLAVIER, SHINICHI MATSUSHITA, MOSAIK / YOKO ONO, EIN STÜCK UM	1.	DEN HIMMEL ZU SEHEN / KEIJO SATO, CALIGRAPHY / YUJI TAKAHASHI, EKSTASIS / TORU TAKEMITSU, KLAVIER ENTFERNUNG	UND	YASUNAO TAJIMA, TONKUNST, KLAVIER TON MIT TONBAND / GEORGE YUNAS, PROJECTION ESCAPISM, I, II, III
20:00 UHR	UND	YASUNAO TAJIMA, TONKUNST, KLAVIER TON MIT TONBAND / GEORGE YUNAS, PROJECTION ESCAPISM, I, II, III	UND	YASUNAO TAJIMA, TONKUNST, KLAVIER TON MIT TONBAND / GEORGE YUNAS, PROJECTION ESCAPISM, I, II, III	UND
SONNTAG	KONZERT NR.3 KLAVIERKOMPOSITIONEN - EUROPA, F.RZEWSKI - PIANIST, JACQUES CALDENE, QUADRANGES SUIVI DE	1.	FROIS BAGATELLES / G.M.KOENIG, 2 KLAVIER STÜCKE / KONRAD BOCHNER, KLANGSTÜCK & POTENTIAL / JAN MOTHENSON, COHARTE / LARS J.WELTE, GRILLER FÜR PIANIST / MICHAEL VON BIEL, EIN BUCH FÜR DIETER SCHNEBEL, REACTIONS	UND	KONZERT FÜR EINEN INSTRUMENTALISTEN & PUBLIKUM / VISIBILE, MUSIK FÜR 3 DIRIGENTEN & INSTRUMENTALISTEN
14:30 UHR	UND	KONZERT FÜR EINEN INSTRUMENTALISTEN & PUBLIKUM / VISIBILE, MUSIK FÜR 3 DIRIGENTEN & INSTRUMENTALISTEN	UND	KONZERT FÜR EINEN INSTRUMENTALISTEN & PUBLIKUM / VISIBILE, MUSIK FÜR 3 DIRIGENTEN & INSTRUMENTALISTEN	UND
SONNTAG	KONZERT NR.4 KLAVIERKOMPOSITIONEN - EUROPA, F.RZEWSKI - PIANIST, JACQUES CALDENE, QUADRANGES SUIVI DE	1.	FROIS BAGATELLES / G.M.KOENIG, 2 KLAVIER STÜCKE / KONRAD BOCHNER, KLANGSTÜCK & POTENTIAL / JAN MOTHENSON, COHARTE / LARS J.WELTE, GRILLER FÜR PIANIST / MICHAEL VON BIEL, EIN BUCH FÜR DIETER SCHNEBEL, REACTIONS	UND	KONZERT FÜR EINEN INSTRUMENTALISTEN & PUBLIKUM / VISIBILE, MUSIK FÜR 3 DIRIGENTEN & INSTRUMENTALISTEN
20:00 UHR	UND	KONZERT FÜR EINEN INSTRUMENTALISTEN & PUBLIKUM / VISIBILE, MUSIK FÜR 3 DIRIGENTEN & INSTRUMENTALISTEN	UND	KONZERT FÜR EINEN INSTRUMENTALISTEN & PUBLIKUM / VISIBILE, MUSIK FÜR 3 DIRIGENTEN & INSTRUMENTALISTEN	UND
SAMSTAG	KONZERT NR.5, KOMPOSITIONEN FÜR ANDERE INSTRUMENTE UND STIMMEN - U.S.A., GEORGE BRECHT, KARTENSTÜCK FÜR	1.	STIMMEN, JOHN CAGE, SOLO FÜR STIMME, 12'19"60 / PHILIP CORNER, PASSIONATE EXPANSION OF THE LAW / DICK HIGGINS, CONSTELLATION NR.4 & NR.7 / TERRY JENNINGS, STREICHQUARTETT / PHILIP KULM, MUSTER (FÜR STREICHQUARTETT)	UND	JACKSON MAC LOW, BUCHSTABEN FÜR IRIS NUMMERN FÜR DIE STILLE UND DANKE - EINE ZUSAMMENBAUERTE FÜR LEUTE / TERRY RILEY, UNSCHLAG, 1960 FÜR STREICHQUARTETT / EMMETT WILLIAMS, EIN ZWEIFELHAFTES LIED IN VIER RICHTUNGEN
14:30 UHR	UND	JACKSON MAC LOW, BUCHSTABEN FÜR IRIS NUMMERN FÜR DIE STILLE UND DANKE - EINE ZUSAMMENBAUERTE FÜR LEUTE / TERRY RILEY, UNSCHLAG, 1960 FÜR STREICHQUARTETT / EMMETT WILLIAMS, EIN ZWEIFELHAFTES LIED IN VIER RICHTUNGEN	UND	JACKSON MAC LOW, BUCHSTABEN FÜR IRIS NUMMERN FÜR DIE STILLE UND DANKE - EINE ZUSAMMENBAUERTE FÜR LEUTE / TERRY RILEY, UNSCHLAG, 1960 FÜR STREICHQUARTETT / EMMETT WILLIAMS, EIN ZWEIFELHAFTES LIED IN VIER RICHTUNGEN	UND
SONNTAG	KONZERT NR.6, KOMPOSITIONEN FÜR ANDERE INSTRUMENTE UND STIMMEN - JAPAN, TOSHI ICHIHANAGI, STANZEN & PILE	1.	9, SEPT, KENZO EZAKI, BEWEGLICHE PULSE & DISCRETION / YORITSUNE MATSUO, EIN STÜCK FÜR SOLO FLOTT / YASUNAO TAJIMA, ANAGRAMM FÜR STREICHE // YOKO ONO, DER PULS //	UND	KONZERT NR.7, KOMPOSITIONEN FÜR ANDERE INSTRUMENTE UND STIMMEN - EUROPA, MICHAEL VON BIEL, STREICH MUSIK
14:30 UHR	UND	KONZERT NR.7, KOMPOSITIONEN FÜR ANDERE INSTRUMENTE UND STIMMEN - EUROPA, MICHAEL VON BIEL, STREICH MUSIK	UND	KONZERT NR.7, KOMPOSITIONEN FÜR ANDERE INSTRUMENTE UND STIMMEN - EUROPA, MICHAEL VON BIEL, STREICH MUSIK	UND
SONNTAG	KONZERT NR.8, KONKRETE MUSIK & HAPPENINGS - U.S.A., JOSEPH BYRD, ZWEI STÜCKE FÜR RICHARD MAXFIELD, 1960	1.	JOHN CAGE, VARIATIONS / GEORGE BRECHT, KARTENSTÜCK FÜR DIETER TRUFFELFELD, MUSIK, KERZEN, STÜCK FÜR RADIOS & CD, KONZERT FÜR EINEN BLÄSER, JED CURTIS, GAVOTTE, ALLEMANDY, UND GEGE // DICK HIGGINS, GEFÄHRLICHE MUSIK NR.2	UND	GRAPHIS 82 // JACKSON MAC LOW, EIN STÜCK FÜR SARI DIENES // TERRY RILEY, OHN STÜCK (FÜR PUBLIKUM) //
20:00 UHR	UND	GRAPHIS 82 // JACKSON MAC LOW, EIN STÜCK FÜR SARI DIENES // TERRY RILEY, OHN STÜCK (FÜR PUBLIKUM) //	UND	GRAPHIS 82 // JACKSON MAC LOW, EIN STÜCK FÜR SARI DIENES // TERRY RILEY, OHN STÜCK (FÜR PUBLIKUM) //	UND
SAMSTAG	KONZERT NR.9, KONKRETE MUSIK & HAPPENINGS - JAPAN, TOSHI ICHIHANAGI, MUSIK FÜR ELEKTRISCHE METRONOM & IBM	1.	MUSIK, K.AKIYAMA, EINE GEHEIM METHODE / TAKENISHI KOSUGI, MICRO I & MANDOHARMA // YOKO ONO, ZWEI STÜCKE / YASUNAO TAJIMA, TAGE, NUMMER & UTERREDUNG / GEORGE YUNAS, MUSIQUE CONCRETE UND ADOINQUE //	UND	KONZERT NR.10, KONKRETE MUSIK & HAPPENINGS - INTERNATIONAL, RAO JUNE PAIK, SIMPLE // PIERRE MERCIURE, STRUC
14:30 UHR	UND	KONZERT NR.10, KONKRETE MUSIK & HAPPENINGS - INTERNATIONAL, RAO JUNE PAIK, SIMPLE // PIERRE MERCIURE, STRUC	UND	KONZERT NR.10, KONKRETE MUSIK & HAPPENINGS - INTERNATIONAL, RAO JUNE PAIK, SIMPLE // PIERRE MERCIURE, STRUC	UND
SONNTAG	KONZERT NR.11, TONBAND MUSIK UND FILME - U.S.A., JOHN CAGE, FORTANA DIX, MUSIC FOR THE MARRYING MANDEA /	1.	LA MONTE YOUNG, ZWEI TÖNE // STAN VAN DER BEEK, FILMEN // DICK HIGGINS, REQUIM, FOXWALKER, THE CRIMINAL MAYSOR	UND	FANTASIA, DIETER SCHNEBEL, SICHTBARE MUSIK FÜR EINEN DIRIGENTEN / MACIUNAS, IN MEMORIAM FÜR ADRIANO OLIVETTI /
20:00 UHR	UND	FANTASIA, DIETER SCHNEBEL, SICHTBARE MUSIK FÜR EINEN DIRIGENTEN / MACIUNAS, IN MEMORIAM FÜR ADRIANO OLIVETTI /	UND	FANTASIA, DIETER SCHNEBEL, SICHTBARE MUSIK FÜR EINEN DIRIGENTEN / MACIUNAS, IN MEMORIAM FÜR ADRIANO OLIVETTI /	UND
22. SEPT	KONZERT NR.11, TONBAND MUSIK UND FILME - U.S.A., JOHN CAGE, FORTANA DIX, MUSIC FOR THE MARRYING MANDEA /	1.	LA MONTE YOUNG, ZWEI TÖNE // STAN VAN DER BEEK, FILMEN // DICK HIGGINS, REQUIM, FOXWALKER, THE CRIMINAL MAYSOR	UND	FANTASIA, DIETER SCHNEBEL, SICHTBARE MUSIK FÜR EINEN DIRIGENTEN / MACIUNAS, IN MEMORIAM FÜR ADRIANO OLIVETTI /
20:00 UHR	UND	FANTASIA, DIETER SCHNEBEL, SICHTBARE MUSIK FÜR EINEN DIRIGENTEN / MACIUNAS, IN MEMORIAM FÜR ADRIANO OLIVETTI /	UND	FANTASIA, DIETER SCHNEBEL, SICHTBARE MUSIK FÜR EINEN DIRIGENTEN / MACIUNAS, IN MEMORIAM FÜR ADRIANO OLIVETTI /	UND
22. SEPT	KONZERT NR.12, TONBAND MUSIK - U.S.A., RICHARD MAXFIELD, HUFEN MUSIK / RADIO MUSIK / DAMPF // PASTORAL	1.	20:00 UHR SYMPHONY / PERSPECTIVES / NACHT MUSIK	UND	KONZERT NR.13, TONBAND MUSIK UND FILME - JAPAN, KANADA, TOSHI ICHIHANAGI, KAKI / NOBUTAKA MIZUNO, TONBAND
20:00 UHR	UND	KONZERT NR.13, TONBAND MUSIK UND FILME - JAPAN, KANADA, TOSHI ICHIHANAGI, KAKI / NOBUTAKA MIZUNO, TONBAND	UND	KONZERT NR.13, TONBAND MUSIK UND FILME - JAPAN, KANADA, TOSHI ICHIHANAGI, KAKI / NOBUTAKA MIZUNO, TONBAND	UND
SONNTAG	KONZERT NR.14, TONBAND MUSIK - FRANKREICH, "LES PREMIERES DECOUVERTES" / P. SCHAEFFER, ETUDE AUX CASSEROL	1.	P.HENRY, MUSIQUE SANS TITRE / P.ARTHUY, NATURE MORTE / LA GUITARE, A.HOJDER, JAZZ & JAZZ // "RECHERCHES	UND	ACCENTES" / L.FERRARI, ETUDE AUX ACCIDENTS & TETE ET OULEU DU DRAGON // F.B.MACHE, PRÉLUDE / E. CANTON
20:00 UHR	UND	ACCENTES" / L.FERRARI, ETUDE AUX ACCIDENTS & TETE ET OULEU DU DRAGON // F.B.MACHE, PRÉLUDE / E. CANTON	UND	ACCENTES" / L.FERRARI, ETUDE AUX ACCIDENTS & TETE ET OULEU DU DRAGON // F.B.MACHE, PRÉLUDE / E. CANTON	UND
ENTRITTS- / KARTEN	FÜR JEDEN KONZERT	DM 3	ENTRITTSKARTEN SIND AM ERGANG ZU ERHALTEN ODER DURCH	UND	KARTEN FÜR EIN ABONNEMENT (14 KONZERTE) DM 20
FÜR STÜGENTEN	DM 1,90	VORVERKAUF AM HAUPTBAHNHOF, WIESBADEN	UND	KARTEN FÜR EIN ABONNEMENT (14 KONZERTE) DM 20	DM 1,90

GEORGE MACIUNAS, POSTER FOR FLUXUS INTERNATIONALE FESTSPIELE NEUESTER MUSIK, WIESBADEN (1962). OFFSET ON PAPER, 23 1/4 x 16 1/2. THE GILBERT AND LILA SILVERMAN FLUXUS COLLECTION.

sequence of events leading to Wiesbaden is well known. It began at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where the composer John Cage did the first Happening-like performances in 1952, working with Merce Cunningham, Charles Olson, Robert Rauschenberg, David Tudor, and others, and led to New York City, where Cage taught at the New School for Social Research in the late 1950s and provided the intellectual center for a fast forming group of artists that included George Brecht, Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, Allan Kaprow, Jackson Mac Low, George Maciunas, and La Monte Young, most of whom were to play major roles in Fluxus.

The link to Cage is so significant because, for the first time in the twentieth century, music played the leading part in an avant-garde movement that encompassed a multiplicity of artistic media and strategies. Of course, there had been a musical avant-garde earlier in the twentieth century, and the sound experiments of Luigi Russolo, Erik Satie, and Edgar Varèse were being rediscovered in the 1950s, together with Dada in poetry and the visual arts. Concrete music, as well as concrete poetry, with its concern with graphics, were two developments of the 1950s that entered into Maciunas' notion of the concrete, monomorphic Fluxus event. A movement such as the Vienna School, on the other hand, had remained bound to a single medium, while the multimedia collaborations between Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill or Hanns Eisler had remained isolated instances, cut short, like so many other aesthetic experiments of the Weimar Republic, by Hitler's rise to power.



DICK HIGGINS PERFORMING HIS *DANGER MUSIC NUMBER TWO* AT FLUXUS INTERNATIONALE FESTSPIELE NEUESTER MUSIK, WIESBADEN (1962). PHOTO HARTMUT REKORT, © ARCHIV SOHM, STAATSGALERIE STUTTART.

Given Fluxus' link to Cage and experimental music, it can be said that the Beat movement, which was rattling American culture in the late 1950s from the West Coast with its own brand of attack on high-modernist seriousness, played no major role in the beginnings of Fluxus. On the contrary, the Beats' predilection for unmediated, spontaneous, and expressive subjectivity in their poetry and prose was explicitly shunned by the New York disciples of John Cage. The Cage group defined their project of expanding the boundaries of art

by emphatically rejecting Abstract Expressionism in painting and by attempting to overcome the crisis of serialism in music. Yet it is easy to see the link between Action Painting and Fluxus performances, with their emphasis on the concrete materiality of medium and action as logical means to move decisively beyond the canvas and away from the notion of the finished work of art.

Abstract Expressionism had by then become institutionalized and commanded considerable prices on the art market. It also exercised enormous influence in Europe, where 1950s abstraction and its variations such as Informel or Tachisme were seen as the culmination of the modernist trajectory that had begun with Kandinsky's first abstract paintings in 1910. With the New York School, America had proven its ability to win on the battlefields of culture, as New York succeeded in displacing Paris as the center of the modernist arts. For the Fluxus rebellion to take shape, however, it seemed that the New York scene alone did not provide enough energy. Something else was necessary, and Cage provided the impetus. With Cage, who had been strongly affected by Duchamp since the early 1940s, we have the linkage to European music—namely to Arnold Schönberg, who had fled the Nazis and had taught Cage in California before Cage moved East. In the United States, however, Cage's musical experiments lacked the background and environment of a vibrant modernist music culture. There simply was very little Schönberg or dodecaphonic music to be heard in the concert halls. Musical modernism was hardly even known, while modernism in architecture and painting had become the dominant artistic expression of the postwar era.

This is where West Germany became central to the growth of Fluxus as an avant-garde emerging from the music scene. In contrast to the United States, there was practically no indigenous new painting in Germany throughout the 1950s. Instead, the Federal Republic witnessed the exhilarating rediscovery of the modernism the Nazis had so spectacularly banned with their notorious 1937 *Entartete Kunst* (degenerate art) exhibition.<sup>12</sup> That art, forbidden during the Third Reich, had a major revival with the first Documenta exhibition in Kassel in 1955, and it was followed by the introduction of American-style Abstract Expressionism with the second Documenta in 1959. But as far as new production was concerned, the visual field seemed exhausted—the visual imagination of Germany depleted after the imagistic orgies of Nazi festivities, the light domes of Albert Speer, and the experience of war and burning cities. At the same time, the revulsion against radical forms of modernism that had preceded Nazism, and which Nazi cultural politics had so cleverly exploited, seemed to linger far beyond the downfall of the regime itself among a culturally traditionalist public. Finally, and even more important, documentary footage from the concentration camps that began to be ever more frequently shown in West Germany in the mid-1950s (such as that in Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog*) had a paralyzing effect on the visual imagination of a whole generation. Auschwitz cast a prohibition over any form of visual and literary representation, and artists were fundamentally insecure as to which traditions were still usable, which aesthetic strategies not contaminated by Nazi abuse.

In painting, abstraction—no matter how secondary and imitative—provided a possible way out. But only music, an inherently nonrepresentational medium, seemed not to have been affected. In its many music and opera festivals and its lively concert culture, West Germany sought to escape from the pressures of the present and the memory of the Nazi years by affirming a cultural heritage presumably not tainted by Nazism, even though many of the Third Reich's musical performance stars and conductors continued to perform in the limelight. They stood for an unbroken tradition of a fundamentally conservative musical culture that was thought to be free from the fetters of politics.

A result of this apologetic continuation of "the best of German culture," however, is that the center of avant-gardism in West Germany in the 1950s became tied neither to literature nor to the visual arts, but precisely to musical experimentation, in what was then called the New

Music, "musica nuova." The key site was Darmstadt. At the famous annual Ferienkurse für neue Musik (Vacation Courses for New Music), musical experiment moved from an intense appropriation of Schönberg, who in the early 1950s replaced Paul Hindemith, Igor Stravinsky, and Béla Bartók as the key paradigm of musical modernism, to a Webernian phase, and to the espousal of serialism by the mid-1950s. Pierre Boulez, Luigi Nono, and Karlheinz Stockhausen were some of the leading new composers at the time, and most of the major figures of the European music scene taught or performed in Darmstadt. However, increasing abstraction and a kind of technocratic formalism, experienced by many as the formal expression of a decadent capitalist system, eventually led to a dead end. Already in 1955, Theodor Adorno, one of the most astute observers of modernism in music, spoke of the aging of the new music, its loss of inner tension and creative force, and its incorporation into an accommodating, administered culture.

In the meantime, electronic experiment had found its laboratory in the radio studios of the WDR in Cologne. Stockhausen and Nam June Paik worked there developing a new music aesthetic that pushed beyond the natural sound boundaries of traditional instruments. Radio was still the major mass medium at the time and serious music commanded considerable air time. Just as the Cologne WDR supported musical experiment, the Darmstadt scene was cosponsored by Hessian radio.

It was in this Darmstadt environment of advanced musical experimentation, at which Adorno was a frequent participant, that Cage caused a major sensation in 1958 with his Zen-inspired challenge to the extreme rationalization of the musical material in the serialist enterprise. As against Western musical rationalism, which Max Weber had already analyzed and which Adorno had made into a theoretical pillar of his music philosophy, Cage demanded to free the pure materiality of sound and to emancipate noise from its oppressive exclusion from the realm of music. For sound to emerge, music had to be silent; thus the title of Cage's seminal 1961 book, *Silence*. The avant-garde's demand to abolish the boundaries between art and life had finally entered the realm of the most advanced music in a major way.

The famous Fluxus concerts of the early 1960s are unthinkable apart from this development toward an aleatoric post-serialism. Not only did Emmett Williams spend decisive years in Darmstadt, but both Nam June Paik and La Monte Young first met Cage there—this encounter significantly reorienting their work. Cage in New York City, Cage in Darmstadt: this double impact created the critical mass out of which Fluxus emerged as an intermedia avant-garde born out of the spirit of experimental music.

It was indeed plausible that a new radicalism, a neo-Dada, should emanate from music, a field that had lacked the kind of avant-gardist dismantling of its institutional frame and inherent structures and was ripe for the expansion of its sound material into what always had been considered to be simply nonmusical. In Schönberg's dodecaphonic compositions, as well as in Webern and serialism, Western culture's movement toward rationalization had continued unabated beyond World War II. The constructivist logic of this brand of modernism could be read either as *protest* against a totally rationalized world which radiated disaster (as per Adorno), or as a kind of high cultural *reproduction* of the very oppressive structures of a rationalizing modernity. This latter view made a radical anarchic attack on serialism almost inevitable, an attack that posited the principles of indeterminacy and chance against the rigidly administered and rationalized musical material.

On a pragmatic level, it had also become evident that the totally determined and rationalized music could no longer be distinguished from completely undetermined and random music by listening alone. Only the reading of the musical score would reveal the difference. Indeed, to some sophisticated professionals, the reading of the score became more important than actual listening or performing. To a critical ear, however, it is precisely this inability to distinguish indeterminacy from excessive overdetermination that also reveals how close chance and indeterminacy are to the very oppressiveness of rationalization they ostensibly want to overcome. Excessive determination itself had already opened the door to chance in the works of Stockhausen and Boulez, and Cage could be said simply to have drawn the conclusions of what was latent in serialism itself.

Cage's Zen-inspired focus on the sounds and noises of everyday life seems to offer a striking contrast in sensibility to that of the post-Webernian European music scene. And yet Cage's uncritical celebration of chance and the *I Ching* call to mind Walter Benjamin's paradoxical comments, in his essay on Baudelaire, on the structural proximity of assembly-line work and gambling.<sup>13</sup> The insidious dialectic of mere accident and total rational control is perhaps nowhere as evident as in the ultimate Fluxus event of the 1950s, one performed millions of times over, but never by a Fluxus artist: schoolchildren lined up, arms covering their heads, in nuclear war drills (p. 151). Nuclear war was, after all, the trauma of the 1950s generation: the possibility of MAD (mutually assured destruction) revealed the inherent absurdity and danger of technological progress and the politics of deterrence—or, in aesthetically coded terms, the dialectical closeness of chance and determination.

Thus while Cage's aesthetic of musical silence, which permitted the chance sounds of everyday life to penetrate the field of music, represented a perhaps unavoidable move in music aesthetics, it was far less liberating, or at least more ambivalent, than it imagined itself to be. Much the same can be said of the Fluxus pieces and events that followed on the heels of Cage's project. Total rational control and the status quo may be exploded by chance, but chance in the 1950s always had these two sides: the life-affirming side, with its focus on the simple acts and events of everyday life and with its cutting critique of an oppressive logic of modernization and consumerism; and the apocalyptic side of the nuclear accident that would blow up the world and generate a silence beyond art and any life.

The turn to Zen Buddhism, so central to Cage and much of the counterculture of the 1960s, had been significant in that it functioned as the Eastern veneer of some alternate meaning, an intellectual "other" that breathed new life into the world of Dr. Strangelove. It provided the illusion of spirituality that had been drained from Western civilization itself. But the paradoxical celebration of chance as a constructive principle of the new art would reach its own dead end very soon: after the elimination of author, work, and conscious aesthetic construction, randomness itself would necessarily sink into the muck of the unadulterated materiality of everyday life and its ultimate lack of meaning. Here it is important to note that Fluxus, in general, did not follow the Cagean road to Zen and, in its practice of performing pieces and events, carefully maintained the boundary between art event and the heterogeneous reality of everyday life, never lapsing into that participatory aesthetic ethos that emerged as one of the major utopian delusions of the 1960s in various artistic media.

Clearly, Cage's experiments articulated an important critique of excessive rationalization in contemporary Western music, which stood revealed as oppressive and confining. His critique of technocratic modes of composition also manifested itself in his attempt to move music away from modern technology and media and back into everyday life. Electronic experiment had expanded the realm of sound in a different way, but from Cage's perspective, this was just another wrong avenue to pursue. Most of the Fluxus artists (with the exception, of course, of Paik) shared this rather purist anti-technological attitude, which would soon have to contend with a new media triumphalism under the spell of Marshall McLuhan.

Cage and Fluxus share the project to do away with ART. This is the genuine Dadaist moment of Fluxus. But even in this rebellion, in its incorporation of everyday events into art and art's opening up toward chance events of everyday life, Fluxus remained art and expanded its realm of expression and material development in highly charged and consequential ways. The high-modernist notion of individualized artistic expression based on transcendent vision was replaced by a focus on the *événement trouvé*, the "found event," as one might call it in reference to Duchamp's *objet trouvé*. But this typical avant-gardist move was caught in a paradox: the "found event" from everyday life still needed the artist as a medium to stage and perform it. Fluxus as neo-Dada thus had its own inherent logic, which did not permit the final abolition of art. But this performative contradiction did not seem to bother anybody particularly.

### Intermedia and Verfransung

Fluxus was in every respect a threshold or boundary phenomenon. Historically, it was located on the threshold between an older type of European avant-gardism, with which it still shared many basic assumptions, and a beginning postmodernism, which it anticipated in its emphasis on performance, event, and the indeterminacy of medium. This historical threshold was marked by the tension between the European, critical, negating side of Fluxus, best embodied in George Maciunas himself and in his archival in West Germany, Wolf Vostell, and the affirming, expanding, though by no means uncritical aspects transmitted to Fluxus primarily through Cage and the emerging American avant-garde scene.

Fluxus also was a boundary phenomenon in that it located its experiments on the thresholds between different arts and media: between music and poetry, design and poetry, music and graphics, music performance and theater performance, vaudeville and high art, art and life. Dick Higgins coined the fortuitous formula of "intermedia," which he wanted clearly to distinguish from multimedia. Multimedia resulted from addition and juxtaposition, while intermedia focused on heretofore empty spaces between rigidly separated and defined arts. The guiding principles of intermedia were subtraction and reduction rather than addition, in that the intermedia event also tended to be, in Maciunas' words, concrete, monomorphic, untheatrical, and, especially in the laconic pieces of George Brecht, minimalist.

The Fluxus *u-topian* space between media is of course meaningful only as long as existing or formerly dominant boundaries are still respected or at least known. This implicit dependence on a traditionally structured system of the arts, which is put under erasure by the Fluxus event, is perhaps best expressed in what Adorno, in a key essay of 1966, called the increasing "Verfransung der Künste."<sup>14</sup> This notion of *Verfransung* (fraying, entangling, blurring of boundaries), while close to Higgins' celebrated formula of "intermedia," is perhaps theoretically more perceptive in that it includes the sense of an evolving dissolution, of aesthetic entropy, a reciprocal emptying out of traditions, a loss of form and truth content. Adorno, in his characteristically European mode, makes a strong point of the logic of material development in the arts that pushes them toward a degree zero of meaning and transcendence which is absent from Higgins' simply nonmetaphysical discourse. Where Higgins assumes optimistically that each Fluxus event will create its own inherent and natural medium, Adorno sees entropy and a process in which the arts, given their inability to redeem in the post-Auschwitz age, simply consume each other. But neither Higgins nor Adorno ever aims at unifying the arts in some kind of a postmodern *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The terms *intermedia* and *Verfransung* both insist on differentiation and thus reproduce theoretically what the American-European encounter produced in Fluxus practices: ways to rethink and transform the different arts in that crucial fluid space between modernism and postmodernism.

Looking back at Fluxus thirty years after its beginning, one may well want to ask whether Adorno's or Higgins' analyses have been borne out by subsequent developments in the arts. The movement toward entropy eventually proved a dead end in theory and in artistic practice, and so it is no surprise that traditional forms of artistic expression that had been declared dead many times over have returned with a vengeance. Neither Adorno nor Higgins would have been pleased, even though this development tends to confirm at least Adorno's belief that art has to insist on remaining separate from and heterogeneous to life. The process of *Verfransung* was actually stopped in its tracks, and one might say that today's postmodern culture bristles with the kind of promiscuity of hybrids that Adorno saw emerging in the early 1960s. But such hybrid forms and media now exist in their own right, and *Verfransung* as hybridization has been recognized as a productive tendency rather than as entropy. Contrary to original Fluxus practices, intermedia now also includes any kind of technological and electronic gadgetry. Traditional and nontraditional forms of art exist side by side, and Higgins' distinction between multi- and intermedia does not seem to carry much weight any longer. Ironically, Higgins' vision was correct to the extent that the intermedia work ultimately legitimized itself as a medium in its own right. Fluxus as a threshold phenomenon in a temporal and aesthetic sense has become historical indeed.

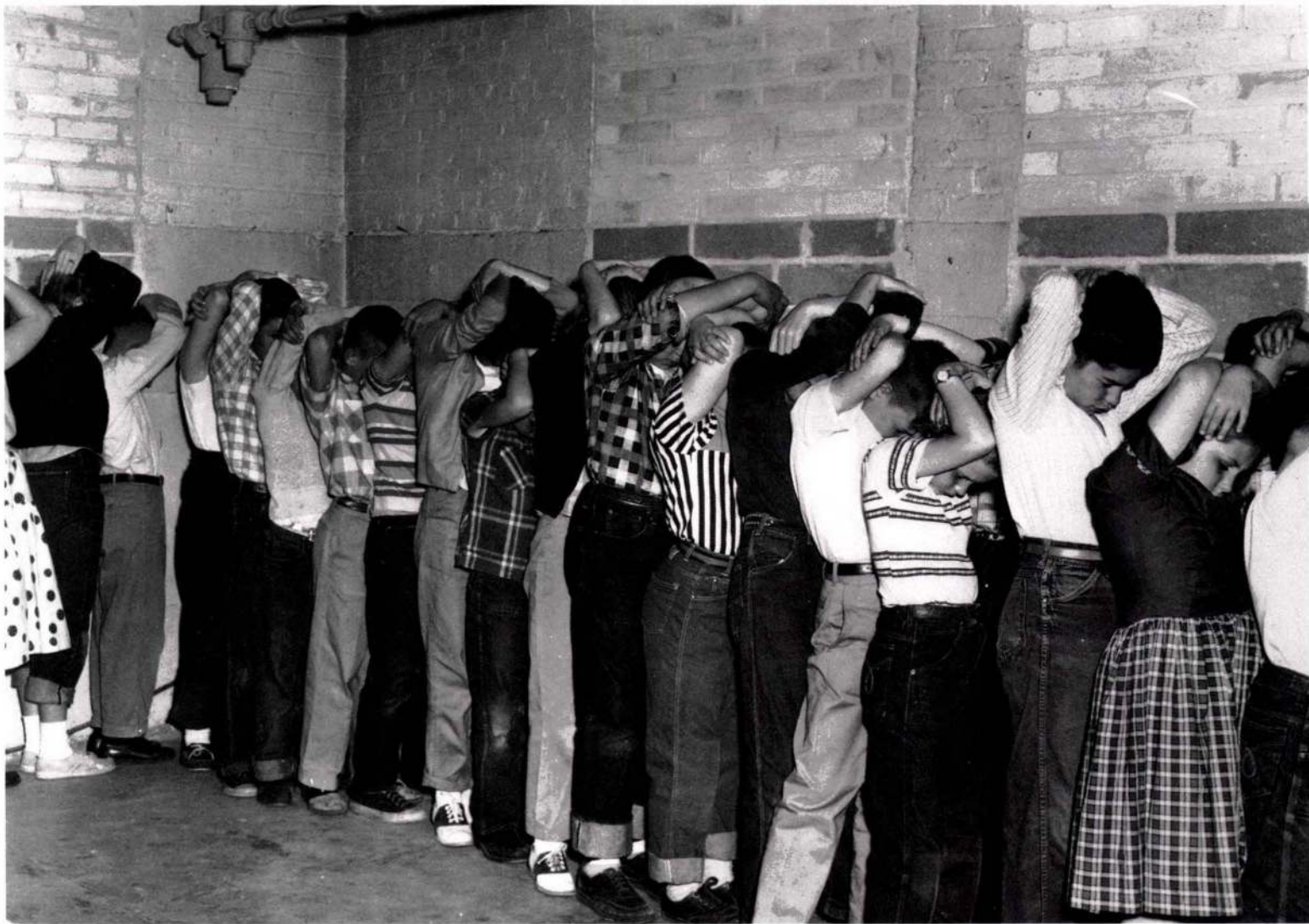
If Fluxus, as it emerged in name in 1961, is indeed symptomatic of major and groundbreaking changes in the arts, why did it take so long to recognize its importance? For contrary to Pop Art, Minimalism, ZERO, or concept art, Fluxus has indeed managed to be—almost—

forgotten, not only as a "movement" but even as a tendency or an attitude. Remarkably few of the art historical accounts of the 1960s have much to say about Fluxus. And yet, as soon as one begins studying Fluxus as a phenomenon of the late 1950s and early 1960s, one begins seeing its traces everywhere in the artistic movements that followed in the 1960s and 1970s, from Minimalism and concept art to performance art, video, mail art, and correspondence art.

Since the major twentieth-anniversary celebration of Fluxus in Wiesbaden in 1982, Fluxus has been awakened from the slumber of oblivion. From the hidden corners of its often quite vital afterlife, it is being pulled into the open public sphere through publications, exhibitions, and a new kind of collector interest. This recent interest in Fluxus may prove to be as elusive as the Fluxus phenomenon itself. But what motivates this new interest in Fluxus? Are we looking for some lost purity and innocence of an artistic ethos at a time when the commodification of art has reached a new fever pitch and the hopes for a postmodernism of resistance seem to have shipwrecked? The past as panacea for the frustrations of the present, as it were? Or are we even searching for some hidden origin of that phenomenon called postmodernism, the prehistory of the postmodern? Is the current fascination with movements of the 1950s and 1960s such as Letterism, Cobra, Situationism, Viennese Actionism, and others the result of our fatigue with the churning of the art markets, the instantaneous commodification of the latest artistic genius? Is it merely avant-garde nostalgia or is it a cultural move prone to challenge the blatant cultural conservatism of our own time? Is the aim then to construct Fluxus as the forgotten and hidden, perhaps even betrayed origin of later art movements that preyed on it without much acknowledgment? The master-code, as it were, of what has come to be called postmodernism? Is that what motivates the recent interest of museums and collectors in the Fluxus phenomenon, despite the well-known and almost insuperable difficulties of collecting objects from a movement that was centered in performances and events, of presenting a nonmovement that by definition eludes museum presentation or re-presentation?

Whatever the answers to such queries may be, Fluxus has come back from oblivion, even though its new life is now in the museum, the archive, the academy. But, then, the museum today is no longer a bastion of high culture only, but, at its best, a space for the kind of cultural encounter that might actually not betray the spirit of Fluxus while representing it. For if Fluxus has become historical, it may also be true, as Emmett Williams suggested some years ago, that it has not yet been invented.

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SCHOOLCHILDREN LINED UP FOR AN ATOM-BOMB DRILL. OFFICIAL CIVIL DEFENSE PHOTOGRAPH (CIRCA 1958), USED IN THE FILM *THE ATOMIC CAFE* (1982). PHOTO COURTESY MUSEUM OF MODERN ART/FILM STILL ARCHIVE.

#### Notes

- 1 Dick Higgins, "Fluxus: Theory and Reception" (unpublished ms., n.d. [1982]); a revised version of this essay appears in *Lund Art Press* 2, no. 2 (1991), pp. 25–50.
- 2 Robert Watts, cited by Matthew Rose in "Fluxus something? Is There a Renaissance in Fluxus or Just Boredom with Everything Else? A Survey of Fluxus in America," *Lund Art Press* 2, no. 2 (1991), p. 16.
- 3 Maciunas' comments on Fluxus as rear-guard are contained in a document of three handwritten pages entitled "Comments on the relationship of Fluxus to so called 'Avant-Garde Festival,'" Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, George Maciunas papers, no. 86.
- 4 George Maciunas, "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art" (1962); repr. on pp. 156–157 of this book.
- 5 Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1960).
- 6 Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Die Aporien der Avantgarde," *Einzelheiten II: Poesie und Politik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1962), pp. 50–80.
- 7 The term *société du spectacle* originated with the French artist, social critic, and filmmaker Guy Debord. See Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), rev. English edn. (Detroit: Black & Red, 1983).
- 8 Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation," *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), pp. 13–23.

- 9 Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism," *Reflections* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), p. 179.
- 10 Supra, note 8, p. 23.
- 11 Dick Higgins, "Intermedia," *Something Else Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (February 1966). An image of this article is reproduced in Thomas Kellein, "*Fröhliche Wissenschaft*": *Das Archiv Sohm*, exh. cat. (Stuttgart: Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, 1986), p. 15.
- 12 Entitled *Degenerate Art*, this exhibition was the highpoint of the Nazi attack on the avant-garde and of their desecration of modernism as decadent, degenerate, and un-German. This exhibition was reconstructed by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1991. See Stephanie Barron et al., "*Degenerate Art*": *The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991).
- 13 Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 177–180.
- 14 Theodor W. Adorno, "Kunst und die Künste," *Ohne Leitbild: Parva Aesthetica* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), pp. 158–182.





# **Artists' Statements and Documents**

Captions for this section appear on page 184.

La Monte: finally I have time to sit down in front of typewriter. The past month as you guessed right was our festival of fluxus - 14 concerts in all! Wiesbaden was shocked, the mayor almost had to flee the town for giving us the hall. We gave very good performances, too bad the audience was not too large and I still lost some \$ 500 in the whole deal (maybe less when I start accounting more exactly). The press was very attentive and reviews about this event or rather events appeared in some dozen newspapers, 4 magazines, papers even as far as Florence, Austria, Denmark etc. One evening was shot on film for TV presentation, a shortened version of which appeared 4 times on TV. That TV evening included Pattersons contrabass piece, Emmetts 4-directional song, Jacksons - Thanks II, youline piece, which Nam June Paik performed in his usual improvisational manner: dipped his head in a nightpot full of ink and drew a line with his head over a long roll of paper stretched over floor. Then we did my Olivetti piece, (which called for one to lift a bowler hat, another to sit down or up, another to point to audience, another (emmett) was hand farting and Dick was breathing asmathicully following Olivetti adding machine ribbon.) a sort of rithmical machine like piece. Then on the end we did Corners piano activities ~~whizk~~ not according to his instructions, since we systematically destroyed a piano which I bought for \$5 and had to have it all cut up to throw away, otherwise we would have to pay movers, a very practical composition, but german~~xxxxxx~~ sentiments about this "instrument" of chopin was hurt and they made a row about it. I enclose the program, but we did not follow it, since there were not enough materials from Japan (some arriving too late) and so we added more of american works.

What I will do is write a sort of review of this festival or report on what was done etc. in a ozolith printed newsletter form, so I will not have to write it over and over to people in New York etc. Besides my health started to give way and I get tired very quick even on typing. This continuous use of cortesone started to affect the spine in some sort of way (As the doctor syas would some day happen) so that my hands and a leg for some reason (by way of the spine-if you can figure it all out) don't operate very efficiently and are bothered by annoying and inconvenient pains and other things etc.etc. Then I was knocked off with another lung infection last few weeks and was hardly able to finish the festival. That's why the delay in leter replies etc. (many letters to write also). So the news:

1. Fluxus I is definitely coming out, in fact the whole issue is at printers, I have done all my work. Printer is doing on credit (my bowler hat having impressed him), except I have to pay for papaer in advance. not a bad deal. I figure the issue should go out in mid November, since it is a rather fat book and printer is not very fast (not as slow as that Rapport in N.Y.)
2. After all the publicity we got in Wiesbaden it is easier to do festivals elsewhere, so we have it all arranged to have one in Copenhagen (6 concerts in last week of November) and Paris (8 concerts in first week of December), then we will rest a month or two before continuing in other towns.
3. Too bad I did not have Fluxus or Anthology ready at Wiesbaden fests - could have sold quite a few of them, people kept asking, but all we had where prospectuses.

Now I will go over your letters in review and see if I can answer all points:

1. I got your package with Zazeela and figured out which way is up.
2. Also got photos of Jack Smith, poem of Ray Johnson, copy of generation magazine. But since as you say Peters got hold of it - there is no way of reprinting it, since Peters ~~is~~ owns Cage completely, especially here. We can't even perform Cage without paying some fee to GEMA etc.etc. All very commercial, and I have no desire to deal with those bastards at Peters. Will include Smith photos (not all) and R.J.
3. Also got some things from Joe Byrd.
4. Never got the tapes of your concerts -(?????)
5. I will print your 1961 compositions on my own money (I mean on my own no-money), in other words I will start work, get paper etd. and ask printer to start work. So I hope we will have it done in time for copy-wright this year. OK? Anyway it will definitely be printed, whether you send money or not, though \$ 50 or \$ 100 would be of considerable help.
6. How the hell can Charlotte Merman ~~pay~~ cello being in New York, thats no good. We need somebody right here. I will write her anyway. You never gave address of Jack Glick
7. Can't pay your way over, since we lost money on festival. But if you can come on your own, you could perform in Copenhagen and Paris fests (although we assume they will loose money too). So money situation is not good at all and save all I can for getting the fluxus out and some of the books, like your book, Brecht box of cards. (plus some costs of festivals, which at least do not eat up as much \$ as New York concerts).
8. Dick and Alison Hagginses are here helping out with concerts and are staying in my place, so the place is tight, but if you came over, some people in Frankfurt, I forget their name, some fake "collectors" of new art etc. and friends of Cage, oh yes they must me those Sturtevant, well they said they would put you up, but when I made diplomatic inquiries about them backing your trip, they did not respond, the bastards. Anyway they are total fakes and fashion followers. But if you come over, they would put you up, so they say. I don't know whether they would put up with 3 of you, but you can always try. So you must nonly find a way of getting over atlantic. Did you try Icelandic Airways ? it costs \$200 to Luxembourg and \$5 from Luxembourg to Frankfurt. So \$205 by fast airplane to Frankfurt is not too expensive.

9. Your last letter. Got your string trio. WHY THE HELL DID YOU PRINT IT ! You wasted \$ 100 completely !!!!! I could have copied for nothing and have done it on a transparency directly, so I could print quick ozolith copies for immediate performances. Now the damn thing is printed on both sides of a paper and I cant even transparentize it for quick ozolith prints (for festival performance copies - for the players I mean) very thoughtless of you. But I will definitely put it in fluxus, so don't worry in that direction. So my definite answer as you asked is: FLUXUS IS COMING OUT, AND IS BEING PRINTED RIGHT NOW, SOME 30% ALREADY PRINTED.  
YOUR BOOK WILL BE PRINTED ALTHOUGH SOME \$\$ WOULD HELP IT OUT, I WILL SEND YOU THE PROOFS IN A WEEK  
FLUXUS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED IN AMERICAN, EUROPE, POLAND, YUGOSLAVIA, USSR JAPAN, etc.
10. If you want to go to Turkey with Dick, you better come to my place (first stopping at Frankfurt by those Sturtivants) say around mid November. Then you can go to Copenhagen and Paris festivals, perform there, which would be very nice, and go with Dick & Alison to Turkey after Paris fests (which is what they are planning to do). But they want to fly by plane in extravagant manner. The cheapest way to India however is not by way of Turkey but by a french small boat "Laos" which goes to Japan for \$ 400 from France, so probably stop at India would be some \$200 or so. Another way would be by way of USSR giving concerts along the way, so it may not cost anything at all. I would give you names to contact and they might be able to arrange things. But you must get visas for East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland and USSR. Visas take time to obtain, so you better start obtaining them right now.
11. As I said fluxus is being printed, but if you send things within another 3 weeks (NOT ANY LONGER) I can still include. So please send your pieces to Henry as you said you may do. (I mean send them to me not to Henry)
12. THANKS FOR ALL THE NICE MATERIALS YOU ARE SENDING, THEY ARE ALL VERY GOOD THINGS FOR FLUXUS, NAD AND YOUR COLLABORATION IS VERY IMPORTANT AND VALUABLE ETC. AND ALL THAT, BUT DON'T GET ANNOYED FOR MY LATE REPLY AND DELAYS IN FLUXUS, as I said, I was knocked off for a while with my sicknesses, which is still very inconvenient with this spine now playing all sorts of tricks with me, but FLUXUS WILL COME OUT FOR SURE, SO WILL YOUR BOOK, DON'T GET DISCOURAGED. Send those tapes of your concerts, we can play them in those fests.
13. Keep sending stuff even after fluxus is printed. They can all be included in the next fluxus, the 1964 fluxus american issue. OK ? Ask Simone Morris, why the Hell she is not sending anything. Things are still missing from her. Bob Morris sent a nice thing. Ann Halprin sent a load of stuff, some of which I will have to include, since there are no other dance compositions included. Halprins things are very elaborate and baroque.

We just about performed every piece-composition of yours in the festivals. The fifth interval we hummed for almost an hour, which was very nice, almost nicer than the 7 gambas. (sounded like some Buddhist ritual, especially after Paik announced it in Japanese and wrote ~~xxx~~ your name on blackboard in Chinese characters). You probably would have disliked such anonymity, but you were in a Japanese program and we thought it fitted very well in it. We recorded it on tape as all other concerts. (except the pure action concerts, like Dick's danger musiks and your silent pieces).

14. Why are you going to India ?????? what are you up to ????? Why not stick around in Europe and then join us on a tour of East Europe and USSR late in 1963 ??? then settle down in Siberia. Climate there would be very healthy, nice cool winters. Give concerts allong the Siberian railroad stops. Think it over.

I will write this news letter, which will give more details on festival. Meanwhile let me know your exact plans on travels etc. and keep sending stuff and goodies. My hand is all swollen and refuses to push keys so I quit.

*George*

PS I got all your 3 letters, the one to 633APO also

# NEO-DADA IN MUSIC, THEATER, POETRY, ART

GEORGE MACIUNAS

The following text is a draft of an essay/manifesto by George Maciunas that exists in at least three versions. The English text below was transcribed from microfilm in the Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, and first published in Clive Phillpot and Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus: Selections from the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, pp. 25–27. A version in German was read by Arthus C. Caspari at the concert Kleines Sommerfest: Après John Cage, Wuppertal, West Germany, June 9, 1962; an audio tape of the reading is in the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit. A second German-language version was published in Jürgen Becker and Wolf Vostell, *Happenings: Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme: Eine Dokumentation*, pp. 192–195.

Neo dada, its equivalent, or what appears to be neo dada manifests itself in very wide fields of creativity. It ranges from “time” arts to “space” arts; or more specifically from literary arts (time-art), through graphic-literature (time-space-art) to graphics (space-arts) through graphic-music (space-time-arts) to graphless or scoreless music (time-art), through theatrical music (space-time-art) to environments (space-arts). There exist no borderlines between one and the other extreme. Many works belong to several categories and also many artists create separate works in each category. Almost each category and each artist however, is bound with the concept of Concretism ranging in intensity from pseudo concretism, surface concretism, structural concretism, method concretism (indeterminacy systems), to the extreme of concretism which is beyond the limits of art, and therefore sometimes referred to as anti-art, or art-nihilism. The new activities of the artists therefore could be charted by reference to two coordinates: the horizontal coordinate defining transition from “time” arts to “space” arts and back to “time” and “space” etc., and the vertical coordinate defining transition from extremely artificial art, illusionistic art, then abstract art, (not within the subject of this essay), to mild concretism, which becomes more and more concrete, or rather nonartificial till it becomes non-art, anti-art, nature, reality.

Concretists in contrast to illusionists prefer unity of form and content, rather than their separation. They prefer the world of concrete reality rather than the artificial abstraction of illusionism. Thus in plastic arts for instance, a concretist perceives and expresses a rotten tomato without changing its reality or form. In the end, the form and expression remain [the] same as the content and perception — the reality of rotten tomato, rather than an illusionistic image or symbol of it. In music a concretist perceives and expresses the material sound with all its inherent polychromy and pitchlessness and “incidentalness,” rather than the immaterial abstracted and artificial sound of pure pitch or rather controlled tones denuded of its pitch obliterating overtones. A material or concrete sound is considered one that has close affinity to the sound producing material — thus a sound whose overtone pattern and the resultant polychromy clearly indicates the nature of material or concrete reality producing it. Thus a note sounded on a piano keyboard or a bel-canto voice is largely immaterial, abstract

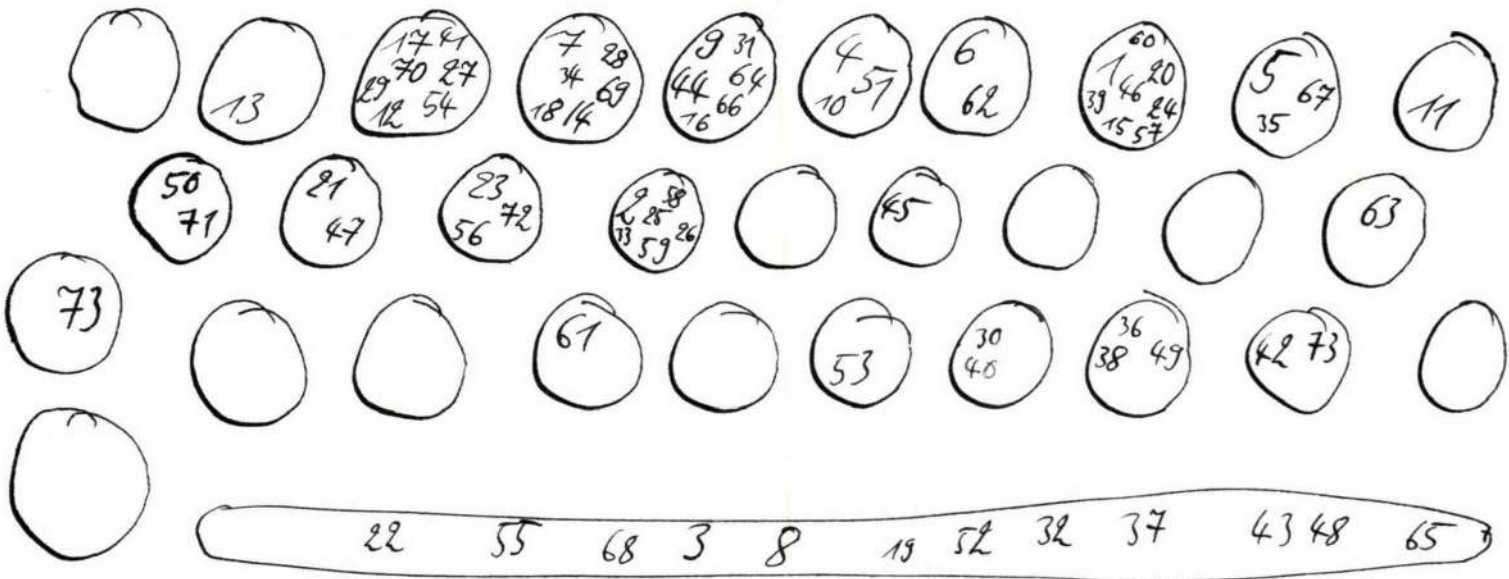
and artificial since the sound does not clearly indicate its true source or material reality — common action of string, wood, metal, felt, voice, lips, tongue, mouth etc. A sound, for instance, produced by striking the same piano itself with a hammer or kicking its underside is more material and concrete since it indicates in a much clearer manner the hardness of hammer, hollowness of piano sound box and resonance of string. A human speech or eating sounds are likewise more concrete for the same reason of source recognisability. These concrete sounds are commonly, although inaccurately, referred to as noises. They maybe pitchless to a large extent, but their pitchlessness makes them polychromic, since the intensity of acoustic color depends directly on pitch obliterating inharmonic overtones.

Further departure from artificial world of abstraction is affected by the concept of indeterminacy and improvisation. Since artificiality implies human pre-determination, contrivance, a truer concretist rejects pre-determination of final form in order to perceive the reality of nature, the course of which, like that of man himself is largely indeterminate and unpredictable. Thus an indeterminate composition approaches greater concretism by allowing nature [to] complete its form in its own course. This requires the composition to provide a kind of framework, an “automatic machine” within which or by which, nature (either in the form of an independent performer or indeterminate-chance compositional methods) can complete the art-form, effectively and independently of the artist-composer. Thus the primary contribution of a truly concrete artist consists in creating a *concept* or a *method* by which form can be created independently of him, rather than the form or structure. Like a mathematical solution such a composition contains a beauty in the method alone.

The furthest step towards concretism is of course a kind of art-nihilism. This concept opposes and rejects art itself, since the very meaning of it implies artificiality whether in creation of form or method. To approach closer affinity with concrete reality and its closer understanding, the Art-nihilist or anti-artists (they usually deny those definitions) either creates “anti-art” or exercises nothingness. The “anti-art” forms are directed primarily against art as a profession, against the artificial separation of a performer from audience, or creator and spectator, or life and art; it is against the artificial forms or patterns or methods of art itself; it is against the purposefulness, formfulness and meaningfulness of art; Anti-art is life, is nature, is true reality — it is one and all. Rainfall is anti-art, a babble of a crowd is anti-art, a sneeze is anti-art, a flight of a butterfly, or movements of microbes are anti-art. They are as beautiful and as worth to be aware of as art itself. If man could experience the world, the concrete world surrounding him, (from mathematical ideas to physical matter) in the same way he experiences art, there would be no need for art, artists and similar “nonproductive” elements.



typewriter poem      tomas schmit    march 63



numbers indicate sequence.

1. Play downward glissandos only.
2. Draw an oblique line from left to right and play where the oblique line intersects with the circle.
3. See the point of intersection, and where the horizontal figure is larger than the vertical figure, play the number of the balance, and where the vertical figure is larger than the horizontal figure, play the total number of both figures.

White circle means long glissando.

Black circle means medium long glissando.

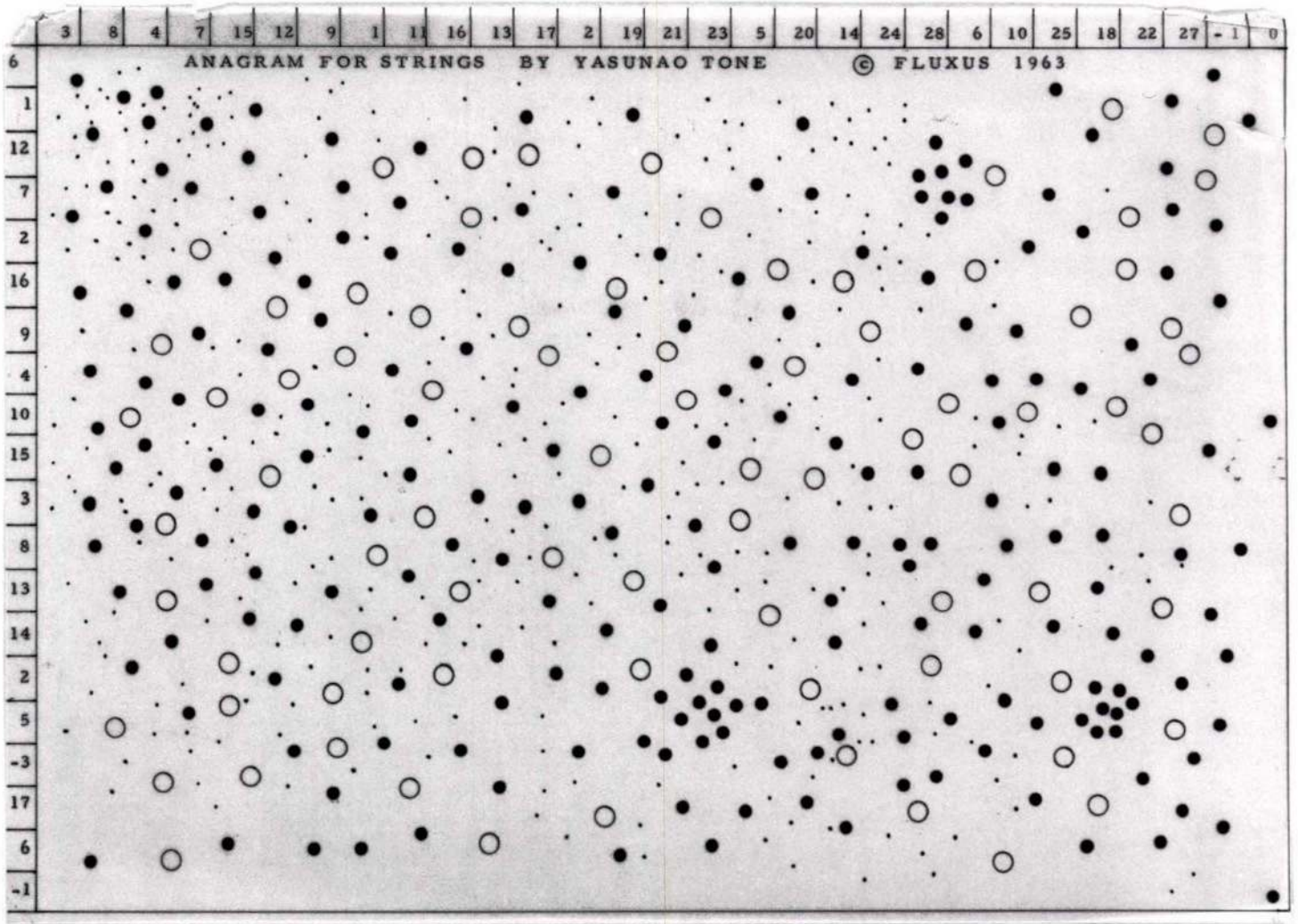
Dot means short glissando.

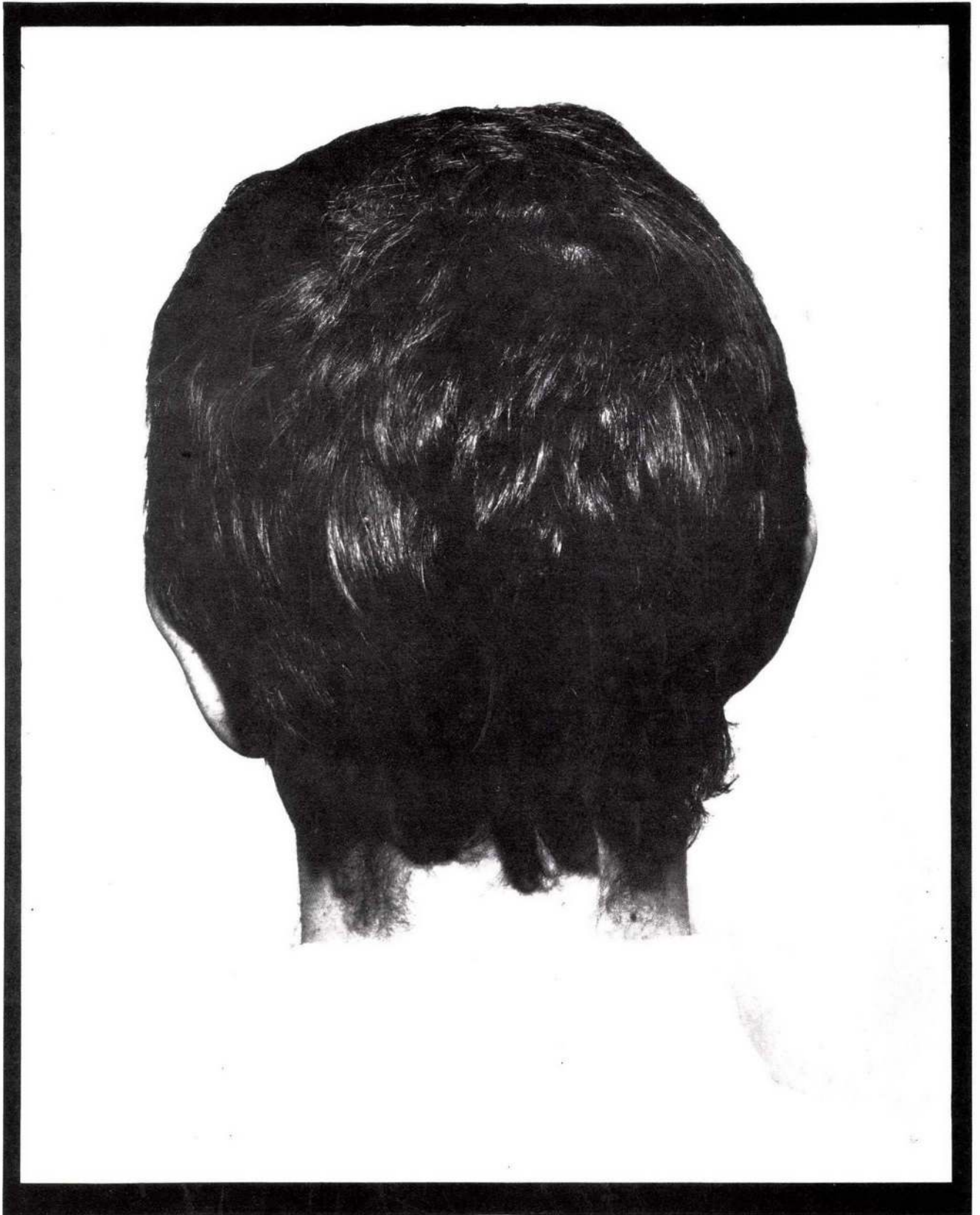
4. The piece may be played with violin, viola, cello or bass, or any combination of these instruments.

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1963







**BEN EXPOSE PARTOUT**

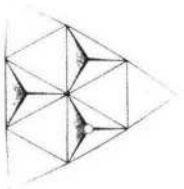
**BEN, IS SO MUCH OF A TRUE  
FAILURE AND A SHABBY  
FOOL, CRYING TO BE GREAT,  
THAT HE HAS HAD ENOUGH  
OF IT ALL.**

**CRISIS AND NERVOUS  
DEPRESSION**

**THE \_\_\_\_\_ OF \_\_\_\_\_**

**AT \_\_\_\_\_ OCLOCK**

**TOTAL ART GALERY  
32, RUE TONDUTTI DE  
L'ESCARENE - NICE  
FRANCE**



EVENTS: scores and other occurrences (EDITORIAL.)

George Brecht, 12/28/63

"A stitch in time saves nine."

Reluctantly pruning cultural interests." (Hebert)

"All's well that ends well."

"All in a day's work."

"Watch for it at your neighborhood theater."

event: the event-score event: finding an incident of it (truly incidental)

Three Aqueous Events

- Ice
- water
- steam

Composers, performers, and auditors of music permit sound-experiences by arranging situations having sound as an aspect. But the theater is well lit. I caught the seat cracks, and I can feel the vibration. Since there is no distraction, why choose sound as the common aspect?

Three Lamp Events

- on
- off
- lamp
- off on

"It is sure to be dark, if you shut your eyes." (J. Ray)

Objects and events as units of thought. (Alan Watts)

Sounds barely heard. Sights barely distinguished. Borderline art. (See which way it goes.) (It should be possible to miss it completely.)

no fun, no treasure

Three Chair Events

- Sitting on a white chair. Occurrence.
- On or near a black chair. Occurrence.
- Yellow chair. Occurrence.

It is like water and ice without water no ice, without human beings, no Buddhas." (Hakumi: Song of Meditation)

Musical sculpture

Sounds lasting and leaving from different places and forming

a sounding sculpture which lasts." (Duchamp)

Event: EXIT

"The Pause that Refreshes"

gatake-can, EXIT-sion, shrub, bed-spread shoe-scrape, motor-sound, something dropping tea, satchel, a chair, a door-knob

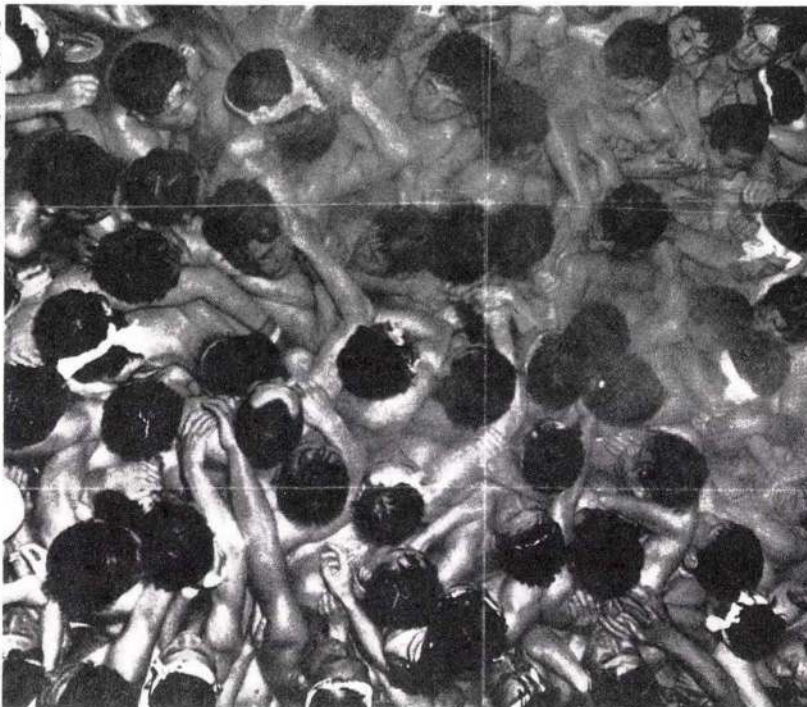
The absolute has no connection with good and evil.

It is like the light of a lamp. Thanks to it you may read the Holy Scriptures. But you may equally commit forger by the same light."

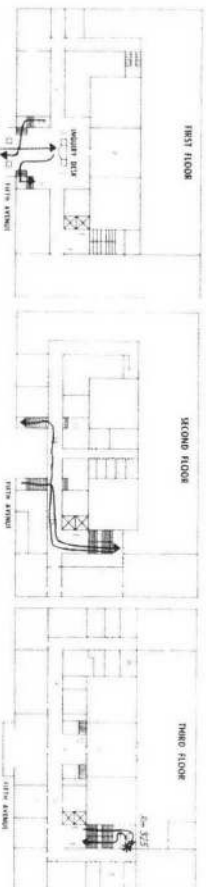
No incorrect forms present themselves.

What is yellow, weighs one-thousand pounds, and flies?"

"I dunno, what? I've five-hundred-pound canaries."



Robert Watts: Swimming pool event no. 3



man who runs

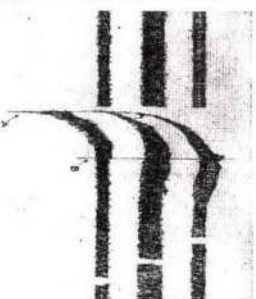
New York Public Library Event.

Ben Patterson, 1963

MIRROR

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

Chieko Shiomi, 1963



WEATHER

Drizzle tonight off the east coast of my head (R. Krauss)

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TATU IZUMI EVENTS JULY 7 & 8 11:15-12:15

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CHRONOMY 1

Put out a hand from a window for long

T. Kasagi



Georgy Ligeti - Poeme Symphonique 1962

for 100 metronomes - score

"Poeme Symphonique" (for 100 metronomes) requires, as its primary condition for performance, 100 metronomes. Their acquisition may be accomplished in several ways. For example, they may be borrowed from one or more music instrument firms. (When the pertinent special shops are not to be found on the spot, it is recommended that inquiry be made to this end at so-called music dealers). For the purpose of attaining the desired result (i.e., the permission to borrow), some comments may be useful with regard to the value of the advertising to the firm, gained through its readiness to loan. In this connection one may offer to print the name(s) of the firm(s) on the concert poster, in the programme book or on a placard to be placed on the stage, or one or another combination of the listed possibilities. If necessary, the announcement may take the form of a verbal communication, either by itself or as a means of following up the printed announcement.

Another way to bring about the acquisition of the metronomes is to insert advertisements in the newspapers. In this case all private persons will be invited to be so generous as to make temporarily available the metronomes in their possession for use in the performance. In cities which have their own music schools\*, this request can be made directly to the teaching staff or the student body, with the assistance of the customary media of communication. In the two last-named instances it is recommended that the owners of the required instruments be asked to put some means of identification on them, to prevent their being misplaced or mixed up. This can be achieved, for example, through the obligatory affixing of the owner's name by means of a suitable strip of paper\*\*. Should it happen that a Maecenas makes it possible to borrow the metronomes for the purpose of performance, his name - after consultation with the person in question - shall be made public.\*\*\* The composition is provided with a passe-partout dedication: on each occasion the work is dedicated to the person (or persons) who have helped to bring about the performance through the contribution of the instruments, by any means whatsoever, whether it be the executive council of a city, one or more music schools\*\*\*\*, one or more businesses, one or more private persons. If a patron can be found who will remove once for all the financial hindrances to the performance of the work by buying the necessary metronomes and guaranteeing the transportation costs which arise from time to time, "Poeme Symphonique" will be dedicated from then on to him alone.

In particular, the following instructions for performance are to be carried out:

- 1) It is preferred that pyramid-shaped metronomes be employed.
- 2) The work is performed by 10 players under the leadership of a conductor. Each player operates 10 metronomes.
- 3) The metronomes must be brought onto the stage with completely run-down clockwork (that is, in an unwound condition). It is expedient that they be placed on suitable resonators. Loudspeakers, distributed throughout the concert hall, can serve to raise the dynamic level. It is recommended that each of the 10 groups of 10 metronomes be arranged about a microphone which is connected to an appropriated loudspeaker \*\*\*\*\*. The distance between the metronome-group and the microphone, as well as the regulation of the dynamic level of the allocated loudspeaker\*\*\*\*\*, are to be differently set in order to achieve the proper effects of closeness and distance.
- 4) At a sign from the conductor the players wind up the metronomes. Following this, the speeds of the pendulums are set: within each group they must be different for each instrument.

"Poeme Symphonique" may be performed in two versions:

- 1) All metronomes are wound equally tightly. In this version the chosen metronome numbers (oscillation speeds) wholly determine the time it will take for the several metronomes to run down: those which swing faster will run down faster, the others more slowly.
- 2) The several metronomes of a group are wound unequally: the first of the 10 metronomes the tightest, the second a little less, the tenth the least tightly. Care must be taken, however, that the winding and the regulation of the speeds of the several metronomes are carried out completely independently of each other. Thus the metronome in each group which has been most tightly wound must not be the fastest or the slowest in its oscillation.

The conductor arranges with the players beforehand the method and the degree of winding. The performance may be considered ideal, if



afterlude to the EXPOSITION of EXPERIMENTAL TELEVISION 1963, March, Galerie Parnass, nam june PAIK. GEORGE BRECHT: SOMETHING ABOUT FLUXUS, MAY 1964

(1)  
My experimental TV is  
not always interesting  
but  
not always uninteresting  
like nature, which is beautiful,  
not because it changes beautifully,  
but simply because it changes.

The core of the beauty of nature is, that, the limitless QUANTITY of nature disarmed the category of QUALITY, which is used unconsciously mixed and confused with double meanings.

1) character  
2) value.  
In my experimental TV, the words "QUALITY" means only the CHARACTER, but not the VALUE.

A is different from B,  
but not that  
A is better than B.

Sometimes I need red apple  
Sometimes I need red lips.

(2))  
2 My experimental TV is the first ART (?), in which the "perfect crime" is possible..... I had put just a diode into opposite direction, and got a "waving" negative Television. If my epigons do the same trick, the result will be completely the same (unlike Webern and Webern-epigons)..... that is.....  
My TV is NOT the expression of my personality, but merely  
a "PHYSICAL MUSIC"  
like my "FLUXUS championcontest",  
in which the longest-pissing-time-recorderholder is honored with his national hymn, (the first champion; F. Trowbridge, U.S.A. 59.7 seconds)  
My TV is more (?) than the art,  
or  
less (?) than the art.  
I can compose something, which lies higher (?) than my personality,  
or  
lower (?) than my personality.  
\*\*\*\*\* 3 \*\*\*\*\*

Therefore (?), perhaps therefore, the working process and the final result has little to do, and therefore,..... by no previous work was I so happy working as in these TV experiments.  
In usual compositions, we have first the approximate vision of the completed work, (the pre-imagined ideal, or "IDEA" in the sense of Plato). Then, the working process means the torturing endeavour to approach to this ideal "IDEA". But in the experimental TV, the thing is completely revised. Usually I don't, or cannot have any pre-imagined VISION before working. First I seek the "WAY", of which I cannot foresee where it leads to. The "WAY",....., that means, to study the circuit, to try various "FEED BACKS", to cut some places and feed the different waves there, to change the phase of waves etc..... whose technical details, I will publish in the next essay..... Anyway, what I need is approximately the same kind of "IDEA" which American Ad Agency used to use..... just a way or a key to something NEW. This "modern" (?) usage of "IDEA" has not much to do with "TRUTH", "ETERNITY", "CONSUMMATION", "ideal IDEA", which Plato-Hegel ascribed to this celebrated classical terminology. (IDEA)<sup>2</sup>  
f.i.  
"KUNST IST DIE ERSCHENUNG DER IDEE"  
"Art is the appearance of the idea"  
(Hegel---Schiller.)  
This difference should be underlined, because the "Fetichism of Idea" seems to be the main critical criteria in the contemporary art, like "Nobility and Simplicity" in the greek art (Winkelman), or famous five pairs of categories of Woefflin in Renaissance and Baroque art.

INDETERMINISM and VARIABILITY is the very UNDERDEVELOPED parameter in the optical art, although this has been the central problem in music for the last 10 years, (just as parameter SEX is very underdeveloped in music, as opposed to literature and optical art.)  
a) I utilized intensely the live-transmission of normal program, which is the most variable

optical and semantical event, in Nineteen-sixties. The beauty of distorted Kennedy is different from the beauty of football hero, or not always pretty but always stupid female announcer. Second dimension of variability.  
13 sets suffered 13 sorts of variation in their VIDEO-HORIZONTAL-VERTICAL units. I am proud to be able to say that all 13 sets actually changed their inner circuits. No Two sets had the same kind of technical operation. Not one is the simple blur, which occurs, when you turn the vertical and horizontal control-button at home. I enjoyed very much the study of electronics, which I began in 1961, and some life-danger, I met while working with 15 Kilo-Volts. I had the luck to meet nice collaborators: HIDEO UCHIDA (president of UCHIDA Radio Research Institute), a general avante-garde electronician, who discovered the principle of Transistor 2 years earlier than the Americans, and SHUYA ABE, allmighty poly-technician, who knows that the science is more a beauty than the logic. UCHIDA is now trying to prove the telepathy and prophesy electromagnetically.  
c) As the third dimension of variability, the waves from various generators, tape-recorders and radios are fed to various points to give different rhythms to each other. This rather old-typed beauty, which is not essentially combined with High Frequency Technique, was easier to understand to the normal audience, maybe because it had some humanistic aspects.  
d) There are as many sorts of TV circuits, as French cheese-sorts. F.i. some old models of 1952 do certain kind of variation, which new models with automatic frequency control cannot do.

e) Many mystics are interested to spring out from ONE-ROW-TIME, ONE-WAY-TIME, in order to GRASP the Eternity.  
aa) To stop at the consummated or sterile Zero-point is a classical method to grasp the Eternity.  
bb) To perceive SIMULTANEOUSLY the parallel flows of many independent movements is another classical way for it.  
But poor Joyce was compelled to write the paralytically advancing stories in one book with one-way direction, because of the otology of the book. The simultaneous perception of the parallel flows of 13 independent TV movements can perhaps realize this old dream of mystics, although the problem is left unresolved, whether this is possible with our normal physiognomy (we have only one heart, one breath, one focus of eye,) without some mystical Training, and TF WELL TRAINED,....., he needs neither 13 TVs, nor TV, nor electronics, nor music, nor art..... the happiest suicide of art..... the most difficult anti-art, that ever existed..... I don't know, who could have achieved this platonic and sterile consummation of art,  
because if he REALLY did,  
I should not know his name.  
I must not know his name.  
--- 5 ---

This reflection reminds me of two usages of the word "ECSTASY", which originally means in Greek  
ekstiseinal (ek=ex- out of - histinal to set, stand).  
xx) Normal use of this word is the frenzy of poetic inspiration, or mental transport or rapture from the contemplation of divine things. (A.C.D.)  
In other words,.....  
\*\* completely filled time\*\* the presence of eternal present  
\*\*\* a kind of abnormal situation of the consciousness  
\*\*\* unconscious- or superconsciousness \*\*\*  
\*\*\* extreme concentration  
\*\*\* some mystics forget themselves  
\*\*\* I unify with myself \*\*\* The world stops for 3 minutes !!! the eternal 3 minutes !!! (Dostoyevsky, before having the spasm of (Epilepsy) etc. etc....  
\*\*\* There is dimension of "HIGH" OR "DEEP", which Germans are very fond of .....  
zz) Above uses are somehow related with the abnormal state of consciousness, but J.P. SARTRE applied this word (EXTASIS) in analysing our consciousness in NORMAL STATE. (S. L'Etire et Le Neant)  
According to Sartre, our consciousness (cogito) is always "etre pour soi" (Sein fuer sich), a kind of being, which cannot unify with itself. We are condemned to think and that means we are condemned to ask.  
That means in his word

I AM ALWAYS, WHAT I AM NOT and I AM ALWAYS NOT, WHAT I AM.  
This incessant EX-TASIS (to go out of oneself) is the "NORMAL" character in the normal situation of our consciousness. The word "Ecstasy" (ex-tasis) is used here, almost as an antonym to the first case (xx). In xx our consciousness is UNIFIED with itself. It has synthesized the dualism of our consciousness. But in zz), this dualism, or the dialectic evolution of our esprit is kept precious as the proof of our freedom,....  
)) 6 ((  
The aa) (to stop at the consummated or sterile zero-point to grasp the eternity ....) and the xx), (the ecstasy, in the sense of "mental transport or rapture from the contemplation of divine things") is the same thing. But the bb) (the perception of parallel flows of many independent movements simultaneously) and the zz) (the ecstasy in the sense of Sartre, .. that is, the perpetual proceeding of our consciousness in the normal state, ..) seems to be completely different. But there are important common things between the two (bb) and zz)). Both bb) and zz) don't know the terminal station, conclusion, stopped absolute moment, consummation, ascension. In other words, they are relative, relative, suspending, plain and common, movable, variable, hanging in mid-air,..  
NOT VERY SATISFIED,  
BUT NOT VERY UNSATISFIED.....  
like my experimental TV, which is  
NOT ALWAYS INTERESTING,  
BUT NOT ALWAYS UNINTERESTING.....  
--- 7 ---

Now let me talk about Zen, although I avoid it usually, not to become the salesman of "OUR" culture like Daisetsu Suzuki, because the cultural patriotism is more harmful than the political patriotism, because the former is the disguised one, and especially the self-propaganda of Zen (the doctrine of the self-abandonment) must be the stupid suicide of Zen.  
Anyway, Zen consists of two negations.  
the first negation:  
The absolute IS the relative.  
the second negation:  
The relative IS the absolute.  
The first negation is a simple fact, which every mortal meets every day; everything passes away, mother, lover, hero, youth, fame,..... etc.  
The second negation is the KEY-point of Zen.  
That means,.....  
The NOW is utopia, what it may be.  
The NOW in 10 minutes is also utopia, what it may be.  
The NOW in 20 hours is also utopia, what it may be.  
The NOW in 30 months is also utopia, what it may be.  
The NOW in 40 million years is also utopia, what it may be.  
Therefore  
We should learn,  
how to be satisfied with 75%  
how to be satisfied with 50%  
how to be satisfied with 38%  
how to be satisfied with 9%  
how to be satisfied with 0%  
how to be satisfied with -100%.....  
Zen is anti-avant-garde, anti-frontier spirit, anti-Kennedy, Zen is responsible of asian poverty.  
How can I justify ZEN, without justifying asian poverty ?? It is another problem, to which I will refer again in the next essay.  
Anyway, if you see my TV, please, see it more than 30 minutes.  
"the perpetual evolution is the perpetual Unsatisfaction.  
it is the only merit of Hegelian dialectic."  
(R. AKUTAGAWA)  
"the perpetual Unsatisfaction is the perpetual evolution.  
it is the main merit of my experimental TV"  
(N.J.P.)  
The frustration remains as the frustration.  
There is NO catharsis.  
(8)

Don't expect from my TV: Shock, Expressionism, Romantism, Climax, Surprise, etc..... for which my previous compositions had the honour to be praised. In Galerie Parnass, one bull's head made more sensation than 13 TV sets. Maybe one needs 10 years to be able to perceive delicate difference of 13 different "distortions" (?), as it was so in perceiving the delicate difference of many kinds of "noises" (?) in the field of electronic music.  
(please, refer to introduction of J.P. Wilhelm and my own to the Exposition of 1963 March in Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal. (reprints available, also published in Decollage no.4)

Now that Fluxus activities are occurring in New York it's possible for statesiders to get some understanding and, relatively, some misunderstanding of the nature of Fluxus. (A report on last year's Fluxus activities in Europe, Dick Higgins' "Postface", is to be available this summer.) From my point of view the individual understandings of Fluxus have come from placing hands in Ayo's Tactile Boxes, from making a poem with Diter Rot's Poem Machine published in the Fluxus newspaper, from watching Ben Vautier string Alison Knowles-on-the-blue-stool to objects in the room and to the audience in Kosugi's Anima I ...

The misunderstandings have seemed to come from comparing Fluxus with movements or groups whose individuals have had some principle in common, or an agreed-upon program. In Fluxus there has never been any attempt to agree on aims or methods; individuals with something unnameable in common have simply naturally coalesced to publish and perform their work. Perhaps this common something is a feeling that the bounds of art are much wider than they have conventionally seemed, or that art and certain long-established bounds are longer very useful. At any rate, individuals in Europe, the U.S., and Japan have discovered each other's work and found it nourishing (as something) and have grown objects and events which are original, and often unclassifiable, in a strange new way:

Alison Knowles' BEAN CAN: Early Red Valentines, Early Mohawks, Long Yellow Six Weeks, English Canterbury's ... Bean's Insulated Boot Foot Wader (Suspenders extra) ... Ich bean ein Star, ein Kino - Star... The U.S. bean cup would make enough bean soup to run Niagara Falls for three hours ...  
Bob Watts' BOX OF ROCKS marked with their weight in kilograms. Tomas Schmit's ZYKLUS; the performer, surrounded by a ring of bottles, pours water from one bottle into the next, until all the water has evaporated or been spilled.  
Ben Patterson's TWO MOVEMENTS FROM SYMPHONY NO.1 : The audience stands in line. One person at a time sits at a stool across the table from Ben, who whispers "Do you trust me ?" Ben puts yesses on one side of the room, noes on the other. The lights go out. Waiting; possibly tensions. Then, the smell of coffee, ground-coffee-rain, in the hair, dusting over the floor. Medaglia d'oro.  
Ben Vautier's Bottle of Dirty Water, the Street Composition LIE DOWN ON YOUR BACK, Total Art Sculpture PICK UP ANYTHING AT YOUR FEET, Total Art Poetry JUST SAY ANYTHING ...  
Daniel Spoerri's OPTIQUE MODERNE: collection of unknown spectacles, with Dufrene's useless notes.  
Dick Higgins' lectures, like "The day begins. After a time the day ends. The day begins. After a time the day ends. The day begins..." (repeated the number of times that a day appears in a common span of time)  
Emmett Williams' PIECE FOR LA MONTE YOUNG - "Is La Monte Young in the Audience ?"  
Brooklyn Joe Jones' chair, switchboards on the arms. Lower the white translucent hat over your head, and flip the switches. Lights here and there, and sounds from peripheral radios on, off, news, static, twist music, commercials ...  
George Brecht's BEAD PUZZLE: "Your birth day."  
George Brecht's BEAD PUZZLE: "Your birthday."  
La Monte Young, COMPOSITION 1960, No.2, "Build a fire in front of the audience..."  
Ayo's EXIT EVENTS: the audience leaves the performance room through a narrow hall, over a large mirror on the floor, or over a bed of upward-pointed nails, with foot-sized gaps in the bed, or through rows of taut, knee-high strings.  
Nam June Paik's ZEN FOR FILM. (See it, then go to your neighborhood theater and see it again.)  
Henry Flynt's professional anti-culture and down-withs (paying culture a sort of inverse compliment), making Alison Knowles' bean-sprouts seem even lovelier.

Whether you think that concert halls, theaters, and art galleries are the natural places to present music, performances, and objects, or find these places mummifying, preferring streets, homes, and railway stations, or do not find it useful to distinguish between these two aspects of the world theater, there is someone associated with Fluxus who agrees with you. Artists, anti-artists, non-artists, anarchists, the politically committed and the apolitical, poets of non-poetry, non-dancers dancing, doers, undoers, and non-doers, Fluxus encompasses opposites. Consider opposing it, supporting it, ignoring it, changing your mind.

EXCERPTS FROM A DISCUSSION BETWEEN GEORGE BRECHT AND ALLAN KAPROW ENTITLED: "HAPPENINGS AND EVENTS" BROADCAST BY WBAI SOMETIMES DURING MAY.

Kaprow: "Happening was a title of a piece I put on in New York at Rubin Galilay and it was taken up by the press and some artists so that I wish to disclaim any responsibility for the word after that. Now as we know, it is around the world and very few people have much in common who use it or know even what it means. Infact it comes to mean in the general public sense any kind of rather casual and usually innocuous event."

Brecht: "Event has simply the meaning it has in the dictionary. ... "I don't take any credit for having written a score like telephone events" "Act of imagination or perception is in itself an arrangement, so there is no avoiding anyone making arrangements".

Kaprow: "The group, with few exceptions, that associates itself with Fluxus is irresponsible - It is my impression that many people just simply goof-off and pretend in a kind of very very nasty way, socially speaking, and certainly socially with respect to other artists, that they have certain superiority in their seemingly indifferent little activities such as sneeze tomorrow or a finger is as good as a hole in a wall, or any of these little directives which if acted out are somehow to me important rather than unimportant so far as its effect is to say to me and others - "You guys are doing important things, but look, we are even more important doing unimportant things ""

Brecht: "...the occurrence that would be of most interest to me would be the little occurrences on the street...."

More excerpts to follow in next issue of V TRE

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CONDUCTED BY KUNIHARU AKIYAMA

# FLUXUS<sup>S</sup> SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PRESENTS



# JUNE 27<sup>th</sup> SAT

8:30  
8 PM

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### PROGRAM

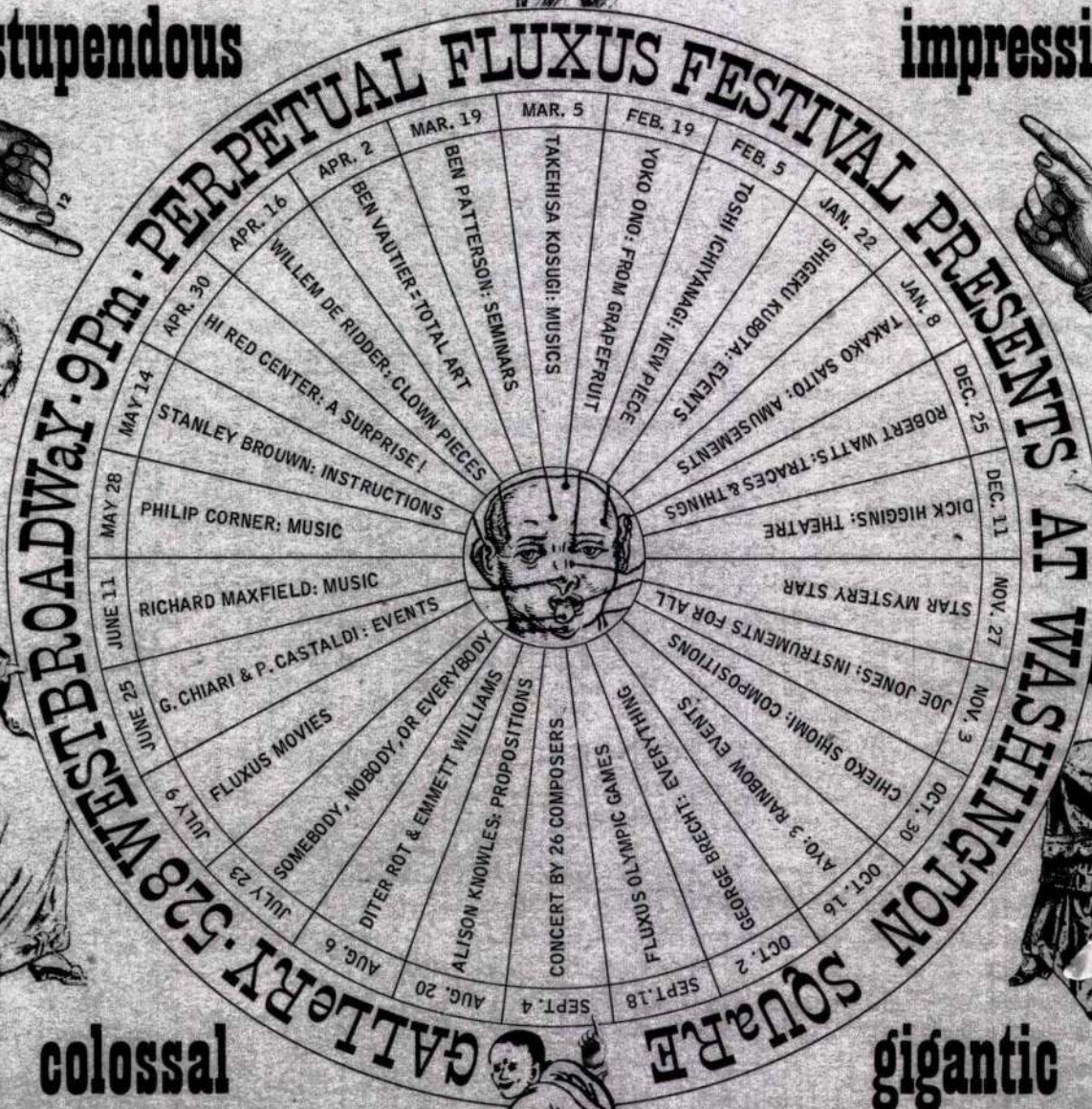
GEORGE BRECHT: 3 LAMP EVENTS. EMMETT WILLIAMS: COUNTING SONGS. LA MONTE YOUNG: COMPOSITION NUMBER 13, 1960. JAMES TENNEY: CHAMBER MUSIC-PRELUDE. GEORGE BRECHT: PIANO PIECE 1962 AND DIRECTION (SIMULTANEOUS PERFORMANCE) ALISON KNOWLES: CHILD ART PIECE. GYORGY LIGETI: TROIS BAGATELLES. VYTAUTAS LANDSBERGIS: YELLOW PIECE. MA-CHU: PIANO PIECE NO. 12 FOR N.J.P. CONGO: QUARTET DICK HIGGINS: CONSTELLATION NO. 4 FOR ORCHESTRA. TAKEHISA KOSUGI: ORGANIC MUSIC. ROBERT WATTS: SOLO FOR FRENCH HORN. DICK HIGGINS: MUSIC FOR STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. JAMES TENNEY: CHAMBER MUSIC-INTERLUDE. AYO: RAINBOW FOR WIND ORCHESTRA. GEORGE BRECHT: CONCERT FOR ORCHESTRA AND SYMPHONY NO. 2. TOSHI ICHIYANAGI 新作. JOE JONES: MECHANICAL ORCHESTRA. ROBERT WATTS: EVENT 13. OLIVETTI ADDING MACHINE: IN MEMORIAM TO ADRIANO OLIVETTI. GEORGE BRECHT: 12 SOLOS FOR STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. JOE JONES: PIECE FOR WIND ORCHESTRA. NAM JUNE PAIK: ONE FOR VIOLIN SOLO. CHIEKO SHIOMI: FALLING EVENT. JAMES TENNEY: CHAMBER MUSIC-POSTLUDE. PHILIP CORNER: 4TH. FINALE. G. BRECHT: WORD EVENT.

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impressive



colossal

gigantic

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**SHOW ON EARTH!  
 COME ALL!**





# PICKET STOCKHAUSEN CONCERT!

"Jazz [Black music] is primitive... barbaric... beat and a few simple chords... garbage... [or words to that effect]" Stockhausen, Lecture, Harvard University, 1958

### RADICAL INTELLECTUALS:

Of all the world's cultures, aristocratic European Art has developed the most elaborate doctrine of its supremacy to all plebeian and non-European, non-white cultures. It has developed the most elaborate body of "Laws of Music" ever known: Common-Practice Harmony, 12-Tone, and all the rest, not to mention Concert etiquette. And its contempt for musics which break those Laws is limitless. Alfred Einstein, the most famous European Musicologist, said of "jazz" that it is "the most abominable treason", "decadent", and so forth. Aristocratic European Art has had a monstrous success in forcing veneration of itself on all the world, especially in the imperialist period. Everywhere that Bach, Beethoven, Bruckner and Stockhausen are huckstered as "Music of the Masters", "Fine Music", "Music Which Will Ennoble You to Listen to It", while aristocratic European supremacy has triumphed. Its greatest success is in North America, whose rulers take the Art of West Europe's rulers as their own. There is a Brussels European Music Competition to which musicians come from all over the world; why is there no Competition, to which European Musicians come, of Arab Music? (Or Indian, or Classical Chinese; or Yoruba, or Bembe, or Tibetan percussion, or Inca, or hillbilly music?)

### STOCKHAUSEN AND HIS KIND

Stockhausen is a characteristic European-North American ruling-class Artist. His magazine, The Series, has hardly condescended to mention plebeian or non-European music at all; but when it has, as on the first page of the fourth number, it leaves no category for it except "light music" that can be summed up by adding a question-mark after 'music'. Stockhausen's doings are supported by the West German Government, as well as the rich Americans J. Brimberg, J. Blinken and A. Everett. If there were a genuine equality of national cultures in the world today, if there were no discrimination against non-European cultures, Stockhausen couldn't possibly enjoy the status he does now. But Stockhausen's real importance, which separates him from the rich U.S. cretins Leonard Bernstein and Benny Goodman, is that he is a fountainhead of "ideas" to shore up the doctrine of white plutocratic European Art's supremacy, enunciated in his theoretical organ The Series and elsewhere.

### BUT THERE IS ANOTHER KIND OF INTELLECTUAL

There are other intellectuals who are restless with the domination of white plutocratic European Art. Maybe they happen to like Bo Diddley or the Everly Brothers. At any rate, they are restless with the Art maintained by the imperialist governments. To them we say: THE DOMINATION OF WHITE PLUTOCRATIC EUROPEAN ART HOLDS YOU TOO IN BONDAGE! You cannot be intellectually honest if you believe the doctrines of plutocratic European Art's supremacy, those "Laws of Art". They are arbitrary myths, maintained ultimately by the repressive violence that keeps oppressed peoples from power. Then, the domination of patrician Art—which is aristocrat-plutocrat in origin, as Opera House etiquette alone shows—condemns you to be surrounded by the stifling cultural mentality of social-climbing snobs. It binds you to the most parochial variety of the small merchant mentality, as promoted by Reader's Digest— "Music That Ennobles You to Listen to It". Even worse, though, the domination of imperialist white European plutocrat Art condemns you to live among white masses who have a sick, helpless fear of being contaminated by the "primitivism" of the colored peoples' cultures. Yes, and this sick cultural racism, not "primitive" musics, is the real barbarism. What these whites fear is actually a kind of vitality the cultures of these oppressed peoples have, which is undreamed of by their white masters. You lose this vitality. Thus, nobody who acquiesces to the domination of patrician European Art can be revolutionary culturally—no matter what else he may be.

### THE FIRST TASK

The first cultural task of radical intellectuals, especially whites, today, is:

- (1) not to produce more Art (there is too much already);
- (2) not to concede in private that non-European culture might have an "ethnic" validity;

# THE FIRST CULTURAL TASK is PUBLICLY TO EXPOSE AND **FIGHT** THE DOMINATION OF WHITE, EUROPEAN-U.S. RULING-CLASS ART!

Whatever path of development the non-European, non-white peoples choose for their cultures, we will fight to break out of the stifling bondage of white, plutocratic European Art's domination.

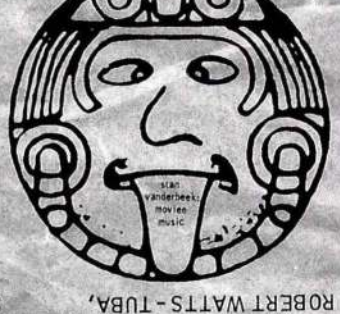
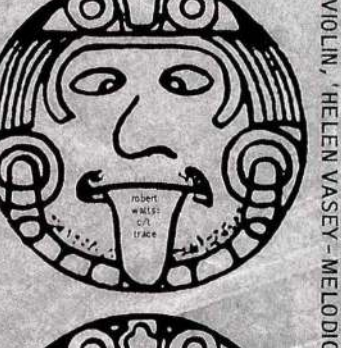
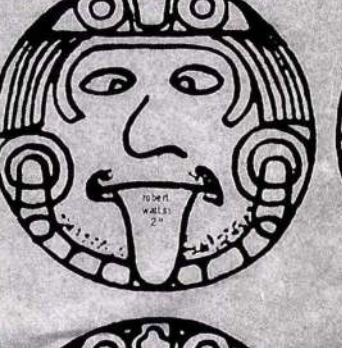
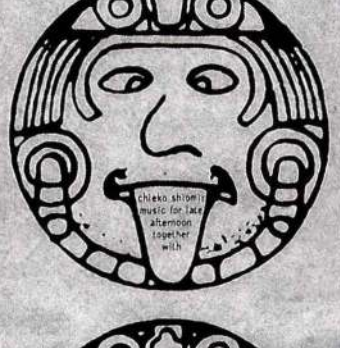
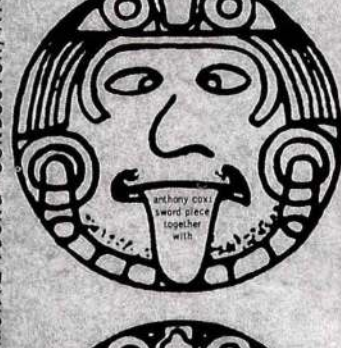
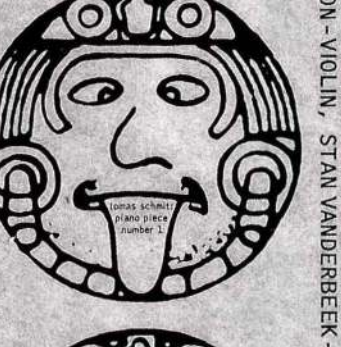
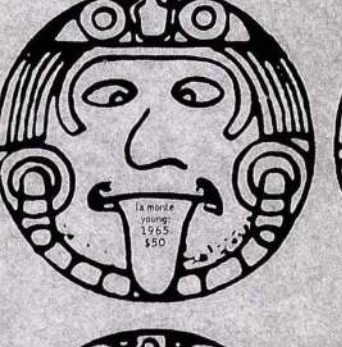
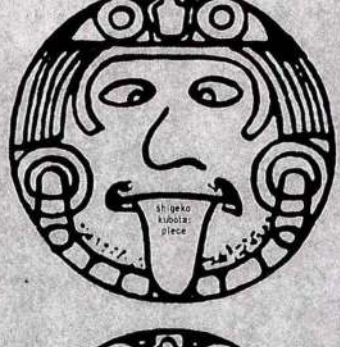
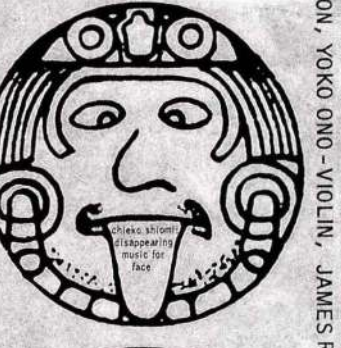
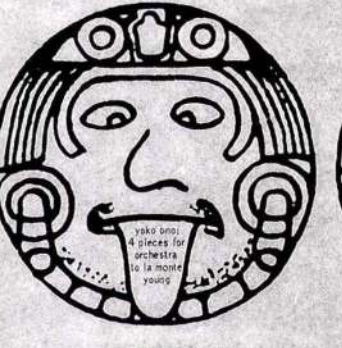
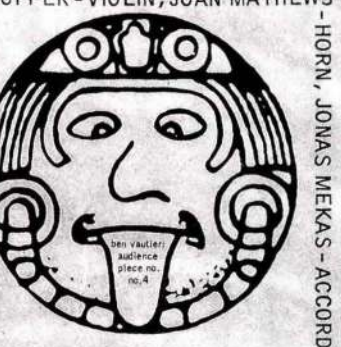
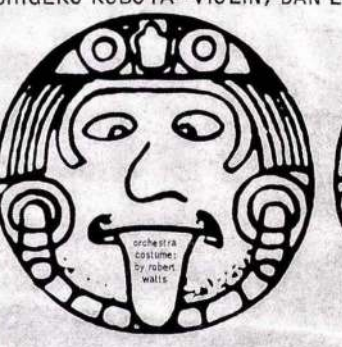
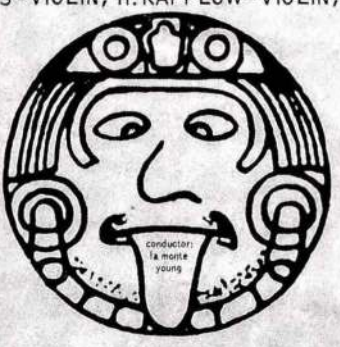
STOCKHAUSEN-PATRICIAN "THEORIST" OF WHITE SUPREMACY: GO TO HELL!

Action Against Cultural Imperialism  
359 Canal Street, New York, N.Y. 10013.


(April 29, 1964: First AACI Demonstration)



ORCHESTRA MEMBERS: LA MONTE YOUNG - CONDUCTOR, STEPHEN BARRY - MELODICA, LYNN BUNN - FRENCH HORN, JOHN CAVANAUGH - GUITAR, ANTHONY COX - VIOLIN, HENRY GREENFIBER - TRUMPET, JOE JONES - VIOLIN, H. KAPLOW - VIOLIN, SHIGEKO KUBOTA - VIOLIN, DAN LAUFFER - VIOLIN, JOAN MATHEWS - HORN, JONAS MEKAS - ACCORDION, YOKO ONO - VIOLIN, JAMES RIDDLE - TRUMPET, LINDA SAMPSON - VIOLIN, STAN VANDERBEEK - VIOLIN, HELEN VASEY - MELODICA, STEVEN VASEY - HORN, CHRISTOPHER WILLMARTH - RECORDER, JOHN WORDEN - TRUMPET, ROBERT WATTS - TUBA, SPECIAL GUEST - SAMURAI SWORD



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## Statement on Intermedia

Art is one of the ways that people communicate. It is difficult for me to imagine a serious person attacking any means of communication per se. Our real enemies are the ones who send us to die in pointless wars or to live lives which are reduced to drudgery, not the people who use other means of communication from those which we find most appropriate to the present situation. When these are attacked, a diversion has been established which only serves the interests of our real enemies.

However, due to the spread of mass literacy, to television and the transistor radio, our sensitivities have changed. The very complexity of this impact gives us a taste for simplicity, for an art which is based on the underlying images that an artist has always used to make his point. As with the cubists, we are seeking for a new way of looking at things, but more totally, since we are more impatient and more anxious to go to the basic images. This explains the impact of Happenings, event pieces, mixed media films. We do not ask any more to speak magnificently of taking arms against a sea of troubles, we want to see it done. The art which most directly does this is the one which allows this immediacy, with a minimum of distractions.

Goodness only knows how the spread of psychedelic means, tastes, and insights will speed up this process. My own conjecture is that it will not change anything, only intensify a trend which is already there.

For the last ten years or so, artists have changed their media to suit this situation, to the point where the media have broken down in their traditional forms, and have become merely puristic points of reference. The idea has arisen, as if by spontaneous combustion throughout the entire world, that these points are arbitrary and only useful as critical tools, in saying that such-and-such a work is basically musical, but also poetry. This is the intermedial approach, to emphasize the dialectic between the media. A composer is a dead man unless he composes for all the media and for his world.

Does it not stand to reason, therefore, that having discovered the intermedia (which was, perhaps, only possible through approaching them by formal, even abstract means), the central problem is now not only the new formal one of learning to use them, but the new and more social one of what to use them for? Having discovered tools with an immediate impact, for what are we going to use them? If we assume, unlike McLuhan and others who have shed some light on the problem up until now, that there are dangerous forces at work in our world, isn't it appropriate to ally ourselves against these, and to use what we really care about and love or hate as the new subject matter in our work? Could it be that the central problem of the next ten years or so, for all artists in all possible forms, is going to be less the still further discovery of new media and intermedia, but of the new discovery of ways to use what we care about both appropriately and explicitly? The old adage was never so true as now, that saying a thing is so don't make it so. Simply talking about Viet Nam or the crisis in our Labor movements is no guarantee against sterility. We must find the ways to say what has to be said in the light of our new means of communicating. For this we will need new rostrums, organizations, criteria, sources of information. There is a great deal for us to do, perhaps more than ever. But we must now take the first steps.

Dick Higgins  
New York.  
August 3, 1966



**U.S.A. SURPASSES ALL THE GENOCIDE RECORDS!**

**KUBLAI KHAN MASSACRES 10% IN NEAR EAST**

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**JOSEPH STALIN MASSACRES 5% OF RUSSIANS**

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**20TH CENTURY NYC**



## SPATIAL POEM NO.5

open event

Open something which is closed.

Please describe to me how you did it and what happened  
by your performance.

Your reports will be recorded on the world map.

- \* Performance period            July 15, Aug. 5, 1972
- \* Reports should preferably be written in English and  
within about three hundreds words
- \* Please add to your report the date and time of your  
performance

mieko shiomi  
sakaguchi 1-24-38  
sakurai, minoo  
osaka, japan

**SPATIAL POEM NO. 5** open event – 1  
people opened . . . . .

**Michael Gibbs**

1. both eyes closed
  2. signal from brain/  
stimulation of muscular  
response/
  3. both eyes open
  4. vision/image of reality
- Exeter 11:43 am Aug. 4, 1972

**Françoise Janicot**

Un livre est a-priori fermé! Son contenu, a priori caché dans ses pages! J'ouvre mon livre "HIDE AND SEEK": pour lever un voile, y redécouvrir ce qui s'y trouve, par nature, enfermé, donc caché.  
Eh bien, ce geste, exécuté au premier degré, bête, par la force des choses, sur un contenu volontairement caché, composé de mes dessins "cachés", de mes tableaux "cachés", de mes photos "cachées". J'ouvre donc ce qui reste fermé. Dévoile ce qui reste caché. Mais ais-je, en définitive, ouvert, dévoilé quoique ce soit? N'ais-je pas plutôt fermé en ouvrant, caché en dévoilant? Hide and Seek est-il en définitive, après ce geste, ouvert ou fermé? En l'ouvrant, est-ce que, en le révélant, je ne le ferme pas plus?  
Paris

**Eric Andersen**

The 15 of July, 1972  
I discovered that I could  
have no possible knowl-  
edge of my contribution  
to Spatial Poem No. 5.  
Copenhagen

**Robert Filiou**

As I finished reading the instructions of Spatial Poem No. 5, I handed them to my son Bruce sitting at the table next to me. I opened my mouth which had been closed until then, and said, "Here, read this. She is a very nice Japanese girl." Bruce read the instructions and, in his own way, opened his mind to the poem.  
Düsseldorf 10:47 am Aug. 15, 1972

**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 Fis. When the sound died down completely, I went to my study to continue on some unfinished work.  
Vilnius 1 pm July 23, 1972

**S. Nicod**

a bird sings  
the clock strikes twelve  
two men talking in Italian  
noise made by a stool while displaced  
somebody getting downstairs quickly  
continuous, muted sound, non identifiable  
a cart starts  
noises made by forks, knives and plates  
people eating in silence  
a man whistles  
something one shakes up out of a window  
chariot which is dragged  
the gate of a store grates while pulled down  
a hammer strikes another piece of metal  
another bird sings . . . than others  
it strikes a quarter past twelve  
oh  
laughters  
a brush falls  
the cry of a child  
a bike goes on quickly  
a door grinds  
someone coughing  
a door slams  
Lausanne



**Françoise Sullivan**

I opened my eyes at eight o'clock this morning. I opened my mouth and ate a plum. I opened my feet and danced. I opened a book and read that humanity is a state difficult to attain. I opened a rose but its petals fell. I opened my arms and entered a city. I opened a window but poetry had gone. I opened a cupboard but poetry was dead. I opened a letter and it contained an apocalypse. I opened my eyes but I closed them and cried. I opened a box and thought of times when art existed. I opened a mind to occasion and there was a feast. I opened my legs and that was nice. I opened an ear to growing sounds. I opened space to revolution. I opened the scroll that spelled words of rigor coherence liberty. I opened my hand and waved. I opened my shirt and uncovered my breast.  
Montreal Aug. 4, 1972

**Peter Weiss**

I opened a letter that was addressed to the Dancers' Workshop Company. I opened it with a sharp edge and read the instructions of Spatial Poem No. 5.  
San Francisco 12 noon  
July 12, 1972

**Ray Johnson**

I opened my ice. My ice had little white light bulbs in the back.  
New York July 11, 1972

**Aleatory Novelties**

Every day at 3:30 pm the water tight doors of "Bordeaux" deck were tested as we crossed the ocean on the S. S. France. My sons and I were warned at 3:29 on Aug. 2 of the closing of these doors by a loud bell. The doors closed always for precisely 2 minutes at which time the bell rang again announcing their opening. On this day my sons Brian and Eamon and I sat before the closed doors and concentrated on opening them. The doors opened after 1.57 seconds which we regarded as a triumph.  
On the ocean Aug. 2, 1972

**Davi Det Hompson**

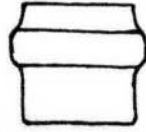
I opened:  
a refrigerator door and removed a partial loaf of sliced wheat bread wrapped in plastic, a 3/4 full jar of mayonnaise with a screw-on lid, a new package of cheddar cheese sealed in cellophane, a 1/2 gallon paper carton of skim milk and a paper cup of red raspberry yogurt sealed with a snap-on lid.  
a refrigerator drawer and removed a head of leaf lettuce wrapped in plastic.  
a tableware box and removed a stainless steel knife and spoon.  
a kitchen cabinet and removed a small white plate and a drinking glass.  
the loaf of bread and removed two slices.  
the mayonnaise jar and removed two knife-fuls of mayonnaise.  
the cheese package and sliced off three pieces.  
the wrapped lettuce and tore off two leaves.  
the milk carton and filled the drinking glass.  
the yogurt cup and placed the lid in the trash.  
Richmond 12:32 - 40 pm July 17, 1972

**Takehisa Kosugi**

As I opened the TV's switch, the sounds and images were gone . . . . .  
Tokyo Aug. 5, 1972

**Hønik Have**

sent M. Shiomi about 300 copies of specially printed postcard with a note to complete the world map with those cards.  
M. Shiomi cut the central circular part of a postcard and opened the two lids just like a window.  
Osaka



yoko ono  
with john  
lennon as

guest artist will

have a show titled

*this is not here* to

commence at everson museum,  
syracuse, new york on oct. 9 '71

yoko ono wishes to invite you  
to participate in a water event  
(one of the events taking place  
in the show) by requesting you  
to produce with her a water  
sculpture, by submitting a water  
container or idea of one which  
would form half of the sculpture.  
yoko will supply the other half  
- water. the sculpture will be  
credited as water sculpture by  
yoko ono and yourself.  
the sculpture will be displayed  
throughout the duration of the show.  
please reply before sept. 20 to:  
yoko ono/apple, 1700 broadway  
n.y., n.y. 10019 tel: (212) 582 5533

**FLUXFEST PRESENTS: 12! BIG NAMES!**  
**APRIL 21, 8PM. AT 80 WOOSTER**



**ONO**  
**S. VETI**  
**SNOW. RINKE. VOSTELL. WARHOL**  
**VALINE. BEUYS. PHILLIP GLASS. KAPRON**  
**MANZONI. NAUMIAN**

# FREE FLUX-TOURS

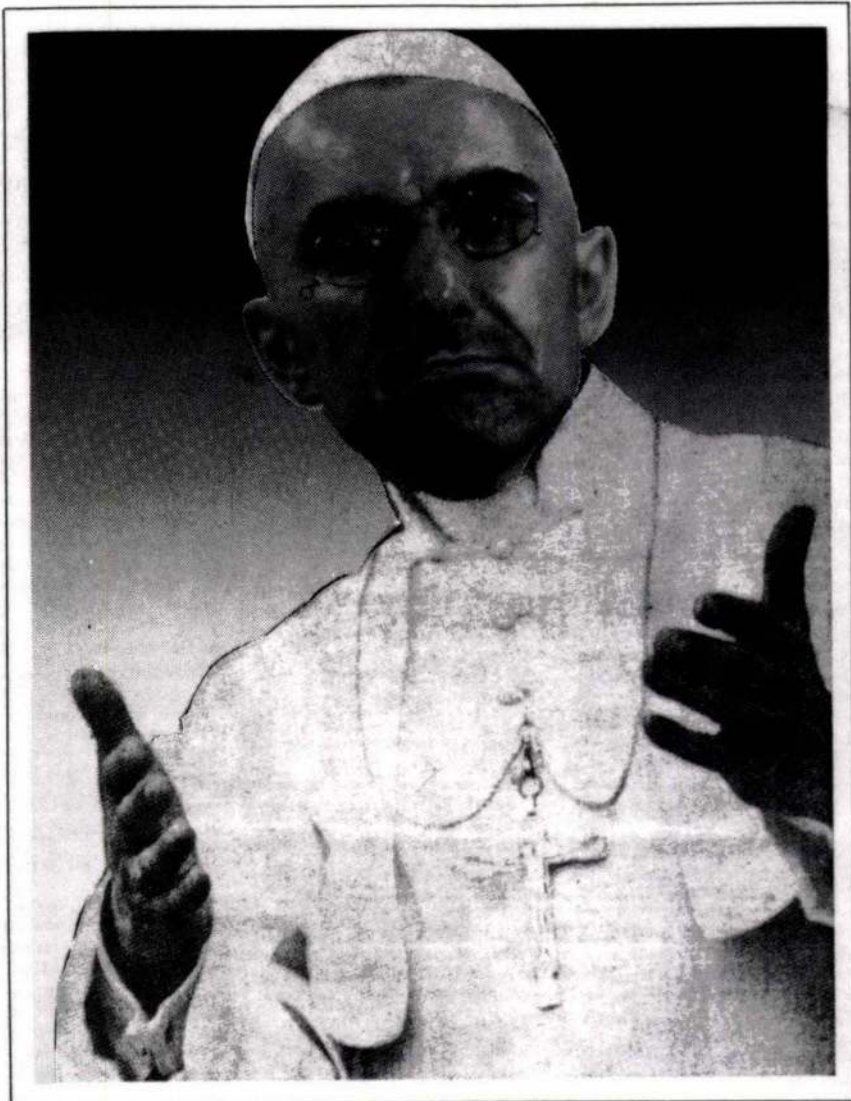
(EXCEPT FOR COST OF TRANSPORTATION & MEALS IF ANY)

- May 1: MAYDAY guided by Bob Watts, call 226-3422 for transportation arrangements.
- May 3: FRANCO-AMERICAN TOUR, by Alison Knowles & Robert Filliou, 2pm at 80 Wooster st.
- May 4: TOUR FOR FOREIGN VISITORS, arranged by George Brecht, start noon at 80 Wooster st.
- May 5: ALLEYS, YARDS & DEAD ENDS, arranged by G. Maciunas, start 3pm at 80 Wooster st.
- May 6: ALEATORIC TOUR, arranged by Jonas Mekas, meet at noon at 80 Wooster st.
- May 7: MUSIC TOUR & LECTURE, by Yoshimasa Wada, start at 2pm at 80 Wooster st.
- May 8: GALLERIES, guided by Larry Miller, start at noon at 80 Wooster st.
- May 9: SUBTERRANEAN TOUR I, guided by Geoff Hendricks, start at noon at 80 Wooster st.
- May 9: SUBTERRANEAN DANGER by Charles Bergengren, start 11 pm at 47 st. & Park av. island.
- May 10 & 11: at 6am go to 17 Mott street and eat Wonton soup (says Nam June Paik).
- May 12: SUBTERRANEAN TOUR III, arranged by George Maciunas, start 2pm at 80 Wooster st.
- May 13: SOUVENIR HUNT, meet at noon at 80 Wooster st.
- May 14: SOHO CURB SITES, guided by Peter Van Ripper, meet at 3:30pm at 80 Wooster st.
- May 15: EXOTIC SITES, guided by Joan Mathews, meet 3pm at Oviedo Restaurant, 202W 14 st.
- May 16: ALL THE WAY AROUND & BACK AGAIN, by Peter Frank, meet at noon 80 Wooster



## Hart attack kills him at summer palace

# MACI UNAS DIES



George Maciunas in one of his many disguises to elude the Attorney General.

Flux Pope George Maciunas died last year after collapsing with a heart attack at his summer palace in New Marlborough. Earlier doctors fought to save the 92 years old spinster after being beaten and gang raped. He was given the last rites and the Flux Council appealed for world-wide prayers for his life.

**'With deep anguish' Sobbing aide breaks news to the world**

"She suffered horribly," said a Scotland Yard man. "The people who did this were animals."

A sobbing spokesman announced the news "with profound anguish and emotion." Crowds wept in the main square outside the palace.

### Bruises

Three youths were involved—Afterwards one of them went to sleep on the battered spinster's bed. The parish church bell tolled a death knell. The papal Flux guards, dressed in their evening uniform of dark blue, closed the heavy gates of the palace.

The Pope was administered a Holy Flux Oil, a rite known as "extreme unction."

The old lady was raped three times. Her jaw and six ribs were

broken. Her body was a mass of bruises—battered with her own aluminum tea kettle. At the time the frail leader of 700 million pranksters was listening to jokes recited at his bedside by his private secretary.

### Tragedy

"This was the most horrific attack on a woman I have ever experienced and one I hope I'll never experience again," added Detective Inspector Robert Hayday, who is leading the investigation.

The Pope's two personal physicians, the Fluxus Secretary of State, George Brecht, and several others were at the Pope's bedside when he died. Yesterday the spinster underwent two emergency operations in Bart's Hospital, London. Only six days ago the Pope visited a cardinal's tomb and told a congregation, "I hope to meet him after death, which cannot be far away."

The attack was on Saturday night. A police spokesman said: "He made full use of his jet age papacy and in his 15 years of office has travelled further and wider than

any of his predecessors." "An apostle on the move," he was the first reigning pontiff to travel by air, the first to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and the first to receive Communist leaders. He survived a knife attack in the Philippines in 1978. Two youths shinned up a drainpipe into the neighboring flat of a 34 year old man who was out playing bingo. They ransacked the man's flat. They disturbed the old lady who came up to investigate. They beat her up and then they all raped her.

### Blood

One of the most difficult moments was in 1971 when he issued his encyclical letter on so called "Avant Garde" Festivals, which upheld the ban on verbal communication. When the neighbor came home, he found this youth asleep on the bed and the woman in a pool of blood on the floor.

Fluxus officials were said to be inspecting the grottos of St. Peter's Basilica, where Popes are buried, and the sewers of Rome. It was during this that he was stricken by

the fatal attack. Last night a youth was helping police inquiries.

Strollers along the waterfront of Buenos Aires are often surprised to see the crews of Japanese merchant ships playing stickball or catch, which the soccer-loving Argentine longshoremen consider "quaint Oriental games."

The Eskimos have been forbidden by Danish authorities to hunt within several square miles of the crash site. The Eskimos have also been told not to boil their meat with melted sea ice, as they have done for centuries in order to obtain salt, but to buy salt at the Danish Government trading post and to use melted glacier ice from the island for water instead.

### 450 SPERRY WORKERS FACE THE AX

A funeral atmosphere gripped the Sperry Gyroscope plant at Lake Success, L.I., today as its 6,350 employees reported for work.

**Artists' Statements and Documents**

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- 183 COVER OF *A V TRE EXTRA* (FLUXUS NEWSPAPER NO. 11, 1979), OFFSET ON PAPER, 15 x 11 1/2 CLOSED. COLLECTION WALKER ART CENTER.



La Monte Young  
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AIR MAIL

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by Karen Moss and Joan Rothfuss

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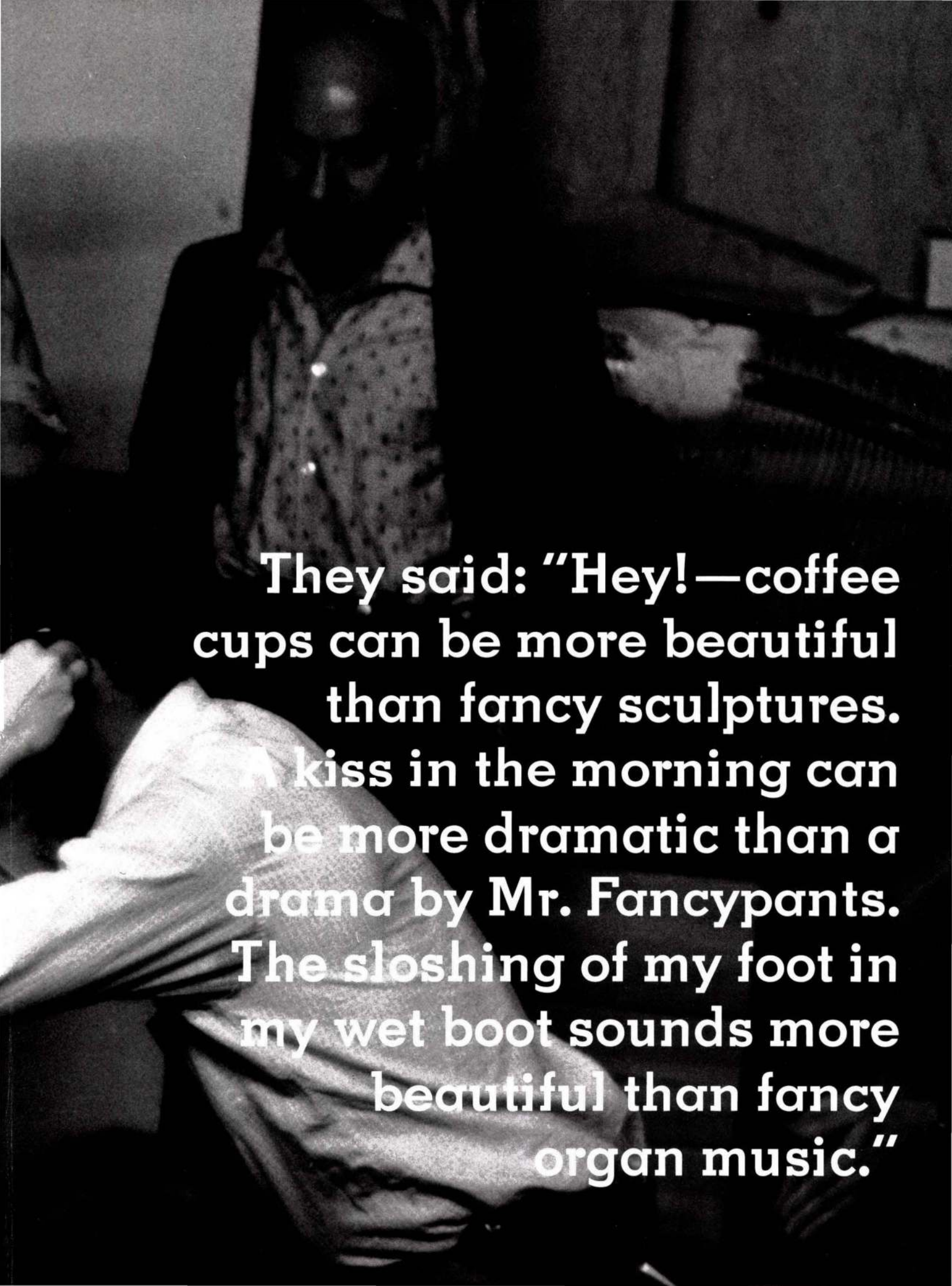
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The Septic Tank Now





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



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



