



MR. FLUXUS

A collective portrait of
GEORGE MACIUNAS
1931 - 1978

\$34.95

GEORGE MACIUNAS was the founding member and leader of the most radical and experimental art movement of the 1960s, Fluxus. Its members rejected the traditional systems of high art, practicing an extraordinary form of anti-art that encompassed everything from photography and pavement art to poetry and drama. *Mr. Fluxus*, the first biography of this key figure in twentieth-century art, reveals the story of an unorthodox, contradictory and elusive genius.

Maciunas was a clown and a gagman but at the same time he was a deadly serious revolutionary. He attempted to rule Fluxus in totalitarian fashion, yet he laughed at himself and provoked others to laughter, poking fun at the incurable illnesses and painful realities that afflicted him throughout his relatively short life. What emerges from this collection of anecdotes and impressions, coaxed from many of his former Fluxus colleagues and from an array of friends and enemies, is an informative portrait of an inspiring crusader whose mission was to change the world, beginning with the world of art.

His serious attempts to defrock the High Priests of Art and their Mercenaries won him few friends among the art establishment during his lifetime. But Maciunas has prevailed, along with Tristan Tzara, André Breton, Marcel Duchamp and John Cage, as one of the acknowledged forces behind the upheavals in contemporary art. *Mr. Fluxus* reveals the man and the artist to the wider public his accomplishments demand.

With 107 illustrations

ON THE JACKET:

Ay-O, portrait of George Maciunas (screenprint 1993)

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MR. FLUXUS



Self-portrait (1962).

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A collective portrait of
GEORGE MACIUNAS
1931 - 1978

Based upon personal reminiscences
gathered by Emmett Williams und Ay-O,
and edited by

Emmett Williams and Ann Noël

Thames and Hudson



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For Michael and Ute Berger
of Harlekin Art,
who kept
MR. FLUXUS
in flux

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INTRODUCTION

MR. FLUXUS is a collective portrait of one of the key figures in the history of art in the second half of the 20th Century. It is a kind of mosaic reflecting the diverse and often contradictory recollections of those who knew him. These elements of biography, told from so many points of view, reveal for the first time the life story of this elusive genius whose many-sided personality was compounded of seemingly incompatible contradictions.

George Maciunas was a clown and gag man *par excellence*, and at the same time a deadly serious revolutionary. Even after he became a public figure, he went to incredible extremes to conceal an unorthodox private life that he shared with no one until almost the very end. A confirmed celibate, he succumbed to his one and only grand passion only a few months before his death. A court jester cast in a tragic role, he laughed at himself, and provoked others to laughter, poking fun at the incurable illnesses and painful realities that afflicted him throughout most of his relatively short life. With death only a few days away, this far-out leader of the most radical and experimental art movement of the Sixties rationalized that it was worth dying just to hear all the lost operas of his soul-mate Monteverdi - "*Nothing of great interest has been composed after him.*"

Even during his earliest years, as the tales told by his mother and sister reveal, little Yurgis (George's given name in Lithuanian) kept his distance. He had no "best friends" during his boyhood in Lithuania or the wartime and postwar years in Germany; fascinated by war games, he always appointed himself commanding general. And in later life, even after he had achieved, through his own untiring efforts, a share of fame and notoriety in the worlds of art in Europe and the United States, he considered himself *primus inter pares*, but suffered no biographers or hagiographers amongst his entourage. If he was indeed a master of Public Relations, it was for the greater glory of the Fluxus collective, never for himself: "*I don't like to use myself or my biography or my face for advertising purposes ... Say simply: 'Biography unavailable.'*"

(It must be admitted too, in fairness, now that he is in his grave and can't strike back, that George, high-born friend of the proletariat, had a despotic way of silencing the opposition - the sacrament of excommunication, followed by public denunciation - which he administered with a free hand when critics and "renegades" within the Fluxus family challenged his authority. There were so many purges, through the years, that most of us were in effect outsiders looking in, a situation that in general provoked more laughter than tears.)

Thus his personal life, and however little there was of a "normal" existence during a lifetime bout with disease and suffering, disappeared into his great invention, the international Fluxus "non-movement", which he attempted to rule in totalitarian fashion. Still, there emerges from this gathering together of anecdotes and impressions, coaxed from so many of his former Fluxus colleagues both living and dead, and from an array of other friends and enemies, an all-too-human portrait, informative, contradictory, hilarious, shocking and tragic in turn, of an inspired and sometimes inspiring crusader whose sacred mission was to change the world, beginning with the world of art.

His serious attempts, tempered with wit and wisdom alongside ridicule and scorn, to defrock the High Priests of Art and their Mercenaries, won him few friends amongst the art establishment during his lifetime. But Mr. Fluxus has prevailed, along with Tristan Tzara, André Breton, Marcel Duchamp and John Cage, as one of the acknowledged forces behind the upheavals in the art of our time, and we hope that this book will help to reveal the man and the artist, hidden behind so many masks of his own devising, to the wider public his accomplishments demand.

Emmett Williams
Berlin, April 1996



Leader of the Lithuanian avant-garde in 1936.

I

THE OLD COUNTRY

I. 1 Unlike the Germans and the English, who use a “corrupted” form of Indo-European grammar, the Lithuanians use an orthodox Indo-European language very close to the classical form of Sanskrit. It is quite remarkable, because both classical Chinese and classical Greek have died out as colloquial forms. In Israel, Hebrew was resuscitated from a dead language artificially, whereas Lithuanians must be a stubborn people to use the 4,000-year-old language of Indian high priests. The 40-year rule of communism doesn’t matter to the long history of Lithuanians, whose state stretched well into the Russian continent in the Middle Ages ...

All together, there are about five million Lithuanians living in their country and scattered through Europe and America and they have a 30-volume national encyclopedia, a feat maybe possible only in a socialist economy, which does not take commercial accountability into consideration. The encyclopedia contains a long article on George Maciunas’ father and it is hoped that the son will also be so honored.



I. 2 My son was a quiet child from birth. He neither screamed nor cried at all, but since the nanny, who was also my daughter’s wet nurse, didn’t want him in the nursery, fearing that the lad would disturb the girl, he slept next to me in the bed. Later, when he had beautifully proved himself and when the household had become accustomed to him, the nanny deigned to accept him in the nursery. But there was something attractive in the child, and I feared that he would be offended and neglected in the nursery. Though he didn’t demand special attention, I was often with him. As the nanny took the little girl out in the pram for fresh air, I carried the little boy in my arms and I sat in a nearby park with the sleeping child.



I. 3 One of George's favorite books was Thomas Mann's *The Confessions of Felix Krull*, which isn't all that surprising when you consider that George himself could be a bit of a con man when it served his purposes. But as a sickly, suffering little boy, from his earliest years taking the cure in sanatoria and rest houses in the Swiss Alps, he would have looked right at home on top of *The Magic Mountain*, alternating between the sick bed and fun-and-games in the bright sunlight of a winter wonderland.

His mother was often there with him, entertaining George (Yurgis), his sister Nijole, and their fellow sufferers by dancing to the accompaniment of a record player she had brought with her. "Not speaking a word of French," his mother recalls, "he was able to show what he wanted, commandingly and seriously inspiring everyone to be especially attentive to him, and this forced them to submit to him willy-nilly."



I. 4 When he came home from Switzerland, we hired a dear young Polish girl who had studied in a convent school in France and who spoke French. Stashka was pleasant and cheerful, and George and his sister quickly made friends and spent the time together amicably. Blocks of different shape and size were ordered for Yurgis and he played with them hours on end building castles. There were no limits to his imagination. Sometimes his constructions were surprisingly beautiful, and since it was sometimes a pity to destroy these castles when we picked up the toys in the evening, we would leave them overnight so we could admire them once again in the morning. I decided then that he should be an architect.



I. 5 The children and I were once vacationing at a pension in the forest. There was another family staying there with an only daughter. The father worked in the Lithuanian Embassy in Paris and his daughter spoke French beautifully. Our children quickly made friends, and when their daughter's birthday came they invited them to the celebration. When everyone had sat down to the table, my Yurgis suddenly tore himself away and ran up to me on the second floor. He quickly grabbed me by the hand and started to pull me below to the dining room where they awaited him. Although I was delighting in my rest, I had to go downstairs to the table, excuse

myself and explain the matter. On the trip downstairs he repeated that there were so many tasty things on the table and that I simply had to share their joy. The little girl's parents were completely taken aback by such behavior in a four-year-old since children at that age are usually egoists thinking only about themselves.



- I. 6 There is another incident that I will always remember. Yurgis was no more than five years old. We lived in our dacha in a pine forest. Our friends who also had two children the same age as ours lived a block away. The children often played together and it came about that one day my Yurgis was barefoot. Lunchtime had come and, since the children still hadn't returned, I went into the forest to lead them home. The warm dry twigs and pine needles painfully pricked the boy's feet and I carried him on my shoulder.

On the way home he told me again and again how when he grew up he would repay me: he would fly to the moon and bring me a lot of gold, and he would hire a servant to dress, feed and groom me. (He had witnessed this with the mother of a friend who was confined to her armchair with arthritis and could move neither her arms nor legs ...)

This feeling of gratitude and the desire to show it moved and touched me to the depths of my soul. It seemed to me then that this boy would be close to me for ages, and that there was a certain unusually delicate connection between us.



- I. 7 When he was five or six, George and his sister Nijole started to study music. "Once, when he was all of six years old," his mother recalls, "he performed on the radio, playing a piece from memory without a mistake. In a children's Christmas program he played four-handed with his sister. The music teacher gave special praise to Yurgis' success."

And what happened to the budding prodigy?

His mother continues: "Two years later he protested, saying that music was for women and not for men, even though his teacher was a talented young musician. Perhaps he taught them incorrectly, playing more himself than demanding that the children play. Seeing his absolute unwillingness to sit down at the piano we had to stop the lessons."

No, that's not the end of this little story. Many years later George reproached his mother for not forcing him to go on studying piano. Her answer was, that she felt that if he studied "without desire, under force, nothing would come of it," especially, she emphasizes, "since Yurgis was stubborn and it was difficult to subdue him."

When I read the mother's account of young George's piano activities to Ann Noël, she rather irreverently remarked: "So, instead of playing them, he ended up destroying them."



- I. 8 George loved to build things. In winter he would build two-story snow houses, then pour water over them so that they became really sturdy, and could hold several children on the second floor. He also built snow fortresses, and he had to be commanding general, even with only one soldier to command.

In Germany his love for building continued. When he was 14 or 15, he built a model of our summer house in Lithuania from memory. It was very detailed, down to the tiles in the fireplace, with all the furniture to scale.



- I. 9 Once in the winter our daughter was invited to a friend's birthday party. The simple people didn't know how to entertain children; they had invited them for the dinner hour, we hadn't fed them at home, and they were treated to sweets, and a certain sweet liqueur. And, according to the custom of these hospitable people, they admonished them to drink it in small glasses. The poor boy came home completely drunk. Our daughter, worried about her brother's unusually cheerful behavior, hurried to bring him home. His head whirled madly; he was pale, and looked altogether ill. After this Yurgis avoided strong drinks especially and similarly didn't like beer. Sometimes he would drink a glass or two of wine.



- I. 10 As an eight-year-old he had to undergo an appendectomy which remained indelibly imprinted forever in his soul. To this day I don't understand why they performed the operation without an anesthetic. It was true that the blind gut was terribly inflamed and the operation was urgent.

The poor boy moaned, and I heard his moans behind the door and sobbed inconsolably. It seemed to me that the operation continued endlessly. Later he told us with shuddering how he felt them cut his body, how they took out the blind gut, about each prick of the needle, and how extraordinarily terrible was the pulling of the thread as they stitched up a live body. It was as if he accused the doctor for such flaying of flesh, and us, his parents, for permitting such a cruel torment.



- I. 11 *The schoolmaster was particularly cruel by day and drunk by night. He was always tipsy from the tavern when he came home. So we found this fast-drying heavy clear glue and filled his keyhole with it so it looked perfectly normal (laughter). It dried very fast. (Laughter.) We hid in the bushes and watched him try and try (laughter) bending down to fit it in the lock (laughter) and try again standing up (laughter) and losing his balance practically falling down (laughter) and he tried and tried but couldn't get it to go in (laughter).*

One night we took his bed apart. To do this we first split the springs with wire cutters (laughter) leaving just the top layer together with the rest hanging out on the floor (laughter). Then with a very sharp knife we cut the mattress leaving just the ticking on the top to hold it together. This takes a long time (laughter). You split it on the bottom down the center. It just holds together because the top surface is intact. Then he sits on it (laughter) and goes right through to the floor (laughter).



- I. 12 The second world war had begun and my son became a genuine commander. He was friendly only with those boys who served him unconditionally. There weren't so many of them ... and they were younger than he was, or weaker in development.



- I. 13 In general, George did not have many friends. As a child he was happy to play by himself, or with children who would agree to be his soldiers. He loved to play with toy soldiers. He had armies of them, intricately set up for battle. He was fascinated by war and

considered himself to be a commanding general. He used to build improvised tanks, and if he couldn't find another boy to be his soldier, he would command me to be one. I had to obey, even though I was older than he was; if I refused, he would hit me.



- I. 14 About the photo of the large villa. George's sister says that the family lived on the first floor. (The original owners had been sent to Siberia by the Russians.) When the Germans came, the Maciunas were allowed to stay on for a while, sharing the villa with a German general who lived upstairs with his mistress.

After a while, the general forced the family to leave because he felt uncomfortable with the children running around while he lived there with his mistress.



- I. 15 In late 1962 or early 1963 George picked me up in Darmstadt in one of his famous used – or overused – cars. I forget exactly where we were headed, to one Fluxus festival or another (there were so many of them in the beginning it's hard to keep track), but I can remember very well that as we approached Frankfurt-Höchst he called my attention to a large industrial complex.

"That's where my father worked during the war," he said, pointing.

"Was he a ... a slave laborer?" I asked, in a sympathetic, understanding tone.

"No, he was an electrical engineer. He had a job with Siemens-Schuckert."

And that was that. Of course there was much more to it than that, but I didn't dare ask. The subject was still taboo. I wish now that I had asked. Had I been bold enough, I might have learned then and there the answer to a question that worries a lot of would-be biographers of George Maciunas. Some hazard the guess that George's father was a collaborator.

Instead of the Big Question, I asked simply: "Did your family live in Frankfurt, too?"

"In Bad Naubeim."

I knew this resort town in the Taunus mountains very well through a collector-friend whose villa housed a formidable collection of German Expressionist paintings that had miraculously

survived the Nazis' purges of "degenerate" art and artists. And I have a picture-postcard, from the war years, showing the Villa Florida, at 55 Hermann-Göring-Straße (renamed Frankfurter-Straße after the war) where the Maciunas family lived when the family arrived in Bad Nauheim in 1944.

Jill Johnston asks, in a recent letter, "Why did his family flee Lithuania? Was his father an enemy of the state or something?" One might ask, in return, an enemy of *which* state? When the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were partitioned by Prussia, Austria and Russia in the 18th Century, most of Lithuania was annexed by Russia. Since then Lithuania has been in the middle of an often bloody tug-of-war between Poland, Russia and Germany. In 1939, the Hitler-Stalin German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact assigned most of an independent Lithuania to the Soviet sphere of influence, and in 1940 it became part of the USSR. The next year it was overrun by the Nazis. In 1944 the Russians marched in again. George was 12 going on 13. What a time to grow up!

As the Russians marched in, the Maciunas family fled with the retreating Germans. "My husband was on the Soviet list," according to George's mother, Leokadija, and well he might have been, this eminent architect, Prof. Alexander M. Maciunas, with a diploma in engineering from the University of Berlin, who had worked in Germany, and with an aristocratic Russian-born wife from Tiflis, the Georgian capital, whose father had been an officer in the army of the czar.

"The Soviet Army was getting closer," she recalls, "and we had to flee since we knew that my husband would be arrested and the family divided. It was better to travel under bombardment, hunger, even going by foot, if only we could stay together and escape this nightmare ... Traveling light, we took only the barest necessities so that we could carry our own bags if necessary ... We stopped a few days in Berlin, already half-destroyed and darkened, then headed south to Frankfurt-Main. My husband continued to work for Siemens-Schuckert in Frankfurt, and we lived in Bad Nauheim with the children."



- I. 16 George – or Yurgis – or Jürgen Matschunas, as his name was Deutschified for the record books – and his sister Nijole were enrolled in the Ernst-Ludwig-Schule (today the Ernst-Ludwig-Gym-

nasium) in Bad Nauheim for the duration of the war. Life was not all sunshine and roses for these immigrants in a demoralized country facing certain defeat. The young scholars, unfortunately, spoke broken German, with funny accents. Their mother recalls a bloody fist fight at school in which Yurgis broke a bully's wrist. She writes of "the vulgarity and impudence of ignorant German children. Not one of them knew that Lithuania bordered Germany. They hated all foreigners."

Whatever her husband's political persuasion, little love was lost between the Germans and this Russian aristocrat.



- I. 17 Yurgis took up drawing in our last years in Germany. His graphic monograms were exceptionally beautiful and scrupulously executed. He loved small drawings. It was interesting to watch how he drew tiny line figures with circles in the place of heads ... Rapidly flipping the pages made the characters seem to come alive and move.



- I. 18 At the Lithuanian Displaced Persons Camp in Hanau, about 30 kilometers from Frankfurt, George had a crush on a girlfriend of mine. For her birthday he worked on a monumental project for a whole year, making a 365-page calendar. Each page had the name of the month and the date. It was done in black-ink drawing, intricately designed in a kind of Persian style.

He loved to play a game of identifying composers. He would put on programs of classical music. The first one to identify the piece would get points. This game lasted throughout our stay in D.P. Camp, and even after we got to the United States.



- I. 19 George's father studied in Berlin after World War I, during the brief golden period when the three Baltic countries enjoyed independence, and became an architect specializing in the construction of electric-power stations. His wife, a blond Russian, was a ballet dancer at the Lithuanian National Opera. (After coming to the United States she was a close friend of the granddaughter of Tolstoy and of Stalin's daughter Svetlana during her exile in America. More

importantly, as his private secretary she helped the revolutionary leader Aleksandr Kerensky, premier of Russia before the October Revolution in 1917, complete his memoirs. Following the early death, in 1978, of her son Yurgis – she called him, affectionately, Jurgulelis – she dictated a memoir of his life in Russian.)



- I. 20 The East European revolution produced a playwright-president, Vaclac Havel, in Czechoslovakia, but few people know that it also produced a Fluxus-president: Vytautas Landsbergis, the president of Lithuania. During the spring of 1990, the image of this bespectacled and stoop-shouldered “music professor” paraded across the TV news every day. He successfully defied the blockade of Soviet power and the “benevolent” advice of the Western press to go slow lest he destroy the superpower summit. When Gorbachev received the Nobel Prize, Landsbergis sent him a congratulatory telegram: “Your Majesty ... ”

This audacious David-and-Goliath situation strongly reminded me of Landsbergis’ friend George Maciunas, founder of the “small” Fluxus movement and the “enormous” SoHo glitz.

Landsbergis and Maciunas were both the sons of well-to-do architects, and were best friends at grade school in Kaunas, in the last peaceful days of prewar Europe. The Soviet-German occupation/war/retreat with the German army/hunger/the displaced person’s camp/his father’s enigmatic death (suicide?)/the vanity of New York/capitalism’s “contradictions” – all these horrendous things made George a heavy asthmatic, a fanatical do-gooder, an egocentric, and a part-time paranoiac.

In the early 1960’s, as a native American Marxist, Maciunas contacted the old friend he had left in Lithuania, who was, alas, a burning anti-Marxist. Recently the correspondence of these two giants from a mini-nation was printed in the Lithuanian music magazine *The Young Music*. When he was dying, in 1978, Maciunas entrusted his part of the correspondence to Jonas Mekas, and President Landsbergis kept his half for the past quarter century during the long winters of resistance.



- I. 21 KK: One of George Maciunas’ “official” Fluxus mailing lists has this address on it. “Vytautas Landsbergis, R. Armijos 74-a-30, Vilnius

LTSR, USSR”, marked with a “2”, denoting your relationship as a “Fluxus ally and associate.” I would like to know how the future president of independent Lithuania got involved with the initiator of the Fluxus movement.

VL: It started in our childhood. We attended the same gymnasium. Marija Peckauskaite, in Kaunas. We lived close to one another, myself on Donelaitis Street, George just around the corner on Gediminas. Later he moved to Zakliakalnis, on Vaizgantas Street, where I visited him quite often. During the war years we lost touch with one another.

Not until 1962, when Almus Salcius came to Lithuania hoping to make a film about (the composer and painter Mikalojus Konstantinas) Ciurlionis did I find out his whereabouts. Hearing from Salcius about the activities of a George Maciunas in America, I wondered if he was the same Yurgis Maciunas I used to know. I wrote him a letter asking if he would help promote the work of Ciurlionis beyond the borders of Lithuania.

He responded with a very long, informal and friendly letter. It seemed that he sincerely enjoyed reestablishing our old friendship. He was not interested in the work of Ciurlionis. Instead, he explained to me thoroughly what he himself was doing, and about the artistic problems that interested him. He also mailed me a bunch of used records, presumably from his own collection, that happened to be of great value to me, as a teacher of the history of music. They were mostly records that were not available to us at the time. Scarlatti sonatas, Monteverdi Psalms, Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, and jazz-blues, John Coltrane, free jazz et cetera ...

Then other boxes started coming. Fluxus promotion stuff. Well, as you might guess, the contemporary political situation wasn't ready for that. All incoming mail from abroad was of great interest to the authorities. I even wondered if this was some kind of provocation, to find out if I would dare to promote Fluxus ideas. Nevertheless, the ideas of Fluxus were cautiously analyzed during my lecture periods, as radical Western avant-garde art, having many meanings.

KK: But your contact with Fluxus didn't limit itself only to theoretical explanations. It is well known that you did a performance of Fluxus work at the Teachers' Institute.

VL: There are probably a few photographs of that event, although it was not especially documented.

KK: What was it? A musical event, an action? What genre, what format?

VL: *Kapustnikas*, as we used to say. A potpourri of entertainment. On New Year's Eve students at the Teachers' Institute allowed themselves a little fun. A joyful program for the end of the school year. Without much serious thinking behind it, we created something like a *durnyste*, a stupendous humoresque. I still remember one of the things. An enormous poster, from floor to ceiling: THINGS AND PEOPLE MOVE LIKE THE PISTONS OF AN ENGINE, signed by the artist, a student. It was suggestive of a quotation or slogan from Lenin or Stalin. Some students took it as a parody and smiled. Others pretended they didn't understand. The directors of the Teachers' Institute, however, didn't find it at all funny. (Landsbergis laughs.) They sat there at their desks, fearful that someone might not consider it politically correct ... by the way, I saw something similar in South Korea at the Kwanjiu Biennale. A Yugoslav artist presented enormous photo-portraits of people, just plain people. It had produced an interesting effect when he did it in Belgrade: seeing these huge portraits on the street, some of the passers-by thought there had been an uprising, a putsch.

KK: Did you ever meet Maciunas again?

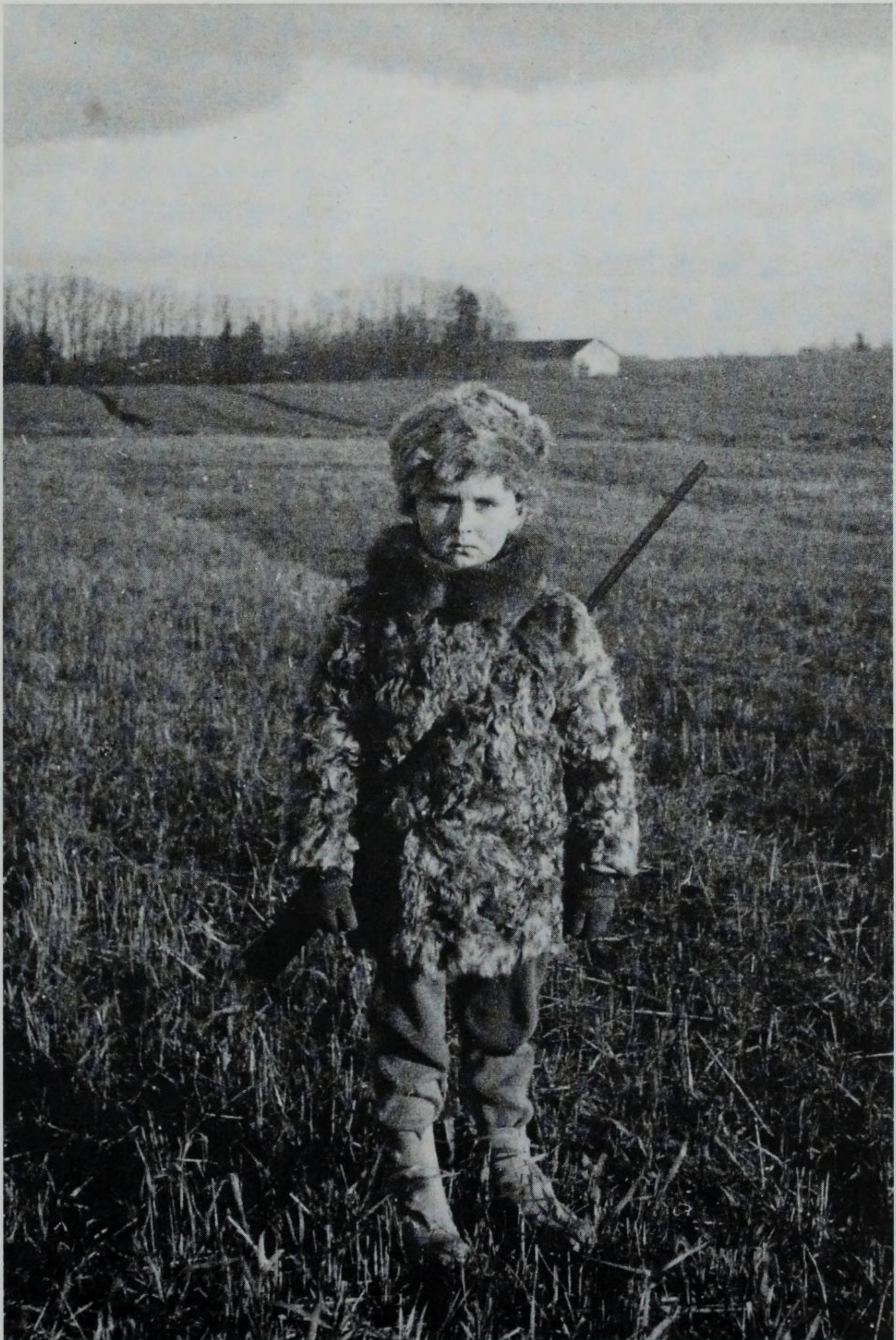
VL: I never saw him again. He continued mailing Fluxus materials to me, and announcements of festivals, so, half-seriously, and half for fun, I sent him suggestions for "happenings." Then afterwards I noticed that my name had been listed on Fluxus festival programs as one of the performers. At the time, I was really worried about possible official repercussions ...



Lithuania 1933: Baby Yurgis, mama Leokadija, papa Alexander, and Nijole.



1934: Three-year-old Yurgis taking the cure in the Swiss Alps.



1936: The 5-year-old commander-in-chief at Senapole, Lithuania.



The family villa that the Maciunases shared with the German general and his mistress. (See I. 14) Photo © 1996 Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection.



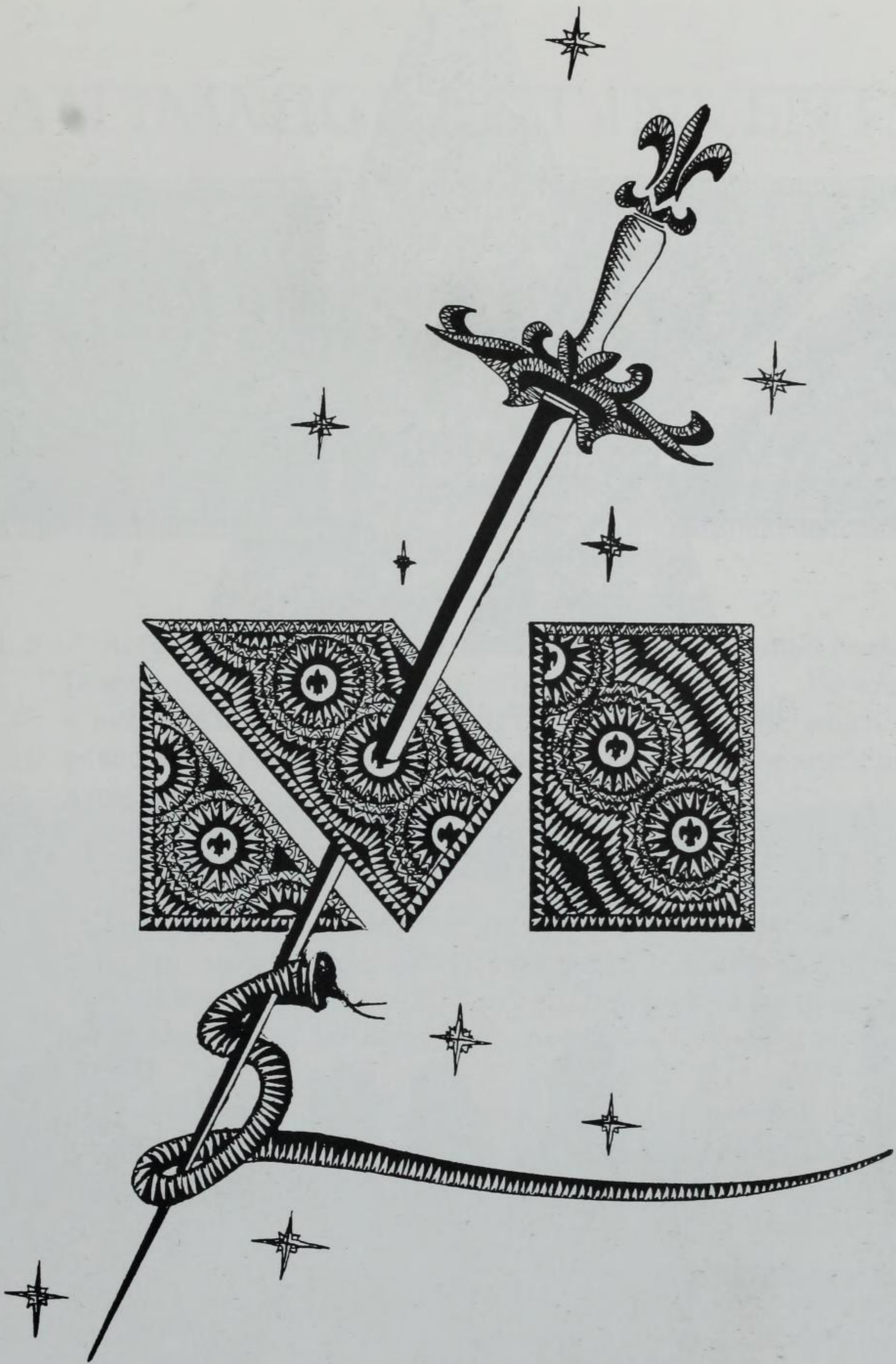
Lithuania 1940: sister Nijole, a cousin, and the Panzer commander himself (age 8) in one of his improvised tanks.



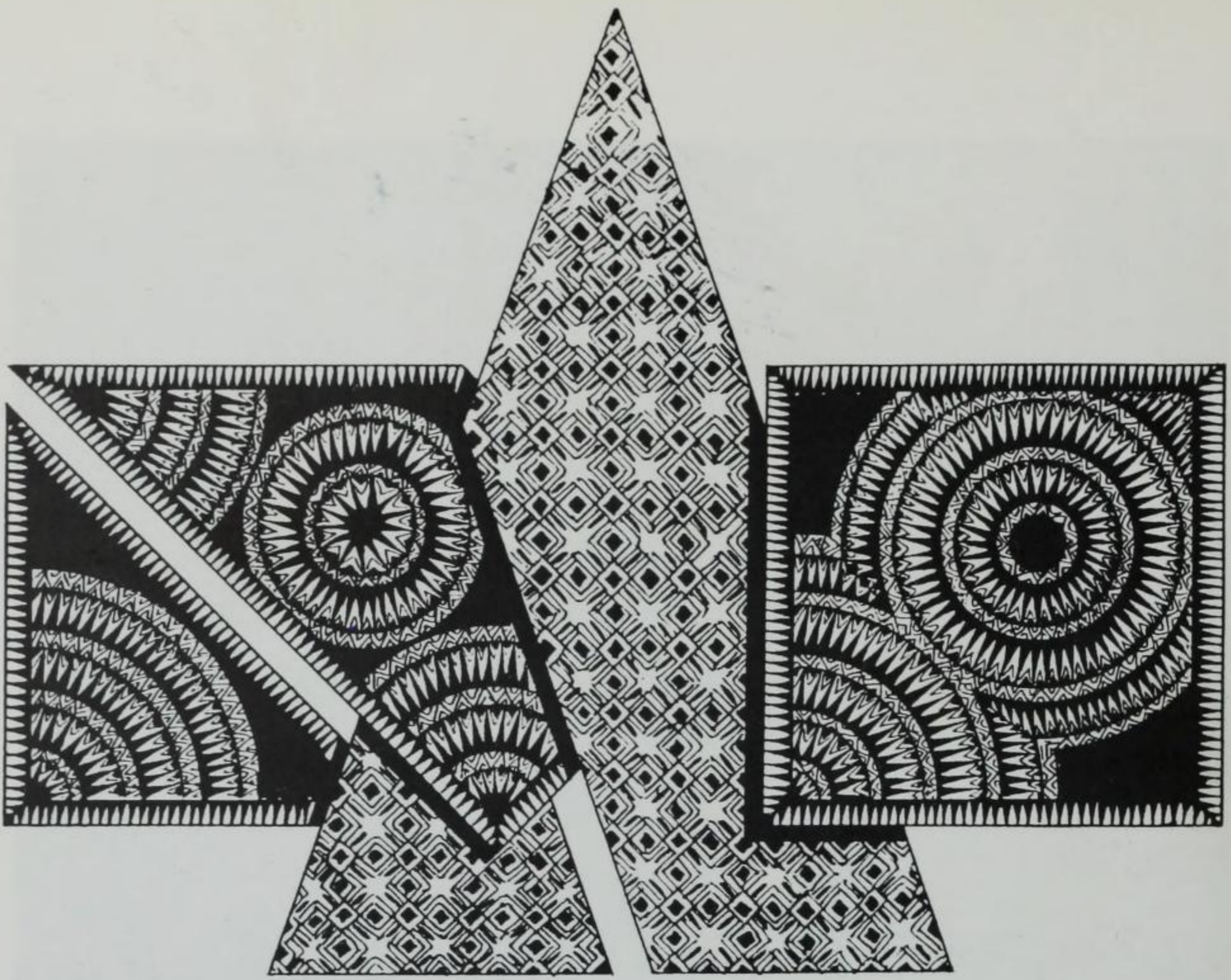
1939: Wing commander Maciunas, age 8, at Palanga Airport.



1945: George and his mother in Bad Nauheim, Germany.



Monogram for his mother, Leokadija Maciunas, circa 1947.



Monogram for his father, Alexander Maciunas, circa 1947.



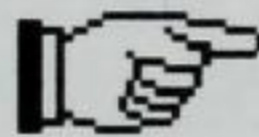
1948: Immigrants en route to New York: From left, George, Nijole, their mother, and two unidentified passengers.

II AN IMMIGRANT INVENTS FLUXUS

II. 1 In April 1948 we left Germany for America. We hadn't one relative there. A charitable organization, the Church Field Service, took care of us. They met us, placed us in a good hotel, and soon found work for my husband in his field, and in the autumn they enrolled Yurgis in a boarding school at Dobbs Ferry, New York, where he finished high school in one year.



II. 2 At first he had no one close to him at school. He started reading Dostoyevsky, who became one of his favorite authors ... He wrote a long article on Dostoyevsky in the school magazine which he edited. One of the editors of the *New York Times* read the article and wrote about it in his newspaper.



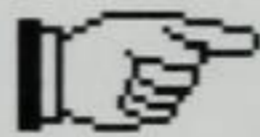
II. 3 I was happily surprised to learn, in a recent article by Nam June Paik, that "George was a good friend of Claes Oldenburg and Stan Vanderbeek at Cooper Union." I wrote Claes, asking him to recollect some impressions and anecdotes from those formative, far-away years.

"Could be my memory is going but I can't summon up any recollections of G.M.," he wrote back. "In any case I didn't know him while I worked at Cooper U. (1956-61)."

Whatever the case may be, some years later, in 1966, Claes and George *did* work together on a prototype for a proposed Fluxus edition, *False Food Selection*, an antique wooden chest containing two sheets of holograph notes by Claes and George, plus assorted false foods.



II. 4 He finished Cooper Union with excellent grades and received a scholarship to continue his studies at the school of architecture at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh. He wasn't interested in sports or girls: he started to take music lessons and never missed a concert. Besides this he took a course on the history of Russia. On his own initiative he made a diagram of the Russian state from the beginnings to the Revolution ... After graduating, he started work as an architect, but was very disappointed, seeing that the work of young architects was limited to drafting, for which one needn't be talented or possess an education. He decided to study art history at the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University.

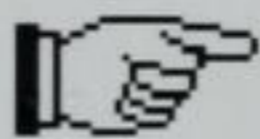


II. 5 My husband died in 1954. It was the first death in our family. I was broken-hearted and completely helpless, but Yurgis, though he seemed so impractical in life, undertook being my protector and taking care of me the way his father had.



II. 6 An old and very good professor taught art history at the university. He treated Yurgis like a son, invited him over, showed him his immense library and told him that after his death it would serve Yurgis when he himself became a professor. Once again Yurgis studied seriously and well, dreaming of becoming a professor, and worked every free moment on a large project, a diagram of the entire course of art history. This work was a *chef d'oeuvre* ... Yurgis always shared his ideas with me ... His memory was phenomenal. He could arrange everything neatly in his head, and we both dreamed of when he would become a professor and how we would travel during the long vacations.

In the Spring, his favorite professor died ... Something broke in his soul and he lost interest in his idea of becoming a professor ... And so our dreams were destroyed.



II. 7 George attended the Institute of Fine Arts of N.Y.U. for a number of years. His branch of study was the art of European and Siberian Migrations. I think it was suggested he leave after his professor died.

Well, when I first met George my son was director of the institute. This must have made a big impression on George. I invited them on Easter Sunday to meet and have lunch. George's first question, after greeting Jonathan, was, "*Do you know how many nails of the True Cross have been found in Europe?*" He answered the question himself: "*One hundred and forty-one.*" Or some such number.



II. 8 History, one of his lifetime passions, received the most intense and prolonged application of Maciunas's organizational acumen. As early as 1953, when he was 22, he had produced for his studies an *Atlas of Russian History* in which a series of superimposed maps and data hand-drawn on transparent pages indicated at a glance all the major historical changes in the Russian state up to the time of the Revolution.

Throughout college he composed his class notes into diagrams, in psychology, music, languages, physiology.

While doing postgraduate work in art history at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts between 1955 and 1960, he began his first art-history chart (never completed), which he projected as a 6-foot-by-12-foot "time/space chart categorizing all past styles, movements, schools, artists, etc." He also planned three-dimensional charts, based on cabinets with drawers full of file cards, including one on art history and one that recategorized the fields of knowledge and, by its storage and retrieval system, functioned as a "learning machine."

These charts, diagrams and atlases became so important to Maciunas that they commanded a special section on his resumé ... In the last years of his life he openly expressed the hope that they would bring him the recognition he had failed to achieve elsewhere. In 1976-77 he applied for, and ultimately achieved, an artists' grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. However this was only after he had been dissuaded by friends from his original intention of applying as an art historian. for which he had no academic credentials and could muster no professional recommendations, rather than as an artist.

Most of these projects remained far from complete and were seen only in segments by close friends. But in May 1966 he produced the first of three published versions of a history of the avant-garde, with Fluxus as its focus. This project occupied him for the rest of his life.



- II. 9 In the Spring of 1961 George Maciunas turned up. He had an art gallery on Madison Avenue, where terrible modern art was shown, but he wanted a good series of goings-on and people put him in touch with other people, who put him in touch with still others, until he wound up presenting the most interesting performances I have ever heard of, and he has never stopped. Eventually he got stuck with the debts from his gallery and fled to Europe, which is why Fluxus began there, and I like that it developed out of economic necessity.



- II. 10 In 1960 an unusually small art gallery, Almus Gallery, had existed for some years in a private home of a once fancy suburb of New York by the name of Great Neck, Long Island. The shows at the gallery were mainly devoted to the work of immigrants or East European artists. Its owner, the expressive but somewhat disorganized Almus Salcius, had arrived from Lithuania ten years earlier, and in the U.S., like so many other *nouveaux pauvres*, he adapted to the contrasts of a dynamic inner life and a cold outward reality filled with compromises.

In the evening of October 8, a group of young Lithuanians met at the gallery to discuss the possibility of founding a Lithuanian cultural club, a forum for recollections, shared emotions and debates. Among the enthusiasts were the artist V. K. Jonynas, Salcius, and George Maciunas, an artist at large whom Salcius had met through the film-maker Jonas Mekas. In the small hours, they finally decided to start a magazine instead of a club. Someone proposed the name *Rsysys* (Lithuanian for "Union"). Someone else suggested *Influx*. Then, familiar with the medical sense of the word, they laughingly accepted Maciunas' quick riposte: *Fluxus*.

However, the name was not adopted definitely. The only unanimous decision was to allow Maciunas, by then already a part-time designer, to make the future magazine's layout; to this end, it was decided that in the course of the next week he would receive funds to purchase an IBM Executive electric typewriter on behalf of the group.

The next day Salcius sent a check to Maciunas and started to write an article, "Lithuania Belongs to the World." He had read an article

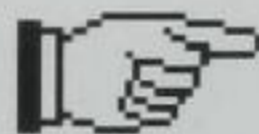
entitled "The United States Belongs to the World", written by an executive at the Rockefeller Foundation, and considered its polemics useful once again.

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

On December 8, Maciunas found empty premises in Manhattan: 925 Madison Avenue, a prestigious address close to Parke-Bernet Galleries. Two days later Salcius visited him again. They had an exquisite dinner consisting of canned French gourmet food (Maciunas had ordered enormous quantities of cans from Europe earlier that year in the hope of being able to sell them with a profit to American restaurants). In the course of the meal they found a name for their enterprise, AG Gallery (which opened a short time afterwards), and decided that Maciunas alone should be responsible for it since Salcius alone was in charge of Almus Gallery.

Their policies were to be the same: they were both to show moderately priced works of art, and the exhibiting artists were to pay for the maintenance of the galleries.

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



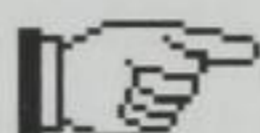
II. 11 At that time some people turned up who were sympathetic to communism and they decided to create an avant-garde magazine for which Yurgis thought up the name *Fluxus*. They decided to acquaint the large American public with the new direction of the magazine. There were announcements in the papers, they sent out invitations, and the auditorium was lent by the Lithuanian Society. But when the appointed day came the Board of Directors of the Lithuanian Society rescinded its agreement since they had found out the essence of the meeting. To them, who had fled from the communists, it seemed blasphemous to hold such a meeting if it even vaguely recalled communism.

Yurgis and his friends had to stand at the entrance of the auditorium and turn everyone back. Yurgis was very disappointed

and rejected the Lithuanian Society completely. He even changed his name from Yurgis to George.

On the advice of a friend he rented a place on Madison Avenue and opened a gallery. He took ultramodern avant-garde paintings. The paintings didn't sell and the gallery was very poorly attended. Yurgis worked as a draftsman and all his earnings went to this gallery, printing and sending out prospectuses and letters.

He also sketched himself, dropping India ink on a white background. We sold one such work, but cheaply, for fifty dollars. I had to sit in this gallery all day and clean up the huge hall.



- II. 12 Sorry we are so slow to respond. Injury, worrying about moving across the continent, as my fellow countrymen, now presumably democratized by our mutual Fluxus friend Mr. Landsbergis, and others anxious to "rejoin" the European Union, still refuse to recognize my basic human rights to recover the family's property in my native Lithuania, stolen under the "universal communist 'happening'" pretext. So, half a century later we are still "displaced persons" wandering from place to place ...

Do you have a cartoon from the Lithuanian weekly *Dirva* showing Fluxus as a bullfrog, connected with a wire to the Kremlin? During the fever of McCarthyism, Fluxus was, to the Lithuanian nationalists, a KGB trick! ...

I will be working on my own much belated memoirs. After all, Fluxus started with AG (Almus Gallery) in Great Neck ... long, long ago story.



- II. 13 A show was announced at AG Gallery and the press was invited to preview the exhibition. I can't remember who the artist was, but the artist backed out two or three days before the opening.

I walk in, and I see the entire floor covered with blank canvases. "Help me," says George, "help me to spray water on the canvases, I have to have them all ready for tomorrow."

So we sprayed them with water, all twenty or so canvases, and George went around, with color tubes, red and black and blue mostly, and dripped paint on them, and the paint spread on the wet canvases and made designs of their own. In fifteen minutes or so he had "painted" some twenty canvases.

In the morning they were all dry and ready. We hung them and we stood there, waiting for the press.

No press came. But the show was on. Yes, I think Lil Picard came, she wrote for German papers on art in America.



II. 14 Shortly after the pioneer electronic composer Dick Maxfield put George Maciunas into organizing concerts at the AG Gallery in 1960, George began his lifelong habit of making master plans. The first plan, which was announced at Dick's concert, covered five years, and presented the AG Gallery as a grand and prototypical Fluxus center – with concerts to continue year round, blending very new and very old (Renaissance) music, with a publications center, and almost around-the-clock art performances and poetry readings.

When I asked George, "Why so grand? And why five years?" he explained that Russian socialist planning had shown that the more ambitious the plan, the more was actually achieved even if the plan itself was never fully implemented, and that five years had proven to be the most workable amount of time. "*The Soviets are into realism,*" he said, "*and this new kind of art is the new realism. Americans are mostly anarchists, but I am not. And I am interested in the five-year reality.*"



II. 15 ... George and a fellow Lithuanian named Almus Salcius were operating an art gallery at 925 Madison Avenue, between 73rd and 74th Streets, prophetically called "The AG Gallery."

Until recently I had thought that the "AG" might, even then, have stood for the "Avant-Garde", but I've learnt during the last years or so that the letters stood for the initial letters of the two operators' first names.

George had designed the gallery's space and was designing all its graphics (mostly announcements) and was presenting programs there, including a series of literary evenings run by the poet Frank Kuenstler in connection with his little magazine *Bread &*, and also a series of concerts, principally of ancient music, under the general title *Musica Antiqua et Nova*. (George was then importing excellent replicas of ancient instruments, some of which were played at the AG concerts, from Germany.) The art exhibits were almost all chosen by Salcius and, for the most part, featured works that fell

roughly in the (very rough) categories of action painting (or abstract expressionism) and tachism.



II. 16 A new era began in our life. The gallery became a concert hall. The first concert was given by excellent musicians from Europe, playing music of the Middle Ages – singing and lute playing. Yurgis began to be captivated by the harpsichord and lute. He conceived the plan of selling these rare instruments, corresponded with Europe and began to receive them and sell them. But the business didn't work out, and we only lost a lot of time and, of course, money.

After the first wonderful concert meetings, rehearsals of a completely opposite character to the Middle Ages began, those of the avant-garde: certain electronic sounds and still some others that were entirely incomprehensible to me. The public was the new youth, overgrown with hair and slovenly dressed.

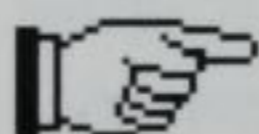


II. 17 One Sunday I went over to Yurgis' as I always did, bringing some tasty pastries with me that he loved. We used to make coffee and enjoy these treats together. But this time I stumbled on a locked door, though noise could be heard from inside. I knocked. My son opened the door a crack, and, seeing me, he asked me in an unfriendly manner why I had come. I was surprised because I always came at this time. He quickly took the box of pastries out of my hands and said, "*Go home!*" He shut and locked the door.

They were having a rehearsal. Yurgis knew that the society of these half-shaven people was unpleasant to me and didn't want a critically inclined person to constrain his friends with her presence.

This was the first time that Yurgis was so nasty to me. Sadly, I made my way to the subway. In the carriage tears streamed down my face and it was bitter, as if I had lost my son, once so sensitive and attentive, forever.

This was the beginning. I didn't understand his passion at all and he didn't try to explain it to me. We understood that we had begun to talk different languages. I was simply unhappy and this annoyed him.



II. 18 We were chiseling the walls of the AG Gallery space. George didn't like the plaster, he wanted the bricks exposed. So we had to take all that stuff off. It was hard work, it took us days and days. And all that dust! And it was a hot summer, too. Almus, George, myself, we worked and we cursed.

A Lithuanian journalist, assigned to the United Nations, calls me, he wants to connect with Lithuanian immigrants doing cultural work. So I say, come to AG Gallery, we'll talk.

I tell this to George and he gets very excited: "*Good,*" he says, "*we need him.*"

So the guy comes, obviously a dutiful Soviet *apparatchik*, and George immediately hands him a chisel and puts him to work. No culture talk, no nothing. For days he worked, poor guy, all dusty, sweating.

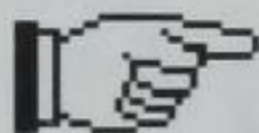
A week or two later I receive a call from C.I.A. They want to know all about this guy. "What kind of relationship do you have with the Soviet Mission?" they ask. "He is working for us," I say. "He is scrubbing our walls, he's working for us." "Do you pay him?" they asked. "No, no. Just the opposite: he treats us with vodka," I say.

George practically split his sides laughing when I told him about the call.

The local Lithuanian community got wind of the case and they immediately began spreading rumors that AG Gallery was a Soviet art front in New York.



II. 19 When he redid the gallery, he cut away a heavy layer of plaster to open up the bricks and leave them in that form. He wasn't able to hire people; one of his new friends helped him. There was solid dust from this work. He spent the night there in an adjacent room where the window opened, but the window faced the rooftops and the whole bed would be black from soot in the morning. Neither day nor night did he have clean air; he also worked without a mask. He didn't let me clean anything, but did it himself. He caught cold and began to cough badly and this cough turned into asthma which almost suffocated him. He couldn't get along without cortisone.



II. 20 *I had a very bad experience (at the AG Gallery in 1961) as regards audiences in N.Y.C. Just couldn't get any. Halls always half filled or*

less. To La Monte's concert for instance only 5 came. Imagine 8 performers and 5 audience!! We will run into same difficulty if we don't promote Fluxus. And we must promote without expenditures—that's the trick, since I won't have a job in N.Y. & will have no \$\$\$\$. So my scheme was to promote at no cost to us through various methods described in Newsletters 6 & 7—maybe others will come up with constructive and realistic proposals on promotional activities rather than criticisms. If we can't promote we can't give Fluxus in N.Y. That's a problem that must be resolved. It will draw fewer people than Paris did. That's a problem that must be resolved really before I go to N.Y. because I would still be able to cancel the trip and save some \$\$.



II. 21 Yurgis worked as a draftsman, and though his earnings weren't bad, so much money had been lost in the unsuccessful business ventures with instruments and canned goods, with the gallery also costing money, that Yurgis became a debtor for the first time and owed many people. His rent hadn't been paid for two months. I was in despair. I didn't have the means to help myself and the money we had received on the sale of our house went to buy some land on the shore.

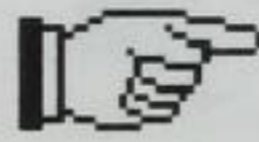
Finally he decided to escape further from these failures and got himself a job with the U.S. Air Force as an architect-designer in Germany. We left some of our things with my daughter, the remainder Yurgis rapidly liquidated; he gave more away than he sold. With the trip for both of us and the apartment in Germany paid for by the Air Force, we left for Wiesbaden.



II. 22 By August 1961 the AG Gallery was closed forever. In September George set up temporary headquarters in the loft of his friend Haroutounian on Water St., far downtown. Toward the end of the month he asked several of us to come down there to help prepare the mechanicals (layouts) for La Monte's *An Anthology*.

I remember George as sitting at his drawing table for 2 1/2 days solid, producing the now famous designs for the title pages and section titles of the book. The rest of us typed the poems, essays, etc., on George's IBM Executive electric typewriter, with the very condensed sans-serif typeface now also well known because of its

use in *An Anthology* and later in George's many Fluxus announcements and publications (as previously in the AG graphics) ... As soon as the mechanicals were completed, George flew off to Wiesbaden, where he quickly got work as a designer for the U.S. Air Force. I don't know the exact circumstances, but I understand that George left the U.S. because of private and tax debts he and his partner had incurred at the AG. As far as I know (I may be wrong) he flew to Wiesbaden to escape these creditors.



II. 23 GM: ... *In 1962, I went to Europe and the plan was to continue ... Oh, before I went to Europe we published or at least we put together La Monte Young's An Anthology, you know, the red book.*

LM: I have that.

GM: *Right. So. We couldn't include everything that we had collected, all the materials we had collected by then, like it didn't have Bob Watts and you know had very few things by George Brecht and so I thought I would go ahead and make another publication with all the pieces that were not included in An Anthology. More or less newer pieces. But La Monte wasn't interested in doing a second anthology book. So 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 had objects and you know, a different kind of packaging. So really then the idea germinated to use the whole book as bound envelopes with objects in the envelopes. See, we had a couple of objects already in the first anthology, you know, like the loose Diter Rot machine holes, things like that. A little envelope with a card of La Monte, another envelope with a letter in it, you know, so things like that. Cards that have to be cut up ...*

LM: Now you designed that book.

GM: *Yeah, I designed that book.*

LM: And it was edited by ... put together ...

GM: *La Monte Young and Jackson Mac Low.*

LM: So then did they suggest the ... was this your first publication, the first Fluxus publication, the second one you're talking about?

GM: *The second one was going to be the first Fluxus publication but it took a few years to get off the ground. Meanwhile we thought, well, we'll do concerts, that's easier than publishing and will give us propaganda like for the publication. Maybe then we will find people*

who will want to buy publications because at first we couldn't sell Anthology either, you know, so it was just accumulating in a warehouse. So then the idea was to do concerts as a promotional trick for selling whatever we were going to publish or produce. That's how the Wiesbaden series came by and that's the first time that it was called Fluxus Festivals and that's the Fall of ...

LM: September of '62, isn't it?

GM: *Right. Yeah, September of '62. And ...*

LM: Here's my chance then to ...

GM: *There were 14 concerts in a row.*

LM: I'd like to ask about the name Fluxus, I mean, where did that come from?

GM: *That came still while we were thinking in New York of what to call the new publication.*

LM: When you say "we", you mean you and La Monte.

GM: *No, La Monte sort of didn't care and then it was mainly me and my gallery partner, 'cause he was maybe going to call the gallery that or something. Then the gallery went bankrupt so it didn't matter; he dropped out so he's out of the picture.*

LM: He's not an artist.

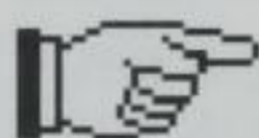
GM: *No. So basically it was me alone then who finally determined we were going to call it that name and the reason for it was the various meanings that you'd find in the dictionary for it, you know, so that it's like it has very broad, many meanings, sort of funny meanings. Nobody seemed to care anyway what we were going to call it because there was no formal meetings or groups or anything.*

LM: The name was thought of at first to refer to ...

GM: *Just the publication.*

LM: A publication called ...

GM: *Fluxus, and that's it ...*



II. 24 Dear Mr. Maciunas,

Thank you very much for your kind letter.

I note with much pleasure what you said about German neodadaists – but I think even the Americans should not use the term “neodadaism” because *neo* means nothing and *ism* is old-fashioned. Why not simply “fluxus”? It seems to me much better, because it's new, and dada is historic.

I was in correspondence with Tzara, Hülsenbeck and Hans Richter concerning this question, and they all declare "neodadaism does not exist" ...

So long.

With kindest regards
sincerely yours
Raoul Hausmann

P.S. If I look over your musical program (for the proposed festival) I feel it is bruitist-futurist and not dadaist.



II. 25 Dear Mr. Maciunas,

I am not a Neodadaist and cannot be one.

I (would) be very enchanted to write a book about the real dada (for a Fluxus edition) because the whole literature about it is more or less unsatisfying, but I am sure I cannot persuade Mr. Tzara to deliver some of his secret documents. When I mentioned to him my correspondence with you he immediately ceased to answer, because for him dada died in 1923 and nobody today has the right to revive it or call himself neodadaist.

With kindest regards
sincerely yours
Raoul Hausmann



II. 26 Fluxus is a Latin word Maciunas dug up. I never studied Latin. If it hadn't been for Maciunas nobody might have ever 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. We would have gone our own ways and done our own things: the only reference point for any of this bunch of people who liked each other's works, and each other, more or less, was Maciunas. So Fluxus, as far as I'm concerned, is Maciunas.

II. 27 *One can say that Fluxus opposes serious art or culture and its institutions, as well as Europeanism. It is also opposed to artistic professionalism and art as a commercial object or means to a personal income, it is opposed to any form of art that promotes the*

artist's ego. Fluxus rejects opera and theater (Kaprow, Stockhausen etc.), which represent the institutionalizing of serious art, and is for, instead of opera and theater, vaudeville or the circus, which represents a more popular art form or totally nonartistic amusement (which have been considered false by "cultivated" intellectuals). Hence Fluxus concerts tend to be vaudevillian or many times satires of serious concerts. They are certainly not "great operas," which once in a while, for unexplained reasons, are called "happenings" – if you look in the dictionary you will see that a happening is anything but a rehearsed and staged piece of theater or opera. We don't want to call our pieces "happenings"; they are really not rehearsed or staged, so they become more unpredictable. You can formulate this however you like. But let me see the translation before you use it (in case you do).

What the organization concerns: It does have a structure, in contrast to what George Brecht has written; otherwise our festivals and publications could not function. They do not function by themselves.

Fluxus is a collective, like a Kolkhoz (collective estate), not a second self. In this respect it differs from your Dé-coll/age. Right now I am chairman, next year it could be Akiyama, Saito or Kubota. The current Fluxus committee is this:

Myself – chairman

Shigeko Kubota – co-chairman for New York

Barbara Moore – administration for New York

Kuniharu Akiyama – co-chairman for Japan

Willem de Ridder – co-chairman and administration for Europe

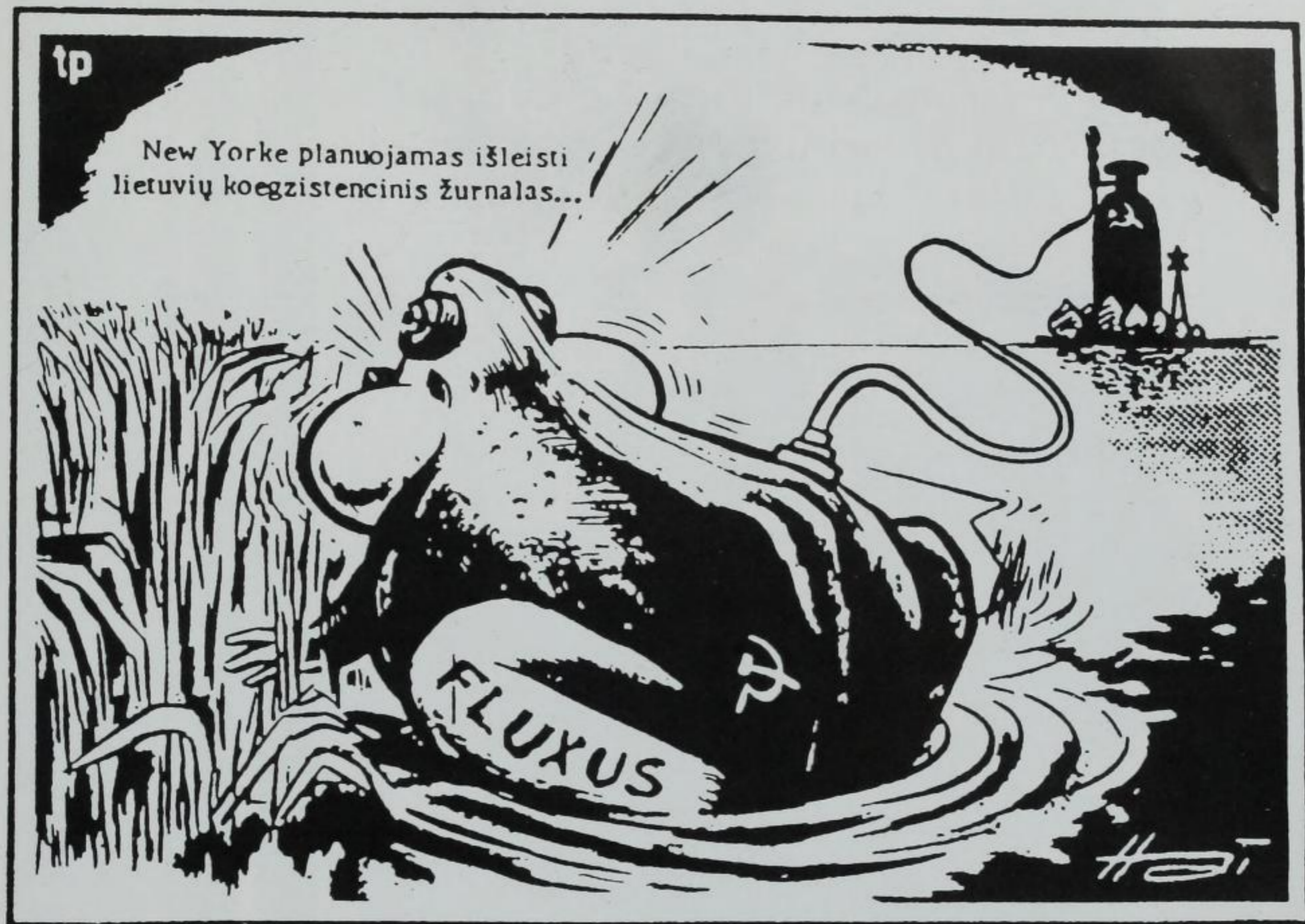
Ben Vautier – co-chairman for Europe

List of Fluxus people (inner core):

George Brecht, Ay-O (Takao Iijima), Willem de Ridder, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Joe Jones, Shigeko Kubota, Takehisa Kosugi, George Maciunas, Ben Patterson, Mieko Shiomi, Ben Vautier, Robert Watts, Emmett Williams, La Monte Young.



- II. 28 I have placed an enquiry with the New York State Bureau of Taxation and Finance regarding any registered exclusivity of proprietorship of the term "Fluxus". So far as I can tell, there is none.



A cartoon from the Lithuanian-language newspaper *Dirva* published in Cleveland, Ohio, February 3, 1961. The cartoon was inspired by news that two Lithuanian expatriates in New York, Almus Salcius and George Maciunas, not only had started a gallery, but planned to publish a magazine called *Fluxus*. Maybe these “expensive” undertakings were financed by Soviet authorities in the name of coexistence?



The young art historian at his parents' house, circa 1952. From Jonas Mekas' film *Zefiro Torna: Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas*.

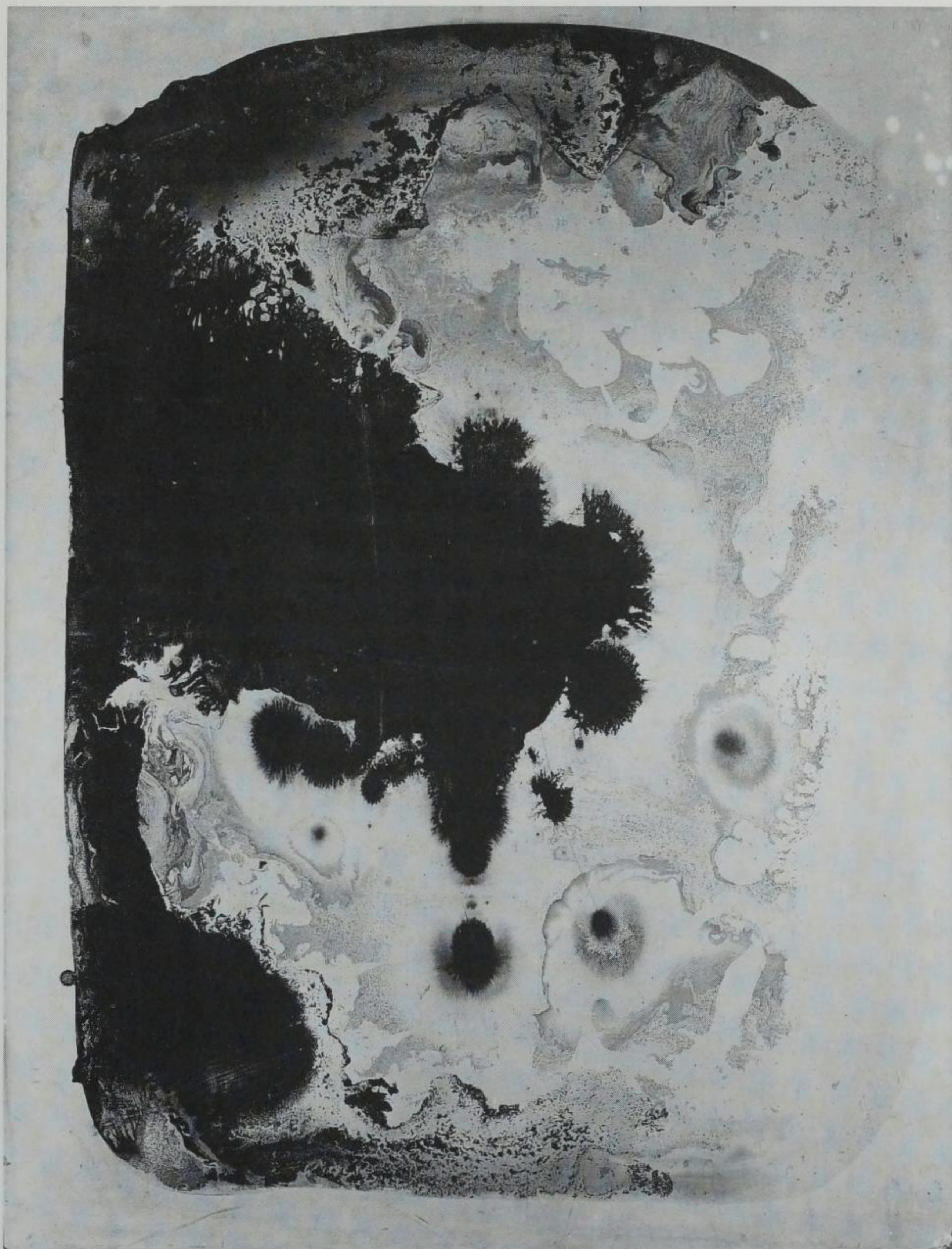


New York 1961: Yoko Ono, composer Toshi Ichiyanagi, and poet/filmmaker Jonas Mekas at the AG Gallery. When George redid the gallery, he cut away a heavy layer of plaster by hand to open up the bricks. The dust he breathed in, without ventilation in his gallery, provoked his first asthma attack. Photo by George Maciunas, © Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection.

WORKS OF G.MACIUNAS AT AG.925 MADISON AV. MAY 8 TO 21, DAILY:1-5

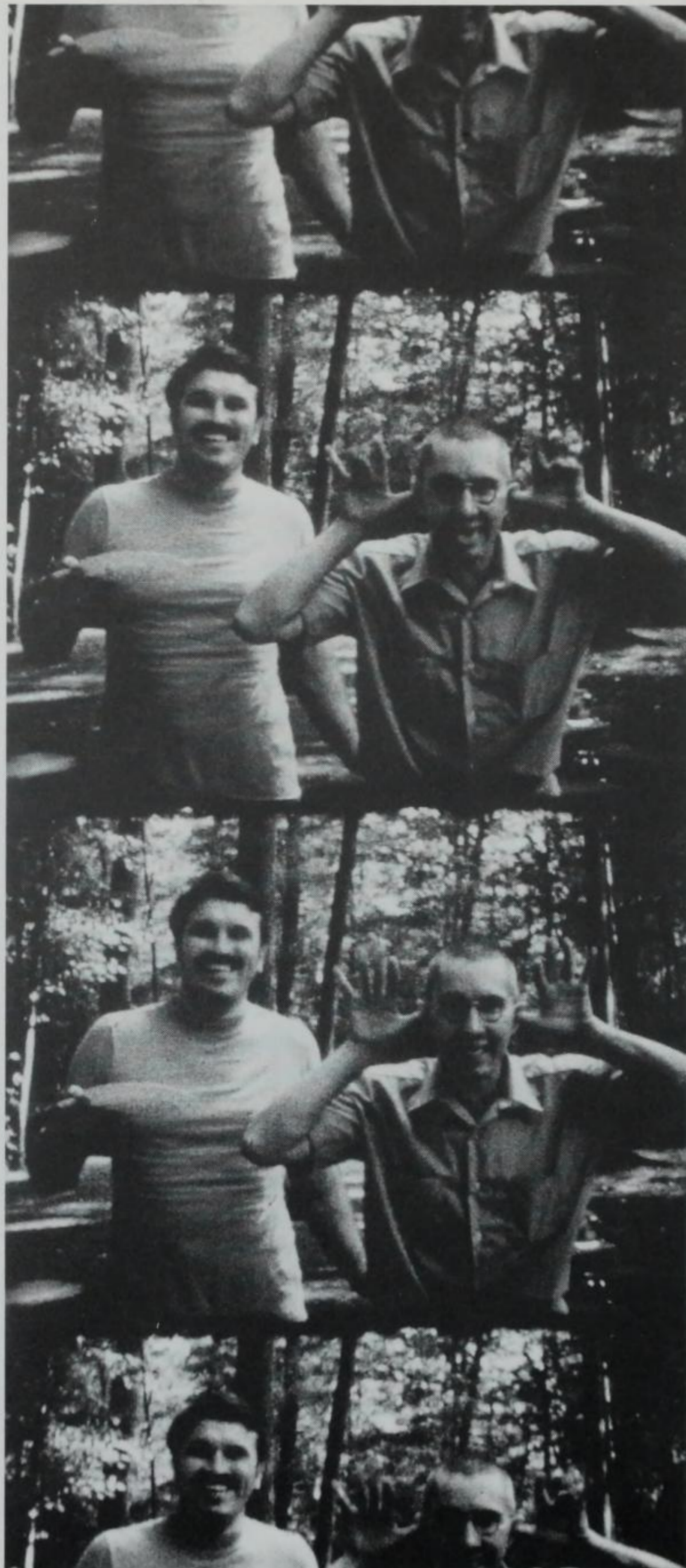
Being non illusional but realistic, my graphic expression or form becomes one and same as my state of consciousness and intuitive perception or awareness of the microcosmos and its process of becoming. The ink dropping into puddle as a mode of expression, by being one and same as the content, resolves itself within its own body, existing only for its own quality of energy, process, movement, efflux and metamorphosis. It becomes thus the perceived reality itself. The hydraulic-chemical behaviour of fluids and microparticles of the medium in motion creates a new micro-geography undergoing constant and continuing metamorphosis, diffusion and efflux until the fluid evaporates arresting thus the movement in its cadence. This reality therefore must be perceived and appreciated firstly as a kinetic reality requiring awareness of its process of becoming into the arrested stage, and secondly as a micro-cosmic reality requiring viewing at a greatly reduced distance and preferably with the help of magnifying glass. Only then will the experience of the new kinetic microcosmos acquire concreteness.





Left: Invitation to George's own exhibition at the AG Gallery in 1961.

Above: One of his 1961 drawings (untitled), India ink dropped on wet paper.
Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.



Almus Salcius, George's AG Gallery partner, and George at Almus' place in Great Neck, Long Island, circa 1970. From Jonas Mekas' film *Zefiro Torna: Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas*.

III

THE EUROPEAN FESTIVALS

III. 1 One evening in Wiesbaden in the September of 1962, George and I were walking through the marbled foyer of the Städtisches Museum. He stopped, and pointed to the Prussian Eagle on high guarding the dedication plaque:

DIESER BAU
WURDE VOLLENDET
IM KRIEGSJAHRE 1915

"This place has survived two world wars," George said, smiling mischievously, *"so I suppose it can survive the Fluxus festival."*



III. 2 *Dear Dr. Weiler:*

Messrs. J.P. Wilhelm and M. de la Motte has advised and requested me to seek your esteemed opinion and possibly collaboration regarding several large projects we have launched. Before requesting an appointment to see you, I thought it better to outline both of the projects in this letter so as to permit you a more leisurely study of them.

The first project consists of organizing several festivals of avant-garde music at several cities. Your sympathies to new arts as such exhibits as "Interferenzen" testify, led us to hope that possibly you would agree to our request which we wish to make hereby, for your esteemed collaboration in organizing the first festival at the Staedtisches Museum, here in Wiesbaden.

We envision the program, hereby attached, for which we would obtain scores, composers' instructions, tapes, performers, electronic equipment, prepare and design programmes, posters and assist as much as possible in all related administrative work.

The second project, although related to the first, does not involve any request on our part and is presented solely for your interest. It is a plan to publish an international magazine devoted to promoting

new arts, music, literature, cinema, architecture and dance. A preliminary prospectus outlining the contents is also enclosed.

Hoping to be able to discuss with you the further aspects of these projects we wish to remain, Dear Sir, yours very respectfully,

*George Maciunas
for FLUXUS editors
J.S. Bach Str. 6
Wiesbaden.*

P.S. I regret not to be able as yet to converse or write freely in German.



III. 3 In 1961 George Maciunas came to Europe. Considerable debts had forced him to leave the States and his gallery in New York where he had had much to do with, amongst others, George Brecht and La Monte Young. In Wiesbaden where he had worked with the US Army (graphics and architecture) he started to make a few dollars which he began to spend not only on a young American chamber ensemble using original instruments to play Renaissance music, but also on what he had called Fluxus – arranging festivals “of the new art”, publishing books and manifestos, objects etc. His next step, after making money, was to make European contacts. This he did with a happy frivolity which most of our American friends seem to possess. So he also collected folk like Harry Kramer, Mon, Kriwet or Stockhausen under his postal hat. Gradually, though, the Fluxus group resulted: Maciunas, Emmett Williams, Ben Patterson, Nam June Paik, Addi K pcke, Ben Vautier, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, T.S., etc. (plus, of course, George Brecht, La Monte Young, Robert Watts, Joe Jones, Jackson Mac Low, Yoko Ono, Mieko Shiomi, Yasunao Tone, Al Hansen, Henry Flynt and Phil Corner, who, however, at that time were not in Europe). A completely free and loose group of very different individuals – certainly not a club (which, actually, is very surprising because Maciunas was inclined to act like a football trainer and was in the habit of getting bad-tempered if a guest of his dared to return home after 10 o’clock or, even worse, be drunk ...).

The first result of these efforts was four weekends of Fluxus Festivals at the Wiesbaden Museum. A gigantic mixture of extreme conventionalism (modern piano music, and so on) and works of great importance (numerous first performances, at least for Europe or Germany, of works of Brecht, La Monte, Emmett, etc.). Reactions:

the museum director was confounded by the cuckoo's egg which Maciunas had palmed off on him; the very small public was partly interested, partly amused; the only person whom we really made happy was the caretaker, who took this opportunity to drag his numerous family from the TV set, every evening, to the hall. The following Wiesbaden Carnival procession included a wagon on which someone with an enormous saw was trying to cut a piano in half.



III. 4 George Maciunas, then living in Wiesbaden, visited me in Darmstadt a few months before the world's first Festum Fluxorum. I was in pyjamas when he called, just back from a heavy trip to Paris and all ready to settle down to a long sleep. But George revived me. I was relieved to find him a warm and very human person endowed with a liberal dose of humor aimed at the entire cosmos. I had expected something very different, after all those rigid and meticulous timetables and lists of performers he had sent me through the mails. Anyway, after a modicum of conversation I got dressed and accompanied George to the musical goings-on at Kranichstein, where he introduced me to several American composers and performers whose names and faces have long since faded away from my memory. I wanted to get away from all the confusion, and talk privately with him, but he left early. Tomorrow was a working day. We made up for that in the year to come causing a lot of commotion in trains and broken-down automobiles en route to one Fluxus festival or another.



III. 5 They began to get ready for a performance. This extraordinary performance was even going to be shown on television. The evening arrived and I, fortunately, didn't see the program (we didn't have television). The next day I met the former landlady of our hotel on the street and I was grieved by her sympathy ... She had seen the previous evening's program and had been horrified. It showed how several young people, including my son, had destroyed a piano with hammer and axes. Even if the instrument was old and useless, it was noble ... It had served talented hands which had given the public joy and rapture. It was painful and terrible to watch how the chips flew, to hear the complaining twanging of the severed strings.

People couldn't hold back their tears seeing such a shameful and tormenting end to the instrument ... These people felt sorry for me, sympathizing and understanding how a mother's heart would ache seeing what her son was doing. At that time he seemed possessed by a dark power.

My Yurgis, so pure, talented and sensitive, had turned from a high calling. With his good education he knew how to value beauty and knew much about it. He adored the music of the Middle Ages. And suddenly it was as if he weren't himself.

He felt that I wasn't sympathetic and became even more secretive. It was as if we were on separate shores. I had fallen completely from my former life. Dick Higgins and his wife came from New York and stayed God knows how long with Yurgis in his apartment.

Yurgis never talked to me about his financial affairs, but I saw by his thrift and near miserliness that his salary barely covered us.

It was difficult for me to see how completely absorbed he was in something so incomprehensible and strange. And I decided to leave for Brazil. My three sisters and brothers lived there. Yurgis was happy with my decision and I left.



III. 6 ... *Finally I have time to sit down in front of the 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 Patterson's contrabass piece, Emmett's 4-directional song, Jackson's Thanks II, your line piece, which Nam June Paik performed in his usual improvisational manner: dipped his head in a night pot full of ink and drew a line with his head over a long roll of paper stretched over the 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 asthmatically

following Olivetti adding machine ribbon), a sort of rhythmical machine-like piece.

Then at the end we did Corner's Piano Activities 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 had to pay movers, a very practical composition, but German sentiments about this "instrument of Chopin" were 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 American works.

What I will do is write a sort of review of this festival or report on what was done etc. in an 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 typing. This continuous use of cortisone started to affect the spine in some sort of way (as the doctor said 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. 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 letter replies etc.



III. 7 This paper is very bad for my fine pen. It gets clogged up. Next time I will write on smoother paper, then I can write smaller and clearer.

Regardful & gardful fuls
Gaaarge
Garage
rage



III. 8 RB: Talking about Wiesbaden, in 1982 you came back to this place, and there was this very touching performance by Phil Corner called *Reverence to the Piano* in which he quasi-excused himself for what had happened 20 years before with the grand piano.

EW: He wasn't there, of course, in 1962.

RB: I'd like to ask why Phil's *Piano Activities*, the piece that made Fluxus famous, was interpreted and performed as it was.

BP: I remember talking to Phil in the past four or five years, and he didn't complain about the way it was performed in 1962, but pointed out that it was not necessarily the way that it *had* to be or *should* have been performed, even though he admitted that the score was open enough so that it *could* have been done that way. But he never conceived in his mind that it would end up happening that way.

EW: I can remember in 1962 when an Associated Press correspondent, Dick O'Regan, asked George why we had destroyed the piano. Because it had caused a big stink, you know. A TV scandal. George's mother was in hysterics. George answered that it was an old piano, and it was a very practical way of getting rid of an old instrument that no longer had any musical value. That was George's justification.

BP: Well, his public justification. He always joked about things being practical.

EW: Because it certainly wasn't a practical way of getting rid of a grand piano. You could simply call a junkman and he would carry it away. But here, in the context of a museum, and music and composers, it was a rather startling symbolic thing. Let's get rid of any vestige of the old music.

BP: Yes, very symbolic. Let's get rid of the past.

EW: But he didn't say that to Dick O'Regan.

BP: No, he wouldn't have said that.

RB: But it was an artistic event. It was a piece of music. There was a score ...

EW: But this piano was destroyed from evening to evening, we were not *following* a score. The objective was to reduce this thing to nothing. (Laughter)

BP: I think as a matter of fact I never saw the original score.

EW: I'm sure René has one ...

BP: The way we "learned the piece" was through George's instructions. It was George's interpretation. He said, well, we're going to do this piece by Philip Corner and this is the way we do it. And here are your tools, your instruments.

EW: And the instruments were there – a crowbar, hammers, rocks. George's interpretation. And we assisted, let's say. And there were saws ... I enjoyed it thoroughly.

BP: It was wonderful. And it *was* a music event. We certainly made sounds – like you've never heard before. (Laughter)



III. 9 *I hear with my third ear that you are driving to Amsterdam with Bazon Brock. Could you stop by Ehlhalten and pick up 5 or 6 film projectors I got for Nam June Paik, and his suit (one he messed up in "Simple")? Maybe the bathtub could fit on top of the auto roof???*

I won't be able to go to Amsterdam since I feel quite sick, got some infection of the nerve in the back of the leg, so I am like that "prince" in Dostoyevsky's uncle's dream – all falling apart at the seams. Anyway, I will be able to go to London, since just luckily my office is sending me to London on a TDY on October 15th for a week or two. So sick or healthy I will go, since that means making about \$7 a day on my TDY allowance; besides, I would like to see those events on the 27th (at the Misfits Festival) ... I will stay most likely at YMCA as I can't think of any cheaper accommodation there.



III. 10 EW: There were concerts in the evening, and afternoons. Fourteen of them. I couldn't make all of them because I was working. I commuted between Darmstadt and Wiesbaden, about an hour. That was a problem for George and myself. We were both working, he for the U.S. Air Force, me for *The Stars & Stripes*.

BP: And I was trying to sell encyclopedias to the army and their families.

EW: It's wonderful, you know, that Ben and George and I were all involved with Uncle Sam.

BP: You could say that Fluxus was first sponsored by the United States military.

EW: I guess we've said it now. That Fluxus ...

BP: Our great patron was the military.

EW: Don't laugh. I was having a problem with this colonel at *The Stars & Stripes*, who didn't like some of my extra-curricular activities, you know, Fluxus festivals, and I was letting him have it one day at the bar, and he said, "You better shut up. The army lets you get away with a lot."



III. 11 *Finally comes an opportunity to make some \$\$\$\$. This case of Bandler (my landlord) vs Fluxus is coming to court & we can make*

a grandiose affair of the "treatment" you received from him. My lawyer says you do not have to testify in court if you write me an affidavit (sworn to and notarized by U.S. Embassy or similar "official" place. Say something to the effect that on such-and-such date (Hell, I forget what date it was) you came to visit me for a few days during which we would have worked out the program & other details for TV shows. Since at that time you were an editor of Stars & Stripes you had the power (or influence) to give promotion to Fluxus & make arrangements for TV shows via your numerous contacts (say the Mainz station & maybe Army TV???) But next morning Bendler entered into your room & rudely awakened you saying various insults such as ordering you to sweep the floor & threatening to throw you out. Since you were not accustomed to such "morning greetings" & since you did not desire to get involved in a fight you decided to leave without completing our "important" discussion. Pile it on thick, the thicker the more money we could get (although German judges being so biased makes the chance rather slim). OK? Have this statement filled with stamps & other official "symbols" ... and send it to me AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.



III. 12 i don't know if i'd like to write about george m., but surely i'd like to write about memory, or remembrance, which i find to be, among related phenomena like time, history etc, one of the strangest, and hardest, aspects of this world.

i wish i had a GM (good memory), but i haven't. that's why i like it when the guys of the diploma or art book factories come to interview me about t h e d a y s: not that i could help them a lot, no, not at all, to the contrary; but for me it's the only way to find out about at least parts of my memory if it's correct or wrong or something strange in between ... ; yes, i have strange experiences about retelling my experiences.

for instance, of the m a n y months i stayed and worked in george's flat in this house in ehlhalten, I don't even remember how many months it was (maybe it wasn't even *m a n y*?!) ... , i just remember that it started just after karneval '63, that i was drunk when i cut my hair to be nice for the ride next day, that my mother said you don't leave town with that, that i went to a friseur early in the morning before going to wiesbaden, that george picked me up at the station in his beautiful old citroen sedan, that there was this huge

electric ibm in the house, which was very new to me, which had letters without seriphens and different lengths for the letters, i and l was one unit, e and n etc. was three units, capital w was five, i think, etc., and every important text, and there wasn't anything but important texts, had to be typed twice, in the first run you could see at the end of each line how many units it was too short or too long and in the final run you could discretely throw out or put in the too-many or missing units, and so you had your text beautifully rechtsbündig instead of flatter, and that there was a huge lot of typing, and that i met george mainly for talking about what to do (type) next and for supper, there i remember saucer-size, i'm talking about the non-flying type of saucer, round pancakes with a large whip of cold sour cream, and that the cream was in cardboard boxes which may imply that germany in those days still had things like milk etc. in real glass bottles, that i once acted as interpreter-in-court when george had a little prozeß against his landlord, and that george naturally couldn't stand my smoking, yet regularly he brought me from the px (or the like) huge round pound and tin boxes of finest quality pipe tobacco of the label 'sir walter raleigh'.

that's, actually, all. – and that's not enough. not enough to require two sentences, even ... –

well, and there is somehow strong feeling about that guy george maciunas having so many faces – i mean the feeling has, not the guy – , but i somehow doubt if this is a thing to have it put into lines easily, be it few or many, be it block or flatter ... –



III. 13 Before we arrived in Germany that winter, to live in the Ehlhalten house built by the potato farmer, we learned that George had worked the previous winter as a draftsman by day, and in the back of his car by night! This was *verboten* of course, and took daily ingenuity, courage and presence of mind to carry it off. In fact, each night became a performance in itself. First George bought the food at the PX, either eating there or adding to his stash of small stock items for the car. No need to eat in a restaurant – ever! One imagines the interior of the car as the ultimate in space organization, with its boxes, probably the glove compartment became a desk, correspondence inside the compartment, and the piles of clothing that had to be worn each night in neat piles on the floor. The driver's seat was perhaps hollow to provide storage for food etc.?

George would exit right along with the others from the main entrance of the parking lot, then detour and double around back to enter the service entrance before the gate closed for the night. Once secured for the night in a far corner of the lot, the arduous task of dressing against the cold began. With five coats, three sweaters and many hats the disguise was complete, and George was not only obscured but unrecognizable! Thus buffered, he could sink into the back of the car until dawn.

Rising demanded precise action again and attention to time. George would exit hastily from the car to the basement of the building where the maintenance people could shower and shave. Then, back to the car to dress, grab a bite from the food stash, probably bread and cheese, and be ready to exit unobserved when the first deliveries came in. Once out of the gate, he retraced to the front entrance and drove in with the others to be at his desk by eight. This was truly a Fluxus vehicle: one was ready for a quick getaway with the stuff in one place; everything in it was of the utmost necessity, either miniaturized, symbolic or in the mind. The "authorities" no doubt knew about George and enjoyed the whole game as much as he did. What was *verboten*, of course, was to ever speak of it. The question is: did George know that they knew? And that's a mystery.



III. 14 *Dear Nam June:*

I got your letter 8 hours before I would have left for Köln, i.e. I got it Tuesday evening and I meant to leave early in the morning. But since you advise me not to come, I will not go Wednesday. So here are my plans: tomorrow (Wed. morning) I will telegram Tomas to come by train and telephone me at hospital. I can take him then to Ehlhalten. I will stay in hospital until Friday but I am not cured – I can not be cured, they say. I am not curable.

Instead of seeing you at your studio, which I wanted to very much since I came to Europe, I will have to go to Wuppertal to see your exhibition. So I will arrive on March 9th, Saturday, about 1 p.m. and will stay till Sunday, March 10th, till 12 p.m., when I must drive back. I will come with Tomas and will photograph EVERYTHING (I will bring 20 films).

I will also bring various objects (one of each) that could be used for the Review of Avant-Garde Hinduism. I now have 100 thick books

on all kinds of subjects – Arctic bibliography, law indexes, martial law, directories, all bound in leather very nicely – we could overprint or paste on review labels – and send each such a book. I also have many medicine bottles, old tablets, pills, poisons that could be included in these bottles. Also I got from printer sheets that he uses to run first through press, so that these pages have about 10 pages overprinted on them. I can bind books from these & we can make another review number. So I will bring all these ideas & samples to Wuppertal & we can discuss in GREAT DETAIL the review project. Photographs of all your objects should go in a separate Paik box like Brecht Fluxus box. (Just a box of photographs.)

I will bring parachutes to Wuppertal – I already have two – do you need more?

I will decide who is to give concerts in New York Fluxus, not Dick. If I say you give whole concert everyone will agree – Brecht, La Monte, Patterson & Emmett think you are one of the best and I think so too, therefore you should have a proportional representation ...

In late May & June we go with the car to Czechoslovakia, Poland, Lithuania & maybe USSR to give many Fluxus concerts. With me will go Tomas, Emmett and maybe Spoerri (I don't know). Too bad you cannot come. When do you go to Japan??? After Wuppertal? But I want to prepare your review during March & April in advance for whole year – because summer I will travel East, and autumn in New York etc., so I will not have too much time. But in 2 months with 3 people much can be done (2 of them working full time).

Is there a cheap hotel for us to stay in Wuppertal?



- III. 15 I met George Maciunas, who is the man behind all the Fluxus productions in Europe, around 1962. It just happened that George Maciunas was working in Europe at that time and Nam June Paik was in Cologne, Benjamin Patterson was also working in Germany, Emmett Williams was there – so actually the manifestations of what came to be known as Fluxus started in Europe.



- III. 16 I hope you can paste the long things (I mean the Fluxus preview) neatly like the way I did. Notice how neatly is the glue applied. I did it by overlapping all ten sheets, applying glue on ends. I used rubber cement – applied on both sides (I mean sides of ends that would face

each other when glued – is it clear?) Then I let this rubber cement dry & applied it (I mean the paper strips – the ends facing each other). So I applied, I mean overlapped the sheets, the ends that is, and got a very neat overlapping glue job. Then when job is finished, I suggest you roll them all up into cigarettes & put in empty cigarette box and the newspaper facsimiles into cigar boxes. You can offer them for smoking, it's healthier than tobacco.



III. 17 The Fluxus concerts in Wiesbaden in 1962 happened on the weekends, and during week nights we mostly stayed at the “lomasery”, discussing such issues as the difference between tactics and strategy (again, the analogy to leftist politics was crucial here), the interfaces among art, anti-art, non-art and life, the nature of realism and concrete art. Relaxation consisted of games of chess with Herr Bengler, the eccentric farmer who lived downstairs, or walks into the November snows, past the suicide’s grave (a cross at a fork in the road) and into the forest, to the charcoal burners’ huts.

Into this Fluxus-environment there came a typical young American couple to help George with his Renaissance music program (George: “*I want to get the public coming and going, I don’t want them to know what hit them.*”), he a fine cornetto player and she a frail harpsichordist, and both of them utterly suburban gobblers of beefsteaks and doughnuts. They were of course utterly bewildered by their new environment. Unable to speak German, they were completely dependent upon George for transportation; and George’s cars were a story in their own right – all of them black and brought out of retirement from one or another junk yard, all of them quite undependable. They never did learn that busses ran several times a day from the village, Ehlhalten-im-Taunus, to a nearby commuter train, so that we were by no means so isolated as they imagined. Eventually they stole a tape recorder from George, sold it, and used the proceeds to move to Bonn. “*Is best letting them go,*” said George, “*not good people for Fluxus collective.*” But that was, for all practical purposes, the end of George’s program of Renaissance music as part of Fluxus.



III. 18 *This Don Smithers – my good friend – pulled a trick on me. After smashing up my Volkswagen, and while I was in hospital, he just*

packed his wife, kid and belongings, plus a few of my belongings like the tape recorder, and disappeared . . . I think stealing a tape recorder is OK, but not from a man who is in hospital and cannot do anything about it. That's not a fair chess game. Now he could have done something like this – said "Look George at that bird on the tree through the window," and while I was looking where that bird was, he takes all things, packs and goes away, I turn and say, "Don, I see no bird." But Don is already in Bremerhaven. Now for that I would have given him credit! Anyway, that's that. He cost me already some \$600, so I am bound to be a sucker to sharp trumpet players. After all, all I can blow is oxygen forced into me from a tank.



III. 19 The first issue of *Dé-coll/age* that came out was done in 1962 in Cologne, and it included all of the people who were my friends at the time – Paik, Patterson, Maciunas, Mon, Kōpcke. And the magazine made its first public appearance at the concert that Paik organized in Wuppertal in 1962, and later that same year, in May, I presented it again in Dusseldorf when Maciunas was there. And I have to say that he was very jealous and pretty much put off, since he himself was preparing to publish a Fluxus magazine, and he found *Dé-coll/age* a little bothersome. Maciunas, moreover, had come to see me about three months previously, and he'd suggested a kind of merger between our magazines. But I didn't want to have anything to do with that since I didn't like his concepts of printing and his style: he had a way of being slightly artificial. Above all, he was very fond of composing things and re-elaborating things, and that was totally at odds with my own ideas. The second issue came out in the winter of 1962 and it was dedicated to Dick Higgins, who had just realized a solo concert. The third issue was exclusively concerned with (the Fluxus Festival in) Wiesbaden, and it had a text by Henry Flynt that was supposed to have appeared in Maciunas' magazine; Maciunas got very angry about that and considered it an affront, but he never really did anything to get back at me. All in all there were seven issues of *Dé-coll/age*, and I think they represented the most authentic phase of the activities of the Fluxus group.



III. 20 *This Vostell is a swindler. He is such an imitator that it goes beyond being comical. Anything he sees which he thinks is "the thing to do"*

he does next few months later. So when I started to work on Fluxus (leisurely) out he rushes with his Dé-coll/age – which is a very sloppy affair – because he does not consult authors – just grabs what he can (whether copyrighted or not) and rushes to print it. He stole from me Flynt's and Ligeti's essays for Dé-coll/age 3. In Dé-coll/age 2 he included La Monte even though it is copyrighted in An Anthology. He included some of my things – incomplete – which made not the slightest sense when printed the way he did. That's how he operates, & now he sees these Fluxus events, so he comes with his Dé-coll/age musique, takes a sheet of glass, stands behind the glass (audience in front of the glass) & throws a cake onto the glass & then smears the thing, the only thing, over and over and over. And I hate to see these cakes go – I think it's immoral to destroy good food, besides I like cakes. (I am not writing too small?) So Vostell is coming to New York this spring to throw the cake. He thinks he may do it at your Yam festivals!! Anyway he wants to get more material for his Dé-coll/age. He like most Germans can't see anyone else doing what they should be doing. After all, "Deutschland ist über Alles." Stockhausen and Helms are others like Vostell – Nationalistic Megalomaniacs. Except for Tomas Schmit (who is himself skeptical of Germans) – just a bunch of pretenders towards greatness and imitators. (This Dé-coll/age business was done by Hains & Dufrêne while Vostell did not even know that French word.) But now he is the "high priest" of Dé-coll/age. That's enough of Vostell, you will meet him this Spring and form your own opinion.

While I was writing this letter they released me from the hospital – so that my days of leisure have ended and I must finish this letter & start working 8 hours a day on crap.



III. 21 I met George by mail. It must have been Alison Knowles who called me up to say GM was in bad shape with asthma in an Air Force hospital in Germany and needed help or at least some encouragement. Dick Higgins and Alison had just returned from the first Fluxus excursion in Europe. As I had never met George I was skeptical that such a person really existed, but Alison was reassuring.

I decided to send something for entertainment, so I stuck some pistol caps on the back of old photos from an Italian magazine of WW1 vintage. I remember there was a photo of a priest blessing the propeller of an Italian Air Force fighter plane. The idea was to put

the photo on an anvil and hit the front with a hammer until all the caps exploded. Later GM said he got a big kick out of this procedure, especially since after he exploded all the caps, he set up the photos' remains for the locals to continue the destruction (part of an exhibition of some sort in the hospital). He said the people beat the shit out of those photos until there was nothing left but fuzz.

The next thing I knew GM was cured and in NYC. An Air Force psychologist had convinced him he really did have asthma, the real kind, and he had to take a shot in the rear every two days, which practice he continued until the very end.



III. 22 *There are another 700 of Spoerri's books in Wiesbaden at printer's, but I will let the printer keep them because I have nothing to pay him with and he will not give me those books and trust that I will pay later. The devil suspects something.*

You know about Olivetti piece, you need no score. Just get a tape from any Olivetti adding machine and you have a score. Offices, stores they throw them away by tons, just go & ask. OK? Incidentally, correct title is in memoriam to Adriano Olivetti (not homage). OK? We did it in Nice (on promenade) this Olivetti with bowler hats only – 6 people – all with bowler hats formally dressed – looked better than other versions – like for a funeral – very appropriate – you could do that version.

Also you could do a church version. Use all gestures a priest uses in mass & do them according to the score, but sharp! & a priest in vestments must do it, not just any actor. OK?

Instructions are like this: each performer chooses number, metronome set to about 120 or less. Each tact indicates horizontal line. When performer sees his number (sharp on tact) like lifts his hat, on next number he lowers his hat. But must be bowler hats or top hats, not just any hat. And in memoriam must be like in funeral. I picked up load of bowler hats at the Paris fleece market at 4NF each.



III. 23 I've always been a part of Fluxus through certain friends of mine, people like Ben Vautier, who has always been a very good friend, and then George Brecht, Robert Filliou and Emmett Williams. And after all, it was only Maciunas who decided who was part of Fluxus and who wasn't.



III. 24 *I am still in hospital, drinking kilograms of pills, being perforated with needles, surrounded by gas masks, dials, valves and all kinds of interesting objects. I pray daily to all the gods and anti-gods that my spine collapses in time so I can collect that insurance & have a hell of a Fluxus time forever after.*



III. 25 Maciunas had contacts in various towns (Addi K pcke in Copenhagen, Jean-Clarence Lambert in Paris, Beuys in Dusseldorf, Willem de Ridder in Amsterdam and The Hague, Ben in Nice) who had to find – preferably without having to pay – rooms and engagements. As soon as when and where were settled, Maciunas spent whole nights producing posters and sorting out programs (which never seemed to have very much to do with the program that was actually performed) and had them printed. Everyone was asked to come if they could. By the way, financial problems never cropped up: Maciunas paid for the printing materials etc., and everyone was invited to pay their own traveling expenses and their accommodation. There were no fees for the actors, let alone for the authors whose things were performed (surprising, really, that anything at all came off with this arrangement – well, those were the days). The contacts were also in charge of obtaining all the non-portable equipment (such as ladders, pianos, tubs, paper rolls, etc.) and a few actors. If one arrived a day, or even only an hour, before the start of the festival, one could set the program up. This depended firstly on who of the Fluxus people had managed to come; secondly on what equipment had been found; and thirdly on how many and what kind of actors had been persuaded to help. There were pieces that could or should only be performed by the author (for instance: most of Paik's pieces, many of Ben's, Patterson's double bass piece, Vostell's pieces); some pieces which required, at least to some degree, capable actors (as for example Cage pieces, La Monte's *566 for Henry Flynt*); and some which any child and almost any adult could perform without rehearsal. There were pieces which demanded particular requisites, such as an attackable (for instance, paintable) piano; some that could be managed with various things (if there were five bowler hats available, the Olivetti piece was played with five bowler hats; if there was only one, it was played

with a bowler hat, fly, a bottle of Underberg, a bow and an umbrella; if there was nothing at all, Olivetti was played with lip sounds); for some of the pieces Maciunas carried the requisites in a specially made suitcase, tidily arranged; and there were some that did not need any requisites at all, or only things which could be got hold of anywhere. It was briefly discussed and decided who did what and when, whether someone should announce the pieces or not, etc. The program was then written on a piece of paper which was pinned to the stage door: it could begin.



III. 26 It was a cold, gray December day in 1962 when George's battered second-hand (no, it was at least fourth-hand) relic of an automobile, overloaded with electronic equipment – and oven-heated bricks wrapped in newspapers to keep our feet from freezing – broke down, or broke up, amongst the fog-shrouded battlefields of Verdun.

We had hauled the load from Wiesbaden, starting in the early morning, and were en route to the Festum Fluxorum in Paris, scheduled to open the next day. We had allowed ourselves enough time to visit historic landmarks along the way. But our progress was slow, and George's nerves were strung high as he steered his old jalopy along almost invisible roads. It came almost as a relief when the motor expired.

We hiked in freezing drizzle to a lonely farmhouse. We explained our predicament, and the farmer's wife summoned a tow-truck from a garage in town. It was a long wait, punctuated by the wheezing and coughing of a shivering George Maciunas. The farmer produced a bottle of red, which George declined. Then, to my astonishment, George accepted a glass of brandy. "*Good medicine,*" he said. He needed it.

Finally, the tow-truck. Then back to Verdun, and the garage. The garage man said they were about to close, and they could do nothing with the automobile until *demain matin* at the earliest. We were doomed to spend the night in Verdun.

We found a hotel by the Meuse, and settled in for the night, beginning, at my insistence, in the restaurant, at a table near the fireplace. It was a major defeat for George. He was a cracker-and-peanut-butter man, and had brought plenty of both along with him; but unfortunately for him, his food rations were stashed away in a

broken-down automobile in a closed garage several miles away. So on this night of nights, in the warmth of the restaurant, though our means were extremely limited we splurged. If I remember the evening so well, more than thirty years later, it is because it was the first time, and the last time, that I shared a liter of wine with my abstemious, penny-pinching companion. With a rich and wonderful *civet* of hare.

As the night wore on, and George's body reached room temperature, his spirits rose. He tried to make jokes with the waiter. While I knew that when George was a little boy he had learnt to speak French at a tuberculosis sanatorium in Switzerland, and had even forgotten how to speak his native Lithuanian for a while, I know, too, that through the years he forgot his French, and on this evening in Verdun he was unable to make the waiter laugh when he told him, in English, "*Waiter, there is a hair in my hare pie.*"

We played with my tangram set during dinner, then in our room late into the sleepless night ("*Cough-cough-cough*"), and again the next morning at the garage (there was still freezing drizzle outside), on into the afternoon, impatiently yet optimistically awaiting the verdict of the garage man.

"Junk the car, *messieurs*," he said with finality, "it will never run again."

The opening of the festival was approaching. Since it was impossible to load the electronic equipment and our luggage onto the Paris train, we were forced to hire a taxi, cram in our load, amassing a formidable fare between Verdun and the City of Light, where our Fluxus colleagues were waiting for us and the equipment.

We arrived just before starting time. The other performers had rearranged the program to take care of our non-appearance. Can an elephant fly? Do two and two make seven? George insisted that the show go on as he had programmed it. He always had the last word – as well as the first – at Fluxus festivals.

Life begins at eight-thirty, theater people used to say. It didn't on Monday the 3rd of December 1962. The doors opened – and nobody came. Well, three or four.

What had happened? George had mailed five thousand posters advertising the festival to Jean-Clarence Lambert. Lambert was a member of the *Domaine Poétique*, to whom we had allotted the seventh and final evening of the festival. Lambert did a very unpoetic thing. He ignored our posters altogether, but distributed thousands

of invitations to his own evening. Yes, his evening the house was full. As George said, but in Lithuanian, "*Merde alors!*"



III. 27 *I am selling my amplifier etc. to raise money QUICK. Is there anyone at Stars & Stripes possibly interested?*

Here is the list: (maybe it could be put on a bulletin board.)

	<i>list</i>	<i>selling for</i>
<i>Two Acoustic Research Speakers</i>		
<i> – AR3</i>	<i>\$203 each</i>	<i>\$130 each</i>
<i>Citation I preamplifier</i>	<i>\$250</i>	<i>\$170</i>
<i>Citation II amplifier – (120 Watt)</i>	<i>\$230</i>	<i>\$200</i>
<i>Klepper Aeriuss sailing boat</i>	<i>\$400</i>	<i>\$200</i>



III. 28 *Dear Prof. Beuys:*

Thank you very much for your letter of January 5, 1963, which I received today. I was very distressed to hear about your poor health and hope you are better now.

Our business:

- 1. February 2 and 3 would be very good for us.*
- 2. We can definitely provide Fluxus with two concerts. Our planned program is enclosed. Electronic music is not included, as the equipment is very hard to transport and is not worth the effort for concerts. Perhaps we can still include some electronic music, if we still have room in our car for the equipment.*
- 3. Finances. In view of the scope of the program we are not in the position to pay the publicity (posters, newspaper advertisements, etc.) or the programs or the rental fee for the hall. Transportation and lodging (if a cheap – a very cheap – hotel can be found) are all that we can pay for.*
- 4. Performers:*

The following performers will participate:

 - 1. Nam June Paik*
 - 2. Tomas Schmit*
 - 3. Emmett Williams*
 - 4. George Maciunas*

5. Robert Filliou – These are still not certain; however if
6. Daniel Spoerri they visit me as planned, they can
participate.

7. Dick Higgins – These two might still be in Turkey, but
8. Alison Knowles if they come back in time they will of
course participate.

We will need four assistants to help with the performance.

5. *We would like to suggest that members of the press and representatives of organizations such as AP, UPI, Reuters, Tass etc., be invited by letter and given free tickets*

6. *We would also like the typography "Festum Fluxorum" (on the enclosed films) to be the same for all the printed matter (publicity and programs).*

With thanks for your efforts in the organization of the Festum Fluxorum in Dusseldorf, we respectfully remain, yours,

*George Maciunas
for the Planning Committee,
FLUXUS,
6241 EHLHALTEN, 17 Gräfliche St.*



III. 29 *Dear Prof. Beuys:*

I have enclosed a slightly revised program. I doubt very much whether Dick and Alison Higgins will receive my communication early enough to be back from Turkey for February 2 and 3. I have therefore asked the very good Swedish "events" composers Bengt af Klintberg and Staffan Olzon to participate. They will arrive in a car fully packed with their materials and other performers.

I would like to ask you if you could perhaps provide (borrow) the following items:

1. *a free-standing ladder, as high as possible.*
2. *a water bucket, large or small.*
3. *a can.*
4. *a very thick rope, about 10 meters long or longer.*
5. *an "exit" sign in German.*
6. *military headgear, a screen, and trumpet in case.*
7. *3 or 4 assistants to help perform.*
8. *a slide projector (only if the academy has one).*

9. *parents with a baby (about 1 to 3 years only) (will only be needed for one performance).*
10. *2 loudspeakers & if possible an amplifier with a microphone.*

We would be very thankful to you if you could arrange to find for us cheap lodgings in Dusseldorf for Saturday night for about 10 people (the rooms can have 2 or 3 or 4 beds). You could also contract someone (a student) to photograph our performances.

We, that is Emmett Williams, Nam June Paik, Tomas Schmit, and I, will arrive around 1 p.m. and drive directly to the Academy where we would like to rehearse and prepare a few pieces with the new assistants.

I believe the festival will enjoy a good success, and that it will be concentrated and compact. We are planning a 1 1/2 hour-long program for each evening. I hope that will be neither too short nor too long. With many thanks for your efforts. I respectfully remain, yours

...



III. 30 *Dear Prof. Beuys:*

I received your letter last night, so I am writing you another letter this morning to answer your questions.

1. *It would be a bit inconvenient to come to Dusseldorf on February 1 at 10 a.m. as I would have to stay away from my job and lose 80 marks. I can come on Friday evening at about 11 p.m. Emmett Williams has the same problem. I will come on February 1 at 10 a.m. if it is absolutely necessary. By the way, Saturday will suffice for the preparations.*
2. *An idea for our manifesto could be a quotation from the dictionary (enclosed) about the meaning of Fluxus. I have also enclosed another manifesto.*
3. *We would be very happy and pleased if you would participate as a performer at the Festival. Wolf Vostell. Dieter Hülsmanns and Frank Trowbridge can also participate as performers and composers. I have revised the program again and added your compositions, although I do not know which composition by Trowbridge can be performed. I must see him before I can say.*
4. *If a tape recorder can be provided, I would be very happy to bring the tapes. I have also placed these taped compositions on the program.)*

5. *We would not destroy the piano. But could we whitewash it? (Paint a section with white watercolors?) (and then afterwards wash it off).*
6. *During the day I can be reached at Wiesbaden 54443.*

*Regards
G. Maciunas*



III. 31 *Behold! I am back unto the sick man's house. This time for a few weeks. I must be like that Chevy in Verdun. (I am not writing too small?) (If not I will continue, you see I got this very nice pen & I want to utilize its advantages.) You got back from Dusseldorf OK? I ran into a snow storm that was worse than that fog (in Verdun), but finally made it to Ehlhalten about 4 a.m. in the morning. Now I have some people, (John) Cale is his name, wishing a + "Festum Fluxorum" + in London ... Please amuse me, it's very boring in the hospital.*



III. 32 *I just lost \$100. The generator in my bus burnt up and had to be replaced. That's such a lot of money that I will have to embark upon an austerity program. One thing to do is skip London, especially since this boat trip is not the cheapest. Therefore I trust you can carry out & lead Fluxus part there very well. Tomas will be there. The program there was to be: Lots of English pieces, plus:*

1. *Your counting song. I think it should be done by a few performers simultaneously and unannounced. I mean unannounced only after piece is performed. Don't you think so???*
2. *Tomas Schmit – Piano No. 1.*
3. *George Brecht – Quartet – (only if 4 violins are available. You know how it goes – shaking hands ... Quartet in 3 movements.*
4. *Nam June Paik – One for Violin Solo – only if violin can be obtained for smash-up.*
5. *My Olivetti – you must obtain metronome or have conductor giving exact time beat. Also must obtain all sorts of hats: bowler, military. Could do like this:*
 1. *bowler hat*
 2. *military salute*
 3. *fat man bow away from audience*
 4. *small man bow towards audience*

5. *sit on chair*
6. *open umbrella – close (holding umbrella upright all the time).*

Six people are enough or even 5 if fat man is not around. But don't do the piece if performers can't keep exact time (they can miss numbers on score etc. but must keep exact time).

6. *If Brecht's Quartet can not be done, do his drip music (either version, pitcher or nose dropper) or his piano music, vase of flowers on piano.*
7. *If my Olivetti can't be done correctly or well do my Piano No. 1 (bring piano to stage just before performing some other piece for piano).*

If there is time to add more Fluxus pieces, I suggest the following:

8. *Your 4-directional song. Tomas has the whistles. And also Voice Piece for La Monte Young. (Also announce maybe afterwards):*
9. *Dick Higgins – Constellation No. 7 (with gongs, violins etc.) or 4 (voices).*
10. *Ben Patterson – Septet (Fluxus variation). Tomas has whistles and darts. Must get balloons.*
11. *Toshi Ichiyanagi – Piano Piece No. 5 (Fluxus variation) – very good piece, it should be done. Tomas has darts. Could perform that right after my Piano No. 1 which would position piano correctly for Toshi's piece. Don't forget to suppress pedal!!!*

Try to squeeze in more pieces!

Now if you miss getting ride with Griffith Rose you must know where to go! Go to:

John Cale, 2 Chamberlain St., London N.W. 1.

I may come Friday evening if I can figure another way of saving money, otherwise I see you in Paris or Nice, OK?



- III. 33 *What the hellium were you doing ding in Vienna? I thought you were in London. I was so certain you would be in London I did not myself go there (to save the \$ that I lost on that confounded generator). BUT YOU MUST, ABSOLUTELY MUST, GO TO NICE. Tomas will come to pick you up on July 20 or July 21. This will give sufficient time for preparations. Sorry you were not in Paris – you*

could have come with me. Keep those Brecht boxes in safe place. I have cards for them.

GREETINGS
FROM
MAO-TSE-TUNG



III. 34 *I propose that we drive with my new LARGE car, Ford station wagon, 9 seats. (But consumes much juice.) We could share expense of gas, since after June 14 I lose my job, & all gasoline privileges & other deals, so I will have to buy this damn French gasoline at high normal price! We could then drive to Nice via nice places, Burgundy, Provence etc., take time, relax, drink wine, eat good food, maybe we can perform, give "concert" in each wayside restaurant or hotel we stay over, in return for free meals & rooms (like medieval minstrels), so we could then travel for practically nothing, eat + perform our way to Nice. Then (maybe) we can continue to Italy and give festival in Florence during August – if Chiari, Bussotti, Metzger can arrange something, & perform in hotels same way through Italy – what a swindle that would be!!! Let me know what you think. Sounds OK?*



III. 35 *dammed dammed bad bad luck*

few minutes after i left the mechanic, police (who obviously cannot imagine that such an old car can be legally registered) stopped me and asked for the license (which i did not have) – only because i told them that i just took the car from the mechanic to make a little try with it and that i thought that it was a private road, i am not in prison now ... but obviously impossible to travel without a license for the car – so i sent a telegram to george to send me his passport (which i need for a correct registration) – this way i will not be able to come to paris before friday noon – even this is not sure yet (depends on when i will get george's passport) – so, in case you can get a lift to nice or would not mind to hitchhike, this may be a more sure way than to wait for me.



III. 36 *It is unfortunate that the idiotic German pedantic bureaucracy had to block your participation in Nice. It is typical of the way they*

try their best to make it difficult for others. Before leaving I made sure that Tomas could pick the car up. Asked them what documents he had to bring, left a letter with my authorization for Tomas to pick the car up. Then last Wednesday I get telegram from Tomas saying now they ask for my passport. So I mailed my passport same day air-special delivery. By Saturday it was still not there!! So Tomas with all these printed books was not able to leave Wiesbaden even on Saturday. The other trouble is that now I am without a passport and can't travel at all, even within France. Stupid situation.



III. 37 ... it is better you did not come to Nice, since the Casino management canceled our date after seeing Ben's program with all the vomit pieces etc. that he has inserted. Ben got a smaller hall, but Casino fearing trouble & being suspicious of Ben called in a battalion of policemen who would not let him distribute leaflets. But we played well I think. Ben played very well Paik's One for Violin Solo. We played the Olivetti piece for bowler hats only which came off much more unified & more in-memoriam or funeral-like than the previous versions. Performances on street came off very well, & not at all like demonstrations. Usually we could perform a few moving pieces to bring in attention, then set up table & chairs & perform stationary pieces sitting around table like in café. We would end by handing out blank sheets (you should see how people grabbed these sheets eagerly – they were so eager to learn new things), or we would hand out cards with just "FLUXUS" on them. (Also not very instructive.)

We began for instance by doing Graphis 6 of us all with bowler hats in tight bunch stepping in tiny steps across street – stopping traffic, or making drivers very nervous. Or we do Watts' 2 Inches across the Promenade, so people go all around the ribbon but do not break it before we cut it. Then Paik's dragging suite, Zen for street, etc. Around table we would do our concert hall pieces, always writing the composer and title on blackboard (pieces like your counting song, La Monte's scratching of violin, Dick's Constellations). Always very large crowds, we could count to 60 or more. In fact it convinced me that the street is best theater to give concerts in – it's free, we don't have to advertise & we get audiences. Since we don't spend any money on rent & promotion we can't lose anything. Up to now all these festivals meant only loss & small audiences (limited diffusion of Fluxus). I think we should concentrate in New

York on these street manifestations or at least on areas that we can get free for performances. These street concerts are also very good way to promote concerts in halls since it makes people curious about what the hell this is all about.



III. 38 That the festivals went off comparatively smoothly was largely due to Maciunas' personality: a Lithuanian/American asthmatic, clinging to life with a large mountain of medicines. Even in the middle of crossing a street he would get out his throat spray. Sometimes he felt so bad that he would only let me talk to him through a gap in the door. Even if I was not smoking, the smell of tobacco that clung around my clothes brought him close to snuffing his candle ... So he thought about pubs what we would think about no-beer-left, visits to doctors, bells pealing, or a dose of crabs: they made him terribly nervous. And each and every smoker was to him the devil incarnate. Anyway, he considered smoking and drinking as totally unnecessary diversions from sensible work; he was an ascetic who put all his money and, as far as his job and his health permitted, all his time and energy into painstaking and hard (unfortunately, partly unnecessary) work for Fluxus.



III. 39 George stayed in contact. His letters were always on thin airmail envelopes, that you have to cut open carefully and then unfold. Opening his letters had to be done with special care, because every inch of the paper was used. He printed his text so concisely that it must have taken him hours to write it. The first letter I ever got from him was a sensation. Not so much what he wrote, but the fanatic dedication to writing as much readable text as possible on one sheet of thin paper amazed me no end. I thought I was the only one to do things like that. I felt immediately at home. I know the great pleasure of sitting motionless for hours and hours with a good fountain pen to make every character a masterpiece.

Since I was an asthmatic, it was a great way to distract my attention from my breathing. It was sometimes a question of life and death to do that. During an attack breathing became so impossible, that every movement meant suffocation. To sit perfectly still, only moving the right hand, burning attention at the writing paper and endless texts to write was a question of survival.

Later I discovered that he was taking a complete pharmacy per day to fight his asthma. I had never seen one man taking so many medicines in my life. His face was grey (like mine when I have an attack) and his concentration intense.

So we hit it off immediately. We both agreed that art was too compartmentalized and he complained that several Fluxus artists still wanted to make art. We must have talked for hours, but I have not the faintest idea about what. That is also typical. Talking is a great distracter of attention. We decided that I would become chairman of Fluxus for Northern Europe. I loved the idea that George was setting up a business. I had already some experience with the presentation of art as a regular commercial business, complete with the right stationery, costume, office, meetings, business cards, attaché cases etc. It created a fantastic confusion and nobody dared to take the risk not to take you seriously.

When I organized the first Fluxus concert in Amsterdam, George came from Wiesbaden to perform and to co-organize. He gave some interviews and we soon got involved in an endless conversation about what Fluxus was. Some journalists thought it was Dada. (Those were the few who had any idea at all of course; most others thought we were lunatics.) George disagreed. It was definitely not Dada, but anti-art. I was a little disappointed, of course. People who are anti-art are still involved with art. It does not matter if you fight art or love art, in both cases your focus is on the same subject. It seems that hate and love are exactly the same physical process in the human body. After some talking George became flexible and agreed about Dada elements in Fluxus. But then he went overboard with borderland art, non-art and gag-art.

I carefully tried business, but he had no idea what I was talking about. But we agreed that I would set up a mail-order house for Flux products and after that I got regular instructions from headquarters in New York. Precise instructions about who was Fluxus and who was not. Who was lost for ever and who was promising. We agreed that Fluxus had to run a tight ship, because by that time it had become clear to me that Fluxus existed only in the imagination of George. We all loved George, and did what we wanted anyway. We happily played Fluxus, too. It was a nice piece – by George.



III. 40 *The hospital insists that I be "evacuated" by end of June, which means losing my job and being dumped in N.Y. – all this upsets my plans. I will try to stay in Europe somehow through July & August & return in September.*



III. 41 *Remember you promised to make little newspaper booklets, from torn newspaper pages. So please make 1,000 of them & send me some 300 before May, the other 700 between May and July, OK? Your book will come out in May. Now you are "F" Fluxus, "f", because all special "solo" editions are lettered (year boxes are numbered), understand? Nam June Paik's review is Fluxus "a", Daniel's book is "b", George Brecht Yam box is "c", La Monte Young's 1961 compositions (all single straight line) (very simple little book) is "d" and I forget what is "e", maybe you are "e" not "f", I must look at the chart. When I first wrote that you were "f" I just took the letter out of the hat, you may very well be "e" or "d". Is it now all clear? Then Emmett is "f" or "g" and so on until x, y, z, then we will have a-a, b-b, etc., then a-a-a. So in 100 years we will have a-a-a-a-a-a-a etc.*



III. 42 *George, do you remember the exact day and place where we met? I don't. But I remember riding in your Buick shortly afterwards. You wore a bowler hat. You also lived in a hotel near the opera.*



III. 43 *I am flying to New York tomorrow ... I will throw a glance at you from the heavens.*



The name cards that George designed for his Fluxus colleagues.

FLUXUS * INTERNATIONALE FESTSPIELE NEUESTER MUSIK

IM HÖRSAAL DES STÄDTISCHEN MUSEUMS, WIESBADEN

SAMSTAG 1. SEPT. 1962 14:30 UHR	KONZERT NR.1, KLAVIER KOMPOSITIONEN - U.S.A., K.E.WELIN UND F.RZEWSKI - PIANISTEN. JOHN CAGE: 31'57.9864"/PHILIP CORNER: KLAVIER TATIGKEITEN (FÜR EIN KLAVIER UND VIELE SPIELER) & FLUX & FORM NR.7 & 14 / TERRY RILEY: KONZERT FÜR 2 PIANISTEN UND TONBAND / T.JENNINGS: KLAVIER STÜCKE / JED CURTIS: KLAVIER STÜCK / GRIFITH ROSE: 2. ENNEAD / DICK HIGGINS: CONSTELLATION NR.1(FÜR 2 KLAVIERE UND 3 RADIOS) / LA MONTE YOUNG: "566" FÜR HENRY FLYNT & KLAVIER STÜCKE FÜR DAVID TUDOR NR.2 / GEORGE BRECHT: FÜNF KLAVIER STÜCKE 1961 UND DREI KLAVIER STÜCKE 1962
SAMSTAG 1. SEPT. 20:00 UHR	KONZERT NR.2 KLAVIER KOMPOSITIONEN - JAPAN, K.E.WELIN - PIANIST. TOSHI ICHIYANAGI: MUSIK FÜR KLAVIER NR.1 BIS NR.7 / YORIAKI MATSUDAIRA: INSTRUKTIONEN FÜR KLAVIER / SHINICHI MATSUSHITA: MOSAIKEN / YOKO ONO: EIN STÜCK UM DEN HIMMEL ZU SEHEN / KEIJIRO SATO: CALIGRAPHY / YUJI TAKAHASHI: EKSTASIS / TORU TAKEMITSU: KLAVIER ENTFERNUNG UND ÜBERGANG / YASUNAO TONE: KLAVIER TON MIT TONBAND / GEORGE YNASE: PROJECTION ESEMPLASTIC I, II UND III
SONNTAG 2. SEPT. 14:30 UHR	KONZERT NR.3, KLAVIER KOMPOSITIONEN - EUROPA, K.E.WELIN - PIANIST. K.H.STOCKHAUSEN: KLAVIERSTÜCK IV / G.LIGETI: TROIS BAGATELLES / G.M.KOENIG: 2 KLAVIER STÜCKE / KONRAD BOEHMER: KLANGSTÜCK & POTENTIAL / JAN MORTHENSON: COURANTE / LARS J.WERLE: GRILLER FÜR PIANIST / MICHAEL VON BIEL: EIN BUCH FÜR DREI / DIETER SCHNEBEL: REACTIONS (KONZERT FÜR EINEN INSTRUMENTALISTEN & PUBLIKUM) & VISIBLE MUSIK FÜR 1 DIRIGENTEN UND 1 INSTRUMENTALISTEN.
SONNTAG 2. SEPT. 20:00 UHR	KONZERT NR.4, KLAVIER KOMPOSITIONEN - EUROPA, F.RZEWSKI - PIANIST. JACQUES CALONNE: QUADRANGLES SUIVIS DE FENETRES ET BOUCLES / PAOLO EMILIO CARAPEZZA: 90 CIELO / GIUSEPPE CHIARI: GESTI SUL PIANO / SYLVANO BUSSOTTI: POUR CLAVIER, 5 KLAVIER STÜCKE FÜR DAVID TUDOR & PER TRE (FÜR EIN KLAVIER UND 3 PIANISTEN) / FREDERIC RZEWSKI STUDIEN & TRÄUME / LUCIER: ACTION MUSIC FOR PIANO BOOK I / MACCHI: TITONE / MARCHETTI MUSIK
SAMSTAG 8. SEPT. 20:00 UHR	KONZERT NR.5, KOMPOSITIONEN FÜR ANDERE INSTRUMENTE UND STIMMEN - U.S.A., GEORGE BRECHT: KARTENSTÜCK FÜR STIMMEN / JOHN CAGE: SOLO FÜR STIMME (2) 1960 / PHILIP CORNER: PASSIONATE EXPANSE OF THE LAW / DICK HIGGINS: CONSTELLATION NR.4 & NR.7 / TERRY JENNINGS: STREICHQUARTETT / PHILIP KRUMM: MUSTER (FÜR STREICHQUARTETT) / JACKSON MAC LOW: BUCHSTABEN FÜR IRIS NUMMERN FÜR DIE STILLE UND DANKE - EINE ZUSAMMENARBEIT FÜR LEUTE / TERRY RILEY: UMSCHLAG 1960 (FÜR STREICHQUARTETT) / EMMETT WILLIAMS: EIN ZWEIFELHAFTES LIED IN VIER RICHTUNGEN FÜR 5 STIMMEN / GEORGE BRECHT: STREICHQUARTETT / LA MONTE YOUNG: KOMPOSITION 1960 NR.7 (FÜR STREICHQUARTETT)
SONNTAG 9. SEPT. 14:30 UHR	KONZERT NR.6, KOMPOSITIONEN FÜR ANDERE INSTRUMENTE UND STIMMEN - JAPAN, TOSHI ICHIYANAGI: STANZEN & PILE / KENJIRO EZAKI: BEWEGLICHE PULSE & DISCRETION / YORITSUNE MATSUDAIRA: EIN STÜCK FÜR SOLO FLÖTE / YASUNAO TONE: ANAGRAMM FÜR STREICHE / YOKO ONO: DER PULS /
SONNTAG 9. SEPT. 20:00 UHR	KONZERT NR.7, KOMPOSITIONEN FÜR ANDERE INSTRUMENTE UND STIMMEN - EUROPA, MICHAEL VON BIEL: STREICH MUSIK / GEORGE MACIUNAS: SOLO FÜR STIMME UND MIKROPHON / GRIFITH ROSE: STREICHQUARTETT / FREDERIC RZEWSKI: SOLOLOQUY (FÜR VIOLINE) UND THREE RHAPSODIES FOR SLIDE WHISTLES / BENJAMIN PATTERSON: VARIATIONEN FÜR KONTRABASS /
FREITAG 14. SEPT. 20:00 UHR	KONZERT NR.8, KONKRETE MUSIK & HAPPENINGS - U.S.A., JOSEPH BYRD: ZWEI STÜCKE FÜR RICHARD MAXFIELD, 1960 / JOHN CAGE: VARIATIONS / GEORGE BRECHT: KARTENSTÜCK FÜR OBJEKTE, TRÖPFELNDE MUSIK, KERZEN STÜCK FÜR RADIOS & SOLO FÜR EINEN BLÄSER / JED CURTIS: GAVOTTE, ALLEMAND, UND GIGUE / DICK HIGGINS: GEFÄHRLICHE MUSIK NR. 2 UND GRAPHIS 82 / JACKSON MAC LOW: EIN STÜCK FÜR SARI DIENES / TERRY RILEY: OHR STÜCK (FÜR PUBLIKUM) /
SAMSTAG 15. SEPT. 20:00 UHR	KONZERT NR.9, KONKRETE MUSIK & HAPPENINGS - JAPAN, TOSHI ICHIYANAGI: MUSIK FÜR ELEKRISCHE METRONOM & IBM MUSIK / K. AKIYAMA: EINE GEHEIM METHODE / TAKENHISA KOSUGI: MICRO I & MANODHARMA I / YOKO ONO: ZWEI STÜCKE / YASUNAO TONE: TAGE, NUMMER & UNTERREDUNG / GEORGE YNASE: MUSIQUE CONCRETE UND AOINOUE /
SONNTAG 16. SEPT. 20:00 UHR	KONZERT NR.10, KONKRETE MUSIK & HAPPENINGS - INTERNATIONAL, NAM JUNE PAIK: SIMPLE / PIERRE MERCURE: STRUCTURES METALLIQUES NR.3 / NAM JUNE PAIK: HOMMÄGE Ä JOHN CAGE / ETUDE FOR PIANOFORTE UND SONATA QUAZI UNA FANTASIA / DIETER SCHNEBEL: SICHTBARE MUSIK FÜR EINEN DIRIGENTEN / MACIUNAS: IN MEMORIAM FÜR ADRIANO OLIVETTI / BENJAMIN PATTERSON: SEPTET AUS "LEMONS" UND OVERTURE (2. DARSTELLUNG) / GEORGE BRECHT: WORD EVENT
22. SEPT. 14:30 UHR	KONZERT NR.11, TONBAND MUSIK UND FILME - U.S.A., JOHN CAGE: FONTANA MIX, MUSIC FOR THE MARRYING MAIDEN / LA MONTE YOUNG: ZWEI TÖNE / STAN VANDERBEEK: FILMEN / DICK HIGGINS: REQUIEM FOR WAGNER THE CRIMINAL MAYOR
22. SEPT. 20:00 UHR	KONZERT NR.12, TONBAND MUSIK - U.S.A., RICHARD MAXFIELD: HUFTEN MUSIK / RADIO MUSIK / DAMPF / PASTORAL SYMPHONY / PERSPECTIVES / NACHT MUSIK
SONNTAG 23. SEPT. 14:30 UHR	KONZERT NR.13, TONBAND MUSIK UND FILME - JAPAN, KANADA. TOSHI ICHIYANAGI: KAIKI / NOBUTAKA MIZUNO: TONBAND STÜCK / TORU TAKEMITSU: VOCALISM A-I & WASSER MUSIK / YASUNAO TONE: COSTUME UND WARANIN / GEORGE YNASE: AOI-NO-UE / TESHIGAHARA: FILM / YOJI KURI: HUMAN ZOO / OSHIMA: FILM / HANI: FILM / ISTVAN ANHALT: COMPOSITION NR.4 / CIONI CARPI & L. PORTUGAIS: POINT ET CONTREPOINT (FILM) / MAURICE BLACKBURN: JE (FILM) /
SONNTAG 23. SEPT. 20:00 UHR	KONZERT NR.14, TONBAND MUSIK - FRANKREICH, "LES PREMIERES DECOUVERTES": P.SCHAEFFER: ETUDE AUX CASSEROL P.HENRY: MUSIQUE SANS TITRE / P.ARTHUYS: NATURE MORTE Ä LA GUITARE / A.HODEIR: JAZZ ET JAZZ / "RECHERCHES RECENTES": L.FERRARI: ETUDE AUX ACCIDENTS & TÊTE ET QUEUE DU DRAGON / F.B.MACHE: PRÉLUDE / E. CANTON: ETUDE / J. HIDALGO: ETUDE / B. PARMEGIANI: ETUDE / F. BAYLE: TREMPLINS & LIGNES ET POINTS / M. PHILIPPOT: AMBIANCE II / P. CARSON: ETUDE / P. SCHAEFFER: SIMULTANÉ CAMEROUNAIS /

EINTRITTS- FÜR JEDES KONZERT DM 3 EINTRITTSKARTEN SIND AM EINGANG ZU ERHALTEN ODER DURCH:
KARTEN FÜR EIN ABONNEMENT (14 KONZERTE) DM 20 VORVERKAUF AM HAUPTBAHNHOF, WIESBADEN
FÜR STUDENTEN DM 1.50

FLUXUS * EINE INTERNATIONALE ZEITSCHRIFT NEUESTER KUNST, ANTIKUNST, MUSIK, ANTIMUSIK, DICHTUNG, ANTIDICHTUNG, ETC.

George's poster for the world's first Fluxus festival, in 1962.



Above: *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* in Wiesbaden, September 1962. The dedicated music makers (from left) George Maciunas, Dick Higgins, Wolf Vostell, Benjamin Patterson and Emmett Williams perform Philip Corner's *Piano Activities*.

Below: Emmett Williams, Wolf Vostell, Nam June Paik, Dick Higgins, Benjamin Patterson and George Maciunas. Photos by Hartmut Rekort, © Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.



NIKOLAI KIRKE

23. og 24. samt 26., 27. og 28. november 1962 kl. 20

samt
ALLÉ SCENEN

Søndag den 25. november 1962 kl. 15

FLUXUS

**MUSIK OG ANTI-MUSIK
DET INSTRUMENTALE TEATER**

6 PRO- ET CONTRAGRAMMER

Medvirkende:

**Nam June
Dick
Allison
Emmett
Arthur
Albert
Wolf
Robert
George
Jørgen
Musica**

med

**Palk
Higgins
Knowles
Williams
Köpcke
Mertz
Vostell
Filliou
Maclunas
Frilsholm
Vitalls**

flere

Arr. af: Det Unge Tonekunstnerselskab - Galerie Köpcke - Kunstbiblioteket, Nikolai Kirke

Entré 4 kr. - Abonnement 15 kr. Billetsalg hos Wilhelm Hansen, Gothersgade 9, Central 5457
samt ved indgangen. Billetsalg til søndag den 25. november: Allé scenen, Central 1490

Å
K. H. Henningsen, Post- og Telegrafvæsenet, København 22, C.

Poster for the Fluxus festival in Copenhagen.



Above: George Maciunas, Emmett Williams and Wolf Vostell, doing something in Copenhagen in 1962. Wolf can't remember what we were doing, nor I, and it's too late to ask George. In any case, the unknown photographer caught archrivals George and Wolf in a most unlikely act of togetherness. (E.W.)

Below: Cartoonist's view of the festival, from the newspaper *Politiken*.



AMERICAN STUDENTS & ARTISTS CENTER, 261 Bd. RASPAIL, PARIS 14^e
 CENTRE DE MUSIQUE (direction musicale - Keith HUMBLE) présente

FESTUM FLUXORUM

POESIE, MUSIQUE ET ANTIMUSIQUE EVÉNEMENTIELLE ET CONCRÈTE

3 DECEMBRE 1962 LUNDI 20.30 HRS. CONCERT NO.1, MUSIQUE EVÉNEMENTIELLE. RAUL HAUSMANN: POESIE PHONETIQUE / JOSEPH BYRD: PIECE FOR R. MAXFIELD / JACKSON MAC LOW: THANKS II / ROBERT WATTS: NEWS & TWO INCHES / EMMETT WILLIAMS: ALPHABET SYMPHONY / G. BRECHT: DRIP MUSIC & DIRECTION / GEORGE MACIUNAS: IN MEMORIAM TO ADRIANO OLIVETTI / DICK HIGGINS: CONSTELLATION NO.7 & 4 / BENJAMIN PATTERSON: SEPTET FROM "LEMONS" AND SOLO FOR DANCER / LA MONTE YOUNG: COMPOSITION 1961 NUMBER 29 / NAM JUNE PAIK: ONE FOR VIOLIN SOLO & SERENADE FOR ALISON / WOLF VOSTELL: DÉCOLLAGE MUSIQUE "KLEENEX" / ALISON KNOWLES: PROPOSITION / TERRY RILEY: EARPIECE / G. BRECHT: WORD EVENT.

4 DECEMBRE 1962 JEUDI 20.30 HRS. CONCERT NO.2, MUSIQUE INSTRUMENTALE ET VOCALE. JACKSON MAC LOW: LETTERS FOR IRIS NUMBERS FOR SILENCE & BIBLICAL POEMS / DICK HIGGINS: GRAPHIS 82 / EMMETT WILLIAMS: 4-DIRECTIONAL SONG OF DOUBT FOR 5 VOICES / GEORGE MACIUNAS: SOLO FOR UKULELE & SOLO FOR MOUTH AND MICROPHONE / BENJAMIN PATTERSON: VARIATIONS FOR DOUBLE BASS / GEORGE BRECHT: CARD PIECE FOR VOICE, FLUTE SOLO, STRING QUARTET AND SAXOPHONE SOLO / LA MONTE YOUNG: COMPOSITION 1960 NO. 7 (STRING QUARTET)

5 DECEMBRE 1962 MARDI 20.30 HRS. CONCERT NO.3, DANIEL SPOERRI: COMPOSITION NO. X / KENJIRO EZAKI: DISCRETION / TOSHI ICHIYANAGI: STANZAS AND MUSIC FOR ELECTRIC METRONOME / YASUNAO TONE: ANAGRAM FOR STRINGS / EMMETT WILLIAMS: LITANY AND RESPONSE / TAKENHISA KOSUGI: MICRO I & ANIMA I / ROBERT PAGE: GUITAR SOLO / NAM JUNE PAIK: TO BE DETERMINED /

6 DÉCEMBRE 1962 MERCREDI 20.30 HRS. CONCERT NO.4, ROBERT FILLIOU: POI POI SYMPHONY NO. 2 / ARTHUR KØPCKE: MUSIC WHILE YOU WORK / ROBERT WATTS: EVENT 13 / SYLVANO BUSSOTTI: PIECE FOR PAIK / SIMONE MORRIS: DANCE CONSTRUCTION / GEORGE BRECHT: CANDLE PIECE FOR RADIOS / DICK HIGGINS: DANGER MUSIC NO. 17 / DIETER SCHNEBEL: VISIBLE MUSIC II, (SOLO FOR ONE CONDUCTOR) / TOSHI ICHIYANAGI: IBM FOR MERCE CUNNINGHAM / B. PATTERSON: TWO PIECES FROM METHODS & PROCESSES / LA MONTE YOUNG: COMPOSITION 1960 NO.3

7 DECEMBRE 1962 VENDREDI 20.30 HRS. CONCERT NO.5, POUR PIANO. TOSHI ICHIYANAGI: MUSIC FOR PIANO NOS. 2, 5 AND 7 / LA MONTE YOUNG: 566 TO HENRY FLYNT / GYORGY LIGETI: TROIS BAGATELLES / PHILIP CORNER: PIANO ACTIVITIES (FOR 10 PIANISTS) / GEORGE MACIUNAS: PIANO PIECE NO.11 FOR N.J.P. / GIUSEPPE CHIARI: GESTI SUL PIANO / GRIFITH ROSE: SECOND ENNEAD / TERRY RILEY: PIECE FOR 2 PIANOS & MAGNETIC TAPE / YORIAKI MATSUDAIRA: CO-ACTION / GEORGE BRECHT: INCIDENTAL MUSIC / LA MONTE YOUNG: PIANO PIECE FOR D. TUDOR NO.2

8 DÉCEMBRE 1962 SAMEDI 19.00 HRS. CONCERT NO.6, MUSIQUE ENRÉGISTRÉE ET FILMS. JOHN CAGE: MUSIC FOR THE MARRYING MAIDEN & FONTANA MIX / RICHARD MAXFIELD: COUGH MUSIC, RADIO MUSIC, PASTORAL SYMPHONY AND NIGHT MUSIC / STAN VANDERBEEK: (FILMS) A LA MODE, WHAT WHO HOW, ACHOO MR. KEROOCHEV / CIONI CARPI: POINT AND COUNTERPOINT / GEORGE BRECHT: 3 YELLOW EVENTS, AND 2 DURATIONS / NAM JUNE PAIK: FILMS / DICK HIGGINS: REQUIEM /

8 DÉCEMBRE 1962 SAMEDI 21.00 HRS. CONCERT NO.7 POESIE OUVERTE. FRANÇOIS DUFRENE: LE TOMBEAU DE PIERRE LAROUSSE / ROBERT FILLIOU: PÈRE LACHAISE NO.1 / BRION GYSIN: PERMUTATIONS SANS FIN / JEAN-CLARENCE LAMBERT: X ALÉAS / GHERASIM LUCA: QUART D'HEURE DE CULTURE MÉTAPHYSIQUE. SOIRÉE ORGANISÉE AVEC LE CONCOURS DU DOMAINE POETIQUE ET LA PARTICIPATION DE JACQUES GRUBER ET JEAN-LOUP PHILIPPE.

PLACES: 4.N.F., 2.N.F. ETUDIANTS, 20.N.F. ABONNEMENT POUR LES 7 CONCERTS

FESTUM FLUXORUM

FLUXUS

MUSIK UND ANTIMUSIK
DAS INSTRUMENTALE
THEATER

Staatliche **K**unstakademie
Düsseldorf, Eiskellerstraße
am 2. und 3. Februar 20 Uhr
als ein **C**olloquium für die
Studenten der **A**kademie

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

Daniel Spoerri
Allison Knowles
Bruno Maderna
Alfred G. Hansen
La Monte Young
Henry Flynt
Richard Maxfield
John Cage
Yoko Ono
Jozef Patkowski
Joseph Byrd
Joseph Beuys
Griffith Rose
Phillip Corner
Achoy Mr. Kerouchev
Kenjiro Ezaki
Jasunao Tone
Lucia Dlugoszewski
Istvan Anhalt
Jörgen Friisholm

Toshi Ichyanagi
Cornelius Cardew
Pär Ahlbom
Gherasim Luca
Brion Gysin
Stan Vanderbeek
Yoriaki Matsudaira
Simone Morris
Sylvano Bussotti
Musika Vitalls
Jak K. Spek
Frederic Rzewski
K. Penderecki
J. Stasulenas
V. Landsbergis
A. Salcius
Kuniharu Akiyama
Joji Kuri
Tori Takemitsu
Arthur Köpcke

IN MEMORIAM TO ADRIANO OLIVETTI

By George Maciunas
revised:

March 20, 1962
Nov. 8, 1962

Any used tape from an Olivetti adding machine may be used as a score for this piece.

PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTIONS

Numbers (including zero) represent specific sounds or actions, each of which is assigned to separate performer. When performed by fewer than 10 performers, the unassigned excessive numbers represent silences. Same number can also be assigned to more than one performer if the tape contains more than one of the same number per row. In such cases the second or third performer performs only when 2nd. or 3rd. of same number appear on the row.

VERSION 1. (poem)

Each performer pronounces his assigned number in any language.

VERSION 2. (ballet) performers to be formally dressed (except no.9, in military uniform). Performers perform the following actions assigned to indicated numbers.

- 0 – lift bowler hat from head when first 0 is indicated, place on head when next 0 is indicated, repeat actions for succeeding indications of 0's.
- 1 – point with finger at someone in the audience (arm outstretched) whenever 1 is indicated. Point at different member of audience for each separate indication of 1
- 2 – point with finger at ceiling or floor
- 3 – sit down on a chair when first 3 is indicated, stand up on next indication, etc.
- 4 – squat down when first 4 is indicated, stand up when next is indicated, etc.
- 5 – strike floor with cane or umbrella on each indication of 5
- 6 – open umbrella over head on first indication of 6, close on next etc.
- 7 – bow down (towards or away from audience) on first indication of 7, raise on next
- 8 – stamp floor with foot on each indication of 8
- 9 – give military salute with hand on first indication of 9, lower hand on next, etc.

VERSION 3. (ballet)

Each performer to use different kind of hat. Perform as in Version 2 (zero)

VERSION 4. (chorale)

- 0 – smack with lips smartly (sound like drop falling into water) on each indication of 1
- 1 – smack with tongue (click like opening corked bottle)
- 2 – lip-fart (through tight lips)

- 3 - lip-fart (with tongue between lips)
- 4 - draw air (upper teeth over lower lips)
- 5 - draw air, open mouth, vibrate deep throat (pig-like sound)
- 6 - blow air between lips vibrating them
- 7 - dry spitting
- 8 - lunger
- 9 - sniff wet nose (wet nose with water if necessary)

VERSION 5. (string quartet or ensemble)

- 0 - strike body with mallet or stick
- 1 - knock against floor (cello) or table (violin)
- 2 - shake body (have pellet or pellets placed inside beforehand)
- 3 - with stick scrape edge of sound hole (obtain squeak or screech)
- 4 - place instrument in playing position and in non-playing position on next called head
- 5 - place bow over strings in playing position " " " "
- 6 - (replace beforehand a string with electric heating coil) scrape coil
- 7 - pluck heating coil
- 8 - (replace beforehand a string with rubber band) pluck rubber band smartly
- 9 - open etuis, close it on next called beat.

VERSION 6. (for string quartet only)

- 1 - pizzicato C
- 2 - " C + 1/4 (tone)
- 3 - " C - 1/4
- 4 - " C #

Any sounds or actions of any versions may be combined in any way to form new versions or new sounds and actions substituted.

EXAMPLE (combined version 2 and 4)

8 performers (1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0)

- 16387 - point finger, open umbrella, sit on chair, lip-fart (s), bow down
- 0086 - lift bowler hat, lift boater hat, lip-fart, close umbrella
- 1057 - point finger elsewhere, place bowler hat on head, draw air (pig-like), raise up
- 608 - open umbrella, lift bowler hat, lip-fart
- 300 - get up from chair, place bowler hat on head, place boater hat on head
- 3798 - sit down on chair, bow down, give military salute, lip-fart

etc.



Performace of George's *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* in Dusseldorf.
From left: Nam June Paik, Arthur Köpcke, Wolf Vostell, Daniel Spoerri, Emmett
Williams, Frank Trowbridge, Bengt af Klintberg, Maciunas. Photo © Manfred Leve.

Dea Ram-Met-ttt: Here I am sending you a small window
 Better small than none. So now you have a window, you can
 get your trunks, & take my clippings out & send them to
 me, OK? You should stay in that house where you are,
 it has very nice sounding name - Carcassonne.
 Why don't you move to Versailles palace, it has been vacated
 for several years, many windows there, we could do
 a fluxus there & afterwards do a Versailles activities
 & take the place appart - this reactionary place.



Now for this Paris biennale why don't you do your 4-dir. song.
 song for LaMonte Young & counting song ??? they are all words.
 Do them please, LaMonte Young piece is short & VERY VERY
 GOOD - you should not delete it! I will send you a batch of "word
 things" by next mail - what's the rush? it's in October, No?
 I will probably see you before then.
 Anyway I would suggest: at least most prolific.

Jackson Mac Low (after all he must be included - the most important
 poet in New York.) - May include his
 a) Letters for Iris, Numbers for silence or/and
 b) Stanzas for Iris (+w
 c) biblical poem no. 5 (simultaneous reading)
 d) Machault (solo reading)
 e) one hundred (you say "one" one hundred times - very good
 piece.)
 I think best is no. a.)

Ben Patterson Pond (They use words no?) I would send you
 the frogs; could do with 4 people if Ferris
 doesn't have 8.
 Methods & Processes - maybe the glove piece:
 Boogie man, Eichman etc.
 written on blackboard.
 it's a good piece.

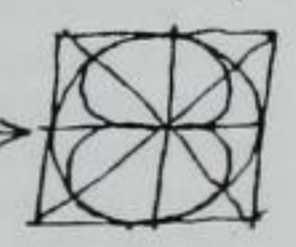
Terry Jennings - I am sending a batch of poems.
 M.C. Richards (former wife of David Tudor) - has one Very good poem.
 birds (you wait one minute)..... another word.
 I will send you the exact poem. (It is a very early one
 I think 1955)

Jerry Bloedow has a good one: "It is winter
 It's winter" ← good

Robert Morris: "It is history not my story." ← very good.

Joseph Byrd: I am sending in few days a good one of his.
 Dick Higgins - really has no poems, but I will dig something up
 from the things of his that I have.

Myself - I have no word things either unless you take this piece
 & say what you want (since it's the complete alphabet)
 like (to the audience) "You are all full of shit"
 or anything you like at the moment.



"Dea Rem-Met-ttt" had asked George for help in choosing "word things" for an American evening he was arranging as part of the *Biennale de Paris* at the Musée d'Art Moderne in October 1963. George's proposal for his own contribution - if used - might just possibly have set back French-American cultural relations a century or two. Courtesy of Archive Jean Brown, Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Santa Monica, California.

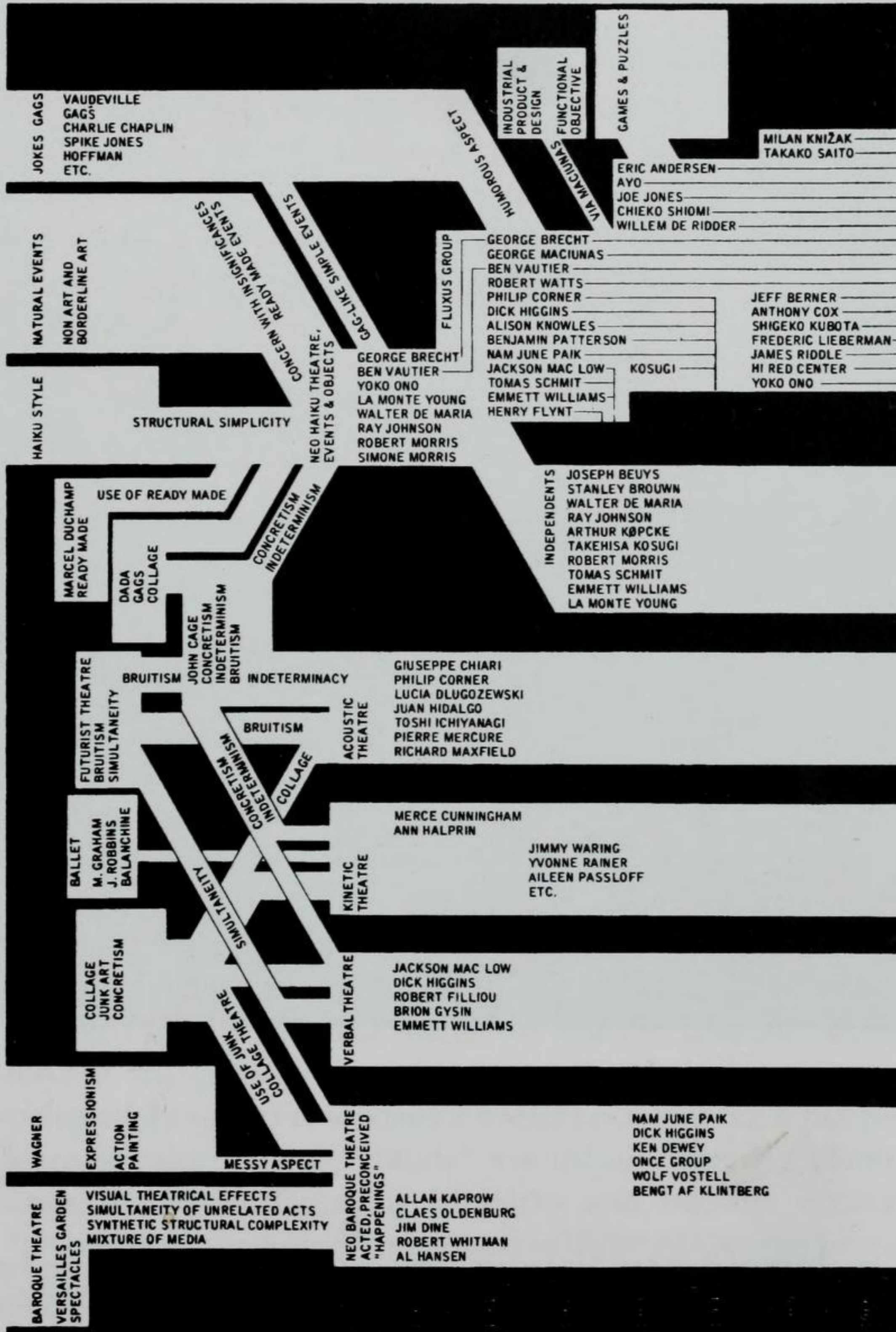
<p>PUBLISHING MASSPRODUCING & PERFORMING WORKS BY:</p> <p>GENPEI AKASEGAWA ERIC ANDERSEN AYO GEORGE BRECHT STANLEY BROUWN GIUSEPPE CHIARI PHILIP CORNER ANTHONY COX WALTER DE MARIA WILLEM DE RIDDER ROBERT FILLIOU HI RED CENTER DICK HIGGINS TOSHI ICHIYANAGI JOE JONES ALISON KNOWLES JIRI KOLAR ARTHUR KOPCKE TAKEHISA KOSUGI SHIGEKO KUBOTA FREDERIC LIEBERMAN GYORGI LIGETI JACKSON MAC LOW GEORGE MACIUNAS JONAS MEKAS ROBERT MORRIS LADISLAV NOVAK CLAES OLDENBURG YOKO ONO BENJAMIN PATTERSON JAMES RIDDLE DITER ROT TAKAKO SAITO WILLEM T. SCHIPPERS TOMAS SCHMIT CHIEKO SHIOMI DANIEL SPOERRI BEN VAUTIER ROBERT WATTS EMMETT WILLIAMS LA MONTE YOUNG</p>	<p>PUBLICATIONS:</p> <p>Periodical newspaper: V TRE (4 times per year) Periodical yearbox Complete works: (supplemented yearly) of: George Brecht, Takehisa Kosugi, Chieko Shiomi and Robert Watts. Individual compositions by: Eric Andersen, Giuseppe Chiari, Dick Higgins, Hi Red Center, Alison Knowles, Gyorgi Ligeti, Jackson Mac Low, Yoko Ono, Benjamin Patterson, James Riddle, Tomas Schmit, Daniel Spoerri, Ben Vautier, Emmett Williams, La Monte Young. Films by: Eric Andersen, Ayo, George Brecht, Walter De Maria, Dick Higgins, Joe Jones, Alison Knowles, Authur Kopcke, Takehisa Kosugi, Shigeko Kubota, George Maciunas, Yoko Ono, Benjamin Patterson, James Riddle, Chieko Shiomi, Robert Watts, La Monte Young.</p>	<p>FLUXUS FESTIVALS, CONCERTS:</p> <p>WIESBADEN, W. Germany, Sept. 1962 at state museum, 14 concerts.</p> <p>COPENHAGEN, Denmark, Nov. 23 to 28, 1962 6 concerts.</p> <p>PARIS, France, Dec. 1962, 7 concerts. DUESSELDORF, W. Germany, Feb. 2 & 3, 1963, at Academy of Art.</p> <p>AMSTERDAM, Holland, June 1963, 2 concerts. HAGUE, Holland, June 1963, 1 concert. NICE, France, July 27 to 30, 1963, 1 concert & 7 street events.</p> <p>COPENHAGEN, "2 internationale koncerter for nyeste instrumentale teater og antiart", Sept. 1963.</p> <p>AMSTERDAM, "Internationaal programma nieuwste muziek, nieuwste literatur, nieuwste theater", Dec. 1963.</p> <p>AMSTERDAM, "16th. Fluxus Film Festival", 24 Feb. 1964.</p> <p>NEW YORK, "Fully Guaranteed 12 Fluxus Concerts", at Fluxhall, April 11 to May 23, 1964.</p> <p>NEW YORK, Fluxus Symphony Orchestra Concert, June 27, 1964, at Carnegie Recital Hall.</p> <p>MILAN, Italy, Nov. 16, 1964 at Galleria Blue.</p> <p>ROTTERDAM, Nov. 23, 1964 AMSTERDAM, Holland, Dec. 6, 1964 WARS</p> <p>COPENHAGEN, Dec. 3 to 23, 1964 NEW YORK, Sept. 1964 to Jan. 1965, at Washington Sq. Gallery.</p> <p>NICE, France, 7 concerts Oct. 31 to Nov. 7, 1964</p> <p>MARSEILLES, France, Mar. 8, 1965 at Marseille University theatre</p> <p>NICE, 1965 perpetual Fluxfest NEW YORK, Perpetual Fluxus Festival, weekly concerts since June 27 '65 at Cinematheque.</p> <p>NEW YORK, the 83rd. Fluxus concert: Fluxorchestra at the Carnegie Recital Hall, Sept. 25, 1965</p>
<p>ART</p> <p>To justify artist's professional, parasitic and elite status in society, he must demonstrate artist's indispensability and exclusiveness, he must demonstrate the dependability of audience upon him, he must demonstrate that no one but the artist can do art.</p>	<p>FLUXUS ART-AMUSEMENT</p> <p>To establish artist's nonprofessional status in society, he must demonstrate artist's dispensability and inclusiveness, he must demonstrate the selfsufficiency of the audience, he must demonstrate that anything can be art and anyone can do it.</p>	
<p>Therefore, art must appear to be complex, pretentious, profound, serious, intellectual, inspired, skillfull, significant, theatrical. It must appear to be valuable as commodity so as to provide the artist with an income. To raise its value (artist's income and patron's profit), art is made to appear rare, limited in quantity and therefore obtainable and accessible only to the social elite and institutions.</p>	<p>Therefore, art-amusement must be simple, amusing, unpretentious, concerned with insignificances, require no skill or countless rehearsals, have no commodity or institutional value.</p> <p>The value of art-amusement must be lowered by making it unlimited, massproduced, obtainable by all and eventually produced by all.</p> <p>Fluxus art-amusement is the rear-guard without any pretention or urge to participate in the competition of "one-upmanship" with the avant-garde. It strives for the monostructural and nontheatrical qualities of a simple natural event, a game or gag. It is the fusion of Spike Jones, Vaudeville, gag, children's games and Duchamp.</p>	

1965: An inventory list of Fluxus artists, publications, objects, festivals and concerts, together with George's "official" definition of Fluxus.

Within fluxus group there are 4 categories indicated:

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

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



George Maciunas: Fluxus Diagram, 1966.

→ **WARNING**—ALTERATION, ADDITION OR MUTILATION OF ENTRIES IS PROHIBITED.
 ANY UNOFFICIAL CHANGE WILL RENDER THIS PASSPORT INVALID.

NAME GEORGE MACIUNAS	
BIRTH DATE NOV. 8, 1931	BIRTHPLACE LITHUANIA
HEIGHT 5 FEET 11 INCHES	HAIR BROWN EYES BLUE
WIFE X X X	ISSUE DATE OCT. 3, 1961 ←
MINORS X X X	PASSPORT RENEWAL
SIGNATURE OF BEARER <i>George Maciunas</i>	

→ **IMPORTANT:** **UNLESS OTHERWISE LIMITED**
 THIS PASSPORT EXPIRES THREE YEARS FROM ISSUE DATE.
 IF RENEWED, IT EXPIRES FIVE YEARS FROM ISSUE DATE.

Photograph of bearer



IMM. & NATZ SERVICE
Mc GUIRE AFB, N. C. 28
ADMITTED

SEP 5 - 1963

CLASS
TO

The hospital insists that I be "evacuated" by end of June, which means losing my job (with the Air Force) and being dumped in New York— all this upsets my plans. I will try to stay in Europe somehow through July and August and return in September. (Passport photo courtesy of The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Foundation, New York.)

IV

SEEING RED

- IV. 1 *There is a good possibility of carrying out a grand Fluxus tour in East Europe & USSR through Siberia – for summer 1964 or more likely 1965, in which case I will go there with whoever would wish to join me. I will pass Paris then & you could join me OK? I have talked with a few officials recently & have interested them with proposal: we get one freight car attached to freight trains, give free concerts in freight yards whenever and wherever train stops. We travel thus right to Vladivostok & then hop to Japan.*



- IV. 2 ... though many people found it hard to accept what many of us were making as art, none of us – in Cage’s class or the group that arrived in New York after it – were, as far as I know, seriously anti-art. Most of us wanted to make art that turned people’s attention to the actual phenomena of the world rather than to the thoughts or emotions of the artists. Only Henry Flynt – and somewhat differently, Maciunas – came, during the 1960s, to develop various anti-art and anti-replacement theories.

Maciunas’ principal idea, derived mainly from his interpretation of the works made by George Brecht in the early 1960’s, La Monte Young’s 1960 compositions, and to some extent my own verbal and performance works and those of Dick Higgins, was that there was no need for art. We had merely to learn to take an “art attitude” toward any phenomenon we encountered. Making artworks, he believed then, was essentially a useless occupation. If people could learn to take the “art attitude” toward all everyday phenomena, artists could stop making artworks and become economically “productive” workers. Works such as those of George Brecht were useful as transitional means toward this state of things.

These ideas relate with George’s political notions. In the early 60s, at least, when I often talked and corresponded with him, he was a peculiar kind of Marxist-Leninist – even, in his own way, a

“Russianist”: at the AG Gallery, he once showed me a very long letter he’d just sent to Premier Khrushchev in which he urged the Soviet ruler to encourage “realistic art” (such as G. Brecht’s, La Monte’s, and to some extent mine) as being more consonant with a “realistic economic system” such as that of the Soviet Union than the old-fashioned “socialist-realist” art then in favor. I think his politics changed later, but I’m not sure.



IV. 3 *I think Poland fluxorum is cooking & also in Lithuania. So you will come with us of course. OK? Tomas Schmit will come as a Chinese, since Polish don't have a great love for Germans. (So he will be To-Ma-Chi-mi't.)*



IV. 4 I never had any connection with Fluxus as an art movement. The connection was rather that Maciunas published important documents of mine in Fluxus publications at a time when nobody else would touch them. I consider myself to be a philosopher above all, and the first philosophical manuscript I ever had published was published by George in *V TRE* - No. 3. The same issue also published the documents of my 1963 anti-art manifestation. George printed my texts sideways to dissociate them from the content of the rest of *V TRE*. George told me at the time that the avant-garde was already horrified at my attack on art; when they heard I was to have a manuscript published attacking language as well, they really thought I was going off the deep end.

Nevertheless, this manuscript was the source of much of the work which subsequently appeared in my book *Blueprint for a Higher Civilization*, not to mention my recent unpublished manuscripts. In 1968, George published my *Down With Art* pamphlet. George also supported my efforts in musical composition. When I became the leader of a country rock band in 1975, George played an important role in producing the first two concerts which we gave. At this time we premiered several works which I thought would never receive live performances. (Tom Johnson wrote a review of the first concert for the *Village Voice*, but Robert Christgau held the review until he could attend the second concert, and then canceled the review.)

As a result of knowing George in the early Sixties, I came to understand the sense of historic mission which many Russians have

about the Soviet state (which is after all still the most important world institution inspired by Marxism). At the same time, the fact that George's ideas in socialist design have never been socially implemented raises profound questions about the social appropriation of talent, about the claims of the Left to be the vehicle of articulation of real needs, and about the point at which historical-institutional success becomes meaningless in relation to stated goals. I hope that in the future I will have the opportunity to discuss these questions in print.



IV. 5.	<i>FLUXUS NEWS-POLICY Letter No. 6</i>	<i>April 6, 1963</i>
<i>Distribution:</i>	<i>George Brecht</i>	<i>Emmett Williams</i>
	<i>Henry Flynt</i>	<i>Daniel Spoerri</i>
	<i>Dick Higgins</i>	<i>Robert Filliou</i>
	<i>Allan Kaprow</i>	<i>Ben Vautier</i>
	<i>Jackson Mac Low</i>	
	<i>Richard Maxfield</i>	<i>Tomas Schmit</i>
	<i>Jonas Mekas</i>	<i>Nam June Paik</i>
	<i>Bob Morris</i>	<i>Toshi Ichiyonagi</i>
	<i>Ben Patterson</i>	<i>Yoko Ono</i>
	<i>Stan Vanderbeek</i>	
	<i>Robert Watts</i>	
	<i>La Monte Young</i>	
	<i>Walter De Maria</i>	

PROPOSED PROPAGANDA ACTION FOR NOV. FLUXUS IN N.Y.

- A. Propaganda through pickets & demonstrations (such as organized by H. Flynt):*
- B. Propaganda through sabotage & disruption of*
 - a) transportation system:*
 - 1. Prearranged "breakdowns" of a fleet of Fluxus autos and trucks bearing posters, exhibits etc. in the middle of the busiest traffic intersections, such as Times Square, 5th Avenue, 57th and 42nd Streets, tunnel and bridge entries etc. "Breakdowns" can involve flat tires, stalled engines, spilled merchandise (leaflets on windy day, bottles with colored water, rolling objects etc.)*
 - 2. Clogging up subway cars during rush hours with cumbersome objects (such as large musical instruments: contrabasses,*

drums; Walter De Maria's boxes, long poles, large signs bearing Fluxus announcements etc. etc.)

b) communications system:

- 1. Printing & selling on street corners "revised" & "prepared" editions of the New York Times, Daily News etc. with Fluxus announcements (such as "107 days until Fluxus", next day "106 days until Fluxus" etc. etc. bearing nonexistent news about closing of museums etc.*
- 2. Arranging live radio programs of music and then not playing anything during actual broadcasting.*
- 3. Stuffing postal boxes with thousands of packages (containing heavy bricks etc.) addressed to various newspapers, galleries, artists etc. bearing no stamps & bearing as return address various galleries, concert halls, museums. Either "sender" or receiver would be bound to pay for these "packages."*

c) museums, theatres, galleries:

- 1. Disrupting concerts at "sensitive" moments with "smell bombs," "sneeze bombs" etc.*
- 2. Ordering by phone in the name of the museum, theater, or gallery at the exact (or just prior to) opening various cumbersome objects: rented chairs, tables, palm trees, caskets, lumber, large sheets of plywood, bricks, gravel, sand, or coal for delivery at sidewalks.*
- 3. Disrupting entries at concert halls, theaters, museums, galleries etc. during critical hours by calling (over phone) numbers of taxicabs, trucks, ambulances, firemen etc. etc. (This could be combined with "breakdown" of Fluxus fleet.)*
- 4. Posting and mailing announcements (to libraries, newspapers etc.) with totally revised dates of various concerts, plays, movies, exhibits etc.*

Cooperation & proposals from all recipients of this letter will be highly appreciated.



IV. 6 On April 6, 1963, at a time when some of us were engaged in practical political work and demonstrations against nuclear weapons and were beginning to protest U.S. activities against the Vietnamese people, George proposed, in *Fluxus News-Policy Letter No. 6*, a series of bizarre, disruptive, antisocial manifestations, such

as breaking down trucks in the tunnels under the Hudson River to stop traffic.

I answered by resigning transatlantically from Fluxus in a letter dated April 25, 1963, which I sent both to George and to as many artists as possible who had ever participated in a Fluxus concert or action ... However, when, later that year, George returned to the U.S., we again became friendly, and I participated with George, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles and Philip Corner in a Fluxus concert that was, of all things, the entertainment at a perfumers' convention held at what was then the Advertising Club on Park Avenue!



IV. 7 *Brecht blew his top because proposals in Newsletter 6 were getting too terroristic and aggressive. Henry Flynt thought they were too "artistic," too much "serious culture," as he calls it. Jackson Mac Low thought they were not serious enough. Each is pulling in different direction like Paik's piano piece.*

Let me know what you think, what line should we take in New York. Can you come to N.Y.??? You 3??? (on your own \$). Maybe you can get jobs as cooks on a passenger ship & get free trip. Daniel could cook fancy dishes, Robert cook nail soup, & you alphabet soup.



IV. 8 *To return to "fluxus crisis": I notice in your letter your reluctance to alienate the "snob circuit". But that's the very thing we should do with Fluxus festivals! One point of disagreement I have with Mac Low is that our street events WOULD NOT ALIENATE "the masses" since they don't go to concerts, museums, gallery premières etc. & would not therefore be affected in the least by sand piles at gallery entrances, blocked traffic etc. etc. etc. I think we should try to reach totally unsophisticated people (like that superintendent at the Paris student center – I forget his name – but he enjoyed our events most thoroughly).*

Also my motive for street disturbances would largely be "commercial" – the more disturbances, the more press notices, the more audiences etc. If for two months we keep associating Fluxus with all kinds of disturbances or "street composition" like Paik's Zen for street or dragging suite then people will begin to get curious as to what Fluxus will do in a theater etc. etc.



IV. 9 *Bad news! George Brecht wants out of Fluxus, thinks Fluxus is getting too aggressive (this Newsletter No. 6). So we will have to compromise, find a midpoint between Flynt, Paik & Brecht (if a midway can be found!). It would be very bad without Brecht. He is the best man in New York (I think). Maybe he is getting too attached to Yam & thinks Fluxus is getting competitive. The unfortunate problem with egos! (This isn't the end of the problem yet, I suppose by autumn it will get more intensified.)*



IV. 10 *Fluxus crisis over and resolved. Brecht is available and reachable again. Just got his letter. JML has been calmed down by Newsletter No. 7 and so were you three. Why would Daniel not want people to have a run after his meals? Enema is one of the healthiest things for stomachs (and heads). Enema is not same as vomiting – I never mentioned vomiting. That's Ben Vautier.*



IV. 11 And what about Heraclitus and the doctrine of flux? Considering George's politics during the first years of Fluxus – his "flux" manifesto calling for the purgation of bourgeois sickness and dead art, and the promotion of a revolutionary flood and tide in art, and other pronouncements and directives to the "Fluxus Collective", a good case *could* be made for interpreting the flux in Fluxus as Hegel's "Primary Truth", straight out of Heraclitus, that everything in nature is in continuous flux, and that "struggle is the father of everything." Comrade Lenin himself praised Heraclitus as a very good expositor of the principle of dialectical materialism.

But if George was telling the truth about opening that dictionary, and, randomly flipping the pages and sticking his finger on the word flux, Latin *fluxus*, then Heraclitus, Hegel, and Lenin are irrelevant to the discussion.

Yet sometimes one wonders: did George know in advance where his index finger was going to land?

This is exactly what Robert Filliou and I began to wonder shortly after the postman handed me a letter from Maciunas one morning in 1963. The letter was full of surprises. It was the most confidential

letter that George ever wrote me. The following is a reconstruction of the event. The letter is, of course, the real thing.

Setting: Paris in the Spring. In my hands, a long letter from The Boss, still in Germany, shortly before his return to New York to activate Fluxus in America. It is addressed to me with messages for Robert Filliou and Daniel Spoerri.

Happily, Robert is present, to help decipher Maciunas' miniscript manuscript ("Write smaller, you can save paper."), full of misspellings, cross-outs, repetitions, and lapses in semantics, articulated in what we call George's Lithuanian-English stream-of-consciousness technique.

I begin to read the letter.

Got your two letters simultaneously, and am happy about the prospr. (sic) of doing Fluxus together in Amsterdam, London and Nice. (Illegible) 100% definite arrangements.

"This is news to me, Emmett," says Robert. "Did you tell him that the three of us would go to all those places?"

"I probably did."

1. Amsterdam. Maybe on June 22 or 23, organized by Willem de Ridder, composer of events, has also a gallery. Paik exhibit being put together in his gallery (not as expensive as in Wuppertal). With festival we shall put together Fluxus exhibit. Works by you 3, George Brecht, Watts, Tomas, Vautier, W. De Maria etc. etc. So if you come (which you must do) bring "exhibits" with you: spaghetti sandwich, nail soup, fakir spectacles—many small items for everyday use (practical items like fakir spectacles, counting song mask ...) Robert! what about your "world-wide" collection of dust? Bring that, too. Idea is to make this Fluxus exhibit a "traveling" one. We take it to London, then to Nice etc. see next items. I will come to Amsterdam in my "truck" loaded with printed matter. Brecht (few cards I enclose) complete works, La Monte Young 1961 compositions, Daniel's book, Fluxus I and many thousands of new Fluxus Preview with facsimiles of newspaper clippings, photos, compositions— an elaborate affair to be given away or sold for a few pennies.

"He must make a lot of money with his Air Force job in Wiesbaden." And I explain that George doesn't always pay his printing bills on time, and that he has a mother to support.

Tomas will come with my other car (the 1948 Citroën). Then after Amsterdam we go to London via Caen, because it costs \$50 per car to cross channel and return, and cross channel by foot (during low tide).

Laughter. And we pour ourselves some wine.

Proposal: you 3 come to Amsterdam on June 21 Friday (after I confirm on exactness of date) by hitchhiking or walking (the only time you will have to do this).

Robert: "You mean we have to pay our own way?"

I: "Ah, you're new at this Fluxus game!"

We all make Fluxus together (after stuffing ourselves with your spaghetti sandwich), rest a bit, & shoot to London. May be it would be better to do Fluxus on June 29, & we would not have to rest so long. Then we go to London together, say on July 3 or so. OK?

"It doesn't sound OK to me," says Robert. "Is this the way your great organizer organizes things?"

2. London, Goldsmith's College, New Cross, London S.E. 14 is fixed on July 6-7. We could go there direct from Amsterdam, together with exhibit & printed matter, deposit some printed matter, & then continue (I would take you to Paris in my "truck"), Tomas would return to Köln.

I confess to Robert that George's itinerary has me going around in circles, too.

Then you would have a CHOICE: wait till July 20 when Tomas on way to Nice would pick you up with my car, the 1948 Citroën, & go directly to Nice, to get there in time for preparation, OR, you all go with me. I would go to Nice in a very leisurely way stopping as follows: July 10—Langeais, July 11—Chinon, 12 & 13 in Poitiers, 14—Perigueux, 15—Moissac, 16—Toulouse, 17—St. Martin du Canigou (in Pirines (sic) mts, 18—same, 19 Carcassonne, 20—Aigues Mortes, 21—Arles, 22 & 23—Avignon, 24—Nice.

"But that's two weeks on the road," Robert exclaims, "just going from Paris to Nice!"

We could perform in all these places for nothing, if you could afford it. Of course I plan to eat very frugally, buying most food in shops rather than restaurants & staying at cheapest hotels.

You could even sleep in my large car, Ford station wagon, 9 seats!"

"The letter gets better and better," says Robert. More wine.

So choice is up to you. Tomas would have room for you also. 3 extra seats, and would go to Nice without stopping, so it would be cheaper for you.

"I'm going with Tomas," I tell Robert, "if I go at all."

ITEM 1: Can I leave a load of printed matter at Dufrêne's house? About 200 of each book. Daniel, Fluxus I, La Monte, Brecht) & 2,000 of prospectuses. It's a load. Would be good to store some 30 gallons of gasoline for Tomas to pick up. Where could we store the gasoline? It's flammable(sic) stuff, you know).

"Wouldn't it be simpler for Tomas to buy his own gas in Paris?" Robert asks. And I explain to him that George can buy cheap gas with Air Force coupons.

ITEM 2: Emmett, would you please tell your good friend Lambert, that I would bring his originals (the books he has given me) after I pass Paris after London which is after Amsterdam which is after Wiesbaden. OK? Don't forget to tell him that.

ITEM 3. The Domaine Poétique announcement looks like sudas, a good Lithuanian word. Why did you not design it?? Or Robert?? Now Vautier's poster looks really nice, nicer than Fluxus or anything I have done. Very nice.

3. *NICE July 27 Saturday. DON'T GET EXCITED ABOUT STREET COMPOSITIONS! You are not forced to participate in streets. Everything will be OK. Tomas, Vautier and his "crowd" plus myself (with bowler hat) will perform in the street. Then we all with you three perform in theater. OK? We bring of course the travelling "exhibit" and your spaghetti sandwich with us— that is a matter of course. OK? I like Ben Vautier. He has enthusiasm for Fluxus like Tomas, daring imagination & he seems to have \$\$\$ which none of us seem to have (and that I like very much). Also I seem to feel he can organize things, so Nice Fluxus should come off very well.*

Another good thing— he has that store where I can deposit lots of matter (printed matter I mean not semifluid matter). So I plan to deposit 100 of each item in his store. He wrote me a wheighty (sic) letter on large poster sheets, but said he was

going to write same to Daniel so I suppose he wrote or told about Monte Carlo TV, performances in fountains, Band parade, St. Trophime, etc. etc.

4. Florence: I wrote a hasty urgent plea to Metzger & his "roommate" (sic) (or just "mate") about organizing Florentine Fluxus for August 10th. If that comes off, then we all go (in my truck again + Ben Vautier & Tomas in the Citroën to Florence and Flux there. That I should know in Amsterdam, where I asked them to write me the results of their efforts, or lack of efforts).

5. Zagreb, August 31 ...

"Zagreb? We'll end up in Mongolia, the way he's going,"

"Don't think it's not in the back of his mind," I reply.

I wrote to my friends to organize Fluxus that day – so we can go there after Florence doing an "anti-festival" in Venice allong (sic) the way (Venice Film Festival., you know). Florence and Zagreb – big questionmark (sic). I may linger in East for a while, while Tomas takes you back to Paris and returns to Köln himself. So you see travelling would not have to be covered.

"But Emmett, that's a couple of months. Impossible for me. Or Daniel. Do you think you might do it?"

"I've got the time, but I don't have a dime. I might go to Amsterdam and London, with Tomas. I'd do the whole number if someone would finance the trip. I haven't missed a festival yet, but I'm going to miss some this time around."

6. New York. I will go to New York towards end of September. We must postpone East Europe Fluxus, to 1965 maybe. Chruschov (sic) is not hot on Fluxus at this very moment, although he agrees with us in being against abstract art.

Laughter.

So he is closer to Fluxus then (sic) say New York "Abstract Expressionists" or French "Tachistes." Yes?

More laughter. But the joke soon peters out.

So I believe that Fluxus has best breeding ground in Soviet Union, which was not spoiled yet by abstractions (or at least Stalin corrected that!) We must all work towards eventual Fluxus in S.U. OK?

Robert looks at me. I look at him. We pause again for refreshments.

Through officials and nonofficials (though not of Yevtushenko's kind – he is a degenerate and already (sic) under the evil spell of Western art. But to work through political agitation and present Fluxus as what they have been looking for all along (sic) to fight (crossed out) to have against the art-revolt brewing there.

Robert interrupts again: “But that’s all wrong. If we were there, we would probably join the revolt of the artists, and Fluxus would be fighting the likes of us!”

We can help them impose a political supremacy over all art activities. You agree?

“No, I don’t agree at all.”

“The man is *mad*,” Robert says.

I know Flynt agrees with me (Higgins, Ben Patterson, Tomas and few others on way of agreeing). More about this when we meet. I must have some semblance of agreement amongst us before I go eastwards. (I was not going to go as a “tourist.”) That’s why I had to postpone my trip there. 1st of course the golden opportunity of Nice Fluxus. + Amsterdam and Florence. 2nd. My printer is such an IDIOT, he is driving me mad!! He has done NOTHING. Did very lousy work on Daniel’s book, botched up Brecht’s cards – look how he fuzzed up Brecht cards! My beautiful IBM type is FUZZY!!!! So I had to take the whole works from him (at a loss to me, great loss) and take all these unfinished things to another printer who is already turning out things on time, cheaper and better.

And 3rd. Let’s see, what is this 1, 2, 3, what am I talking about?

More laughter.

Oh yes, the reasons for postponing the trip. This explosion in N.Y. and disagreement (sic) in New York. Total disagreement (sic) to do any political agitation, join Flynt, or do any terroristic activities, means that we have to arrive at an entirely different platform that we can all agree to. So I think I will make a tiny trip East privately and really no one should know about it or why I go there, so please keep silent about it. Then after, in New York, we have a thorough discussion & see how political Fluxus can be. Then we can make Fluxus penetration or is it entry? or return? eastwards. OK?

“Is there much more of this stuff?” asks Robert.

"Yes, plenty more. But it's addressed to me privately." And of course I continue reading aloud.

"Emmett. I must know how you feel about involving Fluxus politically (sic) with the party (you know which one).

"He's serious, this fellow," says Robert. "Is this what Fluxus is really all about?"

"It's certainly not my idea of Fluxus."

Our activities loose (sic) all significance if divorced from sociopolitical struggle going on now. We must coordinate our activities or we shall become another "new wave", another dada club, comming (sic) and going. There is resistance from Brecht, Watts, La Monte and Mac Low, who are either a-political or naive anarchists, or becomming (sic) sort of indistinct pseudo-socialists (sic) – all this is just crap.

"But he's talking about some of the core people in Fluxus," Robert says.

Now Flynt is politically oriented, Dick, Tomas, I think Vautier, also Joe Byrd, Mekas, Ben Patterson, also Metzger and Bussotti seem to be performing politically oriented. I never discussed this with you and was sort of in the dark about your orientation, or rather under an assumption that it was oriented "correctly". Now Robert, I hear, tends to be politically oriented (is it correct?) ...

"Not in his direction," Robert answers for himself.

while Daniel is not.

For once we agree with George: Daniel is definitely not.

The whole "editorial board" structure has been sort of "constructed" with decoys like La Monte Young and Mac Low, Toshi Ichiyanagi and Nam June Paik – all non-political – that's good to draw support from non-political sources, but there just can't be too many decoys, then whole Fluxus becomes decoy and loses (sic) significance. Therefore, it becomes more and more important to determine the political pattern or orientation of the "committee." We discuss all this later. Keep this away from Daniel – I think he is strongly non-political. OK?

8. *Question – How about New York? Can you hitchhike to New York via Arctic – it's solid ground there, & maybe possible to stand with outstretched finger. Could you collect unemploy-*

ment insurance in New York? This would bring you lots of money.

9. Your eyes must be getting tired – put on fakir spectacles and relax.

Regardful regards

George

P.S. You did not give me opera for one-eyed poet and millionaire! Incidentally we print your box, Robert's, and French Fluxus at Higgins' shop – he with Tomas will do a much better job than those Germans here. They are butchers, not printers – terrible.



IV. 12 I tried your advice, but it did not work. I went to sleep, but next day found to my great surprise that the Air Force has not forgotten me or my sickness. Besides, their investigators dug up something against me apparently, since they don't give me permission to go on TDY trips plus other restrictions, so I think they are getting rid of me for those "other" reasons. My days are numbered to June 14th.



IV. 13 Finally I made it to New York & 2nd day got promptly sick with pleuritis or something. Now everything is OK & we are very actively preparing for Fluxus New York ...

We divided up all responsibilities ourselves so that things will get done, so Al Hansen takes charge of all outdoor events, demonstrations etc., Alison of all outdoor propaganda – printing stencils on sidewalks etc., etc., Dick of "logistics" & technical manager of the printing operation, Brecht & Watts editing new Fluxus monthly newspaper. Bob Morris – exhibits & environments, Mekas – films, La Monte – getting instrumentalists, & myself in charge of theater programming & being "secretary." This arrangement does not overload anyone & is more collective which I like.



IV. 14 I frankly can't understand what you mean when you say you can be more useful to Fluxus by not working. Useful by doing what? What were you doing the past week? Fluxus should become a way of life not a profession.

You should go to university and study mathematics, . That would be much more useful to Fluxus than your turning into a beatnik – that's useless to Fluxus ... There is not a single Fluxus man in N.Y. who is not working. Even Al Hansen and Jackson Mac Low are working. Since Fluxus tends towards substitution of art with non-art, there would be no need for artists & the artists therefore should find another profession to earn a living, otherwise they become the same kind of parasites as the very artists against which Fluxus is set. Do you understand the whole position?

Now let me get into the "ideological" field. I will first explain in very brief & clear terms (a) Fluxus objectives then (b) answer questions you brought up. Then you will be able to make up your mind whether you wish to be associated with Fluxus. If you decide to dissociate yourself, we shall relinquish our copyrights (on your work) to you, return your works and formally expel you from the Fluxus movement. OK? The decision is yours, not ours.

(a) Fluxus objectives are social (not aesthetic). They are connected to the LEF group of 1929 in the Soviet Union (ideologically) and concerned with: gradual elimination of the fine arts (music, theater, poetry, fiction, painting, sculpture etc. etc.). This is motivated by desire to stop the waste of material and human resources (like yourself) and divert it to socially constructive ends. Such as applied arts: industrial design, journalism, architecture, engineering, graphic-typographic arts, printing etc. They are all most closely related fields to fine arts and offer the best alternative profession to fine artists. All clear till now?

Thus Fluxus is definitely against art object as non-functional commodity – to be sold and to make livelihood for an artist. It could temporarily have the pedagogical function of teaching people the needlessness of art, including the eventual needlessness of Fluxus itself. It should not be therefore permanent. (Incidentally one good way of teaching is by satirizing art and satirizing avant-garde art! or yourself!) You will notice this in the first V TRE newspaper I am mailing as printed matter to you. Fluxus therefore is ANTI-PROFESSIONAL (against professional art or artists making a livelihood from art, or artists spending their full time, their life, on art).

Secondly, Fluxus is against art as medium or vehicle promoting artist's ego, since applied art should express the

objective problem to be solved, not artist's personality or his ego. Fluxus therefore should tend towards collective spirit, anonymity and ANTI-INDIVIDUALISM – also ANTI-EUROPEANISM (Europe being the place supporting most strongly – and even originating the idea of – professional artist, art-for-art ideology, expression of artist's ego through art etc. etc.)

These Fluxus concerts, publications etc. are at best transitional (a few years) & temporary until such time when fine art can be totally eliminated (or at least its institutional forms) and artists find other employment. It is very important therefore that you find a profession from which you could make a living. This is as brief as I can write it.

(b) *Answers to your ideological questions*

1. *There is no such thing as amateur or professional revolutionary. Revolution is for participation of all, not only ones who are "professional" revolutionary. One basic requirement: a revolutionary should not practice something he is trying to overthrow (or even worse, make a living from it). Therefore Fluxus people should not make a living from their Fluxus activities but find a profession (like applied arts) by which he would do best Fluxus activity. Fluxus is not an abstraction to do in leisure hours. It is the very non-fine-art you do (or eventually do). The best Fluxus "composition" is a most nonpersonal, "ready-made" one like Brecht's Exit – and it does not require any of us to perform it since it happens daily without any "special" performance of it. Thus our festivals will eliminate themselves (and our need to participate) when they become total readymades ... Same applies to publications and other transitional activities. What would you do in such an eventuality? You can't live off your mother forever (!)*
2. *In answer to your question – Fluxus way of life is 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. doing socially constructive and useful work – earning your own living, 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. spending time on propagandizing your way of life among other idle artists & art collectors and fighting them, 12 p.m. to to 8 a.m. sleeping (8 hours is enough).*

You can't very well propagandize the social aspect of Fluxus by being socially parasitic! It is a contradiction.

The first question people ask is: well, if you are against art as socially useless – and a parasitic activity – what are you doing earning your living? You can't answer "living off my mother!" It's an absurd answer (because you are being just as parasitic as an artist living off the society without contributing anything constructive). You will notice the best revolutionaries are all actually working, practicing what they preach and propagandize. Thus Castro runs a government besides making speeches (propaganda). Can you imagine him only making speeches and letting some one else run the government? All LEF revolutionaries of 1929 were working as journalists or applied artists. All Fluxus people (with exception of Paik & yourself) are working in some fields – applied arts or unrelated field.

Therefore we come to a decision to advise you to choose a field – applied arts or unrelated field – training yourself for it, and then working in it. This will be your Fluxus activity – working at socially useful work & enjoying it without needing to do art on spare "after work" hours. You then also have a choice of dissociating yourself from Fluxus and becoming a social parasite and beatnik.

Give this careful thought and let me know by next mail.



- IV. 15 *If you are really short of \$ I could send you some (after my next pay, since I have spent my present pay 99%). Wait another 5 days, I will send some – don't starve meanwhile. Eat grass mixed with chopped leather belt and boiled old shoes – it's vitamin and protein rich. – That's what the Russian guerillas used to eat.*



- IV. 16 *At this time we have sold in N.Y. 4 Brecht Water Yams, 996 still on our hands, or \$600 loss, so there is a limit to my expenditures, especially when there is no workable distribution of these works. Newspaper is costing me \$120 each month without one single sale. I must be out of my mind to flush my money down the drain this way, especially not succeeding even in holding Fluxus people together. Everyone has the mistaken idea that Fluxus is Maciunas, the way Dé-coll/age = Vostell, instead of Fluxus = collective.*



IV. 17 Maciunas now came under the influence of Henry Flynt, an ultra-Trotskyist who denounced all forms of European art music (including Fluxus) as degenerate and cultural imperialism. Allan Kaprow had arranged, as part of Charlotte Moorman's 1965 series of Avant Garde festivals, to do Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Originale*. Many of us, as friends of Kaprow, were invited to participate. Maciunas loathed Moorman, whom he considered an opportunist, and Flynt loathed Stockhausen, for strange ideological reasons which were intelligible to nobody but himself and perhaps Maciunas.

Maciunas now announced that any one of us that participated in that performance could no longer be considered a part of Fluxus. He tried to intimidate Ay-O and others as well. We became quite angry. Some of us, such as Al Hansen, had already cut off from Maciunas, who was apt to be quite difficult to work with at best.

The day of *Originale* arrived. The result was that some of the Fluxus performers (myself, for instance) had to pass through a picket line of the other Fluxus artists, who were denouncing the performance as cultural imperialism. This was grossly embarrassing, and it discouraged much of the camaraderie of the earlier times of Fluxus forever.



IV. 18 *I am trying to get some equipment on a phony import letterhead. Can I use your Château de Ravenel address? Actually you should not get any mail. because I will pose as your agent here & thus pick the equipment up. OK? But (if) you get letter you will know what it is & can let me know about it. OK? A Theatrum Instrumentorum letterhead. Let the postman know.*



IV. 19 In the early Sixties, George and I collaborated on a series of projects which grew out of our shared dismay at the official art of the Soviet Union – the combination of feudal and bourgeois “classics” and propaganda kitsch. We picketed Stockhausen twice in 1964 in order to oppose the bourgeois and European-chauvinist implications of the ideology of “serious art”. (We were not opposing all culture directed at small audiences; we were opposing the reactionary élitism specific to “serious art.”) Subsequently, some of

the points we were making came to be taken for granted with the appearance of "black studies" and the growing interest of American students in classical Indian music. However, the Left still has not settled accounts *theoretically* with "serious art". Another development was that one of the ethnic musics of the U.S., rock-'n'-roll, became so successful as commercial culture that it became subject to all of the manipulation and degradation of the larger imperialist society. (From Chuck Berry to Johnny Rotten.) Today, Rock mostly represents kitsch and depravity. We do not concede in any way that this perversion discredits our support of ethnic music.

(I should also mention the long narrow dark grey leaflet which George designed for the second demonstration. I will remember Marc Schleifer's astonishment when I took the leaflet to him.)

At the time of the demonstrations against Stockhausen, I was associated with a tiny Leftist sect called WWP. After the second demonstration, the chairman of WWP, Sam Marcy, made the valid criticism that one does not expound a new theory in a leaflet; one does not hold a demonstration unless an issue is well enough understood to be expressed in a slogan. Marcy said that I ought to write a theoretical pamphlet. I approached George about co-authoring such a pamphlet, and that is how *Communists Must Give Revolutionary Leadership in Culture* came about. I still agree with that pamphlet in three areas: (a) criticism of Soviet culture as the expression of a retrogressive élite in Soviet society; (b) interest in documentary film and revived ethnic music as symptoms of social progressivism; (c) George's architecture as an example of the socialist planning of use-values. Where George and I were naive was in not recognizing the primacy of the relationship between the economic core of society and mass consciousness in determining the character of culture. State manipulation of the fine arts cannot turn an otherwise retrogressive situation into a revolutionary one; and in a revolutionary situation, the spontaneous revolution in culture becomes primary: state manipulation of culture is misplaced use of executive authority.

The Communist Culture pamphlet certainly exemplified Richard Kostelanetz's idea of a new book format. The text was on two broadsheets which were folded and sandwiched between slabs of materials used in George's building system. Although the result was physically able to be mailed without wrapping, postal regulations did not permit us to do so. The problem has appeared in other works

of George's that designs cannot be used in the intended way because they do not comply with bureaucratic regulations.

I mailed copies of the Stockhausen leaflets to Robert F. Williams in Cuba in 1964, and copies of the Communist Culture pamphlet to China in 1965. I have often wondered if those mailings had any connection with the fact that when the factional struggle in the Chinese Communist Party surfaced in 1966, it did so in the misleading guise of a "Cultural Revolution."



IV. 20 *Sorry for such long silence, but I am being snowed under with work (up to the top part of the top of my spectacles) ... Everything happened as I was afraid it would. All people assigned to be responsible in certain activities just did nothing. So Al Hansen disappeared, George Brecht asked me to continue on paper V TRE (him contributing a portion, but me doing all the mountain of technical work – paste-up etc. etc.) and nobody doing anything about theaters, exhibits, promotion – so now it ends up that I have to do all, Dick & Alison being the only ones helping actively, while all others are just waiting for all arrangements to be made so they can come as "stars" to perform etc. That's the very last festival I am organizing (on such basis.)*



IV. 21 ... Maciunas seemed to have a fantastic ability to get things done. Like, I was sending out all these event cards to my friends. I had them printed, and just sent them. And there was the V TRE paper to get printed. There I was, sitting in the woods, in East Brunswick, New Jersey, with Eric, who was I don't know how many years old at the time, but very short. All of a sudden there was this guy there, and there was no outlet for this work at the time, for anything we were doing at the time. La Monte Young had just arrived from California. I'd heard his pieces at the Living Theater – the poem for benches and tables – so I knew most of the work already, but some of the people I had never met ... well, we're not going to go on a nostalgia kick ...

So this guy turned up, and if you had things to be printed he could get them printed. It's pretty hard in East Brunswick to get good offset printing. It's not impossible, but it's not so easy, and since I'm very lazy it was a relief to find somebody who could take the burden off

my hands. So there was this guy Maciunas, a Lithuanian or Bulgarian, or somehow refugee or whatever – beautifully dressed – “astounding looking” would be a better adjective. He was able somehow to carry the whole thing off, without my having to go 57 miles to find a printer.



- IV. 22 Also, didn't you, Addi, Eric and Tomas travel to the USSR and Poland in late 1963 or early 1964? I've never known just what was involved there, but heard that it raised some controversy with George M.



- IV. 23 During the early days in Europe, one of George's biggest dreams was to put us all on the Trans-Siberian Railroad and make a Fluxus tour from Leningrad to Vladivostok. The plan was, every time the train stopped we would all get off and perform for the local population in exchange for meals. None of us was eager or able to participate in this Agit-Prop project.

Instead, I went with my brother by car through East Europe and Russia the summer of 1964. The trip took us from Warsaw and Cracow in Poland to Prague, Brno and Bratislava in Czechoslovakia, and from Budapest in Hungary to Lvov, Kiev, Orel, Moscow, Novgorod and Leningrad in the Soviet Union.

The postcards we sent George (to make him happy, now that he was stuck in New York) were a bit exaggerated. First of all, we told him that Addi Kōpcke, Tomas Schmit and Emmett Williams were with us on the tour, and we told him that we were performing in huge spaces before thousands of spectators. I remember especially describing to him how we had just performed Nam June Paik's Pissing Contest at Red Square in Moscow in front of tens of thousands of happy communists.

When I returned to Scandinavia I found a beautiful letter from George, unchurching us all from the Fluxus Cathedral he had erected in his mind. There was also a copy of a letter from George to General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev; in it, he stated that he wasn't responsible for anything we had done in the Soviet Union and neighboring countries since we did not belong to his art movement, and that we were obviously lunatics.

Unfortunately, a few days before the letter from George was received at the Kremlin, Khrushchev fell from power. Nikita couldn't arrest us after that.



IV. 24 Dear George,

Big succès de scandale here in Moscow – I will send you the press clippings and pictures ...

Here we are – just finished a performance (intelligent audience) waiting for the press – the magazine *Blamen* has already been very nice to us with 20 pages of biography and scores – we performed the same program as we did in Warszawa – your Olivetti piece and mouth piece among other things.

We performed the Olivetti piece by drinking, eating and pissing (in fact we succeeded even if it was rather difficult for me, who was the pissing man).

We are going to be fat rich from this journey.



IV. 25 Dear George,

No scandal but only success in Leningrad because they don't want to be like Moscow people here. But officially not a word. The avant-garde critic of Leningrad (Gurvic) told us that the newspapers had forbidden any kind of article because they didn't want to get into a discussion they would lose with the Moscow papers. That's great.

Now your mouth piece and Olivetti piece have been performed in Warsaw, Prague, Budapest, Leningrad – and soon in Helsinki.



IV. 26 *Thanks for all these letters you've been sending me about your adventures in the Socialist Republics. Although we were pleased to hear of your initiative in propagating the Fluxus collective, the 2 serious oversights or rather mistakes you have made have done more harm than any intentional sabotage, and undo all the past and present good will of yours, plus all my careful promotional efforts in USSR.*

1. *Before going to Poland you never consulted us about:*

a. *PROGRAMMING (particularly in USSR) which must be very careful and delicate to achieve maximum audience accept-*

ance and least criticism from the press. In such case Fluxus had to be planned as vaudeville, amusement, satire, etc., rather than a vulgar shock, which even I or most New York (if not all) Fluxus members would strongly disapprove of. (Pissing on stage is just about the least suitable version of Olivetti and I would never have approved of it to be played anywhere, least of all in East Europe or USSR.) Knowing of your plans to go to USSR in advance, for instance, I would have had the chance of forbidding you to play any of my pieces since I am going to USSR in the Spring of 1965 in regards to some important (non-Fluxus) affairs, and performance of my pieces, in such a vulgar manner, could jeopardize not only my affairs there, but my whole future life.

- b. NEW PIECES, of which there are many, especially from Japan, many of which would have been immeasurably more suitable there than your interpretation of Olivetti, and I have no idea of what other shocks you pulled off there ...
2. When you started to send me letters of your performances, you never informed us of what was most important, so that the first mistake could have been corrected – namely HOW TO REACH YOU BY MAIL ...

This second mistake is such an obvious oversight that it almost seems like intentional sabotage of Fluxus. To protect Fluxus and salvage some of the past promotional efforts I put in there, I regret that I must publicly denounce you to the Soviet Press along the lines of criticism voiced in their press and accuse you of apostasy. I hope you realize that is the only way out of the situation your two oversights have put us in.

I have mailed you a package of Fluxus goodies to demonstrate there is no personal animosity involved. I am not angered but only disappointed by your continuous and almost chronic disloyalty to Fluxus and particularly distrust of me. Please understand, that Fluxus is not ME (this is not Dé-coll/age). Fluxus is about 20 (loyal) members who should be given at least a minimal amount of consideration. Just as we would not start distorting your compositions when performing them in the U.S. and Japan without your prior approval, you should not do the same without consulting us. We should also be considerate of the new members rather than monopolize Fluxus concerts with just our own compositions. Such monopoly of our egos is more in line with Dé-coll/age than Fluxus.

Please consider this letter in confidence (destroy it), and also, please, PLEASE STOP PERFORMING MY PIECES. I am not at all interested in promoting myself (how many times do I have to insist on that?)



IV. 27 Let me say at once that I had not been traipsing about the Soviet Union, but minding my own business at the Château de Ravenel. And I had never ever had any inclination, and certainly not the opportunity, to piss in the grand squares or on the stages of theaters in Moscow, Leningrad, Warsaw, Budapest, and Prague.

What provoked these bitter letters of denunciation? It was a hoax – or you could, I'm not saying you should, or that I would – call it one of the finest Fluxus gags of them all.

Eric Andersen and his brother had indeed been to all of the cities above, and from each one of them Eric, always an inventive artist, sent to Maciunas imaginary, if not very imaginative, accounts of how we were misperforming the classic Fluxus repertory in George's Dreamland, the USSR.

Addi Kjøpcke, Tomas Schmit, and I were equally surprised when the letters arrived, denouncing us for crimes we were totally unaware of having committed.

A cruel joke? It was certainly no laughing matter to George, who regarded it as the Gospel Truth; and it cost me, through no fault of my own, his friendship and trust for many years to come.



IV. 28 Naturally I feel a little sad, with Maciunas going to Russia so soon after the publication (three weeks from now) of my "Open Letter to Maria Joudina," in which I attack Maciunas and Flynt as the fascists they are, and point out the terrible damage they are doing both to the political left and to art by pretending to set them in opposition. Naturally Maciunas knows nothing about this, and in all innocence he is about to go to Russia to live, where, if they are wise, they will imprison him till he has a head on his shoulders, which may be never ... Mme. Joudina is the lady in the ministry of culture who says your work has such a healthy tendency.



V. 29 GM: *Dick Higgins was very impatient about printing his complete works, which were voluminous, and I just couldn't get to do it, so then he decided he would open up his own press and print it. That's how the Something Else Press came about, more or less from his impatience, you know, not wanting to wait for my slow process.*

LM: How were you supporting yourself all during this time?

GM: *By having a job. So all these productions were right out of my pocket. Ninety percent of my pay went to support Fluxus productions.*

LM: What was your job then?

GM: *Graphic design. So I worked until, oh, I think 1968.*

LM: Who'd you work for? I've forgotten now.

GM: *Oh, a small, one-man studio.*

LM: Different people?

GM: *No, one place. Earned about \$10,000 (a year), so I spent \$9,000 on Fluxus.*

LM: Do you have any idea what you totally spent (on Fluxus)?

GM: *Probably about \$50,000.*

LM: Has it paid off?

GM: *No, it will never pay off. Look at Dick Higgins, how much he lost on his Something Else Press, like almost half a million.*

LM: May I ask a stupid question? Why didn't it pay off? Because isn't part of the idea that it's low cost and multiple distribution ...

GM: *No one was buying it, in those days. We opened up a store on Canal Street, what was it, 1964, and we had it open almost all year. We didn't make one sale in that whole year ... We did not even sell a 50 cent item, a postage stamp sheet ... You could buy V TRE papers for a quarter, you could buy George Brecht's puzzles for one dollar, Fluxus Yearboxes for twenty dollars.*



IV. 30 Two important general things: No. 1: This Biennale in Venice is the first Biennale after the collapse of communism, and Fluxus has actively taken part in it. Fluxus artist Milan Knizak was arrested in Prague 300 times – he was as famous as Havel – and on the radio Party Leader Novotny called Knizak “an enemy of the working-class.” This is incredible, because, for example, neither Adenauer nor even Strauss ever mentioned Beuys.

No. 2: Vytautas Landsbergis of Lithuania was a contributor to Fluxus, and he founded the official opposition party in Lithuania called *Sajudis* – and in Lithuanian *SAJUDIS* means FLUXUS: so,

officially, the Fluxus party overthrew the communist government and the whole Soviet Union. In the history of art NO artist's party ever won over a government. Just imagine! That this little Lithuanian guy took on the Soviet Union – and the chairman of Fluxus, George Maciunas, a childhood friend of Landsbergis in Lithuania, was a COMMUNIST! ... that's a great IRONY.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

COMMUNISTS
MUST GIVE
REVOLUTIONARY
LEADERSHIP IN
CULTURE

BY HENRY FLYNT
AND GEORGE
MACIUNAS

A NEW THEORETICAL ANALYSIS
OF COMMUNIST CULTURAL
POLICY \$1 FROM: P.O. BOX 180,
N.Y. 10013.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Advertisement from *The Village Voice*, New York, March 3, 1966.

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 (flŭks), *n.* [OF., fr. L. *fluxus*, fr. *fluere*, *fluxum*, to flow. See FLUENT; cf. FLUSH, *n.* (of cards).] **1. Med.**
a A flowing or fluid discharge from the bowels or other part; esp., an excessive and morbid discharge: as, the bloody flux, or dysentery. **b** The matter thus discharged.

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 rosin.

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

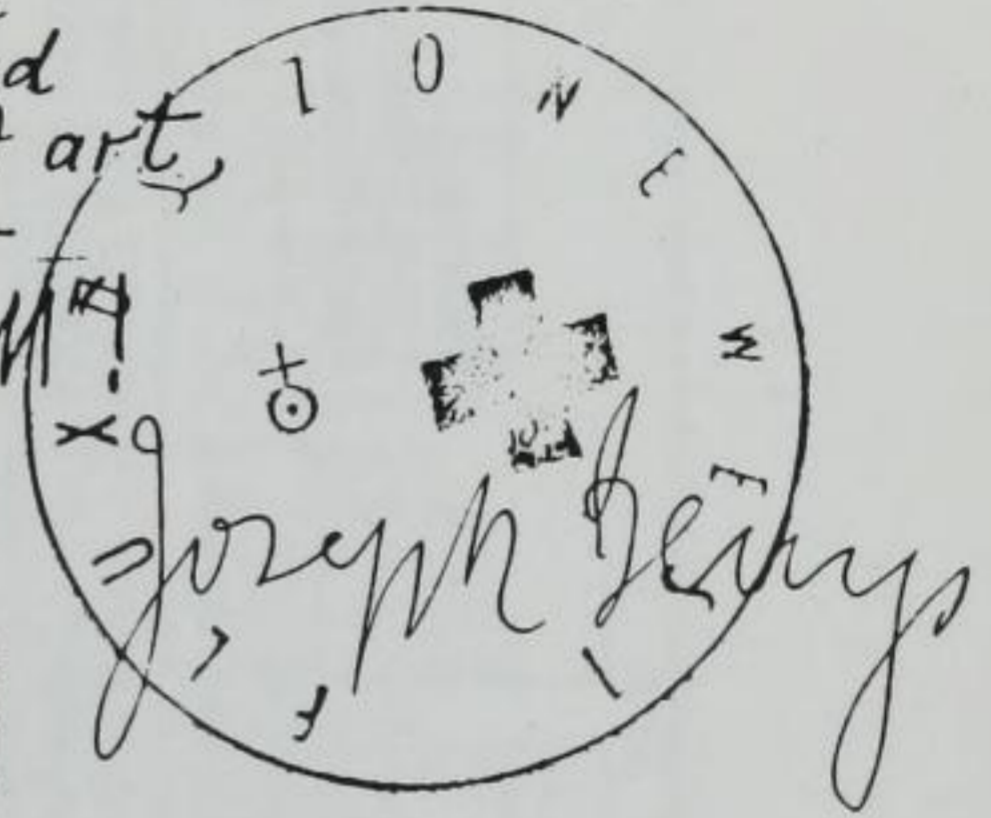
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PURGE THE WORLD OF "AMERICANISM"

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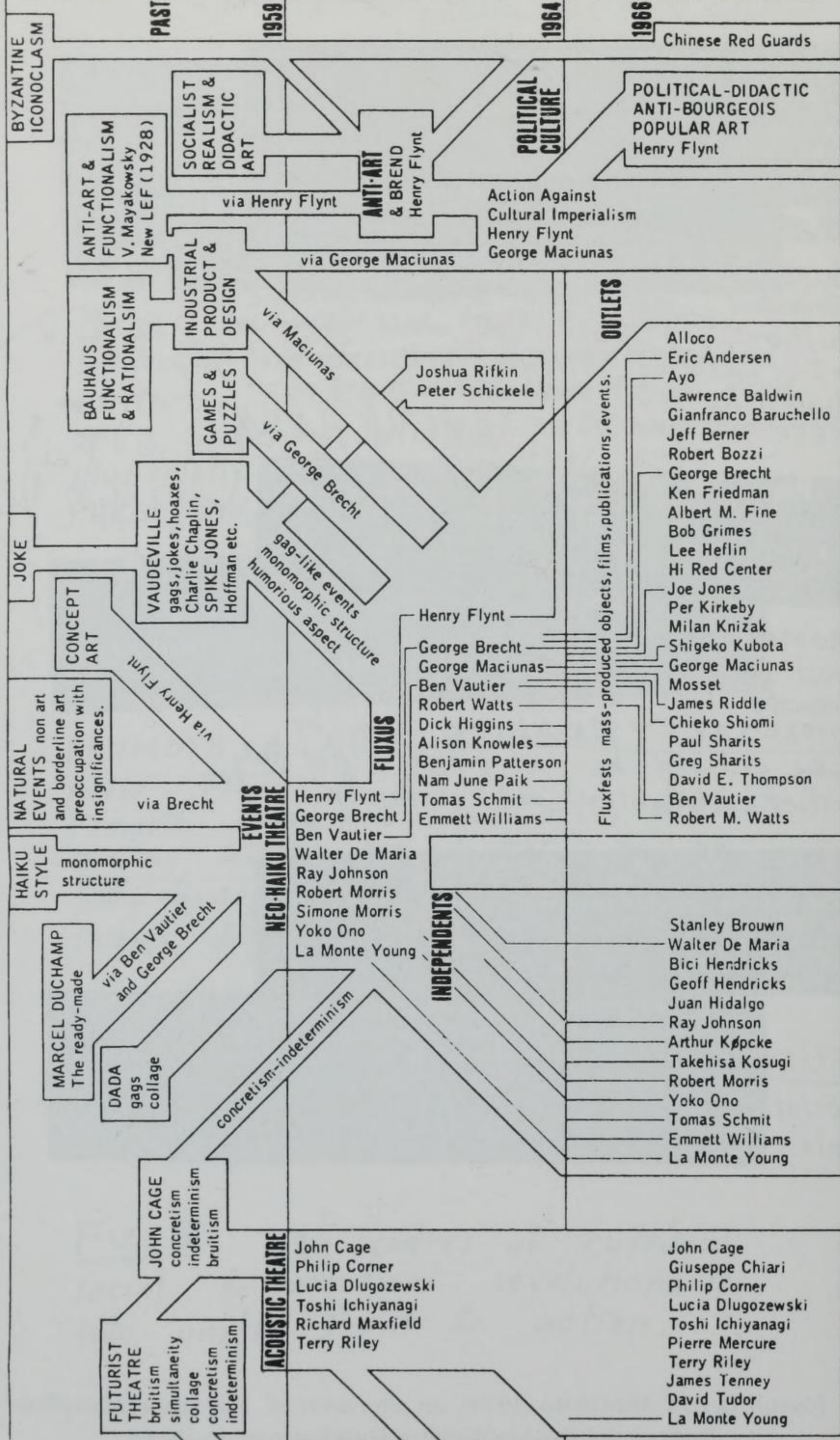
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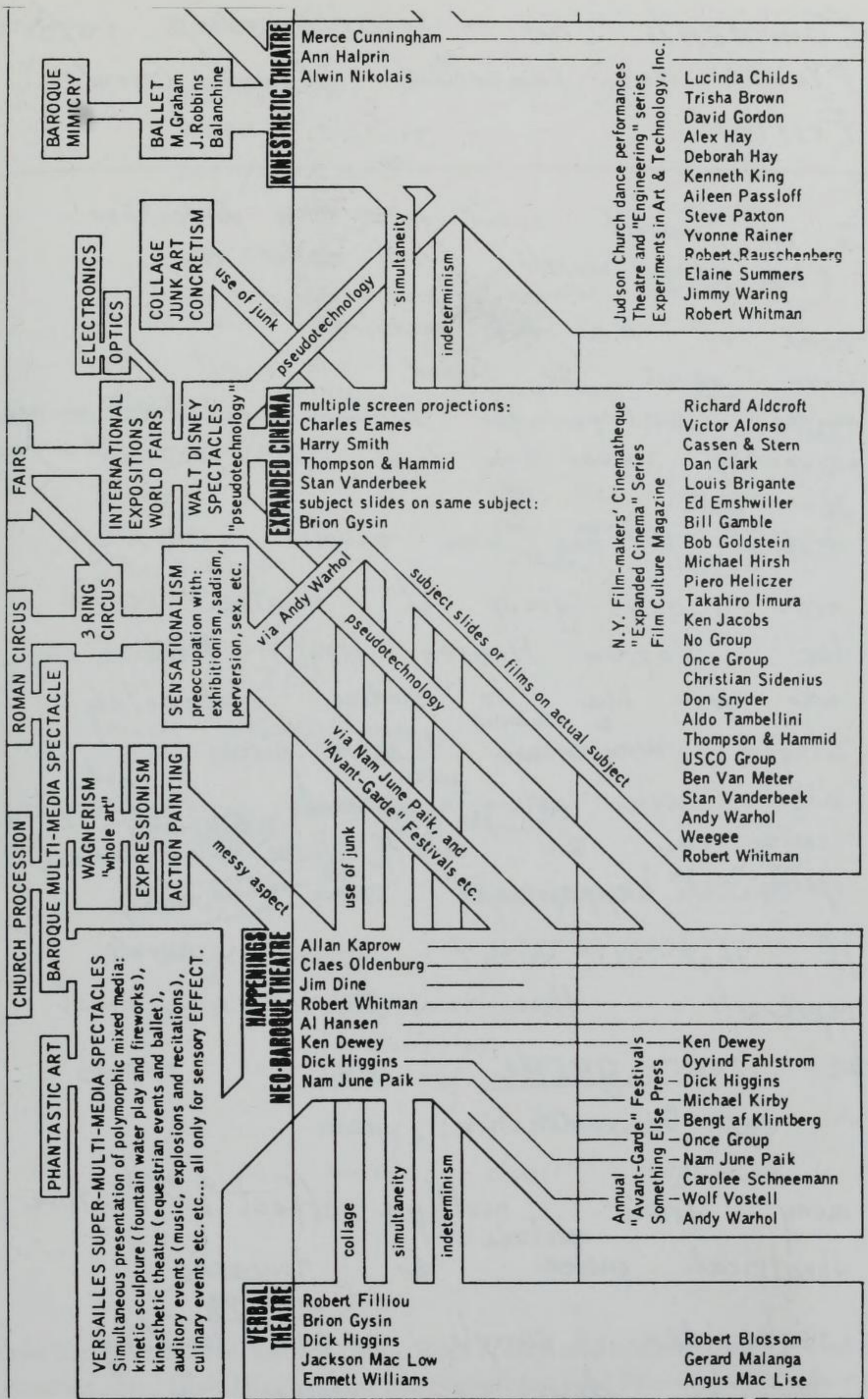
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Joseph Beuys' *Manifesto* (1970), an alteration of Maciunas' *Manifesto*. It was published by Edition Hundertmark in Berlin.

EXPANDED ARTS DIAGRAM





George's *Expanded Arts Diagram*, which traces the "genealogy" of Fluxus. Reprinted from *Film Culture* No. 43, *Expanded Arts* issue, Winter 1966.

Comments on relationship of Fluxus to so called "Avant-Garde" Festival.

To call oneself avant-garde is pretentious (like calling oneself great master etc.).

name of AG lost meaning since it is tossed about & tagged to just about anyone writing for drums or ~~tape~~ or putting noises on tape for past 20 years.

If ~~that~~ lately it has been adopted by a neo-rococo group of theatre people like Kaprow, Hansen, Higgins, Paik etc. - who ~~pro~~ like to produce elaborately staged ~~wagnerian~~ ^{& rehearsed} theatre pieces with much acting, ^{countless} rehearsals, ^{long & exact} scripts, scores etc., & call ^{professional} these ^{neo-wagnerian} operas "happenings".
for some unexplained reason

If that is what avant-garde represents then FLUXUS must be rear-garde since it moves in opposite direction:

away from multiple effect ^{& multi} structure theatrical ~~piece~~ ^{spectacle} & towards unlike gags single idea, simple pieces ^{tending} to be closer & closer to natural event (til it will eventually disappear) [clanic: Brechts - Exit].

Fluxus characteristics -

humorous - ~~gag~~ (gag) ~~fact~~
monostructure -
insignificant
~~not serious~~
unpretentious
unprofessional (anyone can do it.)

content
not
+ drinks

~~the~~ derived from:
Vaudeville
Gags
Dada
Duchamp
some Cage
Japanese Haiku
" Zen
much Spikes Jones.

contrast to
Kaprow, Hansen, Paik
who insist that only
they the "professionals"
can perform their own
pieces. (or direct)

the so called "happenings"
derived from Baroque ballets
staged in Versailles,
with water works
fireworks,
casts of hundreds,
many simultaneous acts
music, dance warfare,
etc. etc. -

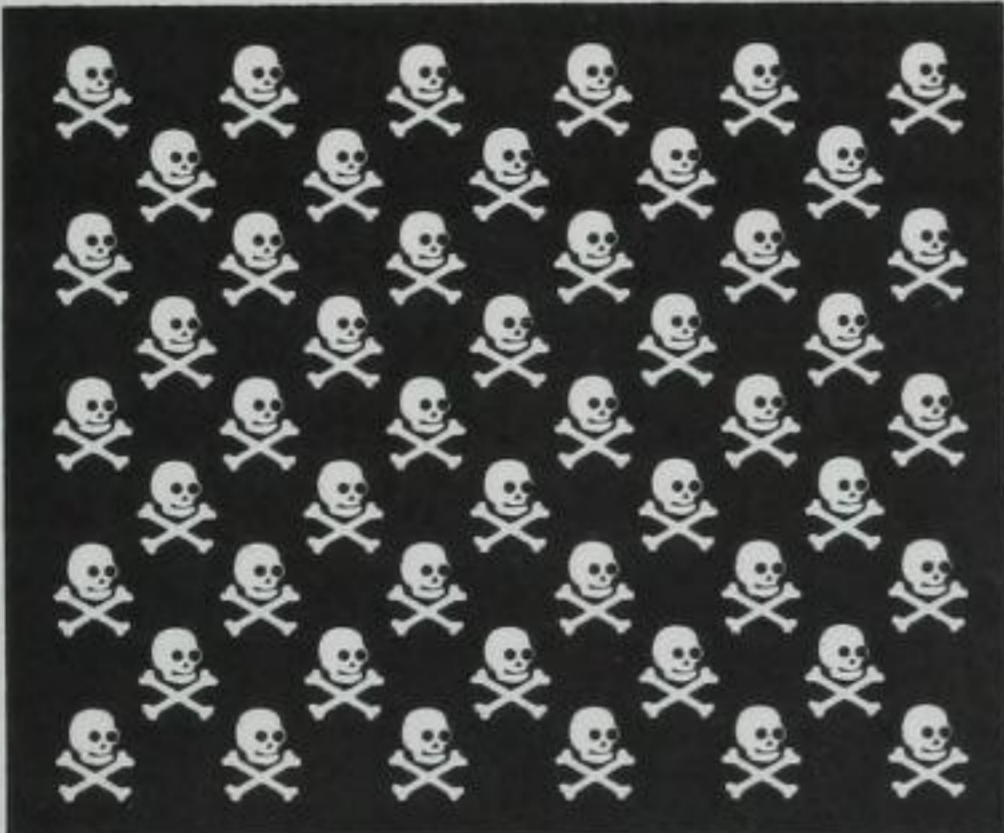
George had several professional rivals, Wolf Vostell and his magazine *Dé-coll/age*, for instance, and Dick Higgins and the Something Else Press, both of whom he regarded as renegades, prima donnas, independents and worse. But the person he *most* loved to hate was "that unperson" and arch-fiend Charlotte Moorman with her annual *New York Festival of the Avant-Garde*. The "comments" above were written circa 1964. (See also George's "composition" on the following page.)

Composition 1971 by George Maciunas, dedicated to all avant garde artists such as:

Vito Acconci, Eric Andersen, Carl Andre, Arman, David Ascevolt, Ayo, J. Baldessari, Robert Barry, Joseph Beuys, Mel Bochner, Robert Bozzi, George Brecht, Bazon Brock, Stanley Brouwn, Trisha Brown, Gunther Brus, James L. Byars, John Cage, Neke Carson, Jim Collins, Merce Cunningham, Walter De Maria, Ger Dekkers, Jan Dibbets, Oyvind Fahlstrom, Robert Filliou, Henry Flynt, Richard Foreman, Simone Forti, Ken Friedman, Terry Fox, Dan Graham, Colin Greenly, Hans Haacke, Alex Hay, Henrik Have, Davi Det Hompson, Hi Red Center, Doug Hubler, Alice Hutchins, P. Hutchinson, Ken Jacobs, R. Jarden, Ray Johnson, Joan Jonas, Joe Jones, Thadeusz Kantor, Kenneth King, Per Kirkeby, Bengt Af Klintberg, Milan Knizak, Alison Knowles, Arthur Koepcke, Paul Kos, Joseph Kosuth, Tetsumi Kudo, Jean Jacques Lebel, Barry LeVa, Sol LeWitt, Barbara Lloyd, Richard Long, J.O. Mallander, Gordon Matta, Barry McCallion, Jonas Mekas, Bruce Melman, Mario Merz, Jean-Claude Moineau, Meredith Monk, Peter Moore, Bob Morris, Gordon Mumma, Giancarlo Nanni, Bruce Nauman, Phil Niblock, Hermann Nitsch, Claes Oldenburg, Dennis Oppenheim, Judy Padow, Daniela Palazzoli, Ben Patterson, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, Robert Rauschenberg, Jock Reynolds, Klaus Rinke, Diter Rot, Takako Saito, Italo Scanga, Tomas Schmit, Paul Sharits, Mieko Shiomi, Robert Smithson, Michael Snow, Alan Sonfist, Keith Sonnier, Daniel Spoerri, Harvey Stromberg, Julias Tobias, Timm Ulrich, John VanSaun, Ben Vautier, Branko Vucicevic, Robert Whitman, Yoshimasa Wada, La Monte Young, ZAJ group,
who refused or did not participate in the so-called *annual avant-garde festival*

George Maciunas shall avoid all visual and oral contact with any of the participants in this festival until the next one comes along.

(See George's attack on the Avant-Garde Festival on previous two pages.)



U.S.A. SURPASSES ALL THE GENOCIDE RECORDS!

KUBLAI KHAN MASSACRES 10% IN NEAR EAST

SPAIN MASSACRES 10% OF AMERICAN INDIANS

JOSEPH STALIN MASSACRES 5% OF RUSSIANS

NAZIS MASSACRE 5% OF OCCUPIED EUROPEANS AND 75% OF EUROPEAN JEWS

U.S.A. MASSACRES 6.5% OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE & 75% OF AMERICAN INDIANS

FOR CALCULATIONS & REFERENCES WRITE TO: P.O. BOX 180, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10013

Flag poster designed and published by Maciunas, circa 1966.

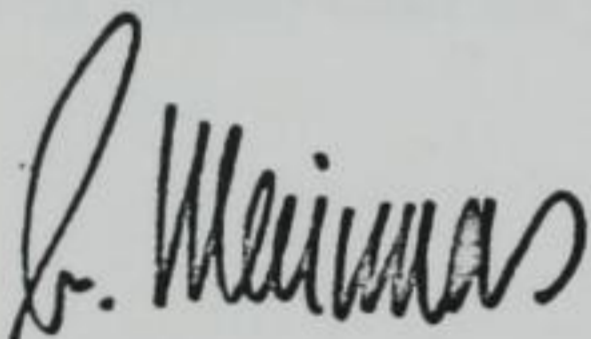
FOR PRESS RELEASE

STATEMENT FROM FLUXUS COMMITTEE REGARDING SO CALLED
FLUXUS CONCERTS RECENTLY PRESENTED AT WARSHAW, PRAGUE,
BUDAPEST, KIEW, MOSCOW AND LENINGRAD BY 4 FLUXUS RENEGADES
AND IMPOSTORS.

It has come to the attention of FLUXUS editorial committee that four Fluxus renegades (Eric Andersen, Arthur K pcke, Tomas Schmit and Emmett Williams) and expelled members have been travelling through various socialist republics giving scandalous and defamatory concerts under the name of FLUXUS. Their purpose obviously was to slander the name of FLUXUS and some of its composers by performing some of these FLUXUS compositions in the most scoundrelly and scandalous way.

We wish to denounce these four renegades and impostors most emphatically and wish to advise that no further opportunity be given them to exhibit their scandalous activities. We wish to express our full agreement with the criticism and denunciation of their activities published in the Soviet Press.

Permission would have been never granted to them to perform compositions by: Genpei Akasegawa, Ayo, George Brecht, Congo, Giuseppe Chiari, Dick Higgins, Toshi Ichiyangi, Joe Jones, Alison Knowles, Takehisa Kosugi, Shigeku Kubota, George Maciunas, Yoko Ono, Benjamin Patterson, Takako Saito, Chieko Shiomi, Ben Vautier, Robert Watts and La Monte Young. Their performances of any compositions by any of these composers must have been with slanderous intent and therefore incorrect. Compositions of any persons not listed above are not FLUXUS material nor done by FLUXUS members and should not have been performed under the name of FLUXUS without its authorization and supervision



George Maciunas,
Chairman
FLUXUS Committee

Renegades? Imposters? What's this all about? For a full explanation,
please read IV. 22 through IV. 27.

V
THE JAPANESE
CONNECTION

V. 1 A Poem for George Maciunas

O! George
O!! George
O!!! George



V. 2 I do remember my promise about sending something to you for the book of George.

Since we were such close friends, it is still very hard for me to write about him – for so many reasons.

What shall I say – we loved – we loved and we fought – or we fought and we loved?



V. 3 Eric tells me GM really liked Japanese women, that they didn't threaten him, he being or being at that time a virgin and all ... ? That women like Carolee terrified him, etc. etc. ... What was Yoko to Fluxus, in the early days? My impression was, not much. Did she get into it through Ichiyanagi? How did Shigeiko get involved? I think I have it straight about Saito, that George just brought her to the U.S. because something she sent him impressed him – ? As for Shiomi, I get the idea she followed Ay-O here – ? Alison the token Western woman, four Japanese women – I can't make too much sociology out of it – Help!



V. 4 Yoko Ono said she had a friend with an uptown gallery who might be interested in my work. We went together to the AG Gallery on Madison Avenue between 73rd and 74th Streets.

It was a terribly chilly late afternoon in February or March in 1961. A guy with a high-collared white shirt and a black vest turned up. This guy, George Maciunas, was coughing terribly. It was painful to listen to him. I thought then that he must have had a very bad cold, but his gallery partner, Almus Salcius, told me later that George had chiseled away heavy layers of plaster to expose the brick walls, without a mask or proper ventilation, and that the resultant piles of dust had provoked the asthma which troubled him for the rest of his life.

Anyway, in spite of the coughing, he managed to say that he was very interested in the work of the avant garde. *"I want to show this work to the whole world,"* he said. Although I was used to hearing the expression "avant garde" in Japan, it was the first time I had heard anyone speak about it in New York. And as I listened to this guy dressed up like Tristan Tzara speaking so passionately about the avant garde as a matter of course, I developed a strange but intimate feeling toward him.

I showed him my portfolio. *"Let's have a show in September,"* he said. *"Come to see me in a few months and we'll set the exact date and make an announcement."*

As I promised him I would, some months later I went back to the gallery to arrange the show. But the gallery no longer existed. George had gone into bankruptcy and escaped to Europe.



V. 5 *GOT ANY NEWS FROM YOUR "CONTACTS" IN JAPAN?*

Apparently U.S. Air Force suddenly realized that I am costing them too much in \$ in medicine etc. & is trying to shake me off. They offered to pay my trip back to the States if I resigned, but I declined. Of course when my contract comes up for renewal in November, they most likely will not renew, in which case I will have to go back to the States, since only there can I earn enough to publish all Fluxus projects, unless something turns up in Japan by November. Are your contacts at Tokyo Stars & Stripes shaky? (Since you left them?) The other possibility is for me to go to Arizona & try to get myself cured (if it is possible in one year, for I would not stay in that desert more than a year). Of course I would work there, too, so I could continue printing stuff. So my future is rather uncertain ...



V. 6 After my disappointment at finding that the AG Gallery had folded, I didn't see George again until two years later, after he returned from organizing Fluxus in Europe. Then shortly after New Year's Day in 1964 he showed up at my loft on Canal Street. Though we had met only once before, the feeling seemed to be mutual that we had known one another for a hundred years.

"I want to open a shop," he said. "A shop, not a gallery. Do you know if there are any lofts available around here?"

He found a vacant loft, at 359 Canal Street, next to mine. I had a carpentry workshop in those days, and I made the shelves for his loft. Soon afterwards it opened as New York's first Fluxus Shop and Fluxus Concert Hall.



V. 7 George Maciunas first appeared in my life in 1963. That summer I met Nam June Paik at a concert in Tokyo, and when I told him what I was doing, he said, "You send your pieces to George Maciunas. He will be very pleased." I followed Paik's words. All of a sudden the frequent exchanges of letters and works started between George and me. He always wrote me on aerograms with neat handwriting, which I tried to imitate, but it never worked out.

In his second or third letter he said he wanted to publish my event pieces, and asked for my agreement. *"When it sells, we share 50% each, OK?"* That was the first time for my art activity to have a subtle flavor of business. Though our business didn't succeed at all, he sent me a box of printed Fluxus name cards.

Whenever he asked me to send something, he always added *"as soon as possible"*. So I secretly called him Mr. As-soon-as-possible. But ah, he seems to have consumed his life "as fast as possible" ... George, you should have learned how to live more slowly and happily!

Anyway, after a while he began urging me to come to New York to join in Fluxus activities there. He bought a dozen of my *Endless Boxes* to help my travel fare. He sent me a check paying \$20 apiece. It surprised me, because \$20 was almost equivalent to one year's tuition at a Japanese national university at that time!

Honestly speaking, it was a little scary for me to go to New York, because I was not sure if this George Maciunas was a trustworthy

person or not, but with the assuring words of Kuniharu Akiyama and Ay-O I decided to go.



V. 8 *I will move in 1964 to Japan & establish there a permanent collective farm. I am asking several people & you to join me there in 1964.*

I would initially invest in a farm & we would subsist by growing our own food & doing little things like composing, performing, Fluxing around, publishing all kinds of things, swindling idiots & robbing the fat capitalists.

People to join may be: Emmett Williams, Robert Filliou, Nam June Paik (?), Ben Patterson, Higginses, etc. etc. I wrote George Brecht & Richard Maxfield also.



V. 9 Once George wrote me that he wished to come to Japan and make a Fluxus village. Living together with people of the same way of thinking was his dream. He often used the words “colony” or “commune”, but I think an artist’s favorite words would be “freedom” or “independence”. Poor George, he didn’t know the most appropriate distance between artists and himself.



V. 10 When I arrived at Kennedy Airport about 7 o’clock in the morning, George and Akiyama were there waiting for us – I flew to New York with Shigeko Kubota. I was sorry for them, thinking that they must have gotten up very early. George was wearing a black shirt and carrying an umbrella. He was much taller than I had imagined, but he looked somewhat shy. I felt awkward, too. I didn’t know what to say. Only Akiyama was able to talk cheerfully and he played a helpful role in our clumsy and serious first meeting. Then we took a limousine to Canal Street, where they held a welcome party for us with Nam June Paik, Ay-O and his wife Ikuko, and Takako Saito.

The next day George rented a car with a chauffeur and took us on a drive around Manhattan. This must have been an unusual extravagance for him, but I did not realize it then. He acted like a

very kind host father to a foreign student. I thought I was right in trusting him.

He had made a hotel reservation at the YWCA for two nights; then he found a new air-conditioned apartment on Sullivan Street for us, located only a few minutes from his loft on Canal Street. He offered us some of his furniture, a bed with a big black mat, blankets, a desk, a lamp with a flexible arm, goods for the kitchen, etc. We carried them up the street with the help of Paik, Ay-O and Takako. "*This is a 'carrying event', ha, ha, ha ...*", said George, laughing. Though carrying them was tough work, I enjoyed the way we looked at this action as a performance.



V. 11 After a while he proposed having dinner together every evening. In his opinion, buying food for many was more economical than buying for one, and also cooking alternatively would save time. He called it Flux Dinner Commune. Theoretically, it sounded practical. So George, Paik, Takako, Shigeko and I started this part-time collective life. For the first few days, the men went shopping and the girls cooked. However, we found it inconvenient, because George came back rather late from his office and then often didn't buy what we wanted to cook.

Finally we girls took over all the tasks, shopping and cooking alternately between us. When I served shrimp, George complained, "*Shrimp is too expensive! We should have cheaper food! To get protein chicken is enough.*" And when I served fruits, he said again, "*We don't have to eat fruits. To get vitamins we can take vitamin pills.*" In fact, he gave me some of his favorite vitamin pills. As everybody knows, he was suffering from asthma. When I made soup with a little pepper in it, he started coughing, and told me never again to use pepper in his dishes.

Actually this was troublesome for us girls who out of sympathy for George thought he might have gotten tired of eating only poor canned food.

Speaking of the Flux Dinner Commune, it didn't last long, because we got jobs at night. George was discouraged, but bravely said, "*Well, work comes first, dinner second.*"



V. 12 I first learned about George soon after the composer Toshi Ichiyanagi returned to Japan from New York in 1961. Toshi described George as a sloppy kind of painter who produced paintings by dropping a sheet of paper over floating oil paints on water in a bathtub. But Toshi added that the guy had "an ability to get things done." Toshi pronounced the name Mack-you-nas. He showed me a letter from George asking Toshi to send some scores and tapes of our music, Group Ongaku's music. I noticed a five or ten dollar bill was enclosed. I wondered why he did not use a money order or a check.

First we sent tapes. Later I sent a score for *Anagram for Strings*. George wrote me about the score, which was performed by four double bassists at the Nikolai Church in Copenhagen. A year or so later he wrote me that he'd published the score and told me about the price and distribution of profit from the selling of the score. He asked me to send more scores and I encouraged many of my friends to send him some pieces. Gempei Akasegawa was one of them. He wrote a couple of events and sent them. He also sent some collaborative pieces and documentation of Hi-Red Center's activities.

I asked Yoko Ono to help translate my pieces. She was not only so kind as to translate my instructions but offered to send it for me by military mail through her GI friend. But the letter, it turned out later, didn't reach George. I had no idea the letter was missing. I was puzzled when I received a letter from George which almost accused me of belonging to the Cage school of composers and told me that the Cage school was now on the decline.

Our correspondence was always one-way from George because of my poor English. But he kept sending me Fluxus publications, which I always admired for their graphic quality as well as the content.

After eleven years, in 1972, I finally met George in his basement at 80 Wooster Street. He welcomed me and gave me many Fluxus objects. I don't remember what we talked about exactly, except that I showed him my 450-page chronology of the Japanese avant-garde which was published in two consecutive issues of a Japanese art magazine just before I left Japan. To my surprise he wanted to publish the chronology in English. I thanked him but said there would be too many problems attached, such as difficulty in translation, obtaining copyrights from the Japanese publisher, lack

of original photos, and so on. Besides, I was planning to revise it and publish it as a book. In fact, if he had actually published the chronology, it would not have made sense to the readers, unless they were highly informed about Japanese art history. My English was not adequate enough to explain these problems, so I told him it was impossible. He never brought up the subject again.

Some people thought George was a kind of Pope. Others thought he was a tyrant. To me he was a very thoughtful and sweet person. He came to my rescue several times. In June 1973, my one-year residence permit was almost expired and I had to apply for an extension. That required a letter from my publisher, but they wanted me back in Japan and wouldn't give me the letter. George, carrying law books and pretending to be a lawyer, took me to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service office downtown and very easily got my stay extended.

After that I decided to visit Tetsumi Kudo in Paris, in order to avoid the notorious New York summer heat. I chose a travel agency from an ad in the *Village Voice* with very cheap charter flights. After I paid, the agency did not give me the tickets, only the sales slip. They made some excuses, I forget now, and told me to wait a few days until they could book them. I waited some time and then I became suspicious. I talked about it with Shigeiko Kubota and she asked George to help me out. Shigeiko, aware that my English was poor, very kindly offered to interpret for George and me. The three of us went to the office of the travel agency in Midtown around 13th Street. A couple of Belgians were conducting the business, and when I went to the bathroom I noticed a bidet next to the toilet bowl. I understood very little of what was going on; then all of a sudden Shigeiko told me they were threatening us and the two guys were saying they would get a gun to settle the matter. George remained very calm and Shigeiko didn't seem nervous to me. I felt no danger because I did not grasp the situation, feeling as if it was a dream.

Well, thanks to George I was able to go to Paris. They gave me a one-way ticket with a memo instructing me to pick up the return-flight ticket at the Sabena desk in Paris.

The memo turned out to be a fraud. I was unable to come back until the end of November. But that is another story. What I remember now is the image of George wearing a half-sleeved shirt walking in the strong light of summer carrying law books in a big paper bag.



V. 13 George had many fights with the people around him. One afternoon I visited him with Eric Andersen. After a while they started an argument. They got excited and spoke so fast that I could not even catch what the problem was. I just sat and watched them. George stood up and exclaimed, "*You are a sophist!*" "No I am not. I just want to be flexible," said Eric, rather coolly. George yelled again, "*Yes, you are a soph ...*", but he burst into coughs and lost his words.



V. 14 Sometimes I would go to George's basement storage room at 80 Wooster Street to get materials for my work. "*Tell me what you need,*" he said, "*if you can't find it.*"

Once I asked him if he had any elephant hide.

He patted his backside and said, "*After all these cortisone shots my skin is tougher than an elephant's.*"

But he nodded yes, and came back with something rough and with hair that was exactly what I was looking for.



V. 15 After dinner we often went to George's loft to help with his publishing. He asked us to cut paper or paste printed cards on boxes, and so on. It was like a small publishing office or a family factory. While working, he sometimes played Japanese traditional music on the tapes. To my surprise, he had abundant knowledge of Japanese culture. In fact, he was living on tatami mats in his loft.

One night he taught me how to paste a piece of paper neatly. "*You should always slide your fingers from the center towards both ends like this ... See? There is no wrinkle!*" He was truly skillful. Even now when I paste a piece of paper, I often remember George's words.



V. 16 *I don't burn your letters, first I memorize, then burn.*

But you are not fair to me. You can't expect me to write as frequently as you do, because I am much busier than you. I have to work 8 hours (as a free-lance designer), then 8 hours Fluxus (newspaper, other publications, festival preparations, fixing loft for FLUXSHOP & FLUXHALL) and all ENTIRELY ALONE ... They are all very involved with their own individual compositions & have no time (or desire) for "THE COLLECTIVE." Made big fuss just to put in 1 hour's work on Saturday for FLUXUS, I think FLUXUS is doomed. First you doomed it in France by not promoting it at all. (Sold any Brecht boxes? or newspapers?) (mailed any newspapers? or at least given them away? ...)

Tomas Schmit sold himself to Vostell.

Willem de Ridder is promoting only himself.

Ben Vautier " " " "

All New York Fluxus crowd " " " themselves.

(Japan is still holding out, but there this European tradition of egoism & promoting of one's ego never took deep roots. So I have been very disappointed with Fluxus people and am contemplating phasing out by this summer & maybe going to Japan.)



- V. 17 One day we visited George's office uptown. I had been wondering how and in what kind of place he was working. The office room was rather smaller than I had imagined. Showing me the desk, he said, *"I am working here as a designer. I make about \$200 a week. It's enough money to live on, but I spend most of it for publishing Fluxus works."*



- V. 18 In the 1960s my wife and I had to manage on \$50 a week for food and rent. George, always helpful, criticized our choice of oranges as far too expensive. So every week he would bring us a crate of small, seedy oranges, purchased at bargain prices from a market far away downtown, and loaves of his beloved Lithuanian bread. We learned to enjoy the dark bread, but the oranges weren't to our taste.

He also took care of our tax returns. According to his calculations, all the taxes we paid should be returned to us. Ikuko was worried about George's bookkeeping, but the refunds he got us were the only savings we had in our bank account.



V. 19 From 1962 to 1965, before I met him, George Maciunas and I communicated with each other very often. I sent my works to him in New York and he mailed Fluxus publications to me in Tokyo: newspapers, books, Fluxus kits. It was a nice time.

In the summer of 1965 I came to New York and met George for the first time. He was expecting me to conduct the Fluxus orchestra at Carnegie Recital Hall in a concert scheduled in the Fall.

My debut in New York, however, was not this concert. In advance, I participated in the annual Avant-Garde Festival of New York, organized by Charlotte Moorman, which took place in Judson Hall on the opposite side of Manhattan from Carnegie Recital Hall. This was my first performance in New York.

After my appearance in the rival Avant-Garde Festival my name as conductor of the Fluxus orchestra disappeared from the program. Although my pieces were performed, I never played in the Fluxus orchestra. George no longer communicated with me. It was an embarrassing time.



V. 20 On a very hot day, I knocked on his door and he opened it. I noticed he was wearing just a white undershirt with grey pants. He was embarrassed, and closing the door again he said, "*Sorry, a moment please. I'll put something on my shoulders.*"



V. 21 I met George in 1968, almost right after I moved to New York from Japan. I had heard about him while I was in Japan and I participated in Fluxus right away. I visited his apartment on West Broadway. He had a mattress on the floor and everything was so well organized. I had the impression of him as a practitioner of Zen. He had so many things – various collections of exotic items – spice, water, dirt, rocks, animal and bird shit, huge amounts of bags and containers, Fluxus boxes, archives – and it goes on and on. These were very well arranged on shelves.



V. 22 Asthma was a serious problem – and how he hated smoke! When he took us to a film show at Jonas Mekas' studio, he brought a real gas mask and put it on his face. Even with the mask the air in the room was too smoky for him, and eventually he walked out into the hallway.



V. 23 One task of host father George was to find me a better job. He asked Joe Jones to share his job of music-typing with me. Joe said okay, and brought his typewriter to George's loft, and taught me how to type notes. Since I had studied music, it seemed to me an ideal job. We worked alternately on the typewriter, and the income from it was just enough to support myself. I was really in debt to both of them.



V. 24 Ay-O and I were having a conversation about the similarities between his country and mine, Japan and England; that they are both islands, maintain royal families, have lots of rain, cars drive on the left-hand side of the road and so on and so forth. George went off immediately to find an atlas to compare annual rainfall and population graphs and to prove that our countries have, in fact, very little in common.



V. 25 One day he took us to see a movie. "*It's a Russian movie, but very nice*", said George. Though I can't remember the story at all, the very calm and somewhat melancholic tone of the film, and an image of a beautiful woman with a parasol, remain in my memory.

Then we visited his mother's apartment. She was an elegant and sturdy woman of sixty-one, but she looked much younger. On this occasion George appeared to be his mother's good little son. Suddenly a telephone interrupted us. She took the phone and started talking in another language, probably in Russian. She frequently pronounced "Da, ... da, ... da, ..."

George whispered to me, "*Da means Yes.*"

On that day I felt I had seen another side of George's face – gentle and modest. Many people remember him as strict, stubborn,

domineering ... but once his mind was off of being the chairman of Fluxus, he was nothing less than a very gentle and modest man.



V. 26 Only once did I have a fight with George. In the Spring of 1965 I had an idea of doing the same simple event with people in many other countries using the mail. I went to George's loft and told him about this idea. He said, "*That's a very good idea. I will give you the Fluxus mailing list*". After receiving the contributions from many people, I started making an edition in the form of a map-board and flags. But George wanted to publish it as a newspaper. I said on the phone, "It will not be nice to publish one event in two different formats at the same time. They will kill each other. If you can't afford to do it, please spend your time and money on other works." But he wouldn't give in, and finally yelled, "*You are a stubborn girl! Do whatever you want to do. I will have nothing to do with you any more.*" "Okay, George. I will take care of myself from now on."

After hanging up the phone, I felt sad that I had hurt George by rejecting his proposal, because I knew at that time he was in quite an isolated situation after many conflicts with the artists around him. He must have been spending very lonely and frustrated days. This thought hurt me deeply. I didn't change my idea, however. I certainly was a stubborn girl.

A few days before leaving New York I called George to tell him I was going back to Japan and thanked him for everything he had helped me with. He sounded friendly again, and I promised to write.



V. 27 Once he sent me the broken handle of his Japanese sword and asked me to get it repaired. I took it to an antique shop in Osaka, but they said it would be impossible to repair if they didn't have the sword itself. I told this to George and he sent me his broken sword.



V. 28 *Thanks for your letter. I will leave it up to you whether to send back the sword or not. If you take it, and eventually sell it (whenever you have the time) you can use the money for producing Poem No.4; if you think the effort to sell it is not worth the amount it may bring, then*

send it back, send it via ship, not by air, since I have to pay for its return. Whichever way you decide will be all right with me ... When I come to Japan, I shall bring more swords, if the duties are not high. Could you tell me what the duties are, if any?



V. 29 *Could you mail me in an envelope a blank postcard ... I will write a message and then send it back to you to mail to the Attorney General in New York. It will look like I am in Japan. I will do this from all over the world. Absolutely confuse him. Thanks a lot.*



V. 30 *You may have received by now the Poem No. 3 and maybe can't figure out the way it is supposed to be hung. These are prototypes and I will change the length of the rivets; now, however, when hung as shown, the pages will tend to fall down (which was the original intention) about 1/3 of the way, so you must pick up the fallen pages and hang them on the upper rivets, continuing taking off the pages till the upper rivets hold most of the pages, because they will start falling again when the upper course is full. I could use, instead of longer rivets, bolts with threads which could also prevent the pages from falling down.*

I will also make several models with wood back or thicker leather. I can send copies to all the participants if you let me know their addresses, I mean addresses of people who are not on my list. I hope you like the design. (Illustration, page 148.)



V. 31 *When I published the book *Spatial Poem* in 1976, I put George's name in it as one of the collaborators. He seemed to have been pleased, and in return he sent me a gift. It was a thin plastic box, which contained eleven small objects, such as a dry strange mushroom, a sea shell, a key, a cigar, a thin glass tube filled with fine dry leaves, etc., and a blue card with this inscription: "MIEKO SHIOMI/Spell your name with these objects/Greetings from George Maciunas."*

This was the last thing I received from him. It continues to be one of the most precious objects in my collection.



V. 32 Once when I was visiting him at the farm at New Marlborough he showed me his collection of shit. Where, I asked him, did you get your elephant shit? He said he bought it from an elephant breeder at the zoo.

The hen house on the farm was almost as large as a real house. There hadn't been a hen inside for ages, just piles of long-dried-out chicken shit. It looked strangely beautiful, a kind of untouchable place, as if it would reject anyone who dared to step inside.



V. 33 With so many Fluxus projects in process that George hired one and all who applied for work, many individual skills were available for George's enormous effort to coordinate the production of Yoko Ono's one-person exhibition at the Everson Museum in Syracuse, New York, *This Is Not Here*, in October 1971. George also had a pool of freelance talent reporting periodically, toting their fabrications to 80 Wooster Street. A giant guitar was being constructed for John Lennon, for example, and other props and objects would appear for George's scrutiny and approval from day to day.

During the production of the Everson show George experienced many frustrations. There were pressures from the Ono-Lennon business people about the mounting expenses, creative disputes between Yoko and George, and serious deadlines to be met. Sometimes when tensions built up, he would storm out of the basement and return around two hours later with a freshly shaved head. I don't know who his barber was, but when smooth-headed George returned he was calm and collected, his rage dispelled.

Frequent meetings between John, Yoko and George were of the utmost urgency, because every detail of production required Yoko's approval. As the moment of these meetings approached, and the arrival of an entourage of businessmen, John's secretary, the couple's personal assistants and chauffeur, George's excitement and nervousness would mount. (For these meetings he prepared delicious crêpes and special non-alcoholic drinks.) Photoshoots and work sessions occurred upstairs in the brick-walled empty space that had been the Filmmakers Cinematheque, and all of George's assistants were somehow suddenly present, just in case they were

needed to help the famous Beatle step on a cigarette butt or smear ink onto a shoe for *Painting To Be Stepped On*.

When the time finally came to install the exhibition in Syracuse, unpredictable aspects of the location, new directives from Yoko and her advisers, and the sheer complexity of filling the entire museum with unconventional art created an emergency atmosphere. It was really hectic.

George would arrive at the museum, jump into the chaos, and try to pull things together. Between Yoko's desires, the requirements of the museum officials, and George's preconceptions there were inevitable difficulties. Even a diplomatic and low-key personality would have been hard-put to stay calm. Differences of opinion often became magnified into great disputes.

One such dispute culminated in a tantrum that sent George striding out of the museum and down the center of the interstate highway, threatening to walk all the way back to New York City (eight hours by car). When we realized that George was serious about walking out, we simply had to retrieve him, and rushed out in a patrol car, to plead with him to return. With the help of the museum's security and the local police, assisted by David Ross (now Director of the Whitney Museum, who was then on the Everson staff), we snatched George off the interstate and managed somehow to soothe him and coax him back to the frantic work scene.



V. 34 George had lost an eye and a lung and broken a couple of ribs after he was attacked by the Mafia while he was organizing co-ops at the building in SoHo where I now live.

"One eye is good enough," he said, pointing to the missing one, and smiling.

The floor installation in my loft was done to his specifications. I named the bathroom door "George's Door" – it was 60 cm wide and 180 cm high, the design based on his rule: Don't waste anything.

Inside George's 60 cm by 180 cm door, however, there is a 70x70x170 cm electric washing machine.



V. 35 When I was in Japan doing work on a thesis on modern Japanese composers, I met, through introductions from John Cage: Yoko

Ono, Toshi Ichiyanagi, and others. Through them I met: Shigeko Kubota, Nam June Paik, Yasunao Tone, Joji Yuasa, Takehisa Kosugi, and Mieko Shiomi – among the most active of the avant-garde in Japan at that time. Of course I also met many other composers of more conservative styles. Through them somehow I was put in contact with George Maciunas ...

When I returned to Hawaii I put together the first Hawaiian Fluxfest during the 1965 festival of contemporary music at the University of Hawaii. Guest performers included John Cage, Toru Takemitsu, and Jeff Perkins, who flew in from Japan for the event. We included most of a program suggested by Maciunas with a heavy admixture of Japanese pieces ...

From that time I kept in contact with Maciunas and the other Fluxus folks in New York and performed Fluxus concerts in Los Angeles and Providence; also had a couple of things printed by George ... In Seattle I organized the Fluxfest last fall at the and/or gallery, and we invited him to spend the week with us. It was a wonderful festival; George was already ill, but did not at that time know it was cancer: the Seattle Fluxfest was the last one he directed before his death, and was I think a fitting living memorial.



V. 36 Shortly after his death George visited me in a dream. We were at the side of a pool. He held a bunch of white flowers and was handing them out to people. He gave me one. *“Hello, Mieko,”* he said, *“the smell of this flower fits in with the color of your dress, doesn’t it?”* But the flower didn’t smell at all. A man in a formal suit began to play tuba on a ladder in the pool. George apologized, *“Sorry, I couldn’t get a trombone.”* The player said, *“George, that’s OK, tuba would be nicer than trombone.”* *“Ya, might be ... ”* George shrugged his shoulders, and went to bake pancakes ... It was a funny dream, but very real.



V. 37 In 1992 I had the opportunity of meeting the former Lithuanian President, Vytautas Landsbergis, in Tokyo. When I spoke with him about George, I found the same expression in his smile and behavior as George’s. I wondered if this polite and modest attitude might be common to Lithuanian people.



V. 38 Vytautas Landsbergis, although still confined in Soviet Lithuania, participated three times in the Fluxus mail-art events *Spatial Poems* organized by Mieko Shiomi from Osaka. An example from 1966:

“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 toward the center of the earth. Then he cut the pike into pieces and let them fall onto a frying pan.”



V. 39 In 1990 I was invited to the Fluxus Festival in Venice. I had an idea of contributing a requiem for George, because I didn't take part in any of his memorial services, and besides, I knew that the growing prosperity of Fluxus could not have been achieved without George's self-sacrificing efforts.

I composed a piece of music in a classical style using the notes which can be spelled by the letters in his name; C, CIS, ES. E, EIS, GES, G, AS, A, AIS, and CES. I played it on my synthesizer to record on a cassette tape. Around the Fluxus pavilion in Venice I asked some of my friends to listen to this requiem. The timbres of the cembalo and the pipe-organ seemed to fit perfectly with the atmosphere of the old city, and especially the bells from San Marco. I wished George could have heard it.

On the last day of my stay in Venice I threw the tape into the Grand Canal, wishing that it might meet his soul somewhere in the ocean, since I had heard from Ay-O that they had scattered George's ashes into the Atlantic.

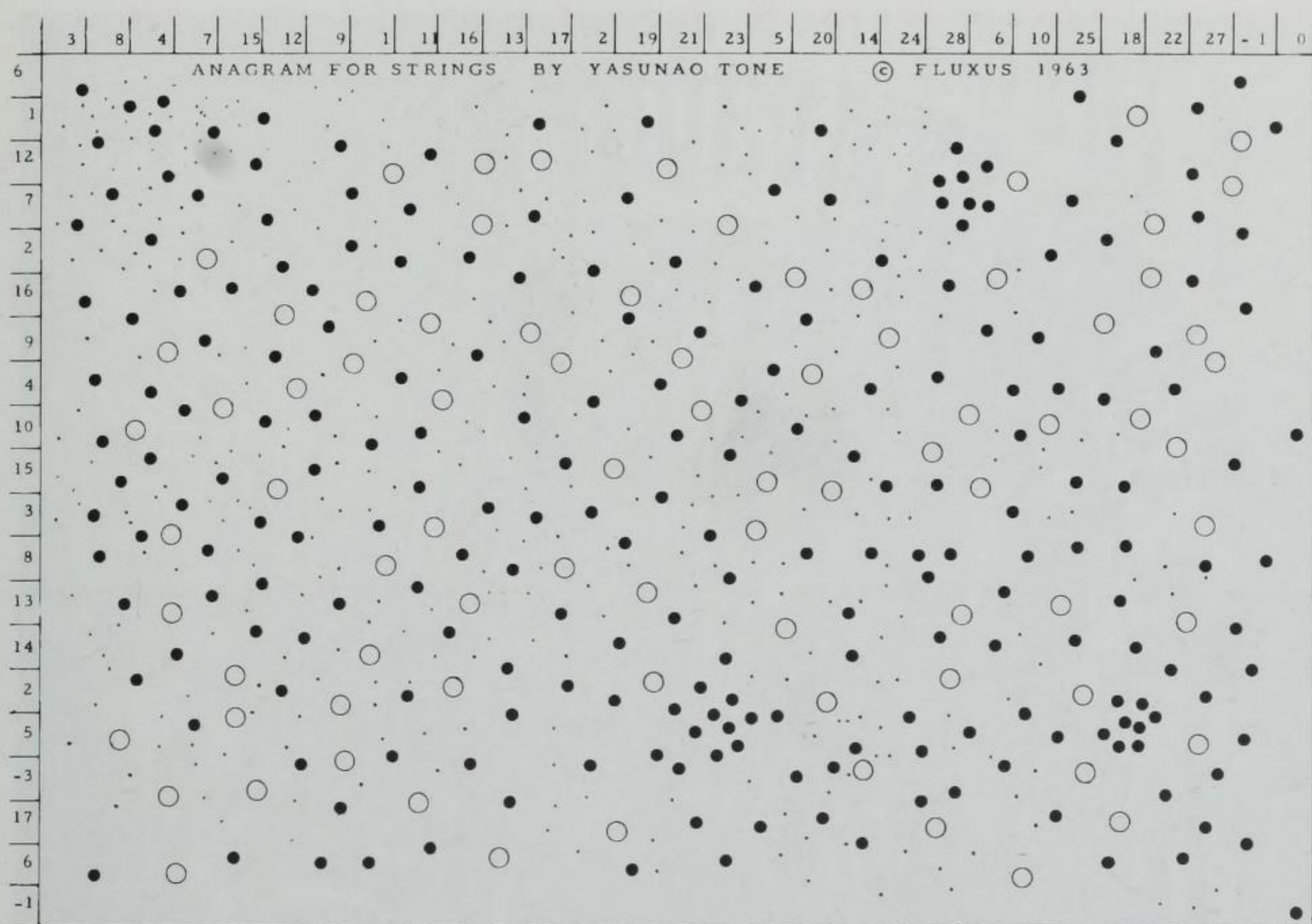
After returning to Japan from Venice I decided to publish this requiem as cassette tape music. I revised the original and overlapped onto it the sounds and voices which I happened to have recorded in the pavilion. I feel that I owe George a lot, but I never gave him anything in return. *Requiem for George Maciunas* was a sign of my apology and my thanks to him.



V. 40 I cannot help feeling that the souls of the deceased exist somewhere in an entirely different dimension and have some kind of subtle relation to this mundane world. This world and another world might merely be both sides of one sheet of paper. I sometimes imagine George as happily entertaining the newcomers, like John Cage or Joe Jones. But dear George, Mr. As-soon-as-possible, this time try to get along well with them! And, as far as I am concerned, I want to go to your place *as late as possible!!*



Portrait of Ay-O by Maciunas, circa 1963.



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Above: Original handdrawn score by Maciunas for Yasunao Tone's *Anagram for Strings* (1963). Below: Mieko Shiomi and "host father George" at Mieko's solo concert at Washington Square Gallery in October 1964, shortly after her arrival in the United States. Photo © Estate of Peter Moore.



SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CONDUCTED BY KUNIHARU AKIYAMA

FLUXUS^S PRESENTS
FLUXUS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



June FLUXUS CONCERT 8:30 PM
27th SAT
Carnegie Recital Hall 154 W. 57th St.

TICKETS \$2, NOW ON SALE AT CARNEGIE HALL BOX OFFICE
OR CARNEGIE RECITAL HALL BOX OFFICE BEFORE CONCERT

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 NJP. 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.

Above: Maciunas' Poster for the Fluxus Concert at Carnegie Recital Hall 1965.

At right: "Fluxus art-amusement must be simple, amusing, unpretentious, concerned with insignificances, require no skill or countless rehearsals..." – but wait just a minute, isn't that Maestro Maciunas himself giving the performers a hard time at the Carnegie Recital Hall rehearsal? Below: Alison Knowles, Robert Watts, Dick Higgins, Maciunas and Ay-O performing George's *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* at the Fluxhall in New York, April 18, 1964. Photos © Estate of Peter Moore.





Maciunas' portrait of Takako Saito with her *Smell Chess Set*, 1964.



YOKO ONO

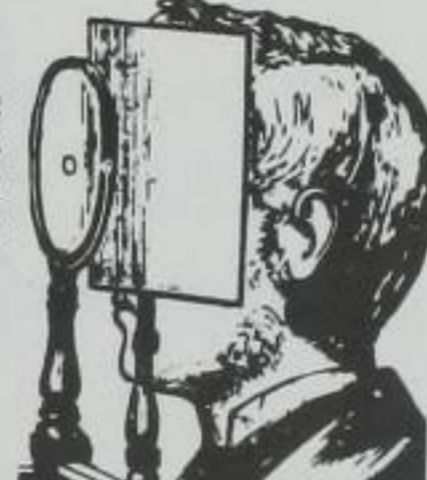
& DANCE CO.



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



SEVENTH DAY: FIND A CLOVER
SEND US MEASUREMENTS AND WEIGHT OF ALL POSSIBLE PARTS OF THE CLOVER.



SEVENTH DAY: FIND A CLOVER

SEND US MEASUREMENTS AND WEIGHT OF ALL POSSIBLE PARTS OF 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



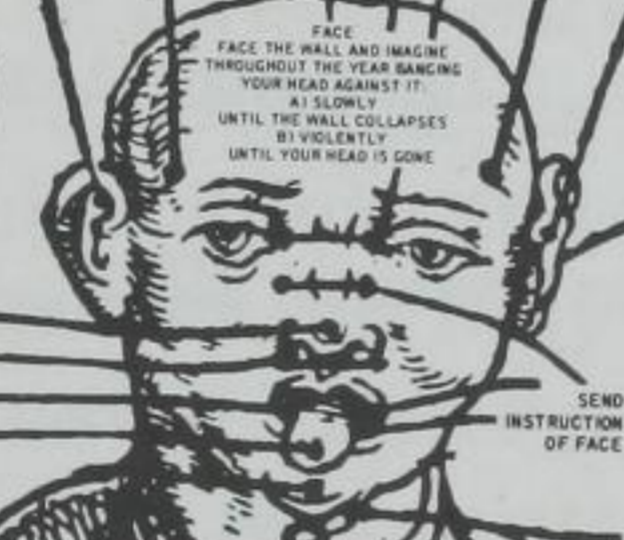
SHAKE HANDS WITH AS MANY PERSONS AS POSSIBLE. WRITE DOWN THE NAMES IN THE ELEVATOR, SUBWAY, TOILET, DAYDREAM, STREET, ON TOP OF A MOUNTAIN, ON THE CLOUDS, IN THE DARK.



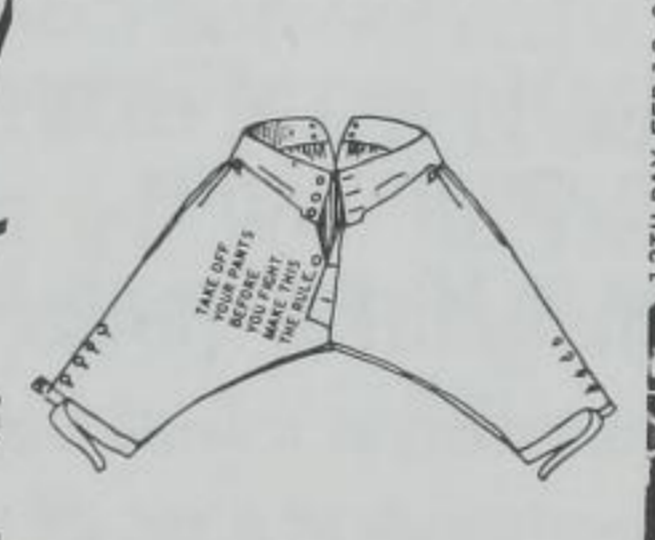
TENTH DAY: SWIM
SWIM IN YOUR DREAMS AS FAR AS YOU CAN



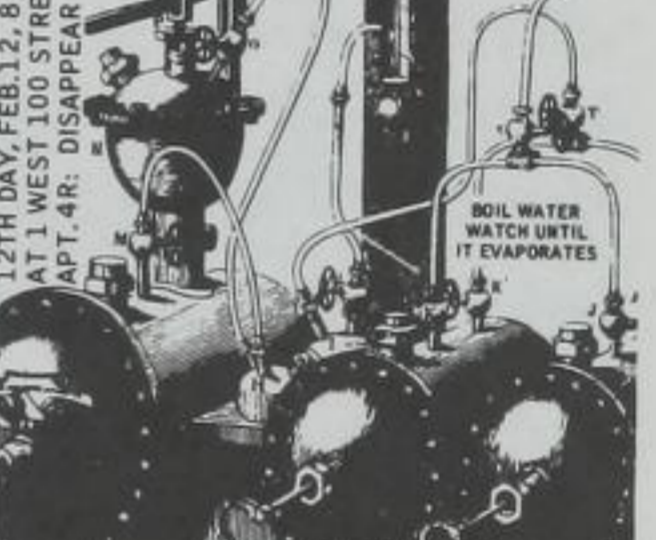
ELEVENTH DAY, FEBRUARY 11: KEEP LAUGHING A DAY



NINTH DAY: SHAKE
CUT AND SEND ADVISE ON TAKE OFF PANTS



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



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 BRINGING THEM TO SLEEP WHILE STANDING. THE GIRLS WENT ON STANDING FOR HOURS WHILE PEOPLE WATCHED.



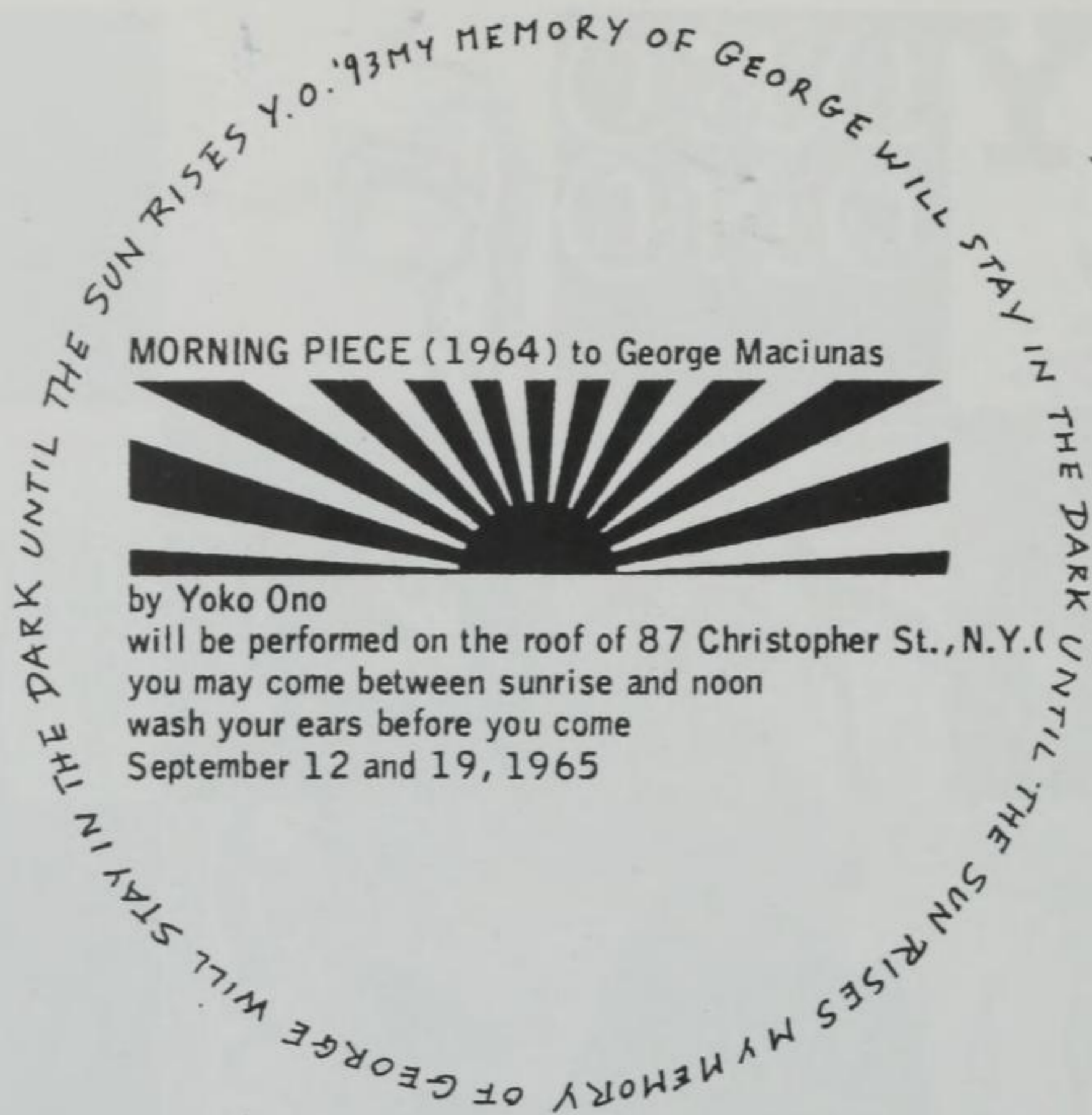
THIRTEENTH DAY: WAIT. COLOUR YOURSELF. WAIT FOR THE SPRING. LET US KNOW WHEN IT COMES.



PASS OUT FLY REPORT
CUT ON DOTTED LINE



George's collage advertising a "Do It Yourself Fluxfest" featuring Yoko Ono appeared in Fluxus Newspaper No. 7 in 1966.

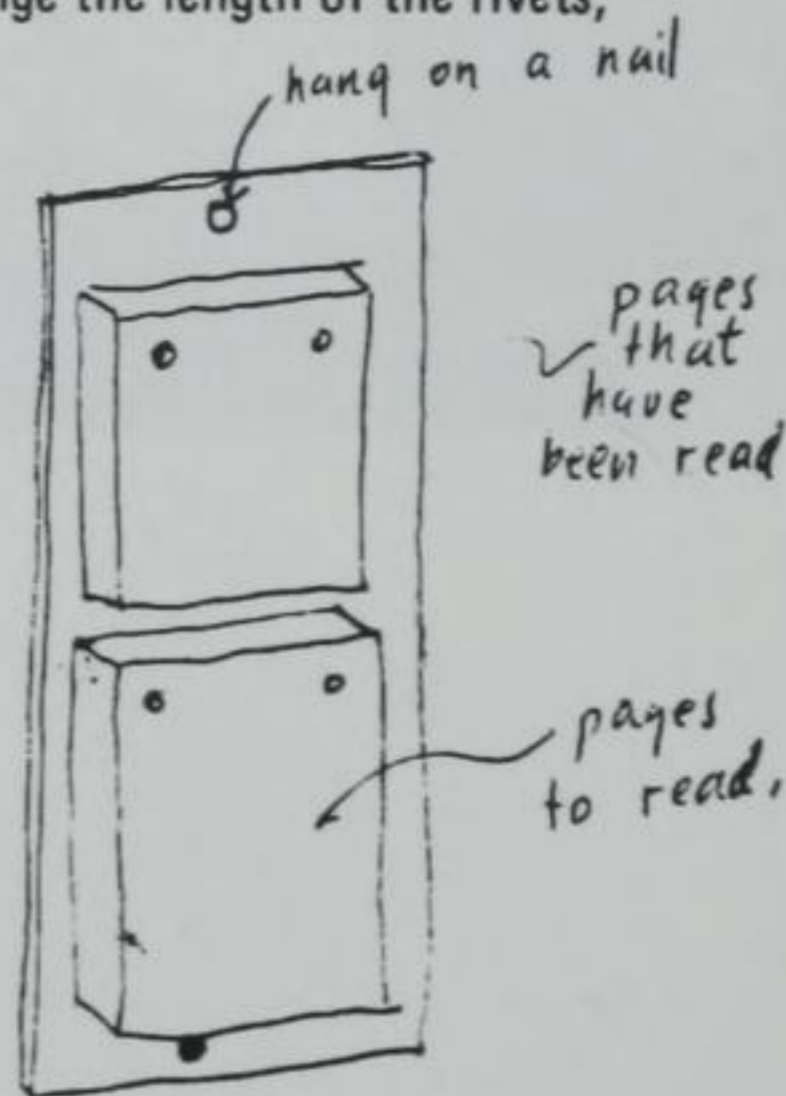


Above: Yoko Ono: *My Memory of George ...*, 1993, an updated version of her 1964 *Morning Piece to George Maciunas*.

Below: Postcard sent to Mieko Shiomi in Osaka in 1972.

Dear Mieoko,
 You may have received by now the Pdem no.3 and maybe can't figure out the way it suppose to be hung. These are prototypes and I will change the length of the rivets, now however when hung as shown, the pages will tend to fall down (which was the original intention) about 1/3rd of the way, so you must pick up the fallen pages and hang them on the upper rivets, continuing taking off the pages till the upper rivets hold most of the pages, because they will start falling again when the upper course is full. I could use instead of longer rivets bolts with threads which would also prevent the pages from falling down.
 I also will make several models with wood back or thicker leather.
 I can send copies to all the participants if you let me know their addresses, I mean addresses of people who are not on my list.

I hope you like the design,
 best regards George.



VI

BARGAIN BANQUETS

VI. 1 In the late 50s and early 60s there was a restaurant on West 50th (or was it 49th?) Street, in New York, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, called Stokholm (without the “c”). As one may guess, it was a Swedish restaurant.

It was George who first told me about it. Actually he was telling all his friends about it. “*You pay \$3 and you can eat and eat and eat, as much as you want,*” George said. And it was true. That was the restaurant’s policy. Swedish and Italian dishes.

The funny thing about this was that George used to very carefully prepare himself for the trips to Stokholm. For two or three days prior to going, he practically starved. He ate nothing. I never followed that rule – which he advised – but George followed it religiously. On the subway, up Sixth Avenue, he could barely contain his anticipation of stuffing himself full. And I tell you, he ate and ate and ate, incredible amounts, his belly barely holding all the Swedish and Italian stuff, and he laughed, and had a terrific time, and we all had a terrific time. He never went to Stokholm alone: it was always a Fluxus gorging party. I don’t think I will ever forget those trips.



VI 2 One of George’s friends once met him on the way out of a smorgasbord restaurant after one of his packing sessions. George had stuffed himself full almost to the bursting point. He had packed himself – to paraphrase the old saying – tight as a drum. This friend happened to tell George a joke. George liked the joke and started to laugh. He laughed so heartily that he cracked a rib.



VI 3 His next passion was the sale of delicatessen goods, of foreign canned foods: fish from the U.S.S.R., *pâté de fois gras* from France. And this business didn’t work out either although I fervently helped

him, spending hours over hundreds of letters which were mailed all over America. Again we had a loss, the result of which caused us to live modestly and to economize in everything. I would have gone to work, but I had to help Yurgis; I worked as an employee in his gallery. Alas that my Yurgis was not a businessman.



VI 4 George always had Big Money schemes. In 1960 he decided that one could become a millionaire by importing very special European foods. So he sent hundreds of form letters to European special food exporters and producers, offering to be their agent/salesman; and, *"Please, send me some samples of your special foods."*

And samples he got! Thousands of canned food samples began arriving at his home.

I was living at that time with my brother Adolfus, at 515 East 13th Street. And we were poor and very very hungry. So George says, *"You need food? I'll get you food! I have these thousands of cans of food, very very special, and I am sick of it, you want it?"*

"Yes, yes," we say, "we want it!"

So he brings and dumps in our place maybe a thousand cans of the most expensive, very very special *pâtés*, nightingale tongues, all very very special stuff. So we ate and ate, and we fed all the hungry Lower East Side poets for a year or two, and everybody was amazed when we used to pull out these French delicacies that you could get only at the Waldorf-Astoria.

I don't have to tell you that George couldn't sell any of it. He ate it all himself, with our help.



VI. 5 While George was working on the paste-ups of Jackson Mac Low's and La Monte Young's *An Anthology*, his diet consisted of ripe cheese and canned fish, many cartons of which he had imported as free samples from the Soviet Union. The fish and the cheese were washed down with liberal amounts of Russian vodka, though Maciunas never showed signs of intoxication. Haroutounian, his restaurateur friend in whose loft he was hiding from the creditors of the by-now-defunct AG Gallery, and myself both tried to warn him that this was not a rounded diet and would surely have disastrous consequences for his stomach. *"Is not mattering,"* he said (in those

days he either had or affected a Russian accent), “*I am making my own balance.*”

He used to say, that as long as the cheese did not walk away, he would eat it.



VI. 6 Despite continual contact with Fluxus people beginning in 1966, I did not meet George Maciunas until 1973. In fact, I did not particularly want to meet George much before then. His reputation preceded him, and a daunting reputation it was; believing myself a bit too callow a youth to withstand such an encounter, I did not seek contact with him, despite our many mutual friends and my increasingly frequent proximity to his downtown haunts. (The removal of many of my closest Flux-contacts to California about the time I moved to Manhattan also discouraged me.) I finally screwed my courage to the sticking place and sought out George at what I felt was an appropriate time: on the occasion of my first professional essay on Fluxus.

The Berlin gallerist Reinhard Onnasch was opening a New York branch in the fall of 1973 with a George Brecht show, and planned a small catalogue. I was approached by Lutze, the new gallery’s vivacious German-born director (whose by-then vestigial first name was Hildegard), to contribute an essay on Brecht, which I wrote from a “sentimental” standpoint (describing my first brush with his art and with Fluxus in general, at Nicolas Calas’ *Hard Center* exhibit at the Thibaut Gallery in December 1963). Still able to live the cheap life of the student, I agreed not to be paid in cash but in Fluxus boxes, those elusive objects I’d earlier avoided acquiring (confused as I was by the order forms and miscellanea that had come to me every time I’d made inquiry to PO Box 180, Canal Street Station, NY NY 10013 – who has that PO box now??). To effect this form of payment, Lutze proposed having me visit George Maciunas with her and to choose several items. I remember little of that first meeting in George’s basement lair at 80 Wooster Street, except that I felt like a kid with a charge card in a candy store and that George, long aware of my interest in Fluxus, was warmly cordial and indulgent – if, indeed, every bit as odd in mannerism as I’d been led to believe.

The ice broken, and my visits to SoHo quite regular then (I was art critic for the *SoHo Weekly News*), I thereafter maintained ongoing, if not exactly frequent, contact with George. Contacts were, as I

recall, always in the company of mutual friends or acquaintances. I wanted, I guess, to be and feel a part of a Fluxus "family"; and, to be honest, I still could not approach George as a flesh-and-blood human being. I still saw him as more of a character than a person, a dotty, semireclusive paterfamilias who cultivated his peculiarities as part of his art. (After his death I gradually came to realize that, to the contrary, George cultivated his art as part of his peculiarities.) Of course I became fond of him as I came to know him at all; but equally, of course, I could not have the easy rapport with him that I could with Fluxus' other, less formidable eccentrics.

My vague fear of George sprang partly from a sense of commitment to his vision – Fluxus – and a concomitant sense of obedience to his direction. I knew most Fluxus folks did not feel thus, and have come since to realize that the whole dynamic of the Fluxus ethos issues as much from divergent means as from shared purpose. But I regarded myself as a guest, distant relative, or at best junior member of the Fluxus household, and thus necessarily more attentive to George's *modus operandi*. Quick to embarrassment and not especially adventurous (I spent the 1970s not trying this drug or that ritual, but admitting I hadn't tried them), I was unsure what the likes of George would require in his presence, and was not game to find out. So I didn't hang around 80 Wooster much.

I was able to participate "properly" in several Fluxus activities George organized in the mid-1970s. I was also able to lend him money towards the construction of the Flux-Labyrinth in Berlin. When it became clear he could not restore the funds, I agreed to take payment, once again, in Flux-boxes. (Only a few of the boxes George proposed to pay me with ever came my way; but the debt was ultimately fulfilled when, a decade later, I sold the largest of the boxes, plus George's letter proposing the alternate form of payment, to the Silverman Collection for precisely the sum I'd originally lent – adjusted for inflation! What goes around, Flux around.) I was quite comfortable with that distanced, "official" participation in Fluxus activities.

Still, my fondest distinct memory of George (yes, I'm amazed I ever got to it, too) is of the one time we did connect substantially on a personal level. And I let it happen by trusting him and trying something new. Something new for me, that is; what George bade me try was no radical prank or perversion, but just some of his home cooking. At the time – the summer of 1975 or '76, I cannot remember

exactly – I was visiting Jean Brown fairly often. My parents own a dacha just over the state line from the Tyringham-Lee-Stockbridge area, and I enjoyed spending free time up there even before I met Jean. Once we met, I would visit her several times a summer, to peruse her Fluxus archive and bring material for it, and just to schmooze.

One time Jean invited me to lunch, and I came over with Sid Schneider, a close friend who shared my enthusiasm for (if not my professional involvement with) Fluxus. George, it turned out, was cook (he had begun his search for a retreat in the vicinity), and the fare was *echt* Lithuanian: peeled boiled potatoes on the left, borscht on the right, and tall glasses of bread cider (or some such carbonated but non-sweet, non-alcoholic beverage) to drink. Dessert was a *crêpe* drenched in a thick, yellow *very* sweet sauce.

Despite my own Eastern European background, all but the potatoes was new to me. I knew I didn't like borscht, but Lithuanian borscht, George assured me, was different from the Russian stuff I'd always eschewed in favor of chicken soup. And, indeed, George's borscht looked and smelled markedly different than the usual goopy pink potage. I don't recall the recipe exactly, but I do believe that a green substitutes for the beets, that sour cream is added by the diner to taste, and that it is served lukewarm rather than chilled. It was in any case delicious, refreshing and lightly filling on a warm, humid afternoon, and fun to eat: per George's instruction, we spooned the soup with our right hands and simultaneously speared potatoes with the forks in our left. And I could not get enough of the homemade bread soda. (I asked George several times subsequently where I might find more, and he always promised some, but ...) Only the dessert gave us pause, its rich, ferociously sweet sauce setting our fillings to ringing.

There is no way I could have refused anything George put in front of me that afternoon, even given my dietary requirements (I was then at the peak of hypoglycemic self-indulgence, in constant search of animal protein) and gustatory timidities. In part because I so enjoyed the food I felt compelled to eat that day, I have become much less fearful a gourmand. George Maciunas opened me up to the world through more ways than just Fluxus.



VI. 7 As I was reading about the “ferociously sweet sauce” poured over *crêpes*, I thought you might be interested in my brother’s recipe.

He used egg yolks mixed with sugar until pale yellow. Warm heavy cream in a saucepan. When just starting to rise add the egg-yolk mixture and some cognac or rum and boil just enough to become the consistency of sour cream. Maybe one or two minutes. You chill this sauce and pour over *crêpes*.

I remember George telling me that John Lennon used to love that sauce. George once suggested that, since John had a loft in SoHo not far from his own, he would build a pipe into which he would pour the sauce and Lennon would catch it at the other end.

SOUR GRASS BORSCHT

A big bunch of sour grass (sorrel)
1 pint of chicken stock
2 hard-boiled eggs
Sour cream

Clean the sour grass and place in a large pot. Pour boiling water over it. Remove the sour grass after a few minutes and chop fine.

Dice hard-boiled eggs, heat up chicken stock, add sour grass and eggs, and stir. Add sour cream to taste at the table.

Serve boiled potatoes as a side dish.

KVASS

1 loaf of dry Lithuanian rye bread
(or sourdough German rye)
1 pint of honey (or less, according to taste)
Some raisins
Bottles with tight caps
Yeast
One or two lemons
Three or four quarts of water

Boil water and pour it over cut-up bread. When bread disintegrates, sieve through cheesecloth so that no bread particles go through.

Add honey and squeezed lemon to liquid and stir well.

Dissolve yeast in small amount of warm water. (If fresh yeast is used, about the size of three-quarters of a butter stick; if dry yeast, three or four bags.)

When yeast starts to bubble, pour it over the liquid bread-honey mixture; when cool, fill the bottles not quite to the top. Add three or four raisins and let stand open for a couple of hours. Then close bottles tight and refrigerate.

Try tasting after two days. If not quite bubbly, leave one more day and then it's ready to be used.



VI. 8 Even before the great Wiesbaden Festum Fluxorum (as the Wiesbaden festival was technically called), George had developed ulcers. His home was the huge and unheated top floor of a house that looked like a Tibetan lamasery, built by an eccentric farmer 20 kilometers north of Wiesbaden in the village of Ehlhalten, and there he lived with his mother and whoever chose to stay with him. His mother came to take care of him and cook for him – just sprinkled the floor with Holy Water and moved in. For two weeks after a portion of the Wiesbaden festival was broadcast on German television she refused to go outdoors, because she was embarrassed to face the neighbors. Practically all she would cook for George was potatoes, noodles and baked apples. So I took to doing a lot of cooking myself (which I loved), making pies and baking-powder biscuits.

Mother McCoochie, as my wife, Alison Knowles, and I took to calling her (but never to her face), took offense at this and saw it as a criticism of herself; she also blamed Alison for *making* me do the cooking, as she saw it. I never could convince her that I enjoyed cooking. Her way of punishing poor Alison was to clean everything so many times a day that she might shame her; this amused us all. Poor George became very tired of potatoes, noodles and baked apples, but apparently it was all he was allowed for his diet. So once as a particular treat I bought some food coloring, and made the potatoes and noodles and baking powder biscuits all pink! Even the milk served that evening was pink. Mother McCoochie was scandalized.



VI. 9 *Question: could you all 3 come (to Amsterdam)? You could hitchhike to save on transport!!!??? Then we could take you to London & back to Paris. All you would need is food. (Bring many old shoes – they are full of protein.) Robert could cook nail soup & you could all eat spaghetti sandwiches from shoelaces. In the worst case you could all commit crime, go to prison & and get there free lodging & “menu du prison.”*



VI. 10 In 1962 he told me that you could live in New York on a \$5-a-week food budget. He bought from the discount shelves in the supermarket all the canned foods without labels. At that time labels were printed on paper and wrapped around the items. When those papers got ripped off, the cans came up on the bargain counter and people, poor people, used to buy them as a kind of blind date.



VI. 11 One of George's best known works is entitled *One Year*, a collection of empty cans, packages, cartons, etc., forming the trace of a year of his eating. The work doesn't measure, suggest or propose what a single human being *could* eat in one year. It is the residue of what George himself *did* eat in one year, package after package, meal after meal, day after day. George made several examples of *One Year*, a peculiar triumph of mind over matter.

These food works demonstrate why some critics consider Fluxus to be the flip side of Pop Art. They also suggest trends that later artists have carried to less systematic and more profitable extremes. For George, this systematic pilgrimage through the world of food was something of a religious exercise.



VI. 12 It was in February 1963, during the Festum Fluxorum in Dusseldorf, that I asked my old friend Daniel Spoerri, who was performing with us for the first time (a distinction he shared with Joseph Beuys), to join me for lunch.

"I can't," he said, "because GEORGE MACIUNAS has asked me to have lunch with HIM in his hotel room." (I was sharing the room with George.)

You'll see how lucky you are, brother, I thought to myself. For no one – count 'em – no one ate with George on the road if it could be avoided, especially in a cheap hotel room, where smoking was absolutely outlawed, and even drinking a bottle of wine was a sign of mental decrepitude and moral depravity.

Almost everyone knows of Daniel's culinary accomplishments – *chef de cuisine* at galleries and museums here and there and in between, and maker of snare pictures that trap the remains of breakfasts, brunches, dinners and suppers of the famous and the

infamous. Well, Daniel didn't attempt to trap his intimate four-course luncheon with the prime mover of Fluxus – crackers, peanut butter, yoghurt, and a bottle of soda water.



VI. 13 One day in 1967 when George was living in the apartment on West Broadway I received an urgent phone call from him. He wanted my assistance and to borrow my car to pick up canned goods from Job Lots and help him carry it up to his place. (On previous occasions we had made trips for food to the markets, usually for a good buy on apples or lemons. This time was to prove somewhat different.)

When I arrived George was all smiles. He said he had made a terrific deal and would have enough food to last for at least a year. Since it was near closing time there was not a second to lose. On the sidewalk on pallets outside the store were case upon case of canned food of some sort with foreign labels. I could see one trip would not make a dent. We loaded the car, a 2 CV, to the roof and started back with the front wheels barely touching the pavement. Then there were the many stairs to the apartment. GM hinted this was a particularly good deal since the boxes could be used for storage.

After three trips and some forty cases we finally got it all in place. GM was exuberant and said I could have all I wanted. Some weeks later he came over to my place (with a paper bag full of this food). He was somewhat hurt that I had not yet tried it out. He also explained that it was special food for the Arctic, made in Belgium, and had to be broken down in a special way in order to cook it.

A few days later I decided to try it out. The contents came out like a brick which was then broken into small chunks. I used a cleaver and a mallet. The chunks were then soaked in water until soft, a matter of some hours. Then the whole mass could possibly be stirred and broken up further. The appearance was somewhat familiar, rather like dog food with a cereal base. After some heating I had a kind of gruel. GM said all it needed was seasoning. I tried several formulas but nothing helped. It always tasted the same – no taste at all. I tossed it all out and as at other times decided if nothing else the exercise had been good for me.



VI. 14 George was his whole life long on the lookout for “good deals”, special offers of all kinds, be it plastic boxes or groceries. His house was full of the most unlikely objects, acquired through special sales in large lots and bulk purchases. I remember the kitchen of the farm house in New Marlborough, with many refrigerators bought on Special Sale. I opened three of them. They were filled with hundreds of oranges. “*It was a bargain at the market last week,*” he explained. His miserliness in this regard often went too far. While he was in Berlin for two weeks working on the *Fluxus Labyrinth*, he held his outlay for food down to six marks a day. “*In New York I can do it on two dollars, but here everything is more expensive.*” Every other day he had one of the construction helpers drive him to an Aldi market (he found out right away that Aldi stores had low prices) where he bought such basic foodstuffs as *Quark* (for protein), the cheapest sugared canned fruit (calories), *Knäckebröd* (carbohydrates), and margarine. The fact that the amount of time and gasoline expended on these shopping tours cost the organizers several times his daily outlay was of no consequence to his way of reckoning.



VI. 15 George’s diet was always unpleasant to me: dictated by illness – ulcers and asthma ... white food, potatoes mashed or creamed, milk and dairy products, peas, sausage and fine sweets were what George ate. The banquets that he initiated were glorious, however: Thanksgiving, New Year’s.

We would always argue over brown and white rice. He claimed that the latter was just as nutritious though refined. He immediately became annoyed and would be off upstairs to prove his point with a book to back up his thesis.

The most outstanding events in the Fluxus eating repertoire were the Festschrift Banquet at Zaccars and the erotic food orgy at the wedding party in Jean Dupuy’s loft: a table shivering with moist colored eggs and Hala Pietkiewicz’s unforgettable creation, a liver-paste penis.



VI. 16 George prided himself on deriving the maximum benefit from all materials. He once made a “tea” from rope, which he claimed contained lots of nutrients, yet still remained perfectly good rope after having been brewed. I tried the tea. It tasted just like rope.



VI. 17 George was, for us, a most reassuring *personnage*, he made us feel that we were not the only “nuts.”

He had taken the habit of ringing our street bell, unannounced, almost once a week, each time he was back from the country, carrying a big wooden crate filled with fresh vegetables, a week's supply of goodies. Of course when I say ring the bell, this was in the Seventies, because in the Sixties we had no bell at our street door, and friends had to shout our name until we would finally hear them, and run down from the fourth floor to open the street door.

He had access to a wholesale place downtown that imported exotic spices, and I remember that for a while our loft smelled like the *souk* of an African town. Those spices changed my cooking habits, not always successfully, because most of them were totally unknown to us. I still have a small brown jar of something, with no label, maybe coriander.



VI. 18 Some Fluxus events were for an outside audience and others were essentially for George and the Flux-family. The latter were often occasioned by special days such as New Year's Day or Halloween as a reason to call people together to flux the usual observances and behaviour. He went to lengths to do things even for the smallest gathering. For one Flux Banquet, each person brought only foods of a specified color and GM's chosen color was no-color. He had produced a meal of totally transparent molded gelatines. He somehow reduced the original foods into liquids and then painstakingly distilled them, a drop at a time, into clear liquids to make the gelatines. You could only distinguish what you were eating by the taste which, surprisingly, still remained present – whether beef taste or onion taste, etc. The transparent, hot liquid also tasted just like coffee.



VI. 19 In 1969 I attended the Fluxus New Year's event that George orchestrated at the Filmmakers' Cinematheque on the ground floor of 80 Wooster Street. There were several large-sized European men in thick winter coats and thick accents, cavorting on table tops and

demanding lots of attention ... George had masterfully prepared the elaborate party bill of fare, which included distilled essences of various foods made into clear gelatin and inserted into emptied eggshells. So a gelatinous egg was presented to me by a Fluxus enthusiast. How did I know that the lovely thing contained 100% distilled vodka? I fluxxed out, and slid under the table. As I was carried outside on the shoulders of those wild fur coats, I heard George's cackling laughter. He was gleeful at the success of his experiment.



VI. 20 George was talking about his immense appetite. Even now, sick as he is, he eats a lot. He said that during our wedding (me & Hollis) he sat next to Francine because he noticed she was a good eater. "*To get to eat more you have to sit next to a good eater,*" he said.



VI. 21 We were talking about George's eating habits. On the one hand his perfect *Bourguignon* when we visited him last time in Barrington; his passionate and deep interest in the recipes of various countries and historical periods; on the other hand, total carelessness about what he eats. During the last stay at our home he brought bags and bags of canned food. Hollis later had to throw out empty cans from his room and placed a drinking glass on the table – George was using empty juice cans to drink water. All that canned junk that he was eating and drinking at 80 Wooster Street! & our arguments about microwave cooking which he thought was so great.

He had no interest in gradations, subtleties of real cooked food. He'd eat and drink milk made out of milk powder, anything made of any powder, distilled, or whatever – but not real milk or real eggs or real fresh squeezed juice etc. And he has always been so proud of his dumplings – all those dumpling parties! I tried to eat them too, but I always told him they were about the most terrible dumplings I ever ate, or rather tried to eat. They were terrible, made out of prepared, packaged dough, heavy, half-cooked, and tasteless. But George sat there, in the chair, leaning back, holding his stomach full of them, hiccupping and ecstatic.



VI. 22 Almus came and brought some Lithuanian bread. He said he called George and offered to bring him some. It used to be George's favorite bread ... "I can't eat it, I can't digest bread anymore," he said to Almus. This depressed all of us very much. Poor George, he must be really bad not to be able to eat Lithuanian bread anymore.

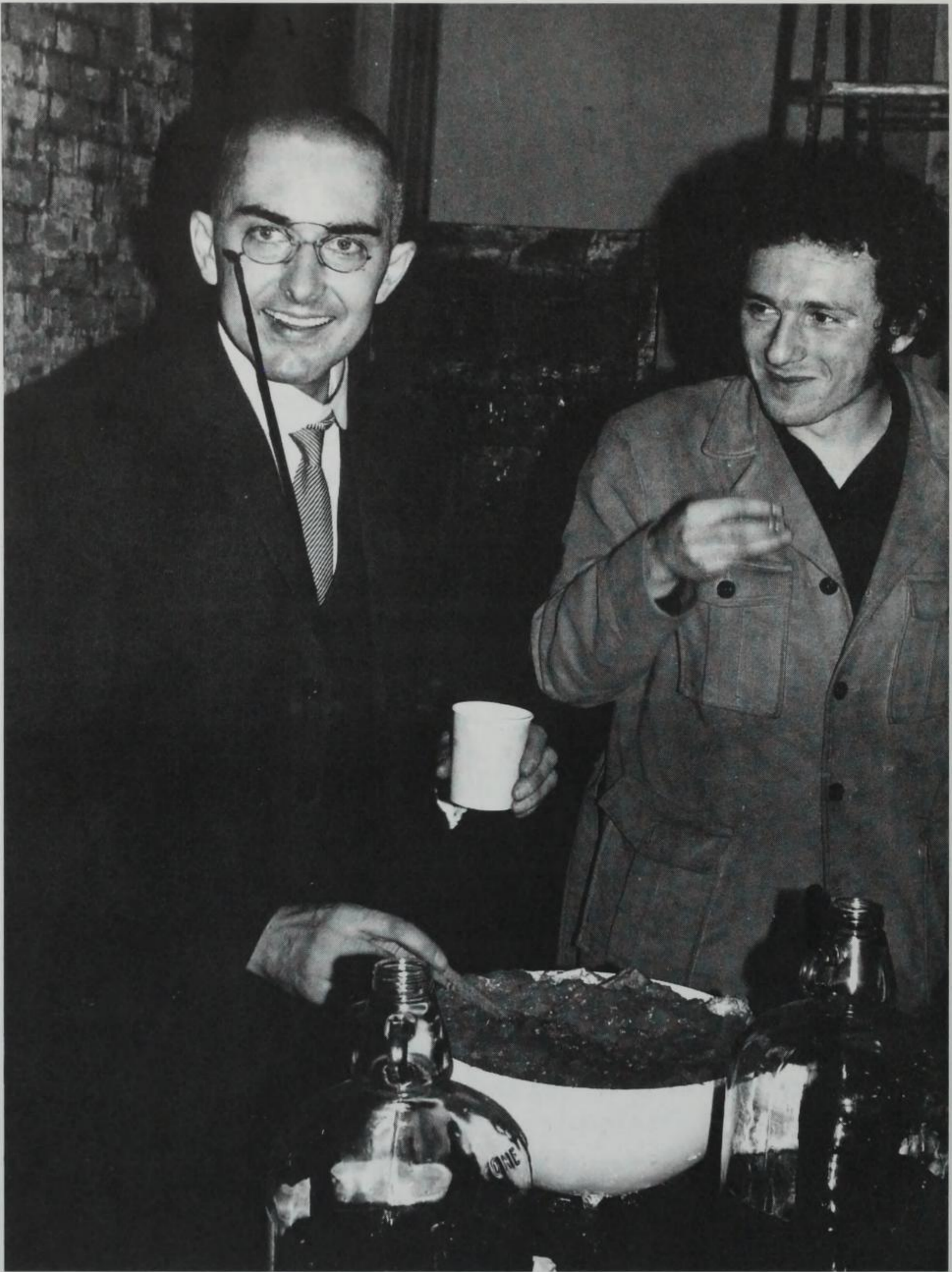


VI. 23 I recall that you visited George in the hospital regularly during his final days. You called me and told me that you played his waiter at mealtimes. This is exactly what he would have done for you had the situation been reversed. When he invited people to dinner in New Marlborough, he would dress in tails and white tie and be the waiter. Every meal consisted of ten courses. Each dish on the menu might consist of a single tablespoon per serving; it kept him busy, as you might imagine, but he loved it.

Discard this paper
after reading.

Fennel	Rice	Asafoetida	Nutmeg	Cinamon
Eucalyptus	Sage	Cardamon	Oats	Blank.
Coffee	Oregano	Powder nutmeg. maybe you can obtain Narcissus or Nosegay	Zipper can't think of any herb with Z	

George was in the habit of sending gift boxes to his colleagues which contained a variety of objects, difficult to identify, with the instructions, "Spell your name with these objects." The box he made up for Fluxus collector Francesco Conz contained a detailed description of the contents.



Above: The genial host at the New Year's Flux-Feast in 1969 is about to help an unidentified guest to a helping of home-made fish jello – or is it the fish ice cream? The gallon jugs contain rope tea – take your choice, sisal or jute.

Right: How George and his friends welcomed in the New Year in 1969 at the Filmmakers Cinematheque in New York. Photos © by Hanns Sohm, Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN NEW YEAR EVE'S FLUX- FEAST (FOOD & DRINK EVENT)

9PM. DEC.31, AT CINEMATHEQUE, 80 WOOSTER STREET, GROUND FLOOR

DISTRIBUTION:

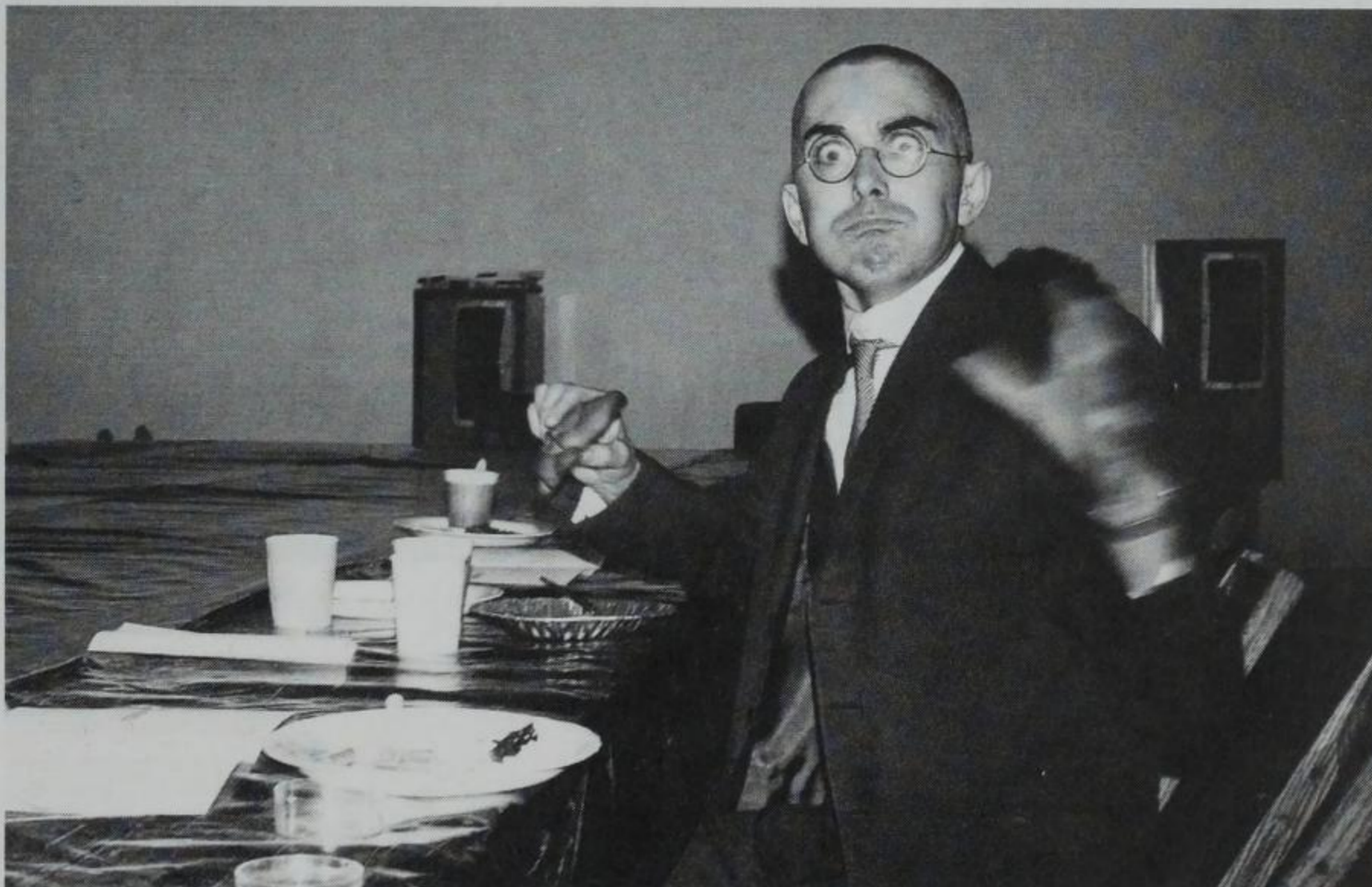
Ayo, Chudnov, Henry Flynt, Geoff & Bici Hendricks, Dick Higgins & Alison Knowles, Milan Knizak, Jonas & Adolfas Mekas, Joan Mathews, Jackson Mac Low, Peter & Barbara Moore, Paul Sharits, Nam June Paik, Bob Watts, Yoshimasa Wada, La Monte Young, Marion Zazeela, Heiner Friedrich, Lawrence Alloway. Joe Jones, Alice Hutchins, Shigeko Kubota, Dan Lauffer, Ben Patterson, Adams Sitney, Richard Forman, Emmett Williams.

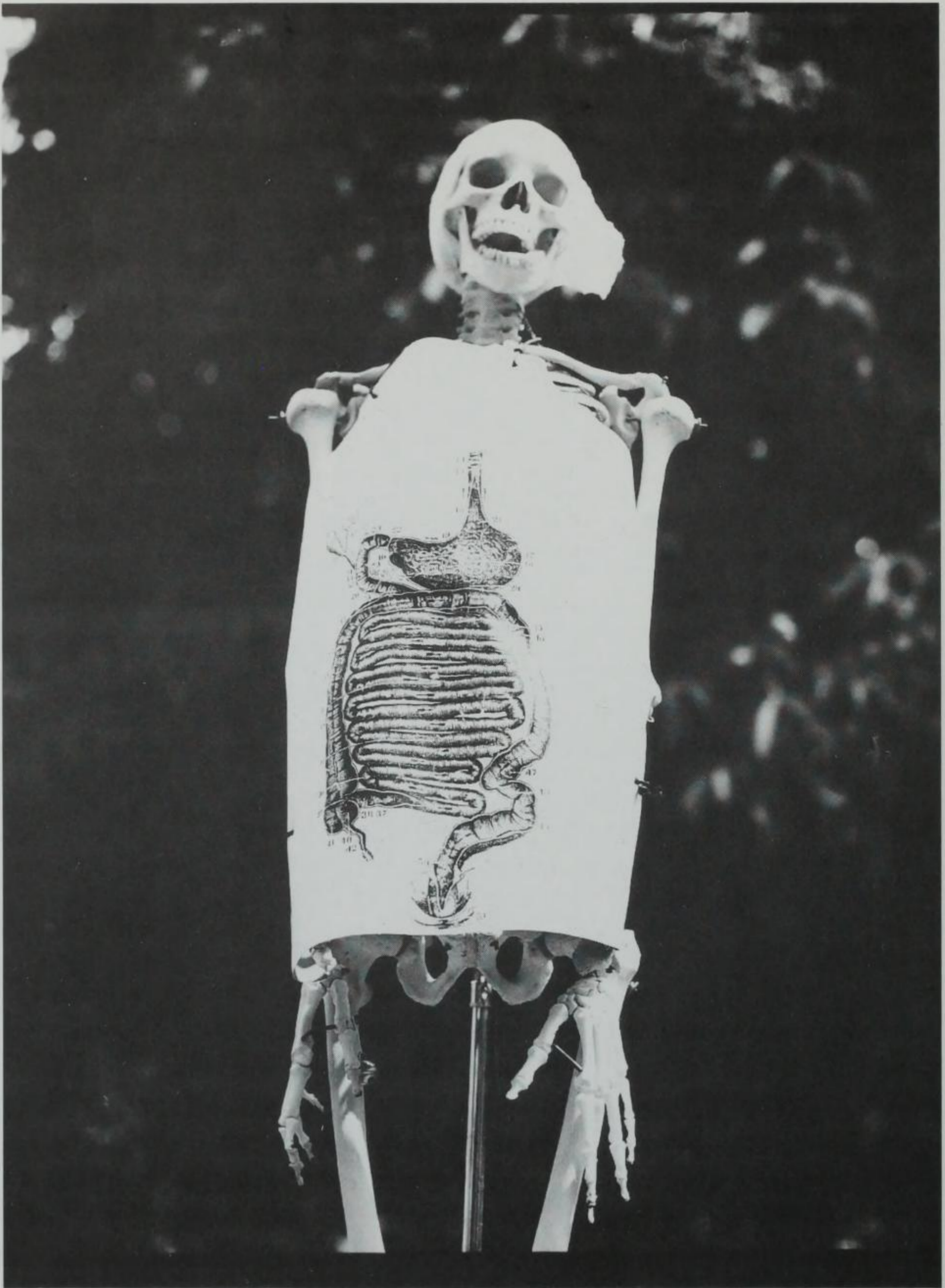
You may participate by contributing either a food or drink of your own invention, or make something up from the list below (except what is marked with *, since these will already be made up)

Please verify and indicate piece to be contributed so as to avoid having too much of the same or similar.
Write: George Maciunas, POB 180, Canal St. Sta. New York 10013

FLUX DRINKS & FOODS

- **FLUX EGGS** emptied egg shells filled with one of the following:
plaster, urethane foam, shaving cream, liquid white glue, white paint, ink, water, white jellatin, coffee, bad smell (rotten), good smell (spices, perfumes), dead bug, etc. (G.Maciunas)
- MONO-MEALS:**
- FISHMEAL** clear fish carbonated drink, fish jello, fish bread (from fish bone flour), fish pudding, fish ice cream, fish salad, fish pastry, fish candy etc. (G.Maciunas)
- POTATOMEAL** potato salad, potato pate, potato vinaigrette, potato moonshine, potato soup, potato pancakes, potato dumplings, potato cake, fried, boiled, broiled, baked potatoes, potato chips, creamed potatoes, mashed potatoes with sauce, potato cutlets, potato bread, potato jello, potato patfait, sweet potato pie, yam jam, cream of Yam, potato ice cream, potato parzipan. (Bob Watts)
- MONO-COLORS:**
- WHITE MEAL** white drink (milk), white potatoes, rice, white cheese, spagetti, white creamed salad, white jello etc. white cake, white ice cream, (Bici Hendricks)
- BLACK MEAL** black drink (coffee), black beans, black meat & sauce, black bread, black chocolate etc. (Bici Hendricks)
- OTHER COLORS** blue, red, green etc. (Bici Hendricks)
- TRANSPARENT** clear coffee, tea, prune juice, tomato juice (distilled), clear butter, onion, fish, beef etc. (clear jellatin with appropriate flavours), clear ice cream etc. (G.Maciunas)
- **TEA VARIATIONS** tea bags with: salt, or sugar, or aspirin, or citric acid. (Per Kirkeby)
tea made from boiling: wood, or rope (sisal, jute, manila), or leather, or wool, or paper etc. (G.Maciunas)
- SOUPS** gravel soup, nail soup, hardware soup etc. (Bici Hendricks)
- TURKEY** with concrete filling (Milan Knizak), with squeaking rubber toy turkey (G.Maciunas)
- SANDWICHES** crunched ice hamburger (frozen beef nouillon (Bici Hendricks), Novocain sandwich (Joe Cammerata) sleeping pill sandwich (G.Maciunas) etc.
- URINE COLORS** food with invisible drug giving color to the urine of the person eating it (red,blue,green,orange) (Bob Watts)





George Maciunas: *Digestive System Apron*, 1968, screenprint on vinyl, modeled on skeleton-mannequin supplied by Michael Berger.

St. Bob
Watts

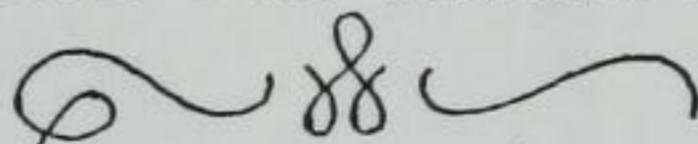
Pancake
Festival
Menu

Tuesday
7 p.m.

БЛИНИ

Blinis au Russe

Buckwheat pancakes - garnished with sour cream,
Caviar and melted butter



Bulviniai blynai
Crêpes de pomme à la Lituanie

Potatoe pancakes Lithuanian style ~ sour cream & cranberry relish

Crêpes à la Grenadine

Almond flavoured pancakes in Pomegranate syrup

Crêpes Forgette

Rum pancakes with pineapple-filling

БЛИНЧИКИ САБАЙОН

Blinchiki Sabajone au Russe

Egg-nog pancakes in egg-nog & rum or raspberry syrup

Crêpes Suzette

Folded cream pancakes coated with flaming Curaçao

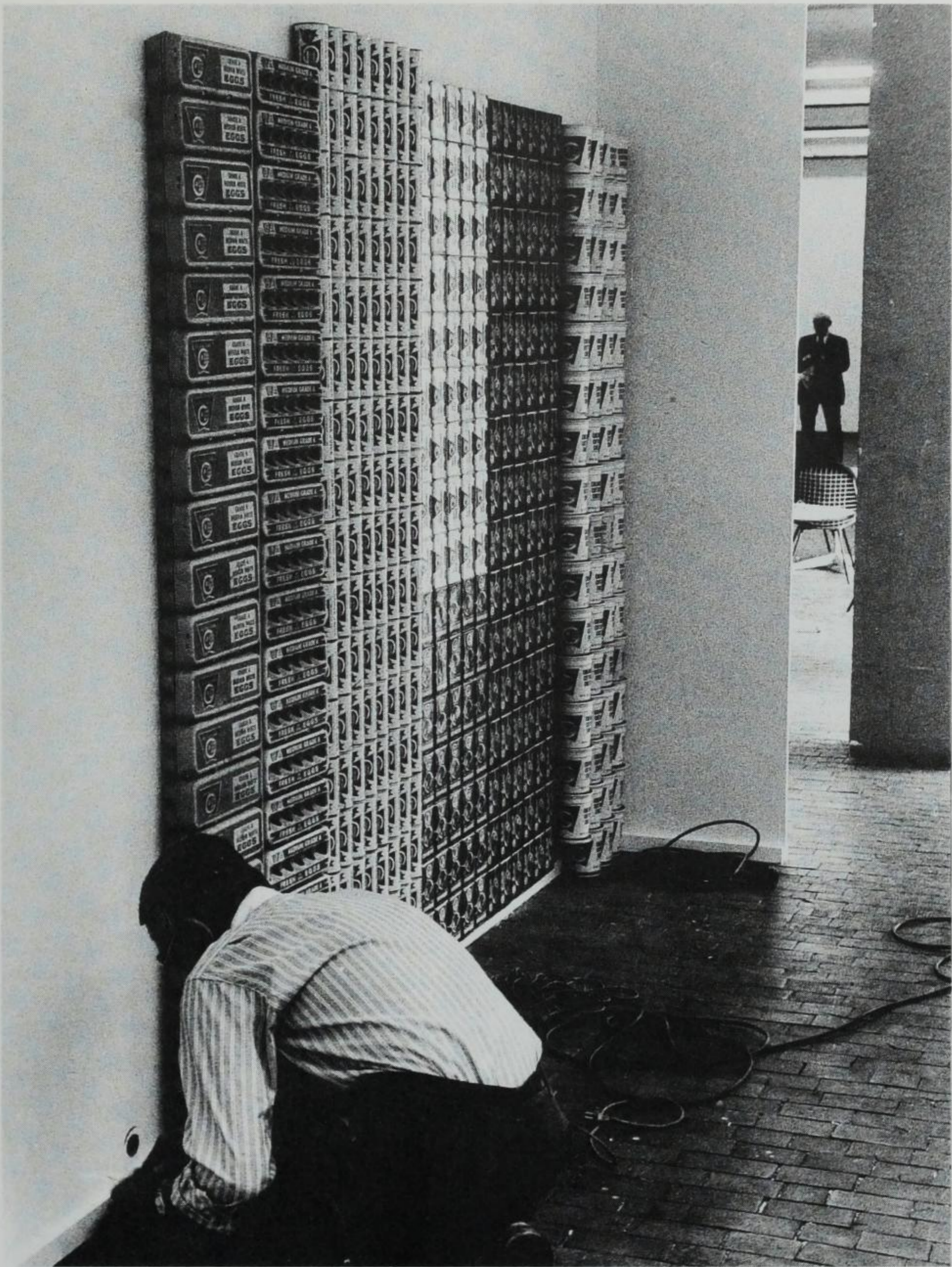
Alka Selzer

This mystery pancake event took place in Santa Cruz, California, Spring 1969, according to a sleuthing Fluxus researcher. Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.



Above: George Maciunas: *Venus de Milo Apron*, 1970. Photo © Scott Hyde.
Below: his contribution to Alison Knowles' *Identical Lunch* project, 1971.

Dear Alison,
Here is my idea for the
- Identical Lunch -
Put tuna fish, wheat toast, lettuce
butter, soup or buttermilk -
all into blender - blend
till all is smooth - drink it,
Best regards,
George -



George installs his work *One Year* – the residue of what he ate in one year, day after day, and with relish, one hopes – at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. Photo by Hanns Sohm, © 1976 by Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.



George at the *Festschrift Banquet* in his honor in New York in 1976.
Photo © Estate of Peter Moore.

VII

DON QUIXOTE IN SoHo

- VII. 1 *“You know,”* George told me this many times, he enjoyed the story so much, and every time he told it he laughed so much I thought his sides would split, *“this guy comes, he wants to buy into the Co-op. So I ask him what he does, and he says: ‘I am an artist!’*
 “So I say to him: You an artist? You’ll have to pay double! I always charge double to artists, that’s what artists deserve. They are all phonies, you know!”

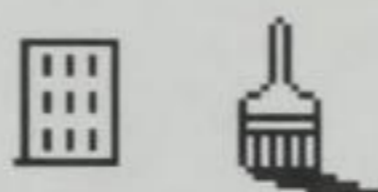


- VII. 2 Shortly after we returned from Europe, Yurgis bought a house in downtown New York near Canal Street, not far from Greenwich Village. He bought the house with hardly any money at all, persuading me to give him the savings which I had managed to pull together thanks to some typing work. And we both sold our land by the shore. In all I had about five thousand dollars and he had a certain amount. With cheap labor he rebuilt lofts. People buying studios advanced him money, with which he continued the reconstruction work. He sold these studios too inexpensively, earning almost nothing or just enough to get by on ... Everyone thought he was earning millions.

And so it went, house after house. As soon as he managed to sell one studio he would buy another house along with a friend. When money was no longer to be found, he borrowed again from his sister whom he promised to pay back double...He was always optimistic in his affairs, and if I sometimes doubted them he called me a pessimist.

I simply got tired of his studios, purchases and sales and didn't want to hear about them any more. As before we met every Sunday. I lived close to Long Island Sound in Mamaroneck and we walked along the water, sat and chatted peacefully, not touching upon the areas where we disagreed completely. I felt that he rested spiritually at my house. After lunch he always lay down and dozed. Walking

him home in the evening, I gave him food I had prepared that would last him several days.

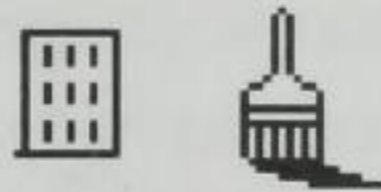


- VII. 3 Maciunas spent 1966 bringing a long-term plan of his to fruition. This was the establishment of Fluxus cooperative studio buildings. The original Flux co-op was to be 16-18 Greene Street, which Maciunas hoped to make into a “big funhouse” in the Fluxus spirit. The building was bought out from Maciunas in 1969, by which time another plan, for a garage at 66-68 Grand Street, had also fallen through. By early 1967, however, Maciunas had acquired 80 Wooster Street, and he soon managed to incorporate it as the first working Fluxus co-op, which it remains to this day. Robert Watts was the first occupant of this building, although others, most notably Ken Friedman, occupied spaces temporarily and informally. Maciunas himself moved into 80 Wooster from his previous residence at 349 West Broadway (where Shigeo Kubota, Joe Jones, Henry Flynt and others lived or had lived) in late 1967. He also invited his friend Jonas Mekas to move his Filmmakers’ Cinematheque to the ground floor that same year; the Cinematheque was housed there for two years, and, reincorporated as the Anthology Film Archives, returned there in 1974.

Besides 80 Wooster, other cooperatives have been established throughout SoHo by Maciunas since 1987. 80 Wooster and several of the others all antedate the SoHo “boom” – they are the first co-op buildings in the region. Similarly, the Cinematheque was the first public art activity space in SoHo, sponsoring live performances as well as films (and, later, video). Both the Cinematheque and the Flux co-ops have served as models for similar establishments in SoHo and other artists’ neighborhoods, both in New York and outside.

Co-operative loft ownership and generalized, non-profit art activity spaces are ideas which have shaped today’s changing, expanding, proliferating international art scene. They are ideas whose time has come. They might have come about without Maciunas and Mekas, but Maciunas and Mekas did provide the first operating models, and could be said to be the inventors of these social structures. Their responsibility for these manifestations makes Maciunas and Mekas heavily responsible in turn for the present state of SoHo - not as a burgeoning tourist trap, but more respectably as

the prime locus for art activity throughout New York, the United States and the world.



VII. 4 ... Don't think Fluxus is all frivolity. It is also moving into the neglected field of artists' housing. In 1966 George Maciunas, a young ex-Lithuanian who calls himself an agitator by profession, started Fluxus Cooperatives, Inc., whose aim is to help artists, filmmakers, dancers, etc. find adequate work and living space. With little assistance from foundations or government agencies, F.C.I. 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.

The four co-ops so far are 80 Wooster St., whose ground floor houses the Filmmakers Cinematheque; 64-70 Grand St., now divorced from Fluxhouse and owned entirely by the 17 occupying artist families plus a theater company (Richard Schechner's *The Performing Garage*); 131 Prince St., a sort of musician's compound; and 16-18 Greene St., which Fluxus is preparing as a funhouse (shops, workrooms, a theater, vending machines, a ground-floor discotheque to help pay the mortgage).

"But we're really too esoteric to make money," explains Maciunas, whose round-rimmed eyeglasses give his face a mildly Menshevik cast. *"After all, if we wanted to do that, we could simply put on Chopin concerts."*



VII 5 In 1965, in favor again with George after my excommunication the year before, he got me a very nice flat on West Broadway just above his own. We jointly and courageously fought an army of cockroaches with all kind of sprays and chemicals but were constantly defeated. The biggest victory we achieved was the day when all the cockroaches in one room fainted for 15 minutes. We celebrated with orange juice and canned foods.

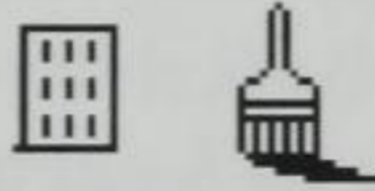
At the time I was preparing a performance at the East End Theater. I had a problem: I intended to do an audience-participation piece that required an audience of at least 50 people. The theater couldn't promise me a crowd like that. Discussing the problem with

George and his mother (who always told me beautiful secrets), he proposed that I announce the show in the *Village Voice* describing myself as “The Horror of Copenhagen” and “The Man Who Cut Off the Head of the Little Mermaid.” So I did. And I got my crowd.

But how I did it got me excommunicated for the second time. I announced that I would *pay* the audience to come, promising a dollar to everyone who attended. This was too much for George. Fluxus was supposed to be cheap, or even free. But to bribe an audience for their attention – Never!

I went through with the performance.

And my nice flat on West Broadway just above George’s? Well, George gave it to Shigeko Kubota.



VII. 6 In August of 1966, Dick Higgins sent me to meet George Maciunas for the first time. I had been corresponding with Dick because I had been making radio programs based on the Something Else Press books of Daniel Spoerri, Emmett Williams, Alison Knowles, Robert Filliou and others at Radio WRSB, a college-based radio station in Mount Carroll, Illinois. Dick and Alison had invited me to stay with them for a while at their home in New York, a few blocks away from the press. I was sixteen years old. I’d just finished the first two years of college, and I was in New York to look around.

George’s telephone directions brought me to his fifth-floor walk-up apartment on West Broadway. It was in a decaying industrial section of New York City that was then part of Little Italy. George’s apartment belongs to Henry Flynt now, and today the neighborhood is called SoHo. I walked up the stairs to find a black door covered with violent, emphatic NO! SMOKING!!! signs. I knocked.

The door opened a crack, and a pair of eyes framed in round, wire-rimmed spectacles peered out. That was George Maciunas.

Maciunas was a small, wiry man with a prim, owl-like look behind those spectacles. As I recall, he was dressed in a short-sleeved business shirt, open at the neck, no tie. He wore dark slacks and some kind of slippers. His pocket was cluttered with a number of pens. Described in the jargon of today, he’d be called a “nerd”. He’d fit right in with the computer jocks, engineers and architects at Carnegie Mellon University, his alma mater.

George ushered me into his kitchen. It was a steamy, New York summer day, but the apartment was cool. It smelled like straw mats.

I recognized the smell. It reminded me of a Japanese store I used to frequent as a youngster in New London, Connecticut.

The apartment contained three rooms. To the right was a compact, well-designed office and work room. The floor was covered with *tatami* mats. George said not to go in without slippers, so I looked in from the door to see drafting tables, desks, shelves and an astonishing clutter of papers, projects, notebooks and files. It was crowded. It was the most orderly clutter I've ever seen, the opposite of my own chronological layers of unfiled projects. I remember a strange rig that permitted George to reach tools by tapping strings and counter-balanced weights, but don't know if this is a memory of what I saw or a planning diagram that George showed me.

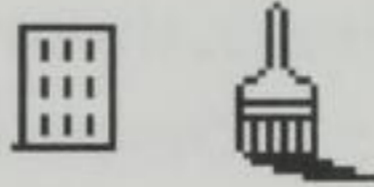
Off to the left was what looked like a huge, walk-in closet or small storage room. The room was filled with floor-to-ceiling shelves, like an industrial warehouse. It *was* an industrial warehouse, the comprehensive inventory of Fluxus editions in unassembled form. The shelves were loaded with boxes storing the contents of Fluxus multiple editions, suitcases and yearboxes. When an order came in for a Fluxbox, George would go to the back of the closet, select the right plastic or wooden container, and march through the room plucking out the proper cards and objects to emerge with a completed work. He'd then select the proper label, glue it on and have the completed edition in hand, ready to mail.

The kitchen had a sink, windows, stove, table and chairs, all quite ordinary except for the refrigerator. George had a bright orange refrigerator. When he opened it, I could see he had filled it with oranges from the bottom clear to the top shelf. The top shelf, on either side of the old-fashioned meat chest and ice tray, held four huge jugs of fresh orange juice. He offered me a glass.

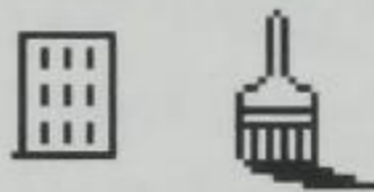
Maciunas peppered me with questions. What did I do? What did I think? What was I planning? I was planning to become a Unitarian minister. I did all sorts of things, things without names, things that jumped over the boundaries between ideas and actions, between the manufacture of objects and books, between philosophy and literature. Maciunas listened for a while and invited me to join Fluxus. I said yes.

A short while later, George asked me what kind of artist I was. Until that moment, I had never thought of myself as an artist. George thought about this for a minute, and said, "*You're a concept artist.*"

It always pleased me that I became part of Fluxus before I became an artist.



- VII. 7 George's basement, full of boxes of every kind, containers, cans. He keeps every container of everything he eats, everything, every wrapper. And, like Joseph Cornell, George is working on hundreds of pieces simultaneously, collecting bits of things to fit this or that one, and many of his boxes and things are in various stages of growth, of progress. Waste is one thing that George cannot stand. All his texts, all his memos, postcards, manifestoes, letters are filled from edge to edge single-spaced, with the same tight IBM type. His postcards, I need a magnifying glass to read his handwriting.



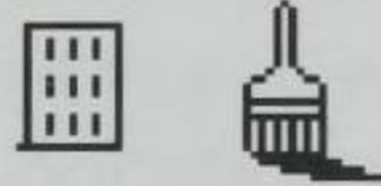
- VII. 8 In 1964 I rented what had been the Fluxus loft where the group had given performances, done street events and sold Fluxus artifacts. They left behind a fabulous array of things which I lived with for the next two-and-a-half years and was greatly influenced by:

A collection of thirty two-foot-long street signs in the shape of an arrow. They were white with the words "One Way" painted on them in black. They were crumpled and bent, some a little rusty. A few were like new. They were crowded onto one wall, nailed there randomly – a very exciting visual experience! I don't have a photograph of them. I'd love to know the author of the work. Perhaps by means of this letter to you I'll find out.

A collection of posters of Fluxus events and happenings plastered on the walls, as well as pages of the newspaper *V TRE*, big sheets cataloguing the Fluxus items for sale there, and posters announcing shows of artists connected with Fluxus. There was always something to read or some diagram or photograph or drawing to study. There was a very large supply of glossy white paper about five feet long and four inches wide. I used them to cover the front of a long rack that held clothes and various other possessions in an improvised wardrobe. They looked very good, fifteen or twenty of these long strips hanging side by side, just clearing the floor. I also used them as curtains on twin windows in the back of the loft. A supply of copies of a very long piece of concrete poetry by Emmett Williams printed on three-foot-long by three-inch-wide pieces of white paper hung at the door.

A variety of attention-getters had been installed at the entrance to the place, most of them invented by Ay-O, consisting of various syringes and other devices that when squeezed, pressed or otherwise manipulated emitted sound or water or music. Most visitors ran through the whole repertory of doorbells, so whenever anybody came to visit I got a little concert (I remember the xylophone especially) and they perhaps got a squirt of water in the face.

The carcass of a destroyed piano lay on the floor of the room that had been the performance space. I regret that I had to have it removed but I preserved most of what I found there. There was silver paper glued to the back wall of the little closet that held the toilet, and every time the door was shut a shower of tiny pieces of crumbling plaster fell from the wall, striking against the silver paper as it went. I hadn't thought of this ethereal music even once until I started this letter to you. Thank you for being the means of my recalling it. I don't think anyone who shut that door ever failed to comment on the ensuing showerlet. Perhaps the Fluxus ambience enabled them to hear what they might not have noticed in another place.

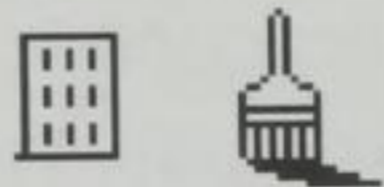


VII. 9 George first invited me to New York in 1965. I didn't make it until 1968, when the Czechoslovakian government finally issued me a passport. George was going to meet me at the airport, but naturally he botched it and wasn't there.

Later I worked on the renovation of Fluxhouses in Greene Street. George had lost all his money. He always made "wrong estimates." Nothing worked. Still, his methods were fantastic. George paid very little, but the workers didn't get too upset about it because they could come to work whenever they wished, even at midnight. They could work however long or as little as they pleased, then tally up the time they'd put in.

George prepared lunch for his co-workers every day. In bargain stores "way downtown" he bought hundreds, maybe thousands, of canned foods, for the most part rice mixed with some mystery product or another, and each day he warmed it up and served it to the workers. He practically achieved the ideals of a communist society. Communism in Apartment 11 (if I remember correctly), 38 West Broadway.

George's clients, the people (artists and others) who bought space in a Fluxhouse from him, started off full of enthusiasm at the prospects of cheap housing, but eventually they began to curse him and loathe him as George's "bargain prices" rose to staggering heights.



VII. 10 I first met George in 1968 when I negotiated a lease of the garage at 33 Wooster Street from him and Bob Watts on behalf of the Performance Group. (Their first theater production there was *Dionysus in '69* and later they became the Wooster Group.) I had first heard of him from Geoffrey Hendricks, already a client, when he talked to me about a co-op George was forming on lower Greene Street in SoHo.

By then I had seen a Bob Watts show or two at the Paul Bianchini Gallery and I had been the lawyer for Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik for two or three years, but I didn't know of their connection or anything about Fluxus except that George called each loft co-op project "Fluxhouse".

After the Wooster Street lease was done, George came to me with his next project and our association began. I only represented him into the early 1970s because he was betrayed on a deal by a group of artists he thought I was part of. It took several years before I could get through to him that I wasn't involved and had been furious when I learned of it, and we resumed our friendship which lasted until his death.



VII. 11 Milan Knizak was living with us in our house on 20th Street; he was working for George on the renovation of one of the many loft buildings – Fluxlofts. One day Milan came home in an absolute rage and swore that he would never work for George again. He had been spending the whole day, or perhaps even several days, putting in electrical boxes, or some comparable part of new wiring in the building. George had been out shopping and discovered that he could get the same or similar fixtures, still meeting code, for a few cents less, and came back proudly telling Milan about this saving, and telling him to take them all out and replace them with the cheaper ones (with a request to be careful so the others could be

returned), with total disregard of the efforts of Milan or the cost of the labor. So Milan stormed out.



VII. 12 To understand George it is helpful to reflect on where and how he lived, for the spaces he created paralleled how he worked and thought. At 349 West Broadway he designed, built and organized the space of that tenement apartment to provide him with the maximum amount of storage and some simple clean work areas, and he took a certain pleasure in showing off what he had created.

80 Wooster Street became the central Fluxus loft, with the Cinematheque of Jonas Mekas, where a lot of Fluxus events took place, and Bob Watts' loft, where other events and meals took place. Most especially, George kept the basement for himself. This he did partly for reasons of economy. But the mechanics of a building, the furnace, the meters and controls, are generally located in the basement and the "super" will have his office there, so that in a larger, metaphorical way it was the place for George. This space was designed for work and storage, and a great deal of the time George was there working on an array of projects, charts, objects, layouts, designs and programs.

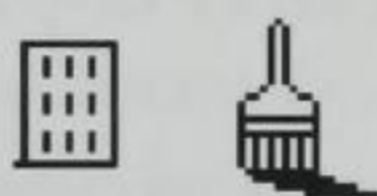
The back wall he opened up with plate glass onto the airshaft area. The wall of the adjoining building he painted white, the ground he tiled with small round white tiles and set in some cylindrical trick holes, covered in different ways for humor, and in one he planted a mimosa tree. He was interested in revealing the cast-iron detailing in the structure and cleaned off a lot of old paint. In the front of the building he worked on restoring the cast-iron sidewalk panels with lenses that were to let light down into the basement, and he took delight in finding a large quantity of these lenses at bargain prices. In front he planted some Ailanthus trees (the Tree of Heaven), to cover up some illegal electrical work.

Along the glass wall in back of his basement space he organized a lot of his work activity – his typewriter, his tape deck and tape, storage for music (and for economy he figured out various ways to borrow tapes, copy them and then return them), his work table for cutting, pasting and layouts, and I seem to recall a bed and sleeping area at that end built into a storage wall. The loft also had a good-size open area near the door as you came in where people could gather for meetings. I remember one time Henry Flynt had a number

of us there, to work on dreams. Another time, my brother Jon arranged for Stewart Sherman to come and give a private performance for George.

In the basement he had a large room for storage with aisles of shelves filled with boxes all carefully labeled in his distinctive handwriting and printing. His theory was that you shouldn't throw out anything, for as soon as you did, you would realize what you needed it for. He was always shopping for bargains, odd lots, strange things that could become elements of Fluxus editions, and these too were stored. Certain Fluxus boxes required materials gathered from around the world – for example 100 small pebbles from different places for Watts' *Flux Atlas* or as many kinds of shit as possible for his *Excreta Fluxorum*.

My son Bracken, aware of this one summer as a young boy, realized that the grasshoppers he had in a jar were producing shit and this had to be gotten to George, and then one time visiting at 80 Wooster he asked to see George's shit collection, and there in a labeled box were all the jars and packages of shit that he and different people had gathered, including Bracken's grasshopper shit.



VII. 13 After graduating from Rutgers in 1971 I decided to enroll in a masters program at Cal Arts, a new school in southern California. I returned to New York to earn money for the tuition, which was very expensive. After a tepid job interview with a SoHo gallerist, I dropped by 80 Wooster Street to say hello to George Maciunas, and within minutes he hired me onto his staff for \$2 an hour. And thus I joined the Union of Fluxworkers, the "cottage industry" in George's basement.

The qualifying job interview for a female worker was brief and to the point. George asked the candidate if she could sew, casting a glance at the idle Singer sewing machine on a table against the wall. It was his hope that she would be expert enough to take over the production of banners planned as Fluxus editions. If the candidate said she could sew, she was hired on the spot, without further investigation. This was a practical but chauvinistic distinction, as the males didn't seem to be interviewed at all. I sensed that their qualifications of having arms, legs, brains or brawn was

satisfactory for George. Still, a varied staff did grow from the network of students, artists and friends who stopped in.

Since George was my first full-time boss, I couldn't compare him to a previous employer. He maintained a fierce standard of excellence and expected that a great deal of work would be accomplished. I felt he was more than kind to his motley staff, and thought it normal that he prepared lunch, and sometimes dinner, for several workers each day, discussing Mayakovsky and socialism as we listened to "classical" music or, occasionally, the Beatles.

Delighted to serve hungry mouths, he chuckled and grinned while placing before us bargain jars of peanut butter and jam which he bought at a discount store. Most days he sent someone around the corner for loaves of locally baked crusty Italian bread. We ate on the throw-away sheets from paste-up boards to keep the work surfaces scrupulously clean. These were comradely meals, with Joe Jones, Yoshi Wada, Almus Salcius, Jr., and other Future Artists and Architects of SoHo, egalitarian partakers of this humble fare.

George was our tutor for every task. He patiently demonstrated all details. His diligence and fastidiousness inspired loyalty as well as obedience. Willing to run the assorted errands to Canal Street vendors, printers, Plexiglas engravers and rubber-stamp makers, we all followed George's explicit diagrams of the New York City streets. His tiny, neat maps on index cards controlled our footsteps, and sped us quickly back to the busy basement at 80 Wooster Street. We never felt that we were in service to a tyrant, but rather that a zealous monkish leader was strategizing a great military campaign requiring careful planning and serious attention. His self-sacrificing example, perfectionistic and inexhaustible, and his generous mentorship informed much of my own subsequent professional behavior. I picked up many of his frugal habits because they were so sensible. To this day I save the glossy sheets from the paste-ups of previous assignments; the ones from the recent *Fluxus Codex* in particular make very good shelving paper liners.

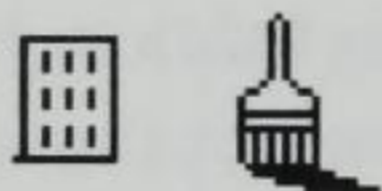


VII. 14 I first met George when I moved to New York in 1971 and was looking for a loft to rent. Ken Greenleaf took me to see George saying he was the one who knew about everything in SoHo.

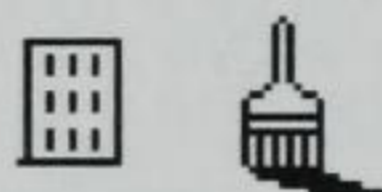
George lived at 80 Wooster. Ken and I walked down the stairs and were let into a basement space with, however, plenty of light from

outdoors. George was a thin dark-haired man, balding, wearing small steel-rimmed glasses. He showed us what he was working on – detailed plans for a ship on which artists could live while it circled the world. He worked at a tilted drawing table set up in this basement room lined with empty containers from the food he ate – mostly, as I remember, cottage cheese and frozen strawberries.

In those days I often saw George scurrying along the street somewhere in SoHo. The next time I met him in his basement space was in 1974 when a small group (Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, Caroline Gooden [York], Jackie Winsor, Stephen Chambers and I) met with him to form a corporation to buy the building at 541 Broadway. He had been instrumental in locating the building and I was a latecomer joining the group. He had all the ideas about how to form a co-op and told us it would be easy. As soon as the purchase was made, “he left us to our own devices”, as they say.



- VII. 15 I met George Maciunas a few times, in his apartment-office on West Broadway near Canal, to buy lots of Fluxus kits for my brother Walther's bookshop in Cologne. He liked me since I paid cash – but did not when I smoked. Next (not smoking) on Wooster Street with Jonas Mekas, social but more superficial. Actually I was a bit afraid of him. Last, on looking in on a Fluxloft co-op. Would Lenin be a good co-op coordinator? I rented.



- VII. 16 I do not have any stories about George Maciunas, just a vague memory of one lovely meeting – crossing a big open space with Robert and George – arriving at some low rundown buildings – entering a door – squeezing myself through hallways – rooms filled with things – standing looking at boxes and tiny things – George putting pills in his mouth once in a while – smiles – eyes – warm feeling – laughter ... Robert is dead – George is also dead – he might know the same story – told another way.



- VII. 17 In 1974, or was it in 1973? – we had to build a projection room at 80 Wooster Street. The heavy room had to rest on the delicate flat iron columns. In order to do this, holes had to be drilled through the

columns. We all stood there, looking at the thin fragile columns on which the entire building was resting, as George, with a powerful drill in his hands, approached them.

“Go out, all of you!” he shouted. *“I don’t know how these columns will behave. They may just crack and the whole building may collapse on my head. Go out!”*

I knew there was nothing in the whole world that could be used to persuade George not to do it. He had to do it, live or die. So we all walked out and stood across the street, staring at the building, while George proceeded with drilling.

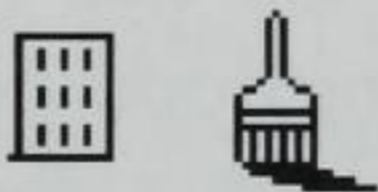
The building held. The columns held. Everybody survived.

Only later, many years later, after George died, as I was going through some of the stuff I had saved from the basement of 80 Wooster Street, after George moved out, I discovered a tiny flask, half filled with black dust. It carried a label, in George’s own careful writing, *“Dust from the flat iron column.”* Not only did he drill the hole in the column: with the danger of imminent death hovering over his head, he didn’t forget to collect all the little particles, produced by his drill, in a little flask, as a Fluxus piece.

One thing George really hated was waste!



VII. 18 Most of the time Jean Brown talks about George Maciunas: “There is nobody I’ve met like him.” She feels he is a genius and will help him every way she can, but says he is also the world’s worst business man and will never escape his financial morass. He never has a dollar to his name, and although he still has lofts for sale in SoHo people are not buying there anymore, and besides, Bob Watts, his partner, seems to get all the money, while George does all the work.



VII. 19 Although I can’t remember the date, I was with my mother, Jean Brown, when she first met George. It was a “cold call”: my mother had somehow obtained the address of George’s house in SoHo, then something of a wasteland. I went along as a sort of bodyguard. We rang the bell and were invited to come in. George’s mother was present. The purpose of the visit was to obtain as many Fluxus boxes and assemblages as possible. George must have sensed the presence of a kindred spirit. After talking for a while, he took us into a large,

walk-in closet, which contained the components of the works my mother wanted to acquire. Everything was neatly stored and labeled; as I later discovered, George was one of the most well-ordered, meticulous people on earth. Within a short time, he filled the order, the first of many he would receive from the person who, I am certain, was his greatest admirer.

George played an enormous role in my mother's life. I believe that she never recovered from the tragedy of his early death.



VII. 20 Hollis remarked today, while we were walking down Wooster Street and talking about George – “*Après moi le déluge*, that’s George.” Which is another perfect description of George. One of one hundred such descriptions. No wonder his favorite historical character is Louis XIV, including Rossellini’s film of that name. He cares nothing about what people say, do, possess, today: it’s all worthless, in his eyes. And the way people behave, they are still on the level of elephants.

“You’ll see,” he has told me at least a dozen times, “*after I leave 80 Wooster Street it will collapse in ten years, you want to bet?*”

Everything that he makes, all his architectural structures are made fragile enough to last only that long.

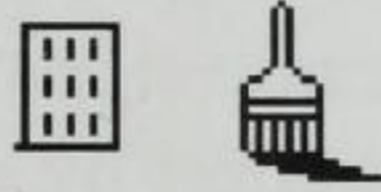
“*People are elephants*,” he says. “*They break whatever they touch: door knobs, chairs, light switches.*” He would like to transfer Japanese architecture – the architecture of bare feet, mats, fragile sliding doors, etc. – to New York “*to civilize Americans.*”



VII. 21 George was an excellent craftsman – although I’m sure he would insist that the only criterion was efficiency. Like his newly constructed steam bath; sliding doors hold in well the heat ... I and my lady-friend oohing and aahing; a severe look from George, “*Only for health reasons!*”

It was then I saw the fundamentally opposite attitudes behind our apparent agreements ... : (to G.) “For you, all this (Fluxus) is an attempt to show that nothing is art. Whereas for me it is evident that everything is. Fluxus is the point of contact between the two philosophies and indeed many results are shared – but eventually the difference will become significant.” Somehow this led to his judgment (critical) of all manifestations of sensuality and a discus-

sion of the eventuality (approving) of eliminating, say, sex ... with artificial insemination. At this point Elisabeth said, "Let's get out of here."

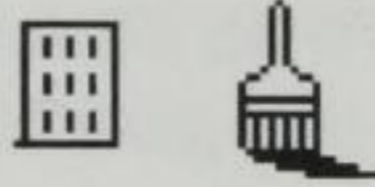


VII. 22 What still mystifies me is where all the money went. I know what the building in which I still reside cost him and what he received from selling individual lofts to prospective residents such as myself. There is no doubt that, at least on our building, that the sum of the second figure was considerably greater than the first. Remembering that he lived so frugally, we can conclude the money must have gone somewhere? Since he did not keep a bank account (because of a minimal outstanding IRS lien) and thus dealt mostly in cash and third-party checks, his financial dealings would be hard to trace now. A friend who collaborated with him in purchasing a building in the late 1960s insists George kept ledger books, but I gather that these have not been seen since. Perhaps he was, as a unique artist, the first to take cash with him at the end.

We were always discussing George's motives. It seemed to me that he wanted most to make people dependent upon him. That accounts for why the contracted renovation of my loft was left incomplete. As long as something had to be done, I would need to be nice and attentive to him. I'm sure there must have been similar manipulations in everyone's dealings with him. He collected people much as he collected miscellaneous objects and filed both people and things away in stacked boxes whose locations he meticulously recorded.

Though all of us who purchased lofts from him were short-changed in some minor way, none of us lost money from dealing with him. Indeed, my own studio is scarcely the only one currently worth several times what I paid for it.

I moved into SoHo with a woman who had emigrated here (from Holland) only a decade before. She thought of George as "the eternal emigrant", not only because he seemed so alienated here (not that he would have been more comfortable anywhere else) but because his English remained imperfect. For instance, articles were continually disappearing from his speech and even his writings. Nonetheless, you always knew what George was saying. I was reminded of Moholy-Nagy, my artistic hero then (as now), who likewise reportedly spoke English clearly, if imperfectly.



VII. 23 A few years ago when George was having problems with the law of New York State it became apparent he had to take defensive action. He was being hounded by the process servers since legal action against him was impossible unless papers were served properly. He devised a series of obstacles both physical and psychological. Outer door locks were improved as well as inner ones. Business names on the door were changed, with statements that GM had moved to a new address. Sound barriers were erected inside so GM could not be heard on the phone or at the typewriter. For some time these means were sufficient, but one day an attempt was made to break down the door, an indication that matters were more serious.

GM now took steps for a prolonged siege. The door was reinforced on the inside with a steel bar, angle and plate, including the door frame. The outer side of the door became medieval and dangerous, as running the length and at close intervals were pieces of industrial paper guillotine blades, and extremely sharp. In effect there was no place to knock without being seriously cut. Then there was the fire escape wired with alarms. This became a problem because of the alley cats that sometimes set off false alarms, so this system was allowed to deteriorate in favor of the inside room and escape hatch.

This was an ingenious idea where an inner room was constructed with a hidden access door. This became GM's bedroom. The room was provided with another door, however, an escape hatch that led by a devious route outside the building, to be used as a means of last resort. A significant problem was for GM to watch his weight so he could exit quickly.

At the same time that these extreme measures were carefully carried out, GM devised the ultimate psychological weapon to confront the Attorney General of the State of New York. As a hoax he decided on an extensive round-the-world trip. He gathered postcards to match the itinerary, wrote corresponding "wish you were here" notes to the Attorney General. He then sent the cards to friends abroad so they could be postmarked from far away places at the proper time to match the fictitious travel. It seems to have worked, for the process servers were not heard from again.



VII. 24

FLUX COMBAT

WITH NEW YORK STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL (& POLICE)

EVENT IN PROGRESS

- a) *Attorney General's arsenal of weapons: some 30 subpoenas to Maciunas and all his friends, interrogation of his friends, warrant of arrest for Maciunas, search warrants, four angry and frustrated marshals, and policemen armed with clubs.*
- b) *Maciunas' arsenal of weapons: humorous, insulting and sneering letters to Attorney General, various disguises (gorilla mask, bandaged head, gas mask, etc). Photos of the disguises sent to Attorney General. Flux-fortress (for keeping away the marshals & police: various unbreakable doors with giant cutting blades facing out, reinforced with steel pipe, braces, camouflaged doors, dummy and trick doors and ceiling hatches, filled or backed with white powder, liquids, smelly extracts. Funny messages behind each door, real escape hatches and tunnels leading to other floors, vaults etc., various precautions in entering and departing flux-fortress.*

After termination of this combat (possibly flight from New York State) documentation will be published by Maciunas (copies of letters, disguise photos, photos of various doors and hatches and photos of escape etc.).



VII. 25 He also devised an escape route up through a narrow secret passage to the Cinematheque with the thought that if he kept himself thin, he could get through but his pursuers would get stuck. But the climax of the story was that in the secret passageway there was a disguise kept for himself, and this he would put on and go around to the upstairs hall and greet the people hunting for him, with the inquiry, "*Who is it you are looking for?*", and then tell them where Maciunas might be found. There were the cards sent around the world to be mailed to the Attorney General with George "pointing himself out" in a crowd welcoming Lindbergh up Broadway, or among the figures in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, conveying the sense that George was dashing around by any conveyance possible – jet plane, dog sled or rickshaw – to elude him.



VII. 26 *Mr. Louis J. Lefkowitz*
Attorney General of New York State
Albany, N.Y.

Dear Sir:

I can easily understand why fresh out of school attorneys at your New York City office are given the easy and rewarding task of harassing artists. Artists traditionally have always been easy game, first to the police, then to the buildings department, now the condominium section of your department. These artists have been paying off every conceivable department, to get renovation plans approved, to obtain certificates of occupancy, permits for electric meters, permits for public assembly, even to have garbage picked up, and I doubt they are going to rush paying off more for approval of prospectuses, more lawyers fees and the like, especially since your department does have the right to waive the requirement for small cooperatives to file formal offerings.

I wonder if your department is aware of the consequences such irresponsible harassment will cause. For the past six years, the area bounded by Houston and Canal Streets (originally named Hell's Hundred Acres) has undergone considerable improvement, without any cost to taxpayers and without harming anyone, primarily because of renovation of buildings bought by groups of artists. All such obstruction from your department could achieve is to stop improvement of the entire area, letting individual landlords keep the buildings in the same dilapidated and neglected condition as they have done for the past 100 years.

Yours respectfully,

George Maciunas



VII. 27 *Attorney General of New York State*
2 World Trade Center
New York

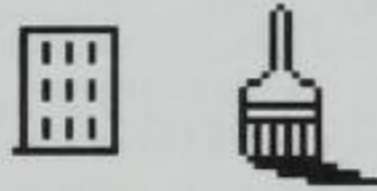
Gentlemen:

I have an extra sensory perception that you are trying to communicate with me. Instead of writing to me directly you seem to be attempting to reach me by harassing my friends and relatives. I

thought your office was slightly above such Gestapo techniques. If however I am mistaken, then you should maybe set 80 Wooster Street building on fire in order to smoke me out. Or, on the other hand, you should simply write to me, something you should have tried before embarking on these absurd round-about approaches. I will try to cooperate and supply you with whatever information you require. I suspect however that information is not what you require.

You have been supplied already with various documents regarding 141 Wooster Street and Good Deal Realty Corp. which you never bothered to read or even look at, since you requested the same documents again and again. Unlike yourselves, I am very busy doing work and can not waste time playing lawyers games. I will try to cooperate only after I have been convinced that you have information-gathering purpose and not that of harassment for the sake of harassment.

*Yours very truly,
George Maciunas*



VII. 28 Re: Good Deal Realty Corp – George Maciunas

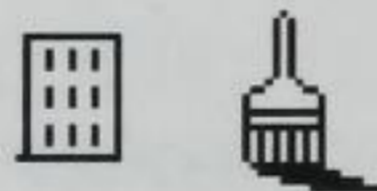
Dear Mr. Maciunas:

Please contact me at 488-5208 with respect to the above matter.

Very truly yours,

Louis J. Lefkowitz, Attorney General

By Lawrence F. Ravetz, Deputy Assistant Attorney General



VII. 29 *Lawrence F. Ravetz*
Deputy Assistant Attorney General

Dear Sir:

In my letter of December 12, 1975, I suggested that you request from me in writing whatever information you required and I promised to cooperate if your request seemed to have a purpose other than that of harassment for the sake of harassment.

Since that time you performed miserably. All I got is a message with your telephone number. I still do not know what information you seek. I do know your telephone number, but I knew that before.

Meanwhile you continue your useless and disgraceful harassment tactics. The three-hour torture of my sister (who has absolutely no information) and your threat to torture my 73-year-old and ailing mother is ample proof of your contemptible intentions.

You also gave another proof of your total lack of interest in the information you suppose to gather by asking my sister for the name of the bank used by the Good Deal Realty Corp. If you took the trouble to read the documents I submitted to you regarding 141 Wooster Street you would have known the name of the bank. There is also no need to ask my sister, my mother or my uncle for my hat size or how frequently I take haircuts. They would not know, but I will give this to you: my hat size is 23" (large), collar size 15 1/2, I weigh 160 lbs, I take haircuts once every month, I do not hang around bars, my favorite hangout is my own room, I do not smoke, I do not drink, I do not have money, or bank accounts, or gold bars hidden under my mattress, yes, my room has windows, you can climb down the fire escape (do you intend to break through them?). The schools I attended are: Hastings-on-Hudson, Cooper Union School of Architecture, Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, Institute of Fine Arts (NYU) in New York City, I travelled a lot in the past and will in the future, I earn my living by doing architectural and graphic design, and selling my art (could send you samples in the future), I spend about 2 1/3 dollars per day for food, I take Adrenocorticotropin for my asthma condition every three days, my medical records are at Roosevelt Hospital and USAF hospital in Wiesbaden, F.R. of G. Any more questions?

So far you have not convinced me of your information-gathering purpose. In fact your scandalous behavior and failure to read the information submitted to you convinced me beyond any doubt, that your only purpose like that of many other government officials is to extract a bribe from me.

Yours very truly,

George Maciunas



VII. 30 The People of the State of New York
To George Maciunas

GREETING:

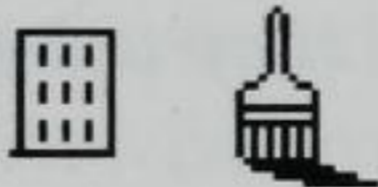
WE COMMAND YOU, That all business and excuses being laid aside, you and each of you appear and attend before LOUIS J. LEFKOWITZ, Attorney General of the State of New York, on the 26th day of February, 1975, at 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon, or any adjourned date or time thereof, at Two World Trade Center, New York, N.Y., 48th Floor, to testify what you and each of you may know in regard to matters relating to the practices of Good Deal Realty Corp. and others in the issuance, sale, promotion, negotiation, advertisement, distribution or purchase of securities in and from the State of New York and bring with you the following books and papers, which the Attorney General deems relevant and material to the enquiry:

- a) All financial records, stock records, bank statements, cancelled checks, and deposit slips for Good Deal Realty Corp. from inception to date.
- b) All existing agreements and other documentation relating to the offering of any floor space in any building in Manhattan by Good Deal Realty Corp.
- c) A list of all buildings for which Good Deal Realty Corp. has ever offered floor space.

and for failure to attend on that day or any adjourned date or time thereof, you will be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor as provided in The General Business Law and other statutes of the State of New York.

WITNESS, Honorable LOUIS J. LEFKOWITZ, Attorney General of the State of New York, the 18th day of February, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy-Five

LAWRENCE F. RAVETZ Assistant Attorney General



VII. 31 *April 1, 1975*

*Mr. Lawrence F. Ravetz,
Deputy Assistant Attorney General*

Dear Sir:

Your so-called "investigation" begins to resemble a blindfolded man on a street swinging a large club and hitting lamp posts, fire hydrants, cats, dogs, parked cars, windows and sometimes a passerby, but never the target which is not even in the street.

Since you are obviously running out of persons to harass, I include some names and their phones. At least these names resemble mine, and that is saying more than trying to subpoena seagulls and other birds.

Machuca	595-2761	Ma Chung Ming	227-7867
Macinnis	689-7607	Ma Sin Kan	477-4093
Machinas	533-6937	Macanas	725-8030
Macuikas	595-2765	Mao Chun Fan	666-2841
Mak Cheuk Ping	673-3242	Matunas	686-7354
Makarushka	595-6099	McCannon	879-4965

And when you are through with them, try these

Bing Ng	226-2538	Yan On Ying	431-3447
Yip Yiek	737-8575	Buddy Zzzypp	861-2008
Rose Stolen	865-4191	Smule Yahn	929-3093

I would also like to take this opportunity to offer a proposition:

I would gladly cooperate and show respect to your investigation and your department if you could show me how the Attorney General has indicted and convicted Dairylea Milk Co. for having diluted millions of gallons of milk with water. Proof of such action would dispel the impression I seem to have that the prime concern of your department is to harass as many people as possible so as to create new clients for as many of your colleagues as possible.

I also wish to advise you to teach the Neanderthal men in your employ some manners. You should warn them of the dangers in impersonating police officers (which they are not), wrecking various doors, destroying property and assaulting various persons. They should be told that they can attempt to break doors only in the presence of police officers, and possibly possessing a bulldozer or bazooka, since otherwise they will succeed only in breaking their own bones.

It seems incredible that you should continue these Gestapo-like and futile methods costing the taxpayers a great deal of money when a simple polite letter would have brought the results you seek.

Yours very truly, George Maciunas
80 Wooster Street (till April 15th, 1975)



VII 32 Yurgis was leading a strange life. He was hiding from the Attorney General of New York State and he made a simple cat-and-mouse game out of it. At home he locked himself up securely, made a secret exit from his studio for himself, and carried a Japanese saber in case of an attack. In any case he always had this saber when he visited me on Sundays. I don't know what he was experiencing in his soul, but he talked about all these things with invariable good humor; he himself laughed and was as delighted as a child. He even thought of sending this official postcards from all the countries of the world where he had friends who could help him in this undertaking. He wanted to lead the Attorney General into the illusion that he was traveling in all these countries.

I felt in my heart that one day he would have to pay for all this, but there was no possibility of warning him. And then one day specifically bribed people beat him up. Having paid the electrician and in complete accord with the contract, Yurgis reserved two thousand dollars for certain additional work. But the work was done poorly and Yurgis had to fix it himself. He understood electrical currents well and guessed where the mistake was right away. He didn't, therefore, hurry to settle up with the unconscientious contractor. And this fiery Italian didn't want to wait a long time and decided to punish Yurgis and dispatched his villains.

One morning when SoHo hadn't begun its life fully, on the weekend, two men came to Yurgis. They asked him to show them a studio for sale. He left with them and when he turned his back to them to open the door, they fell on him and began to beat him in the head with iron rods. Covered with blood, he fell. These criminals began to beat him in the chest and stomach. Yurgis started to call for help, beginning to understand that they could finish him off in such a fury. A woman artist who lived in the opposite studio recognized Yurgis' voice, came out to see what all the noise was about, and the villains disappeared rapidly. She brought Yurgis a wet towel, called the police who arrived momentarily and took him to the nearest hospital.

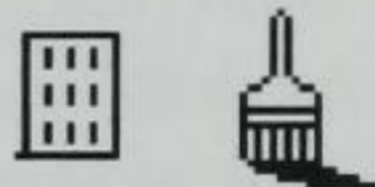
Nine doctors set to saving him; they gave him 36 stitches in his head, put a tube in his chest through which the air passed, and set his four broken ribs. They gave him an injection to ease the pain. He was in good hands, and the doctors, when they found out who

he was, were especially attentive and did everything possible to renew his health. He was in intensive care for nine days. Yurgis was almost happy and in elevated spirits. Only the bruise near his left eye, and the eye, full of blood, witnessed the misfortune.

I felt very sorry seeing my son after this incident. A doctor, famous for eye operations, tried to do everything possible, but, alas, the eye was lost forever. But this was the inescapable result of his unjust deeds and actions. He was in debt to many, promised to return money to many, and gave none to anyone; or, if they pressed him very hard, he would, so as not to lose friends, borrow from one and give to the other.

In general, all that he did he did lightly as if playing a game. He talked about his tragic misfortune with such humor that it was impossible not to laugh.

Finally there were no more homes that could be sold, and if there were, they were very expensive. Many people, moreover, followed Yurgis' idea, but they succeeded; they acted legally, wisely, sold them for great sums and earned a lot in the business.

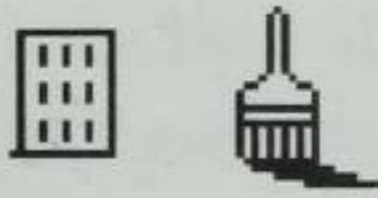


VII. 33 Some men phoned George. They said, could you show us the lofts at 110 Mercer Street, we are interested in them. George was trying to co-op the building. So George went. It was early Sunday morning. The guys jumped on George, with iron pipes, beat him up, collapsed his lung, destroyed one eye. They intended to kill him, but he was saved by some women who happened to be in the building and heard George's screams.

In the hospital, George told me that the guys who beat him up had been sent by the New Jersey electrician whom he had refused to pay. George refused to pay him because *"he did a bad job and did not deserve to be paid."* George was always very particular about a job done well. So the guy hired New Jersey Mafia to kill him.

Through a very strange circumstance, which I cannot reveal yet, I had become a close friend of a very nice person who happened to be close to the Mafia. I asked him if a meeting could be arranged with the New Jersey Mafia people. A meeting was arranged, and my friend asked the Mafia guys to leave George alone. He explained that George was not such a bad guy after all, etc. At first the Mafia guys were angry and were determined to "finish him the next time," but eventually they mellowed and said they'd leave him alone.

That's how George survived. For a while at least. Some day I will be able to tell the entire story. That is, when all involved parties are gone ... This part of George's story is known only to four people, presently ...



VII. 34 *To avoid repeating the story endlessly to everyone, I have decided to describe the event once and send out Xerox copies to anyone interested in the continuing adventures of George Maciunas.*

To settle a long dispute with me, an electrical contractor, Pete di Stefano, decided to cut it short by addressing himself to my bones instead of my reason.

Thus on November 8th, 2 hired gorillas lured me out of my fortress (having failed to enter it the previous day) into the 537 Broadway loft that I was renovating. Immediately upon entering the loft the gorillas commenced to settle the dispute by the "sportsmen's" method – using my head for a soccer ball or baseball.

I broke up like a Ming dynasty vase. 4 broken ribs pierced and deflated the lung, left eye quit the scene entirely, head sprang a Louis 14th fountain.

Luckily I did not lose my voice and was able to call for help. A neighbor scared off the gorillas, called the police and ambulance. The fountain faucet was turned off, lungs kept inflated with a chest tube, head sewed up, vein tubes for plasma, nose tube for oxygen, pretty nurses for good eye, good wishes for bad eye, plenty visiting friends for good mood, \$5,000 bill for bad mood.

ACT II: The plan of the gorillas is a repeat performance, but this time as mountain climbers, trying to enter my fortress by way of sky hooks. My counter plan is to trap the mountain climbers into a small box and then exhibit them as Ben Vautier's Flux-Live-Sculpture.



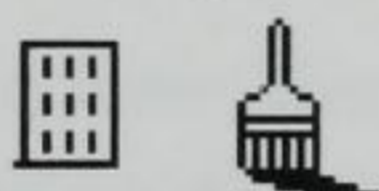
VII. 35 Thanks to George, Jean Dupuy and I made the last loft at 537 Broadway ours. There were many tales about G.M. and his eye loss which occurred in the area of the loft. Apparently he could have left the world much sooner had it not been for the fact that he fell to the ground from the first blows he received (so he said). Luckily the neighbors overheard and stopped the attackers from finishing him off.

That part of the loft always held a kind of awe for me. Plus it being a kind of underworld sort of light with an enormous shaftway window that always appeared like an aquarium. I was never sure what time of the day it was, although after a while one could tell the time according to the subtle and soothing tranquil light in the space. An “oasis”, Billie Maciunas called it. Many, many people came into this “oasis” and became a part of it. George himself would visit us in the evenings, disguised as the Invisible Man, and we would sit for hours and talk about outrageous ways to commit illegal acts – a really good bad guy G.M. was.

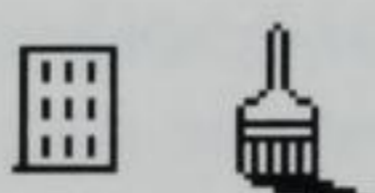
He was also very critical of me for not being practical, like not having a pen in the proper place near the telephone. He’d grumble at me and I would simply ignore his menacing undertoned comments.

When G.M. was around there was never a dull moment. One day he told J.D. not to trust him, because if he could he would “crook” him. J.D. found this a kind of challenge and always appreciated G.M.’s audacity upon being honest (?).

He died in the year of the snake, leaving us with so much to think about and a whole lot of things to do.



VII. 36 Joseph Beuys loved and respected Maciunas. In 1965, after the famous 24-Hour Happening (at the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal), Beuys gave a moving speech in his honor ... However, that same year this eccentric and volatile man all but abandoned Fluxus and plunged himself into the SoHo urban renewal plan and thus paved the way for the success of the SoHo artists’ community. His achievement was not only Fluxus, but also SoHo, one of the most original and successful cases of urban redevelopment in the world, which made many people rich and which was widely imitated around the world. He purchased 27 buildings and remodeled and sold them to artists with very little profit. For this feat he was prosecuted by the Beame Administration of New York City, an arrest warrant was up for more that half a year, and he was severely beaten up by Mafia thugs.



VII. 37 The development of SoHo is often cited as a Maciunas legacy. But George not only conceived of the large-scale idea of artists’ co-ops,

he also contributed on a smaller scale, as a gardener, to the greening of SoHo. A beautiful potted forest of very healthy rubber trees flourished under his vigilance, as well as the baby trees he planted – illegally – in front of the building at 80 Wooster Street that are over two stories high today.

It was surprising to see the nurturing attention that George paid to those living things, clucking over their growth like a hen, worrying about the watering and nutrition of the plants more than about his own health. He seldom wore a coat on cold days, walking about in thin cotton sportshirts, yet he carefully monitored the temperature that determined whether his rubber plants would thrive or perish.

When George's mother took up residence for a while, her insistence on sweeping the street in front of the building revealed their shared disposition toward order and cleanliness. So that when George took over the huge estate at New Marlborough in Massachusetts in the late 1970s, it was possible that, when organized and properly populated, the project might have developed into his vision of a thriving colony of artists.



A tree grows in SoHo! (See p. 214, and IX. 3) Photo © by Larry Miller.



Mr. Fluxus on the fire escape outside the Fluxshop and concert hall at 359 Canal Street, circa 1964-65. Photo © Estate of Kuniharu Akiyama.

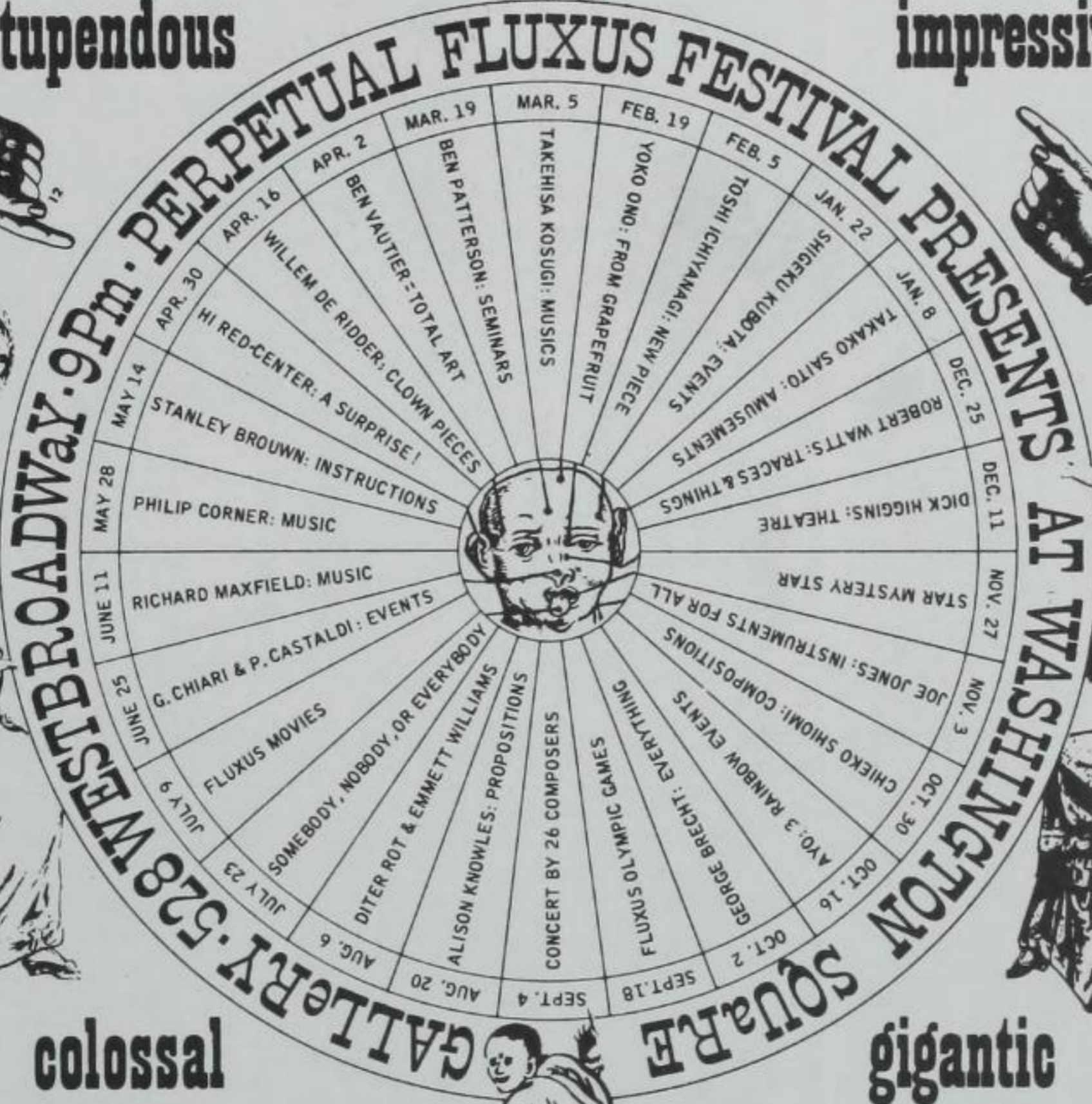


New York 1964: Staged photograph by Maciunas used as an advertisement for the Fluxshop and Mail Order Warehouse at 359 Canal Street. Pictured from the top are Daniel Spoerri, Alison Knowles, Dick Higgins, Ay-O, Letty Eisenhauer and Maciunas (on sidewalk).



Entrance to the Fluxshop. When squeezed, pressed or otherwise manipulated, the “doorbells” emitted noises, water, music and other surprises. Photo © Estate of Peter Moore.

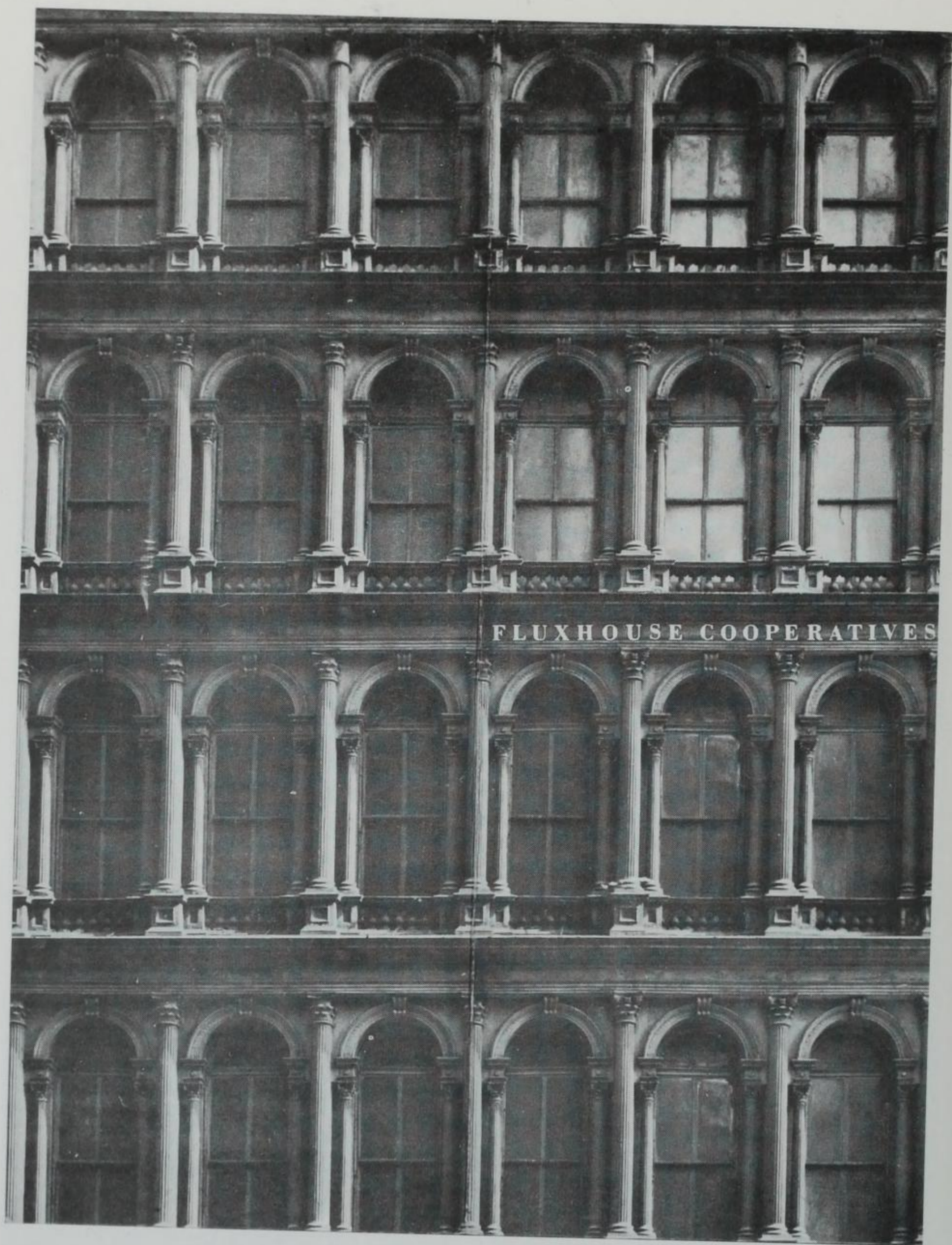
HURRY! HURRY!
FULLY GUARANTEED!
 stupendous impressive



colossal gigantic
GREATEST MUSICAL SHOW ON EARTH!
COME ONE! COME ALL!



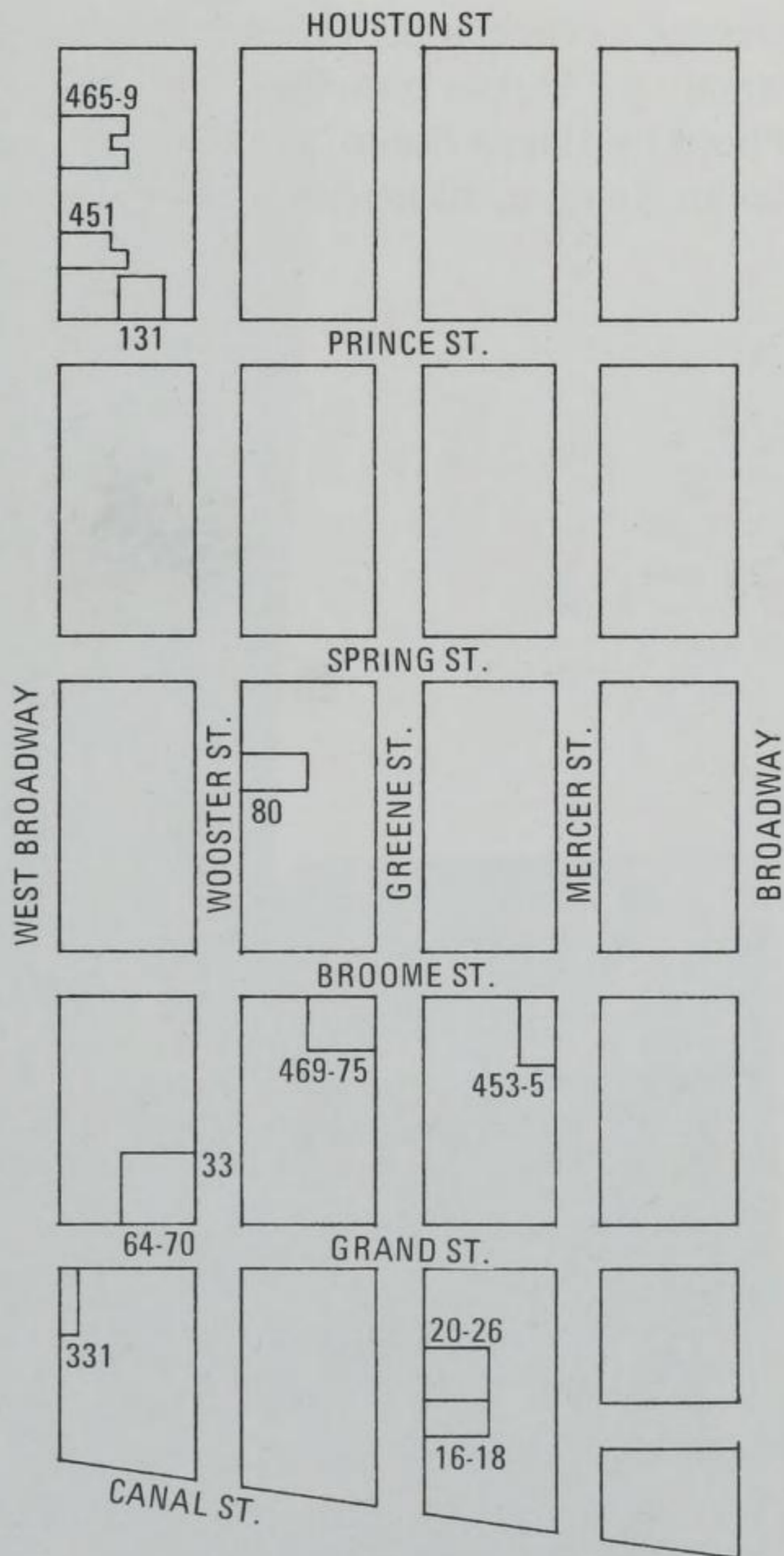
George Maciunas: Poster for Perpetual Fluxus Festival, 1964.



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

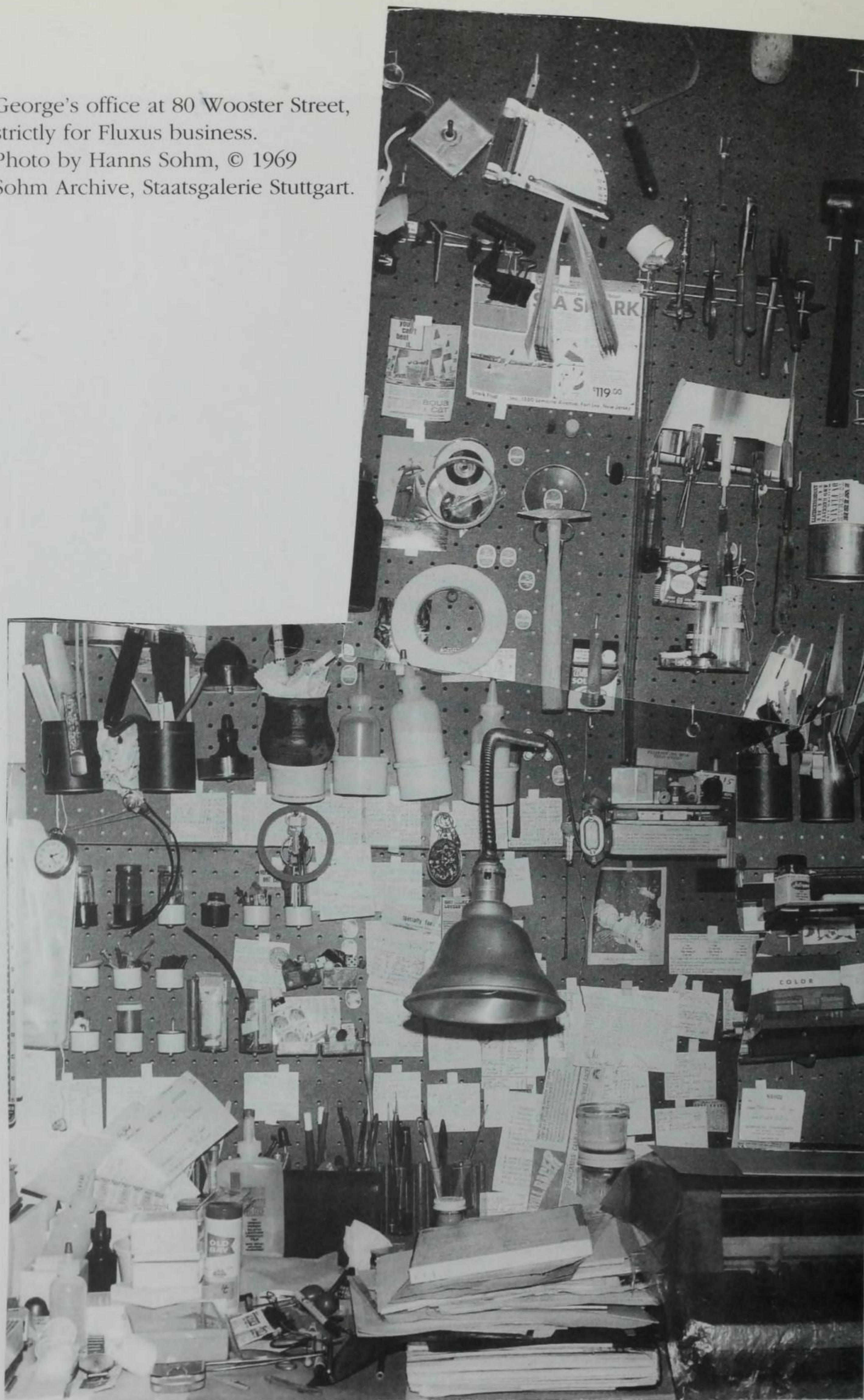
Renovation costs amount to the following:
 2x4 stud partition with 5/8" gypsum board, both sides - 30 cents per sq. ft. without labor, 60 c. with labor; electric system within floor (conduits, fixtures, outlets, switches) about 15 cents per sq. ft.; new plumbing system (brass water pipes, bathroom fixtures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

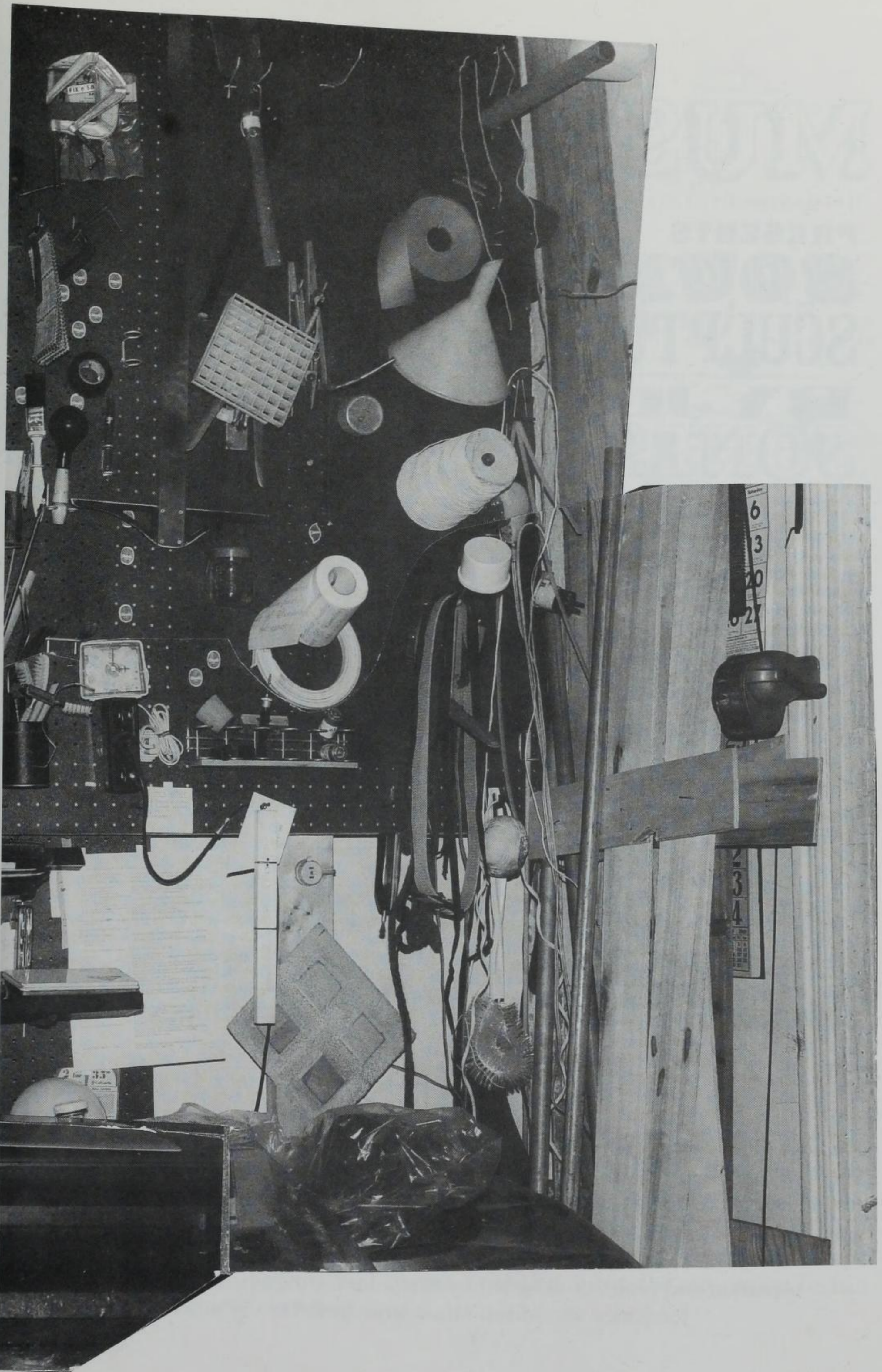
All these buildings are located in M1-5 (manufacturing) zone and prior to its legal use for residences and studios, it will be necessary to obtain appropriate permits either (1) by ammendment of sec. 276 of N.Y. State Multiple Dwelling Law, or (2) by reclassification of artists residence-studio by the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



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

George's office at 80 Wooster Street,
strictly for Fluxus business.
Photo by Hanns Sohm, © 1969
Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.





THE MUSIC STORE

18 NORTH MOORE STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10013 TEL.: (212) 925 - 7360

PRESENTS

SOUND SCULPTURE

BY JOE JONES

PROGRAM:

PIECE FOR WIND INSTRUMENTS
MECHANICAL ORCHESTRA NO. 7
SOLO FOR STEAM ENGINE
MUSIC MACHINES
SMOKE (FLUXFILM)
JOE JONES ON THE FLOOR
DO IT YOURSELF

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

EISNER AND LUBIN AUDITORIUM
LOEB STUDENT CENTER
566 LA GUARDIA PLACE

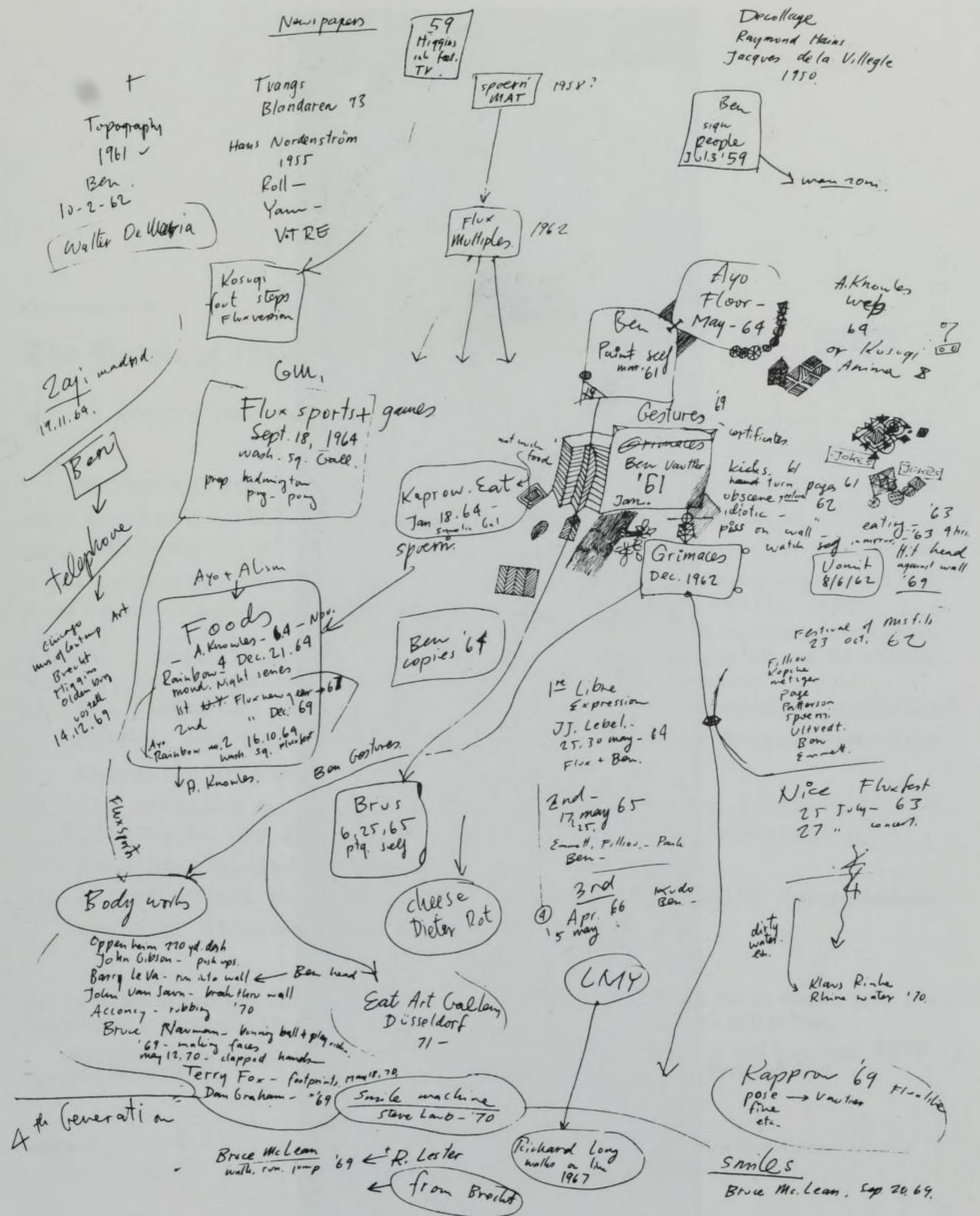
FEB 12

8:30 PM

15



Invitation and program designed by Maciunas for the opening of
Joe Jones' short-lived Music Store in 1971.



Manuscript notations (circa 1973) for a tiny segment of George's famous *Diagram of Historical Development of Fluxus and Other 4-Dimensional, Aural, Optic, Olfactory, Epithelial and Tactile Art Forms*. Although incomplete, the printed version of the chart, first published after George's death, was hailed as a masterwork by some critics. In the last years of his life he often expressed the hope that his charts, diagrams and atlases would bring him the recognition he had failed to achieve elsewhere.



The Don Quixote of SoHo, circa 1974. From Jonas Mekas' film
Zefiro Torna: Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas.

The People of the State of New York

A 33772

To George Maciunas

GREETING :

WE COMMAND YOU, That all business and excuses being laid aside, you and each of you appear and attend before LOUIS J. LEFKOWITZ, Attorney General of the State of New York, on the 26th day of February, 19 75, at 2:00 o'clock in the after noon, or any adjourned date or time thereof, at Two World Trade Center, New York, N. Y., 48th Floor, to testify what you and each of you may know in regard to matters relating to the practices of Good Deal Realty Corp.

and others in the issuance, sale, promotion, negotiation, advertisement, distribution or purchase of securities in and from the State of New York and bring with you the following books and papers, which the Attorney General deems relevant and material to the inquiry:

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and for failure to attend on that day or any adjourned date or time thereof, you will be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor as provided in The General Business Law and other statutes of the State of New York.

WITNESS, Honorable LOUIS J. LEFKOWITZ, Attorney General of the State of New York, the 18th day of February One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy-Five



Signature of Lawrence F. Ravetz, Assistant Attorney General

LAW OFFICES

F. LEE BAILEY

ONE CENTER PLAZA
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02108

AREA CODE 617 723-1980

April 24, 1975

Mr. George Maciunas
80 Wooster Street
New York, NY 10012

Dear Mr. Maciunas:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of April 19, 1975, making inquiry as to the willingness of this office to undertake action against the Attorney General of New York in connection with the grievances stated.

I regret to inform you that due to an extremely pressing trial schedule, and also due to the nature of the particular case, this office cannot undertake to render the services you request.

Thank you for thinking of this office.

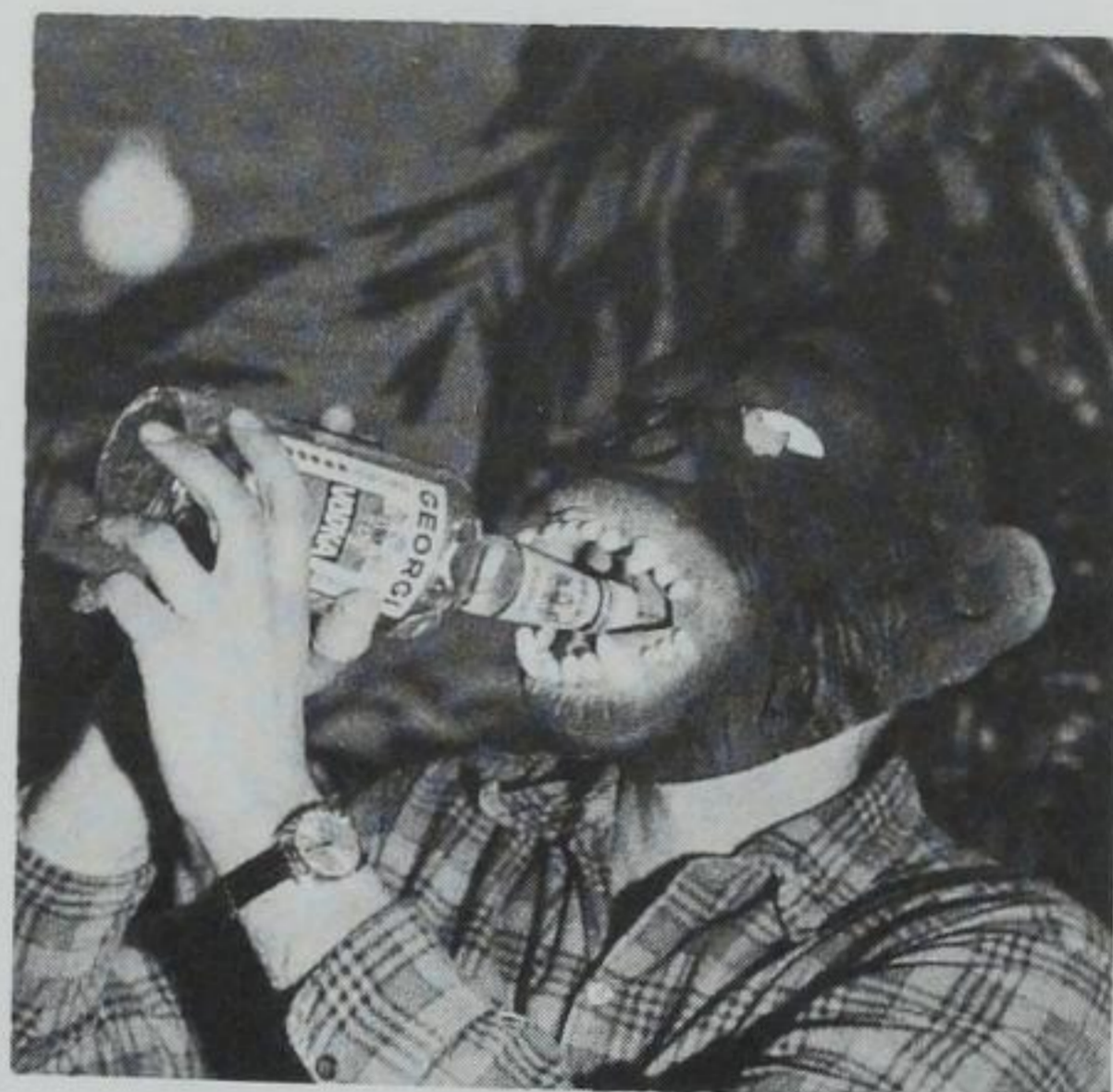
Very truly yours,

Mario Misci

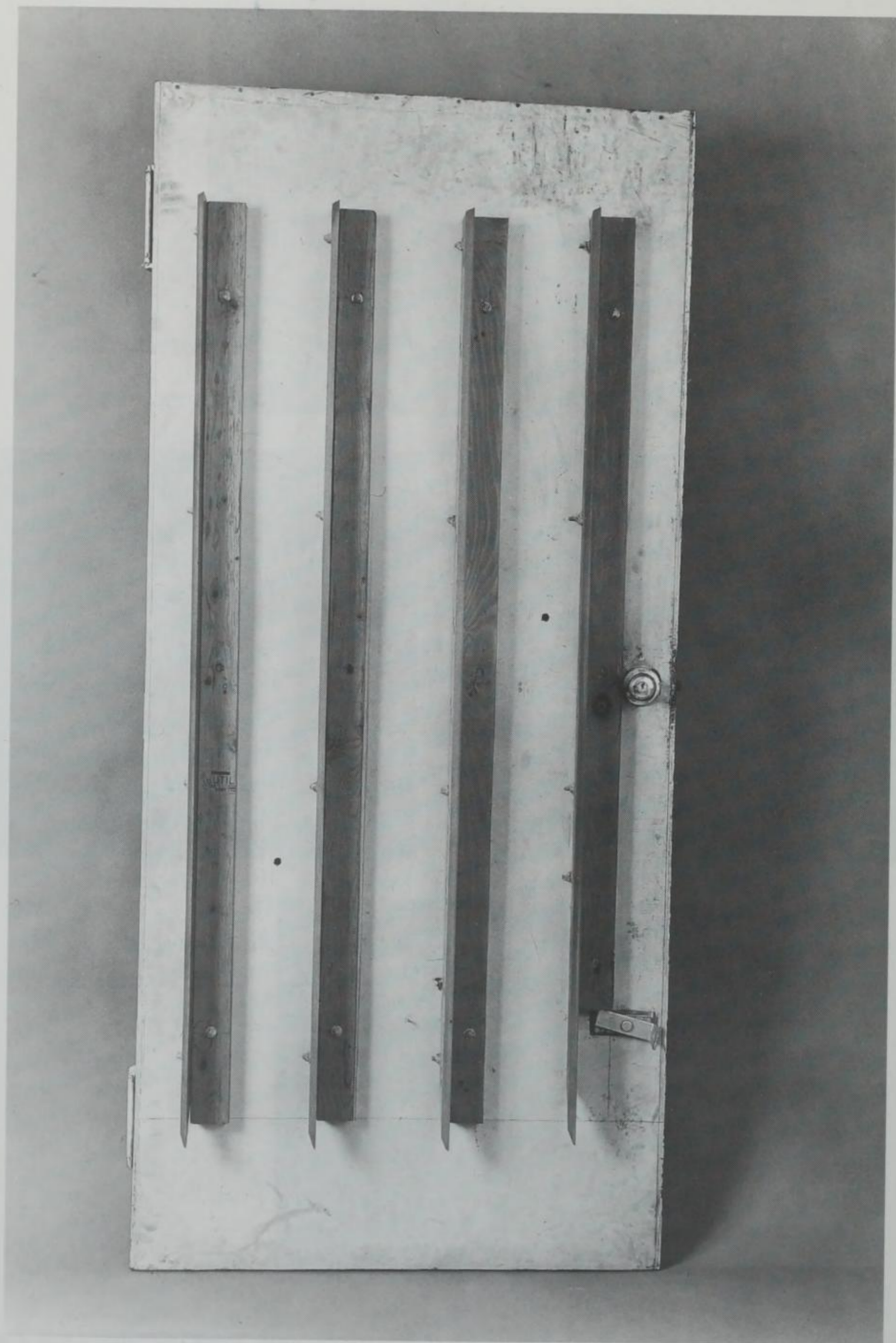
Mario Misci

MM/mc

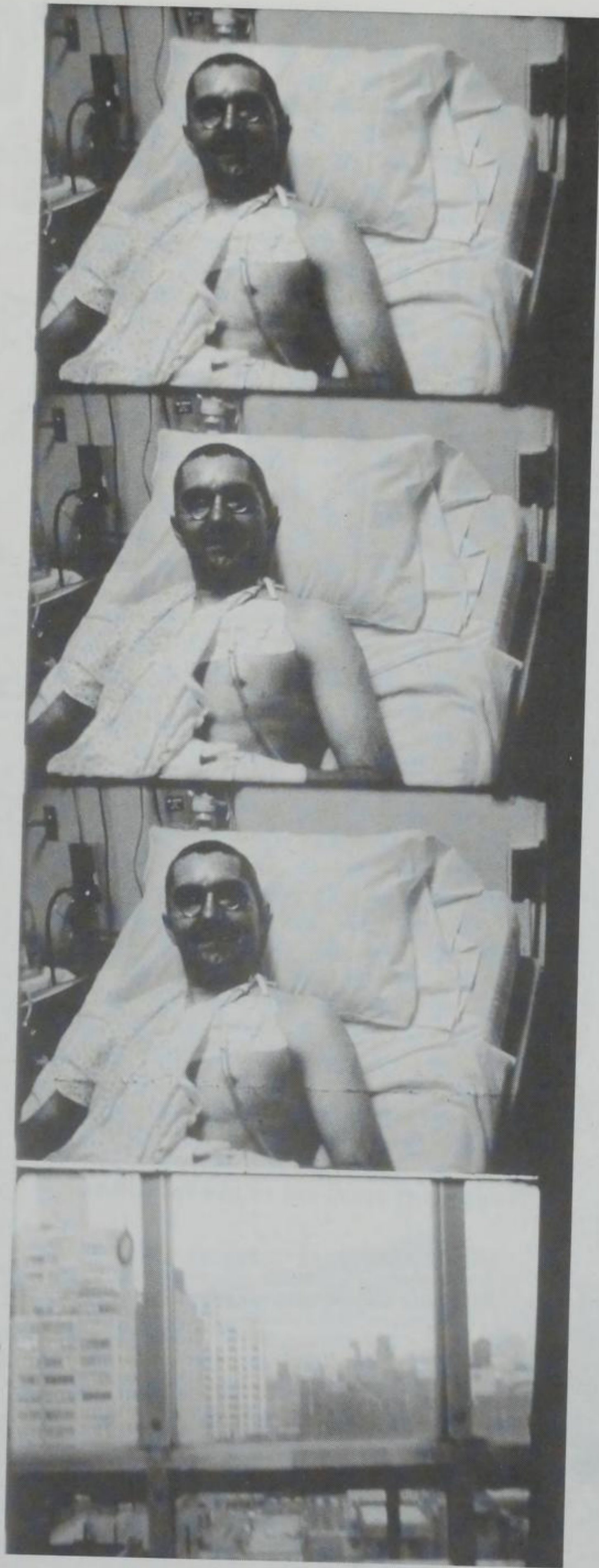
Could F. Lee Bailey have done for Public Enemy George Maciunas what Bailey did for suspected murderer O. J. Simpson decades later?



During his on-going "Fluxcombat" with the State of New York, despite arrest and search warrants, and 30 subpoenas sent to George and his friends, Maciunas replied with humorous, insulting and sneering letters to the Attorney-General, containing photos of George wearing gorilla masks and other disguises. Photos © Estate of Peter Moore.



The door to George's apartment was reinforced with industrial guillotine blades, and extremely sharp. Photo © Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection.



At St. Vincent's Hospital, New York, in November 1975, after the Mafia beating.
From Jonas Mekas' film *Zefiro Torna: Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas*.

To avoid repeating the story endlessly to everyone, I have decided to describe the event once and send out xerox copies to anyone interested in the continuing adventures of George Maciunas

To settle a long dispute with me, an electrical contractor Pete Di Stefano decided to cut it short by addressing himself to my bones instead of my reason.

Thus on November 8th, 2 hired gorillas lured me out of my fortress (having failed to enter it the previous day) into 537 Broadway loft that I was renovating. Immediately upon entering the loft the gorillas commenced to settle the dispute by the "sportsmen's" method -- using my head for a soccer ball or baseball.

I broke up like a Ming dynasty vase. 4 broken ribs pierced and deflated the lung, left eye quit the scene entirely, head sprang a Louis 14th fountain.



Luckily I did not loose my voice and was able to call for help. A neighbour scared off the gorillas, called the police and ambulance. Within minutes I was at St. Vincents Hospital. The fountain faucet was turned off, lungs kept inflated with a chest tube, head sewed up, vein tubes for plasma, nose tube for oxygen, pretty nurses for good eye good wishes for bad eye, plenty visiting friends for good mood, \$5000 bill for bad mood.

ACT II

The plan of the gorillas is a repeat performance, but this time as mountain climbers, trying to enter my fortress by way of sky hooks. My counterplan is to trap the mountainclimbers into a small box and then exhibit them as Ben Vautier's Flux-Live-Sculpture.



Streets are to be avoided altogether



George's version of the attack by "Mafia thugs", xeroxed and mailed out at the end of 1975 "to avoid repeating the story endlessly."

BOYCOTT PETER DI STEFANO

THE BONEBREAKING ELECTRICIAN



this man is dangerous

HE SETTLES DISPUTES WITH CLIENTS NOT BY
ARGUMENT BUT BY BREAKING THEIR BONES.

COMMITTEE TO PROTECT SOHO AGAINST:
ESCAPED GORILLAS, BERSERK ELECTRICIANS,
STONED BALL PLAYERS LOOKING FOR HEADS TO PLAY WITH,
INMATES LOST BY INSANE ASYLUMS AND
OLD TIME POINTED SHOE TORPEDOES.

George risked further attacks by naming names after he was beat up.



The “illegal” tree that George and Jonas Mekas planted in front of 80 Wooster Street circa 1967, as it looked in October 1995. Photo © Arunas Kuikauskas.

VIII

LEAKY DREAMBOATS

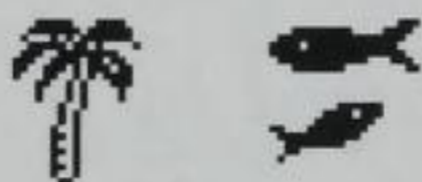
VIII. 1 Best time with George: Traveling together in Greece in 1972, looking for an island for Fluxus. But once there we learned that Greece was not selling land to foreigners ... We didn't find an island but had a lot of fun looking.

Our travels in the Greek islands was an atypical trip for George. It was really a vacation, very bucolic, during which George broke many of his own rules and tabus. We did things according to whim. And we *did not* stay at any of the cheap places he had booked for us before our departure.

Gender certainly played a role: he was quite the old-world gentleman. He was more relaxed than usual, and wasn't taking his shots.

I'll never forget one unplanned, spontaneous Fluxus event. As we were about to board a ferry to another island, George discovered his love for Greek yoghurt. It being part of his credo to purchase in bulk, he bought a large carton of yoghurt. However, neither the carton nor the individual containers had lids.

So there we were, standing on deck with an enormous open carton of open containers of yoghurt, amidst a thick crowd of local passengers, and immediately the boat pulled out, the wind blew and sent masses of yoghurt flying and splattering every which way all over the passengers. George was at first horrified – and then suddenly he was in a hilarious mood as the audience of splattered passengers showed their appreciation for this hysterical show with wild laughter.



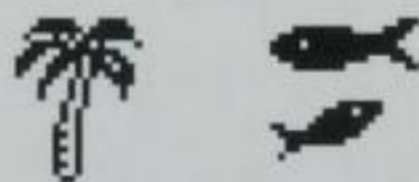
VIII. 2 *The airport mix-up – I ran out of money 4 days before my departure and had to plan on sleeping in airports. So I arrived in London a day sooner, since I knew the airport was very comfortable to sleep in. The evening I arrived I tried to reach you by telephone, and spent the last money on it, but Exeter University did not know how to*

reach you, and at first they would not even take a message (they probably never gave you the message I left). I was not able to stay all day since I was getting hungry, and left therefore with the morning flight.

But the trip was not wasted, since I found a fantastic island in a large bay in Menorca (bay is called Fornells). Island is only an acre but of a very irregular shape and the shores very accessible. I, Bob Watts and few others will most likely buy it. So now I am spending my efforts in making lots of money in as little time as possible. It will probably take all this year and probably 1973.

1974 some 8 of us are planning a 6-month trip in small airplane around the world, since our pilot has \$8,000 of government money which he can spend only in flying. So we thought of leasing a STOL 8 passenger plane with 1,500-mile range (Brequet makes one) and go to strange and inaccessible places like Robinson Crusoe Island, Easter, Pitcairn, Ua Huka, Bora Bora, Rarotonga, Manua, Phoenix Islands, Gilberts, Yap, Palau, Barabudur, Anghor Wat, Bhuvanesvar, Konoraka, Chandigarh, Fatehpur Sikri, Gwalior, Khajuraho, Sanchi, Ajanta, Ellura, Pattadakal, Kancipuram, Mamallapuram, Tanjore, Rameshwaram, Anuradhapura, Chiraz, Samarkand, Bukhara, Seychelles islands, Kenya, Luxor, Wadi-Natroun, Palmyra, Krak des Chevaliers, Ruweha, Bakirha, Kasr il Benat, Dar Kita, Kalota, Der Sim'an, Cycladic islands, etc. etc. etc. and then via Iceland, Greenland, Baffin Island back to New York, all in 1,000-mile steps. We would try to live off the sea.

That's my plan for the next few years. I could probably squeeze a month in England winter 1973 if it was necessary (which I don't think it would be), since you could organize the whole Flux-fest without influx of a lot of tourists. The one person you should invite is Ben Vautier, he is 100% Fluxman.

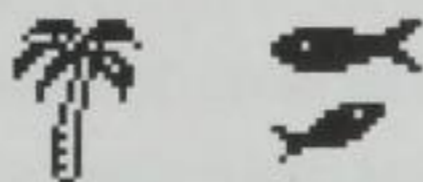


VIII. 3 PROPOSED STRUCTURE FOR FLUX-SNOWHOUSE

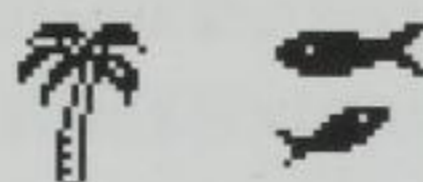
Each category supervised by a supervisor and all supervisors coordinated by a chief of construction.

- 8 surveyors and measurers with long tape measures, plumb lines, long stick measures.
- 10 fitters (to fit snowballs together).
- 20 packers (to pack all concavities and joints with snow).

- 10 trimmers (to trim all surfaces smooth, vaults, arches, walls, columns with long shovels, hand trowels, scrapers etc.).
50 ball rollers (to roll snow into about 2-to-3-ft.-diameter balls).



- VIII. 4 A Fluxus project slated for last winter was a “snow event”, the construction of a six-storey snow building by 100 participants. Alas! It didn’t snow.



- VIII. 5 The summer of 1976 Maciunas bought the farm in Massachusetts, with two manor houses, several outbuildings, spacious barns and stables, once a private estate, almost a village in itself. He bought it with a mortgage cosigned by Robert Watts. This farm was a precondition for the realization of his dream of an independent, self-supporting and autonomous entity, with its own rules and regulations established by himself. One of the sternest prohibitions was posted on all access roads to the farm: NO SMOKING ON THIS PROPERTY. Any infringement of this rule meant expulsion.

Before the purchase of the farm there had been other plans and attempts to found a Fluxus country or state, with representation in the United Nations. Just in case, he had postage stamps printed up, and he assigned ministerial posts to various Fluxus artists. In 1964 he tried to set up a collective farm in Japan. With the near purchase of Ginger Island, in the British Virgin Islands in the Caribbean, he felt himself close to his goal. A Fluxus colony would develop on the island. The resale of land, divided into 50 or 60 parcels, would finance the project, following the SoHo co-op scheme. Prefabricated houses of the type he designed and developed with Henry Flynt would be built on the island.

George loved to tell the story of his visit to the island in 1969. In the company of Milan Knizak, Yoshi Wada and two others he was ferried from a neighboring island (with a tiny airport), and arranged with the boatman that they’d be picked up in a week’s time. They would use this week to explore and set up living conditions. They took sufficient supplies with them. They were delighted with the beauty and size of their kingdom. Though overgrown with cactus in the interior there were picturesque lagoons surrounded by shady

trees. Weary after the first day of exploration, they lay down under the trees on the warm sand. It started to rain. The refreshing rain dripped through the leaves onto their faces and bodies. Thus they fell asleep.

But what an awakening the next morning, as they discovered that they were blind, and that parts of their bodies were inflamed and swollen. Poisonous sap, like the kind Indians used to poison their arrows, had seeped through the leaves onto their faces and was washed into their eyes by the rain, and unleashed these awful effects. After two drama-packed days, remaining helpless and not knowing what had happened to them, they were able to attract a fishing boat to rescue them. Luckily the effects of the poison wore off in a few days, and they recovered. Meanwhile, the owner of the island had died. His heirs had other plans than to sell it to Maciunas.

The next project was an island off the coast of Africa, which would be acquired through the help of Yoko Ono and John Lennon. But Lennon's initial enthusiasm cooled down after a closer inspection.

In the mid-Seventies George's brainstorm was to tour the world for several years in a converted, Fluxus-manned minesweeper. (This was the first of Maciunas' schemes in which I played a part in the planning, and I'll admit that I was uneasy about leaving my friends for an unforeseeable amount of time. Obviously I overestimated the influence of Maciunas.)

And now Maciunas wanted to realize his vision of a Fluxus Life-and-Action community on this farm in New Marlborough, near Great Barrington. He would sell space on the farm, and the largest barn would be transformed into a theater. Bob Watts would participate. Paik, Ay-O, Wada and Cage agreed to take small houses or apartments. Maciunas invited me to participate. So I wandered over the farmlands a whole day long, looked into reclaimable stables and sheds, and developed an attachment to what used to be a two-storey hen-house, half way up the hill, from whence a small stream flows down to provide the farm with fresh spring water.

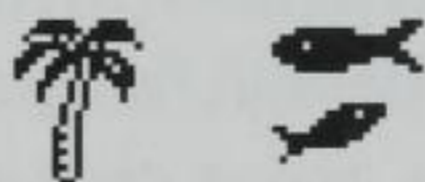
In the evening, on the veranda of the manor house, George was in a much better humor than he usually displayed in New York and I myself was extremely happy. Plans were concocted. Next summer there would be week-long festivals devoted to the most varied themes. The artists would live there. One of the manor houses would be turned into a hotel, and Jean Dupuy would cook.

“We are creating here a center of the arts in a new style, utilizing the experience of the Bauhaus and Black Mountain. The space is appropriate, like no other. Woodstock is close, Boston and New York are not far. We have the space to build classrooms for students. In the course of time we will develop new forms in all areas. New forms of sports, of humor, of historical research, of theater, music and performance.”

By the time of my next visit in late Fall of the same year he had further developed these plans. And in the meantime he had winter-proofed one of the manor houses and drawn up a prospectus for the New Marlborough Center of the Arts. He explained his new diagram of the arts, tracing the roots of Fluxus back to the early Middle Ages and the Renaissance, when in various European noble houses there took place the first environmental compositions for musicians performing on the towers of the town walls, and remarkable costume festivals were celebrated.

Jean Dupuy and Olga Adorno accompanied me on this trip. We brought wine and cheeses for the weekend. George produced a formal dinner, to which Jean and I wore tails. (In his clothes-closet arsenal there was a rich selection of costumes.) For this trip I purchased my first camera, and my first snapshots date from this visit to New Marlborough, photos of the farm and of the remarkable dress-up game in which Maciunas appears, along with Olga and Billie Hutching, as a lady dinner partner. I was taken in by George's new theatrical deviation, and it wasn't until I used the shower later that evening that I remembered my old familiar host: posted instructions-for-use, to this effect:

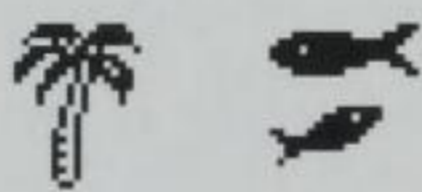
*Maximum use three minutes
Each extra minute is bourgeois luxury
Don't run hot water while soaping
Letting water run is a waste of energy.*



VIII. 6 HOUSE RULES

- 1. Absolutely no smoking in any part of the house.
Any evidence of smoking in any room will produce a 3-day notice to vacate.*
- 2. Keep own doors closed at all times.*
- 3. Sound should be of a volume that a neighbor could not hear.*

4. *After midnight – absolute silence.*
5. *Last person to return should shut off all hall lights.*
6. *Newly varnished floors should not be scratched by pushing furniture around.*
7. *Excessive and inefficient use of hot water during showers will speed up rent increase to everyone. It makes no sense to run water while soaping since these are two opposite functions.*
8. *Extra overnight guests are not permitted unless \$1 per person per night is paid to cover extra use of hot water.*
9. *Each should take turns cleaning bathrooms & second floor hall at least once a week. Bathroom should have all fixtures cleaned with Ajax, then floor vacuumed & washed with Spic & Span.*
10. *If anyone is going to smell up the kitchen with burnt food, close all doors and open window, better still, learn not to burn food or learn how to sauté, since in winter windows will not open.*
11. *When cooking always cover the pot with a lid & reduce flame to prevent overflow.*
12. *Do not throw food out anywhere within the building; rotting food will attract insects and mice. Wash out cans before discarding. If you have to throw out food, then take it to the vegetable garden or dump.*
13. *Oven can be used only once per month per person, unless you are willing to pay \$1 per half hour of oven time (that's what the gas costs).*
14. *Always think about conserving energy – this will keep your rents stable.*
15. *Do not park cars on grass.*



VIII. 7 George planned to buy a large sailboat to take a world tour, and to make Ginger Island an artists' cooperative. This island is located near St. Thomas, in the British Virgin Islands, a small island where nobody lives, but with a great climate.

The team on this trip consisted of George Maciunas, Bob de Niro (the movie actor), Milan Knizak, Igor Demian & myself – for a wild ten-day camping trip. We prepared food for ten days – George insisted that we bring only powdered food and water.

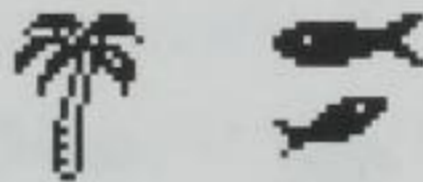
Anyway, the five crew members of the expedition landed at St. Thomas. A real estate broker took us by boat to Ginger Island. They promised to pick us up ten days later. They left us with no means

of communication or a boat. We were totally deserted for that time in true Robinson Crusoe style. George knew about it, but the rest of us did not. It was too late to get upset and scream. I realized that this would be one of the most memorable trips I would ever take, be it Fluxus or not.

On the first day we decided to camp under some nice looking small bushes. The next morning, when we woke up, everybody's eyes hurt. George was in the worst shape; he could not open his eyes at all. Everybody was sick. Later on we found out that these nice looking bushes were deadly poisonous.

We did not have much to eat. The most scary thing was that there was no means to communicate with the outside world. Finally the realtor came back to pick us up. George signed an agreement to buy Ginger Island.

After we returned to New York, George arranged meetings to form the Ginger Island cooperative. But hardly anybody felt it was realistic and the project got lost. Robert de Niro was filming this trip and probably still has the film. I'm sure I will never experience this kind of wild adventure again.



VIII. 8 *We wanted to set up a Fluxus island, a colony, you know, like a real country, with a United Nations delegation and all that. We found an island, about 260 acres. In the British Virgin Islands, discovered by Christopher Columbus, a large number of islands for the most part uninhabited.*

Ginger Island was one of them. It was up for sale – I don't remember how much, exactly, about \$200,000. Sure, that's a lot of money, but I found a bunch of doctors and psychiatrists who wanted to buy land down there. We could have had our Fluxus colony cost-free, and start agricultural production ... I have studied tropical agronomy and agriculture. We would have had to do everything all by ourselves, of course.

We went down there to investigate. With me there were Milan Knizak, Yoshi Wada, and someone else ... oh yes, Igor Demian, a friend of Knizak ... (and Robert de Niro). The real-estate broker took us by boat, and promised to return within ten days. Okay. It was like Robinson Crusoe, we had nothing. No boat, no radio, nothing. We had to fish for food.

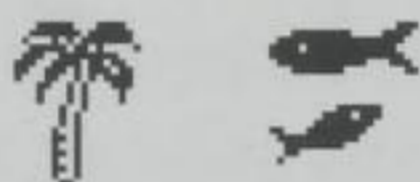
The first night was wonderful. We slept on the bare rocks: if you find a hollow, it's very comfortable. Later we climbed to the other side of the mountain. It looked like paradise. A wonderful beach with trees shaped like umbrellas. We had planned to build a house, or rather a hut, but it wouldn't be necessary, we could simply sleep under the umbrella trees.

When we woke up the following morning we were all blind. We had no idea what had happened. Our eyes hurt so bad we couldn't open them. It was like that almost the entire day. Toward evening the situation improved.

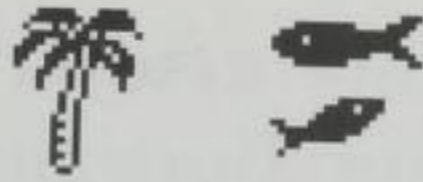
The next morning we had the same problem. We thought that maybe we'd been the victims of a monster from the sea ... insects ... or a snake.

When the broker finally returned, and heard our story, he laughed. "Ha-ha-ha, you must have slept under the umbrella-trees!"

In spite of everything it was a pleasant trip. Very amusing. You can't burn the trees because the fumes will suffocate you. If you chop them down, the roots poison the soil. It's a very vicious tree. It grows little apples, they kill you instantly. Yoshi crunched into one ... (Heh-heh-heh).



VIII. 9 After he had been literally beaten down in New York by low-level contract thugs in the construction business and bureaucratically by high-level officials in state government, he escaped to Massachusetts to readapt his dreams on a property with a country setting. It had been a horse farm with enough barns and stables to house a small community of artists. He wanted us to buy into it as a pastoral studio complex and to eventually reside there. Events could be organized which he supposed would attract many people and even be a counterpoint competition with the nearby Tanglewood music festival. I was happy that George had escaped his deteriorating trials in New York with some energy left, but I could not entertain or afford the idea of a pioneering effort in New Marlborough. Others responded similarly and he nurtured his hopes along with the assistance of local people who lodged there and fell under the Maciunas spell. Meanwhile he directed ongoing outside events from there and friends would make the trip to visit him and to take part in his personalized Flux-occasions.



VIII. 10 Yurgis decided to leave New York for another state – Massachusetts; he wanted to buy a home and we had even chosen one house together which he planned to make over in his own style, to rent or sell. And he wanted to retain a small piece of land for himself, and build the kind of house he had long dreamed of. It was as if my Yurgis had returned anew; he wanted to live with me in quiet surroundings where he could work and commute to New York.

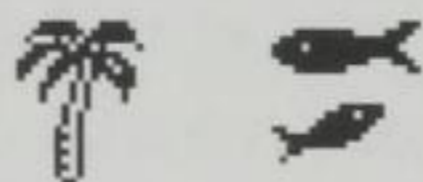
But something went wrong again. Once he went to look at houses with a friend. They especially liked one large estate; it was a former estate of a rich horse breeder and stud farm. He decided immediately, like the father for all his children, that he could house all his friends there, but not one of his friends wanted to live there and share the purchase. Everyone was tied to New York by his work and it wasn't convenient for anyone to live three hours from the city. Yurgis was disappointed in his friends many times, but he loved them as a family and was grieved by their estrangement. But the farm was already bought. He had to take everything on his own shoulders, all the cares and work. The friend (who had decided to buy the house with him) also didn't want to live there, but he sometimes gave money for expenses – a very small portion. But as before, Yurgis got the rest from his sister, my daughter, who gave it to him, pitying him.

He made a lot of changes and improvements; he hired students in the summer who helped him. He paid them a little, and worked indefatigably himself; but there was too much work and it demanded excessive expenditures.

Thinking I could live close to my son, I went to the farm. I cleaned and washed all the rooms. There were thirty of them and all were neglected. So were the halls, the stairs and the huge veranda around the house. The house had three floors; the roof leaked. Repairs had to be done by specialists and cost a lot of money, and, as usual, there was none. Autumn came and it turned out that the heating was out of order and demanded enormous repair. There were fire-places in several of the rooms, but they heated only a small part of the room and at night it was as cold inside as out. I caught cold and began to run a fever; I froze in the course of the night. Finally I left him completely and moved to Florida ...

He began to rent rooms, but it always turned out badly. One of the best separate rooms, beautifully remodeled, was rented to a

woman with four children who was on welfare. She stopped paying and lived free of charge for a long time, filling the house with noise and chaos.

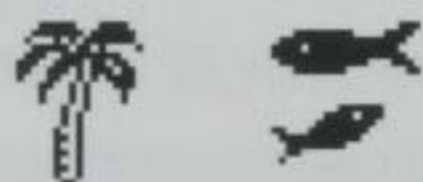


VIII. 11 George Maciunas, Ay-O and the Williams family were invited to Jean Brown's for dinner, from 3:30–8 p.m., and spent the rest of the night and the next day at the Flux Farm.

George took us on a tour of the property, where he hopes Fluxus people will convert pig sties and other farm outbuildings into summer houses for themselves. (The idea of communal living did not appeal to us at all, or even a house in the country, having just lost one in Vermont.) I was most impressed to see the house that John Lennon and Yoko have bought nearby and by George telling us that they needed to turn on "white noise" in order to sleep at night, because it is so quiet there.

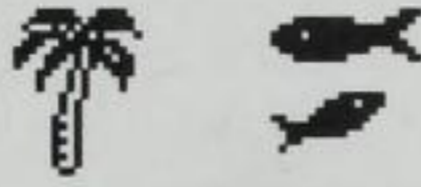
Back at the mansion I noted the signs tacked up on the wall everywhere with George's house rules and copious instructions on how to save energy, such as to always bring water to the boil with a lid on the saucepan and never to leave lights burning in the house – though he did allow me to leave one on in the hallway after I put our four-year-old son Garry to bed upstairs.

The guest bedrooms upstairs were large and spacious, but George slept on a narrow cot in his office/workroom downstairs. That seemed to preclude sexual relationships of any sort and he didn't show any outward sign that he was at all interested either way. His great passion seemed to be for the vast collection of shoes, rocks and every other kind of object you can imagine that he had stored in filing cabinets and boxes in the attic.



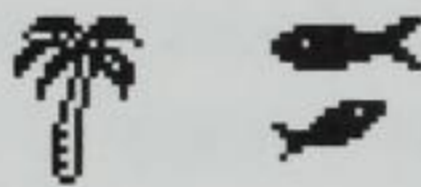
VIII. 12 Brooklyn Joe Jones automates toy music instruments and George had included several bands of these sounds on an LP he produced for Yoko Ono. Then he held back the money Joe would get for this as he wanted Joe to study flying and get a seaplane-pilot's license. George wanted to buy an island in the Caribbean and Joe would fly people to and from this island to the nearest large island with an airport. Maciunas thought big.

Joe had to go several times a week to City Island Seaplane Port on Long Island Sound taking off and landing seaplanes. Maciunas wanted John Lennon to buy the island and I think George wanted to rename it Fluxus. Lennon was interested but insisted that if he did buy it the island should be named Lennon Land.

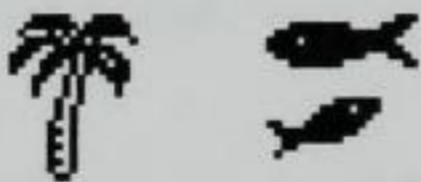


- VIII. 13 George decided that Joe Jones would be the Fluxus pilot for the simple reason that Joe was an alcoholic. According to George's rationale, Joe would have to give up alcohol in order to fly the plane, which of course didn't happen: during one lesson with his flying instructor he manoeuvred the plane so clumsily that they were forced to fly *under* the Brooklyn Bridge, an event that did not escape the attention of the media.

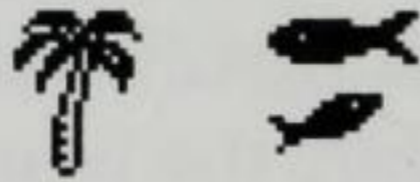
That was the end of Joe Jones the Fluxus pilot.



- VIII. 14 He made long lists and charts of what would grow where, and all the plants would serve a function in producing food or serving some other purpose, all plotted out in detail of what would go where, just as there was a specific function for each member of the around-the-world tour that never took place. Each had to acquire new specialties as well. The edible plants along the route were researched, again to save on the cost of food. This was part of the vision of New Marlborough, too. But there were gaps between the book knowledge and the on-site knowledge. One day he was showing me through the fields and pointing out the wild strawberries that were going to feed him in the spring, and there was an excitement about the discovery. The only trouble was, the "wild strawberries" were cinquefoil and would produce nothing more than little yellow flowers come spring.



- VIII. 15 Most eccentric financial deal: To purchase a series of twelve of my boxes for the big Flux show he was planning for the farm in Great Barrington, George had no money but wanted to pay me in dresses, four hundred dresses per box. He apparently had thousands of old dresses which he had gotten for one dollar each at a thrift shop in Oregon. Of course I accepted.



VIII. 16 CARAVAN/EXPEDITION TO CIRCUMVENT THE WORLD

We are contemplating a very extensive caravan/expedition not just around, but through the world. It is to be as self-sustaining as a climb to Mt. Everest or an expedition to the North Pole. The plan calls for a team of 10, each with one of the following specialties: mechanics (repair and maintenance of motors, engines, tools, automobiles), electronics (repair and operation of radio equipment), cinematography and photography, medicine, dietetics and food preparation, fishing & hunting, navigation & geography, languages, public relations and publicity, history, art history and archeology.

EQUIPMENT:

- 1. Six cross-country vehicles, identical models, Rover type or similar. All equipped with 2-way radios. Sleep-in two per vehicle.*
- 2. Complement of spare parts, tires etc.*
- 3. Tools: welding, threading, drilling, cutting etc.*
- 4. Electric generator.*
- 5. Rain collecting devices.*
- 6. Refrigerator-freezer.*
- 7. Hunting and fishing equipment.*
- 8. Food-preparation equipment: stove, centrifuge, shredder-grinder etc.*
- 9. Complement of basic drugs: antiseptics, analgesics, antacids, antihistamines, antibiotics, cathartics, steroids, vaccines, food supplements.*
- 10. Navigational aids: sextant (bubble type), nautical almanac, hydrographic charts, land maps, surveys etc.*
- 11. Reference material: medical, technical dictionaries-handbooks, dictionaries of various languages, art-history, geographical handbooks.*
- 12. Water tanks, auxiliary gasoline tanks, cooking fuel tanks, welding gas tanks.*

ROUTE:

JAPAN: Tokyo, Kyoto. Mikanohara machi, Tomio-mura, Uji, Mamoyama, Nara, Horyuji, Taimadera, Osaka, Miyajima island

INDONESIA: Djokjakarta

CAMBODIA: Angkor (Yasodharapura, Angkor Thom, Angkor Wat, Banteai Srei)

SIAM: Bangkok, Ayudhya

BURMA: Pagan

INDIA: Bhuvanesvar, Konaraka, Chandigabr, Delhi, Mathura, Jaipur, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Gwalior, Khajuraho, Sanchi, Ajanta caves, Ellura caves, Aiholi, Pattadakal. Madras. Kancipuram, Mamallapuram, Tanjore, Madura, Rameshwaram, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa

KASHMIR

ASIAN USSR: Dushanbe, Samarkand. Bukhara, Tashkent

IRAN: Chiraz (Persepolis)

USSR: Erevan, Tbilisi, Volgograd, Rostov, Togliatti, Zbigolikha, Ulyanovsk, Kazan, Suzdal, Vladimir, Yaroslavl, Moscow, Leningrad, Kizhi, Novgorod, Pskov, Kiev, Percherskaya Laura, Chernigov (back to Caucasus)

SYRIA: Aleppo, Djebel Sim'an region, Mshabbak, Kalota, Djebel Barisha region, Dar Kita, Sahyun, Marqab, Borj Safita, Damascus, Bosra

LEBANON: Krak des Chevaliers, Palmyra, Baalbek, Beaufort Castle, Shabha, Kanawtat, Lubben

JORDAN: Umm Quais, Jerash, Amman, Jericho vicinity. Ma'an (Petra), Jerusalem?

EGYPT: Cairo, Wadi-Natroun, Giza, Luxor

TURKEY: Smyrna, Ephesus, Miletus, Didyma, Priene, Istanbul

GREECE: Athens, Aegina, Epidaurus, Mycenae, Mistra, Bassae, Olympia, Corinth, Delphi, Daphni, Mt. Hymettos

YUGOSLAVIA: Beograd, Smederevo, Veliko Gradiste, Despotovac, Cuprija, Trstenik, Rekovac, Usce, Novi Pazer, Gorhji Gradac, Pristini, Pec, Dekani, Dubrovnik

AUSTRIA

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SPAIN

FRANCE

BELGIUM, HOLLAND

GERMANY

DENMARK, SWEDEN, FINLAND

ESTONIAN, LATVIAN, LITHUANIAN SSR

POLAND, CZECHOSLAVAKIA

GERMANY

ENGLAND

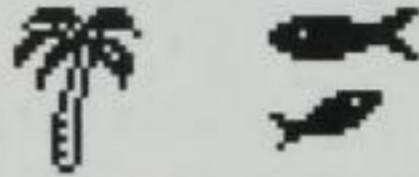
USA

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VIII. 17 It's the summer of 1975. I live in the Mercer Street co-op that George Maciunas organized a year before. My loft is sandwiched between Nam June Paik and Shigeko Kubota's, and Yoshi Wada and Barbara Stewart's. We live in peace, as New Yorkers do, one on top of the other.

One day George calls to see who wants to go on a nine-day sailing trip. There will be a dozen or so of us and this way nobody will have to pay more than \$135. He has organized a schooner that will meet us in Providence, Rhode Island. Those who want to go should send him a check in advance. The others who agree to join in aside from me are Shigeko, Yoshi and Barbara, our friend and plumber Kevin Harrison, Bob Watts, Yumiko Kokubo, a friend of Shigeko's, and I don't remember who else (you'll see why later). And, of course, George.

The day we are to meet our schooner – the Barbara – approaches, and we all pack our bags according to George's precise instructions:

Everyone should bring: own linen (sheets and pillow), extra blanket or sleeping bag or cot (if one wishes to sleep on deck), towel, waterproof raincoat or jacket, rubber-soled shoes, sun hat, sun cream, sun-burn cream, insect repellent, food supplies other than what I will bring (listed below). The boat supplies cooking ware, ice and icebox, table ware, life jackets for all, and sun canopies on deck. I will bring first aid kit, and various drugs (antibiotics, antihistamines etc.)

Food and cooking: I will bring food for nine breakfasts and nine lunches and two dinners and general items for the other dinners, plus all drinks. When buying additional items, please keep track of the costs. Afterwards we will add up all our costs and divide equally in 12 parts. My estimate is about \$20 per person for the nine days. (That's cheaper than eating at home.)

I shall obtain: 20 bottles of wine, 12 gallons of lemon drink, 3 gallons of kvass, coffee, creamer, 5 pounds of sugar, 10 gallons of powdered milk, 12 pounds of granola, 24 pounds of black Lithuanian bread, 5 pounds of margarine, cooking oil, 6 pounds of pâté de foie, 20 pounds of rice, 10 pounds of potatoes, a gallon and a half of pickled cucumbers, 10 pounds of canned mackerel (with cold sauce), sour cream (for potato pancakes), buttermilk, beets, onions, boiled eggs (for cold borscht), salt, various spices. Also will bring fishing gear for anyone wishing to try catching fish.

The following have volunteered to cook single dinners for 14 people:

<i>Shigeko Kubota</i>	<i>Sashimi (raw fish) and seafood salad</i>
<i>Yoshimasa Wada</i>	<i>Seafood tempura</i>
<i>Barbara Stewart</i>	<i>Indian dish (2 dinners?)</i>
<i>Anne Tardos</i>	<i>Seafood stew (French style)</i>
<i>Barbara Baracks</i>	<i>Fish chowder</i>
<i>George Maciunas</i>	<i>Fish sauteed in sauce, potato pancakes, with sour cream and cranberries, cold borscht with potatoes, beef stroganoff (2nd dinner).</i>

The captain will need assistance in sailing, anchoring, docking etc. The following will have to help him:

Kevin Harrison, Barbara Baracks, Yoshi and myself, also Bob.

Barbara Baracks will have a camera and will be "official" photographer.

So now we have our gear together and are full of anticipation. Ah, that George. He sure knows how to take care of his poor sweltering friends frying in the city.

We all climb aboard a train, and after a tiring ride we arrive in Providence. There are about a dozen of us. We all go to the pier to meet the Barbara – but there is no Barbara. Is this a cruel Flux-joke?

"Oh no," George assures us, and quickly devises a plan. *"The boat isn't here because it's delayed; surely it will be here tomorrow. This is the sea, after all, and one cannot expect rigid punctuality. We shall all sleep on the pier, after having dinner in this nearby seafood restaurant, and the boat will surely show up in the morning."*

It's a balmy summer night and the plan sounds okay. We have our seafood dinner according to George's plan and proceed to the pier where we lay out our sleeping bags in a row. Side by side in sleeping bags the Fluxus night begins. Naturally, I can't sleep. Some of the others seem to be asleep; Bob and a few others are still sipping

various somniferous liquors. I partake, but it doesn't cause the desired effect. I get too agitated to even try to lie still and decide to take a walk. I wander up a steep little street toward a water fountain with a little statuette in the center and a stone ledge surrounding it, presumably for people to sit on. There sits Kevin, who also can't sleep, and I join him. We sit there for most of the night, and, like children, we talk about everything under the moon until we're completely exhausted. At dawn we return to our respective sleeping bags and finally fall asleep on the pier.

A few hours later the Barbara shows up, just as George said she would. An eerie schooner that reminds me of the Flying Dutchman. The sails are frayed and tattered, the boat is shabby and looks unstable. George greets the captain, who looks and acts like he hasn't been sober in years. George bravely steps aboard and motions us to follow him. We climb aboard and look around. We couldn't possibly all fit into the cabin at the same time. And what's more the place is so grimy and malodorous. Oh no, says Shigeko and Bob and Yumiko. Oh no, says I. This is no place to spend nine days. Not only is it a day late, but we couldn't all fit on board even if we wanted to.

George says we shouldn't feel obligated to stay, and he'll get us a refund. Bob, Shigeko, Yumi and I split; George stays on board with the others. We wave goodbye.

Later, back in New York, Shigeko and I ask George about our refund. He calls the captain, who refuses to return our money. George says, *"I'll sue you."* The captain says, "Go ahead." George goes to the Small Claims Court and sues him.

The day our case comes up, George takes Shigeko and me along with him to court, as witnesses. As we walk down Mercer Street from Spring Street to the Small Claims Court a few blocks downtown, George tells us how much better off we are than the captain.

"He has to come to court all the way from a distant corner of the Bronx, and we have just a few blocks to walk. And what's more," he informs us, between swift pulls on his asthma inhaler, *"the one who is being sued must be represented by an attorney, whereas the one who sues does not. This alone is a victory,"* he explains, *"no matter what the outcome is."*

We arrive at the courthouse and both Shigeko and I feel uneasy. We're not used to this kind of environment: we are used to sipping *sake* and savoring smoked salmon when we're together. We're "good girls" from bourgeois families from faraway countries. We've

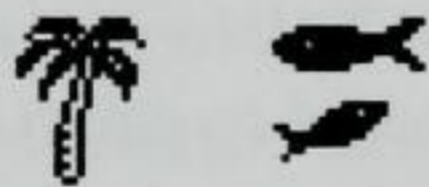
never been to court. George sees our distress and tells us not to worry, he is in complete control of the situation. He looks up our docket number on one of the innumerable posted lists. *"See this?"* He points to a list of numbers. *"This is our docket number, the number of our case,"* he tells us. *"Next to the number on this list here, it says at what time and in which room we are to go. I know this place inside out. I've been here many times."*

We proceed to the courtroom we've been assigned to and sit down. The captain and his lawyer arrive and George starts giggling. *"See these fools? They had to come all the way from the Bronx for this. And on top of it they're sure to lose the case. There was not enough room on that boat for all of us. It's a cinch."*

The captain's attorney approaches us and proposes a settlement. They'll refund us \$100 each. Shigeko and I accept, we're glad to get out of there, and George informs the appropriate clerks of the out-of-court settlement.

George feels victorious, paternal. *"The captain was a fool not to pay up right away. Justice was done."*

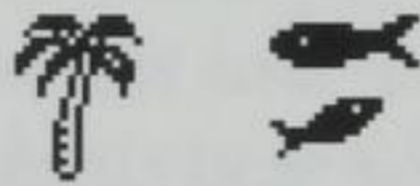
Shigeko and I go home and drink a toast to George our savior, George our representing attorney, George the expert in court cases, and George the defender of justice.



VIII. 18 I believe that George Maciunas' potentially most valuable contribution has been in the field of socialist planning of consumption. I refer especially to his design for a prefabricated housing system, which so far as I know received its only publication in 1965 in a pamphlet which George and I co-authored entitled *Communists Must Give Revolutionary Leadership in Culture*. George's design would be immediately recognizable as socialist even if it was not labeled as such. It is an innovative, integrated, functional solution which combines quality with the possibility of mass production of components – and which allows both centralized and decentralized construction. The design was conceived as an improvement on the Soviet prefabricated concrete system which has been implemented on a massive scale in the USSR. George approached the Soviet authorities with his design, but so far as I know they never became seriously interested in it. Implementation in the US was never a serious possibility either, because the design is not suitable to the capitalist housing market.

The principle of George's designs is a highly innovative and integrative approach to "efficiency" in the sense of distributing given consumption resources over the largest number of acts of consumption (making a wealth of use-values available to the whole population). George also illustrates this principle by contrasting the Citroën 2CV and the Cadillac automobiles. This example shows that George's principle needs modification: the socialist problem is one of a system of public transport which takes both passenger comfort and pollution into account; and a minimal automobile is not necessarily the appropriate solution. However, George's housing system would seem to be ideal as an illustration of how a wealth of use-values can be made available to the whole population (in more technical terms, how to interface solutions in specific problem areas with economy-wide feasibility).

George's plans should at least be available in libraries of architecture and design.



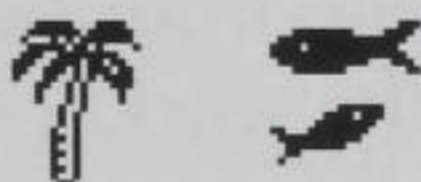
VIII. 19 *Bob Watts told me that Gino Di Maggio was expecting something from me for an exhibit this September in Rome??? I thought I made it clear that I was not enthusiastic about exhibits in galleries or institutions. I would be glad to participate in some arrangement at San Gimignano. The following could be performed or produced there: (we could come Spring 1974).*

1. *Giant spiderweb spun between the 14 towers (shooting continuous string with bow and arrow). Fluxvariation of Alison Knowles piece.*
2. *Using mirrors to reflect sun into square from the 14 towers. Paul Sharits piece.*
3. *Cascade of balloons or ping-pong balls or styrofoam balls from towers.*
4. *Ball game between all the towers.*
5. *Weather balloons with painted faces slowly being inflated on top of towers (towers would appear like necks with giant heads).*
6. *For the night: blinking lights (colored), fireworks, colored smoke from the tops of the towers.*
7. *Theatrical performances to start in the Piazza della Cisterna while the audience is assembled in Piazza del Duomo; when audience rushes to the P. della Cisterna, performers rush to the P. del Duomo.*

8. *Tying with a string each tower block.*
9. *Constructing various obstacles in each town gate, so that people coming or leaving must pass by these obstacles. By Ay-O. (This obstacle course could also be erected in between the P. della Cisterna and P. del Duomo.)*
10. *A race of 14 participants, each with some very large object, up each of the 14 towers. Objects could be mattresses, or large empty boxes, etc.*
11. *Alarms and noise makers of all kinds are thrown from tops of all towers (with and without parachutes). By Bob Watts.*

I would be most happy if you could arrange a Fluxfest in San Gimignano. It probably could be done at no cost (we could finance our own travel) and we could bring all materials and supplies. We would need cooperation of the town and many participants. No damage would be inflicted on any of the buildings, and hotel keepers there would have their hotels full during the festival.

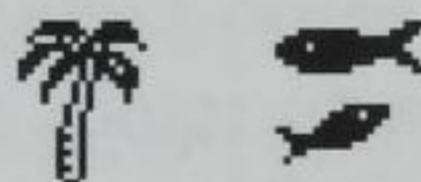
Hoping this will answer all your questions, I remain, with best regards



VIII. 20 The year before George died, Ann Noël, Ay-O and I visited him at the big house in New Marlborough – room after room full of Maciunas and Fluxus exotica. Showing us through some of his wonders, he called our attention to drawers full of rocks, pebbles and stones. He lifted a few from a drawer, handling them as if they were rare minerals and gems, and placed them in my outstretched hand.

“These are some of the best in the collection,” he said proudly. “They were given to me by Bob Watts.”

I knew at once what they were. An astonished George Maciunas watched me place them in my mouth, one by one, chew them, and swallow them. The candies were edible, if a bit stale.

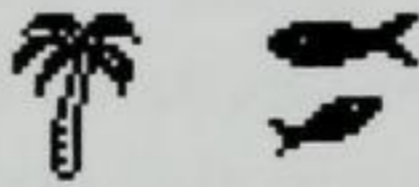


VIII. 21 I suppose the last time I saw George was in early May of 1978. I went to see him and Billie in Nonsmoking Marlborough Country. When I arrived, there he was lying down on a mattress in the middle of the floor, *dans le grand salon*, surrounded by books, maps,

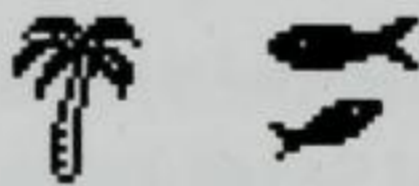
catalogues, all about boats. With the help of morphine he was dreaming. His dream was to cross the Atlantic, sailing his own boat. Direction: France.

Then, he was trying to resolve technical problems. (That happened to him very often during the last two years I saw him.) One of the problems that day was to find a boat with a moveable keel, in order, first, to cross the ocean to France, and then to navigate on canals. (The canals, you know, have crossed the French countryside all over since *Le moyen âge*.)

Well, his idea was to reach the city of Dijon where he planned to organize a festive ceremony, involving the Duke of Burgundy. For this event he asked me to play two roles, first, to be the Duke himself for the ceremony, and then, for the dinner party, *le Chef du Duc*.



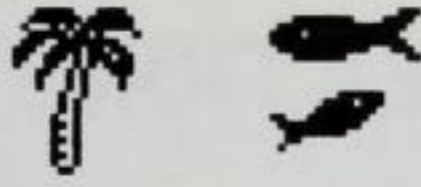
- VIII. 22 Maciunas had a dream of, one day, all the Fluxus people boarding a minesweeper, a kind of boat which someone had told him could be bought cheaply as surplus from the American navy, and spending two years or so touring the world performing.



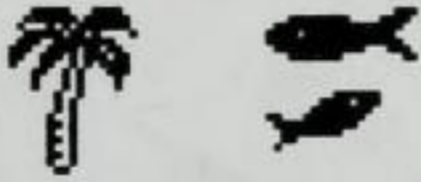
- VIII. 23 The 145-foot converted minesweeper would travel the globe from 1976 to 1984 ... It would be my job to catch the fish, dry it in the sun, pulverize it into flour and bake up a fish loaf (bread). George had many recipes for fish bread.

The Canary Islands fantasy was particularly challenging – a rock-bound island with no water or vegetation of any kind could be had for very little money: a bargain, in fact. This could be our center of operations. We were to be transported in and out by Joe Jones piloting an airplane. Some actually saw the island and the airplane was being considered.

The Marlborough mansion fantasy did work for a time, some memorable images return to mind: a tremendous spread of green lawn sprinkled with a few Fall leaves. Suddenly from the grand entry of the main house our host(ess) rushes out to greet the arriving guests. She is blonde and beautiful, wearing high, black, patent-leather heels and a bright scarlet chenille cocktail dress!



VIII. 24 Best job offer: To be botanist on the Fluxus boat. I accepted this offer and the sustaining fantasy.



VIII. 25 George's space on Wooster Street was dominated by a floor-to-ceiling metal-shelf thing that contained perhaps a hundred or more cardboard brown file boxes: it was a word and picture computer. I stared at it for a while. Then George was standing there staring at me with his giant eyes, smiling in anticipation.

"Are these your records?" I asked.

"No," he said, grinning. "Say a word. Say anything."

"Okay," I said. "Felucca."

"What is it, a felucca?" he asked.

"It's a boat, a simple sailboat."

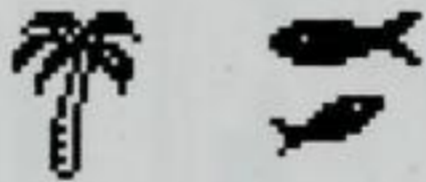
He went to his files happily, opened a box and fished through the tab-index cards, paused, drew out a piece of paper on which was a hand-colored steel engraving of a felucca.

"An Egyptian ship," he chortled, and clapped his hands.

I was impressed.

"Another word?"

He must have a picture of everything in the world card-filed, I thought to myself.

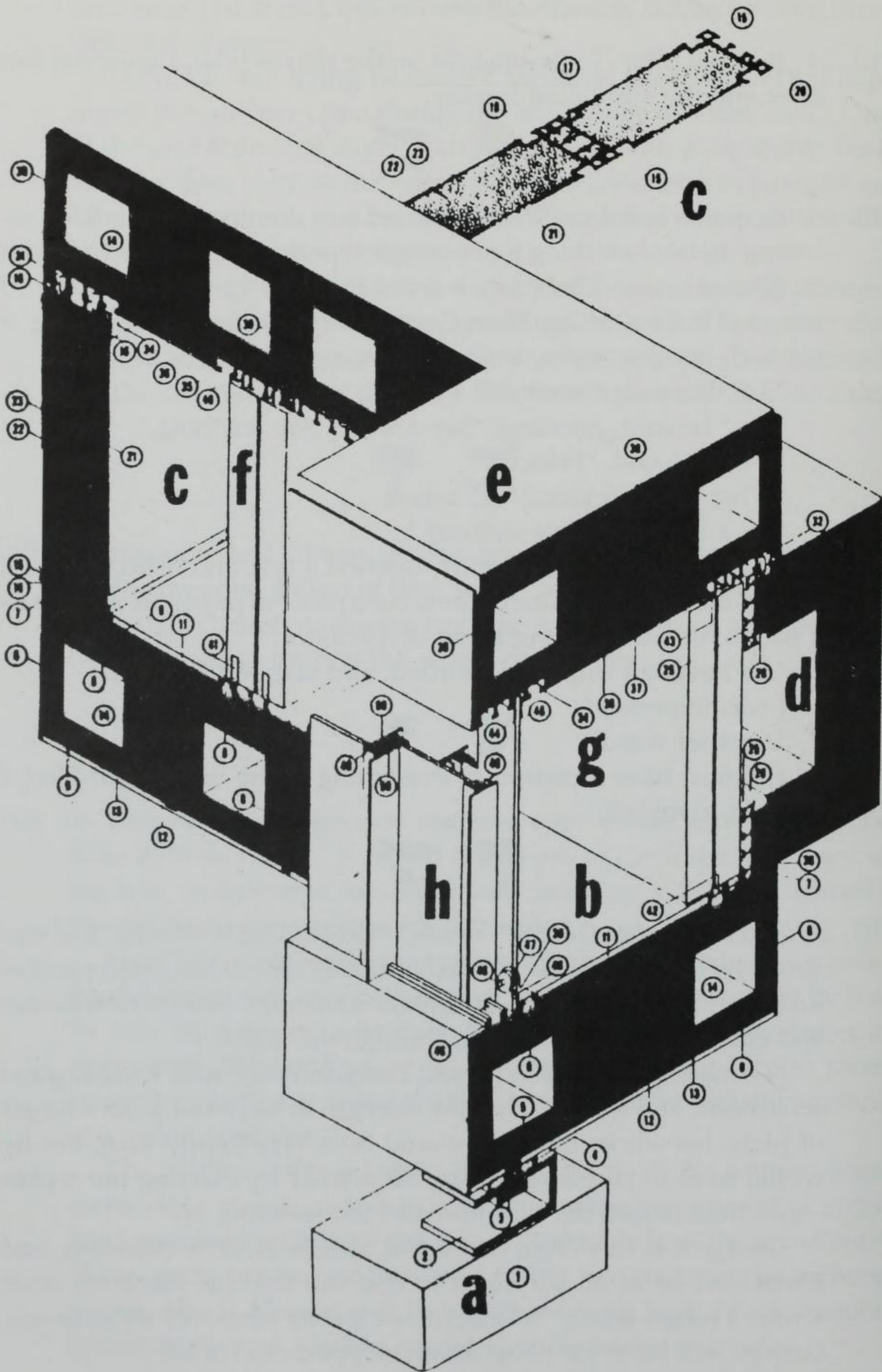


VIII. 26 Sometime after George's death, I was reading Nietzsche, and was struck by a passage that seemed to fit George's unrequited passion for those interminable lists, dreamboat itineraries, real-estate schemes and charts that kept piling up through the years.

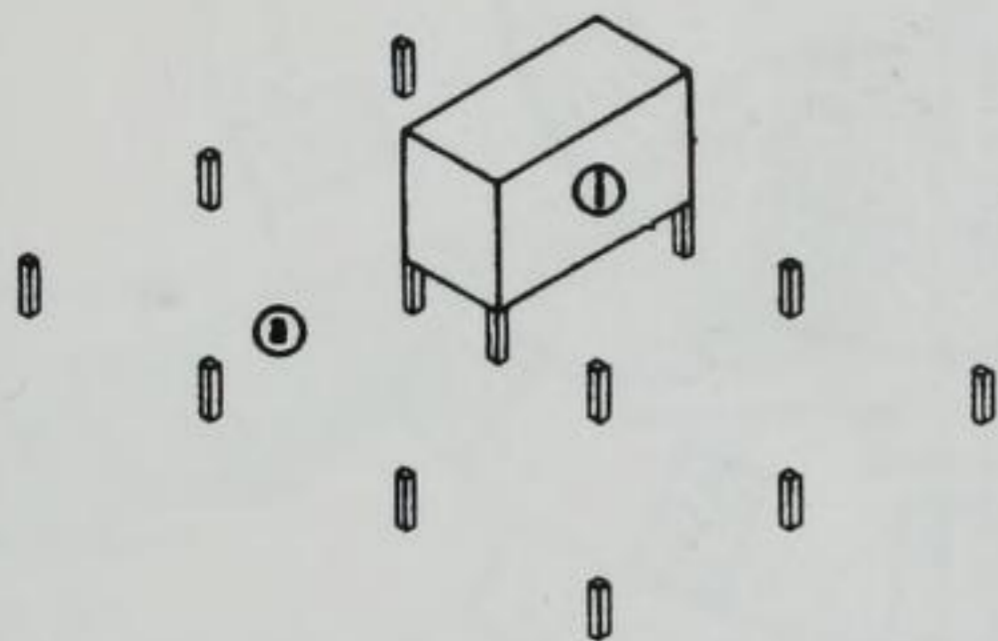
"To make plans and to project designs brings with it many good sensations; and whoever has the strength to be nothing but a forger of plans his whole life long would be a very happy man; but he would have to take a rest from this activity by carrying out a plan – and then comes the vexation and the sobering up."

George was very often vexed, but, alas, he never sobered up. And I wouldn't be at all surprised to find out that (as someone once wrote, I forget who): "Whenever we get to wherever we're going, George will have the program all mapped out for us."

ISOMETRIC CROSS SECTIONS OF COMPONENTS

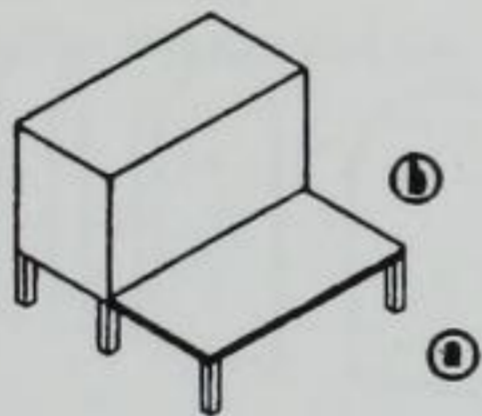


ERECTION PROCEDURE

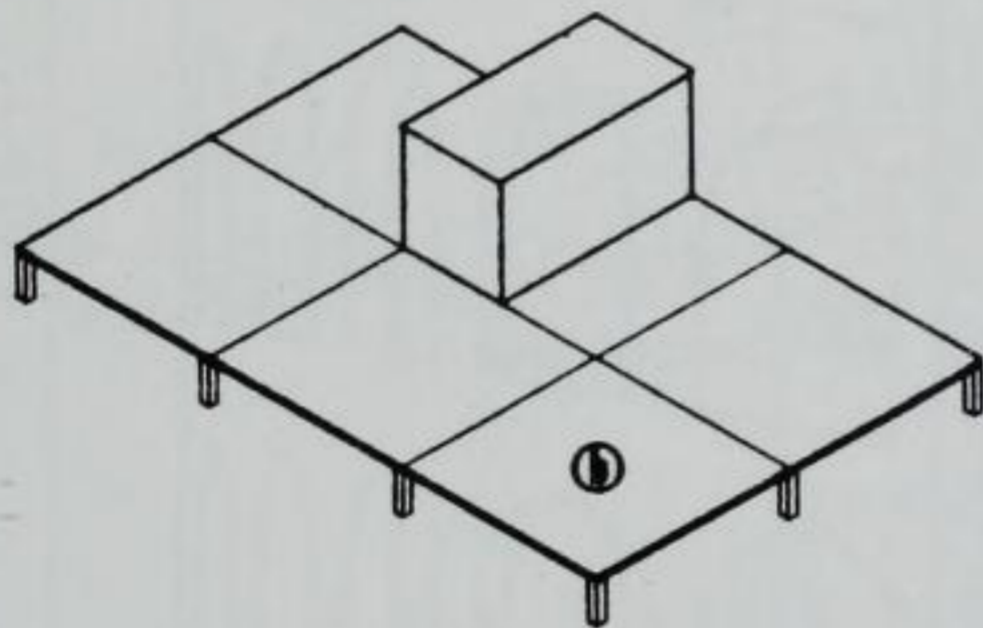


1. Precast concrete piles are inserted into predrilled holes.

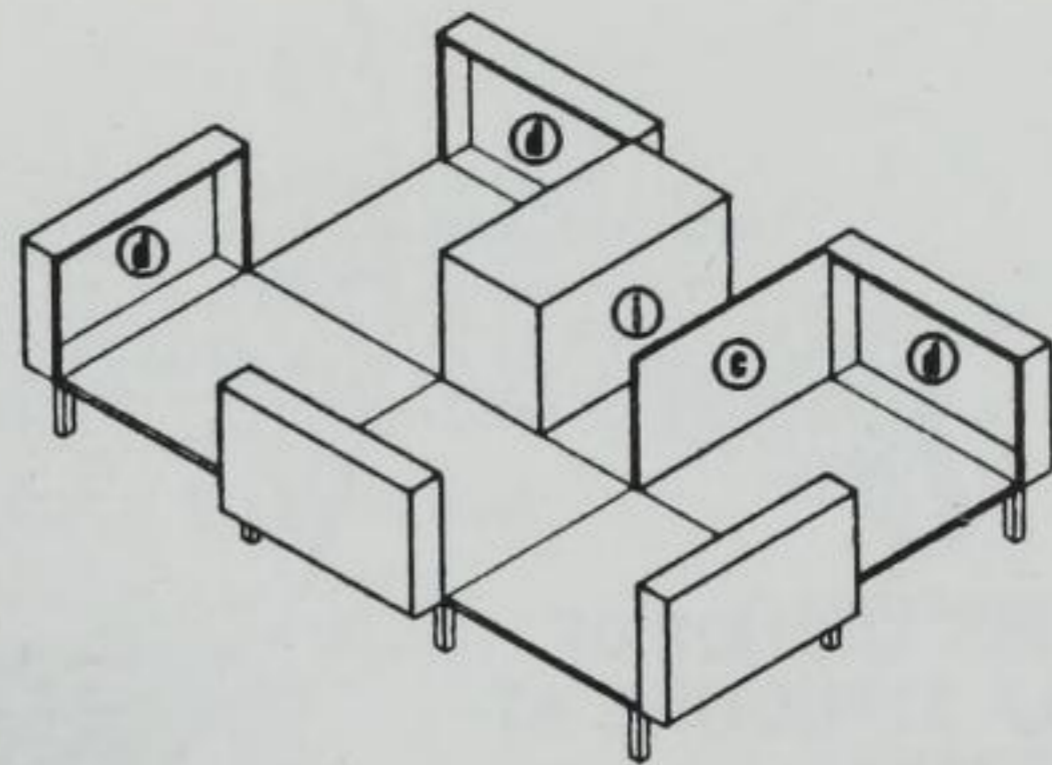
14' x 7' x 8' prefabricated service cubical is brought by flat bed truck and lowered over 4 piles.



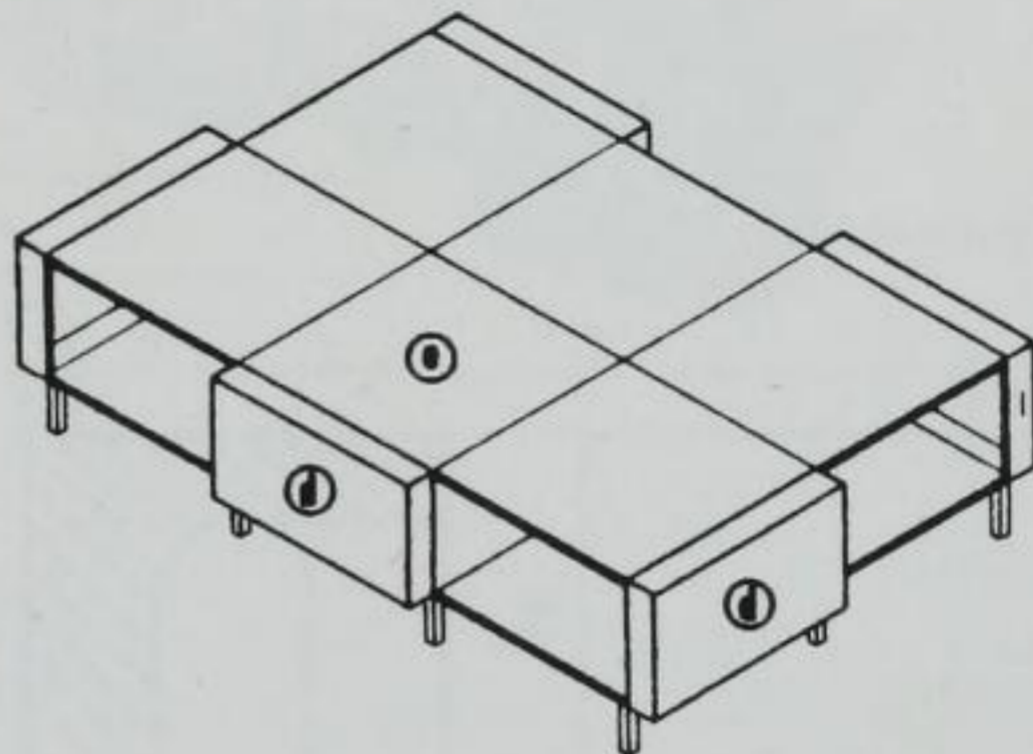
2. Kitchen floor, which is hinged to service cubical, is lowered over 2 additional piles.



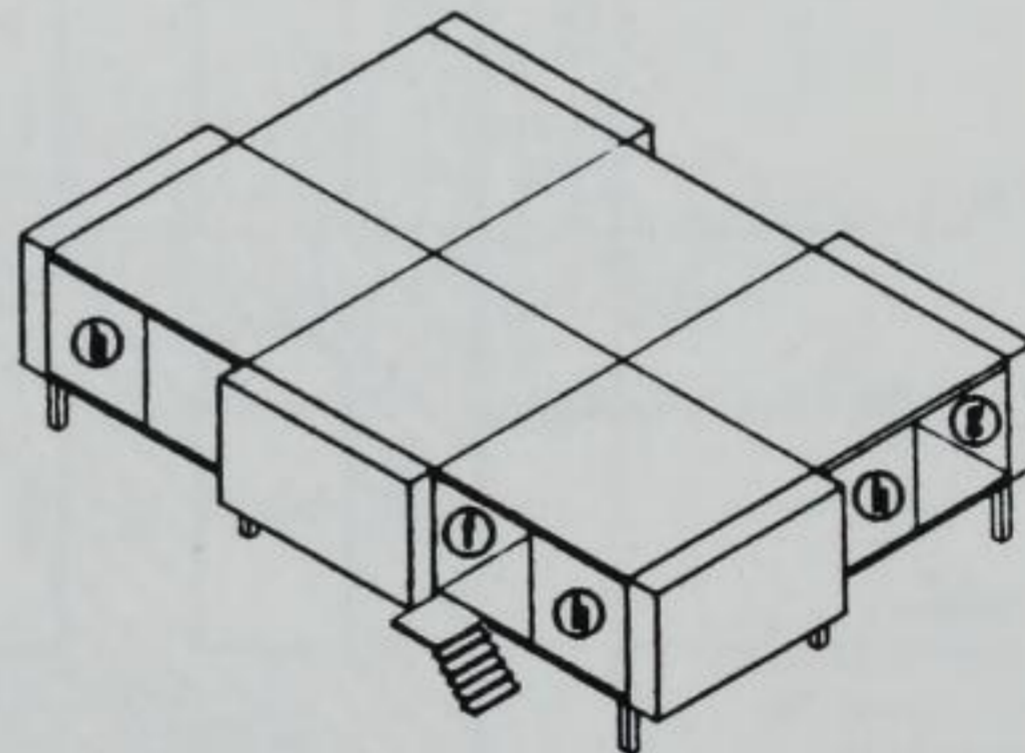
3. Floor panels are connected to piles and to themselves.



4. Structural panels and structural cabinets are connected to floor panels and kept temporarily erect by temporary braces (not shown).



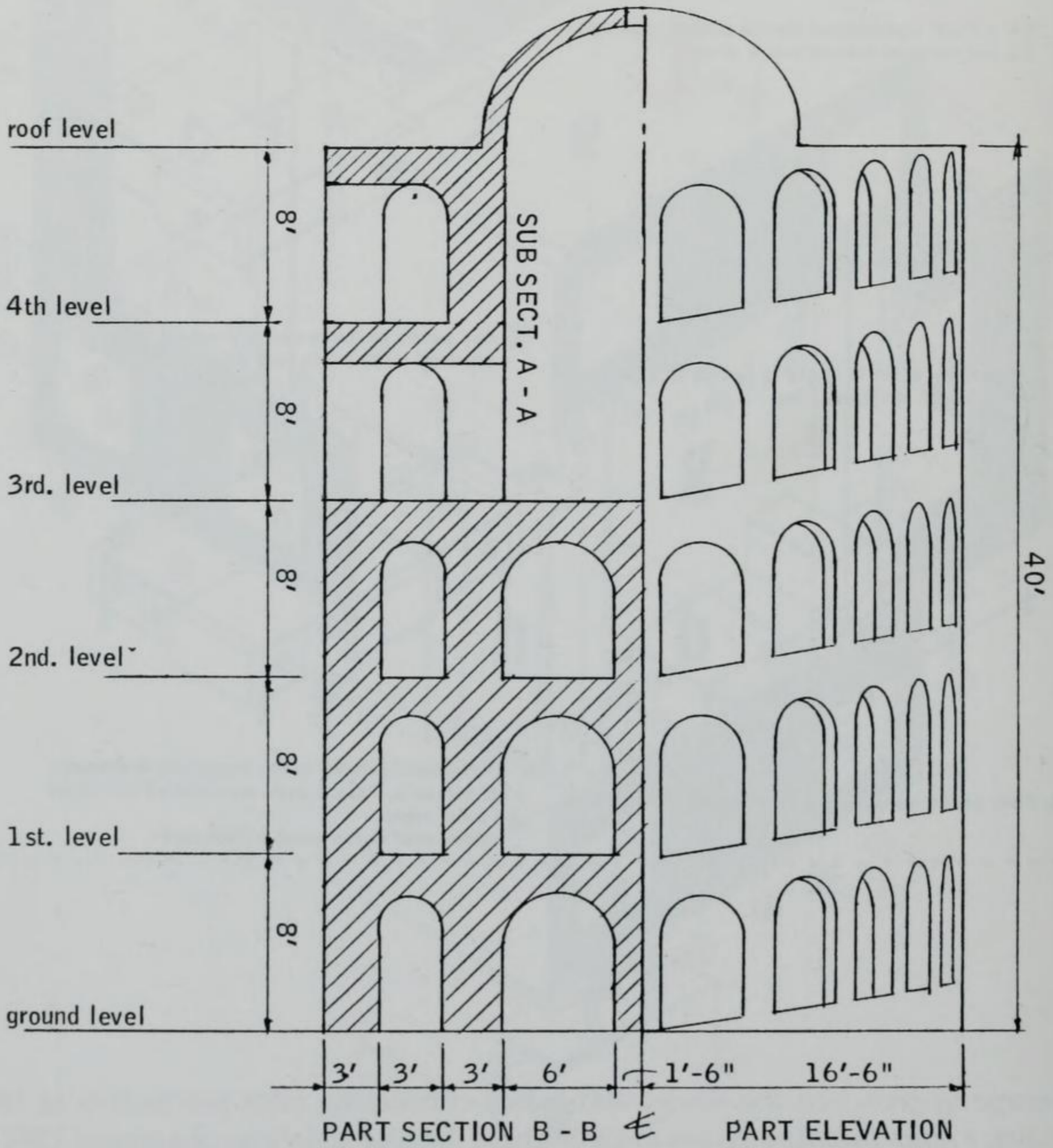
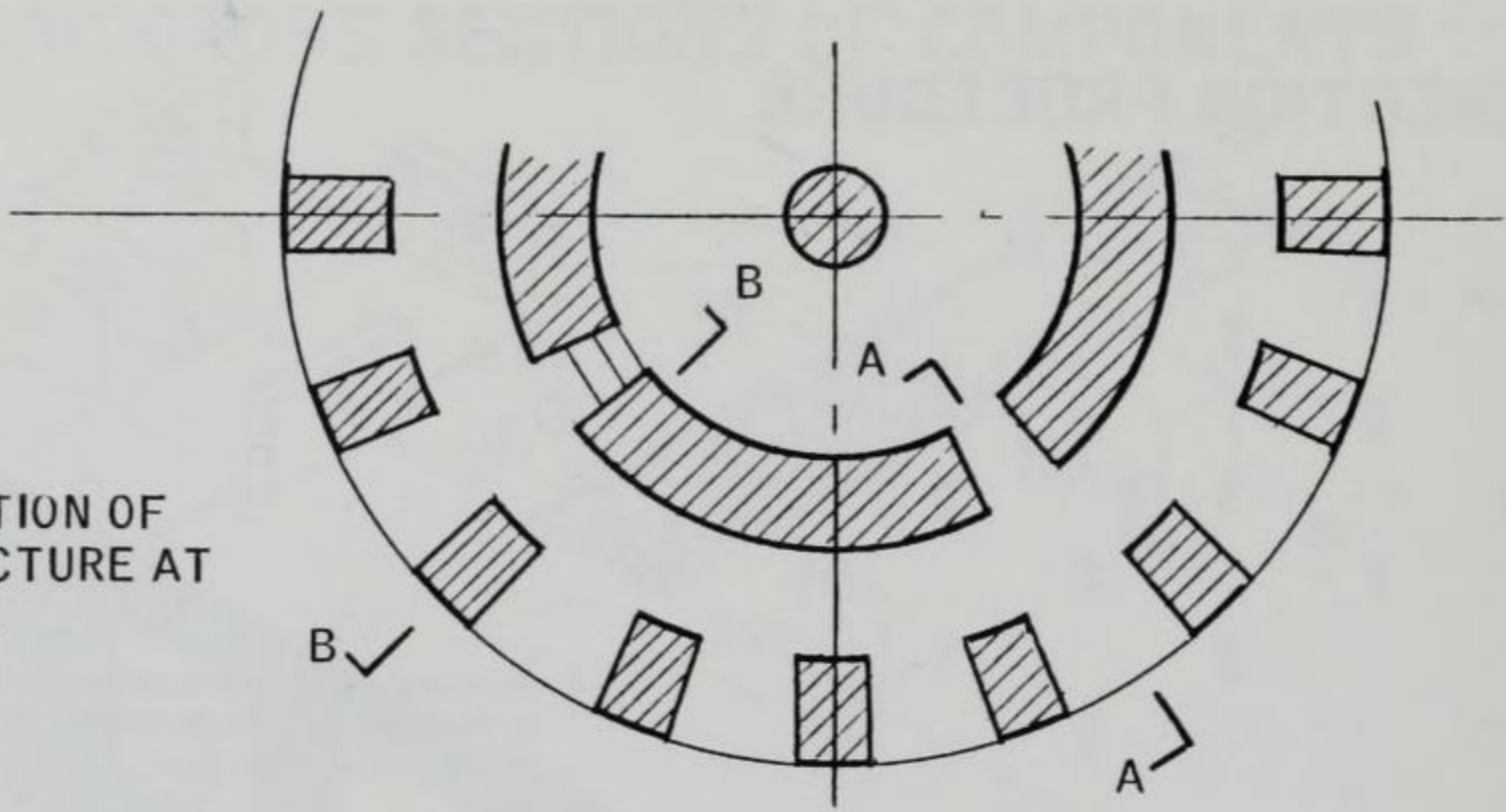
5. Roof panels are connected to structural cabinets, structural walls and to each other.



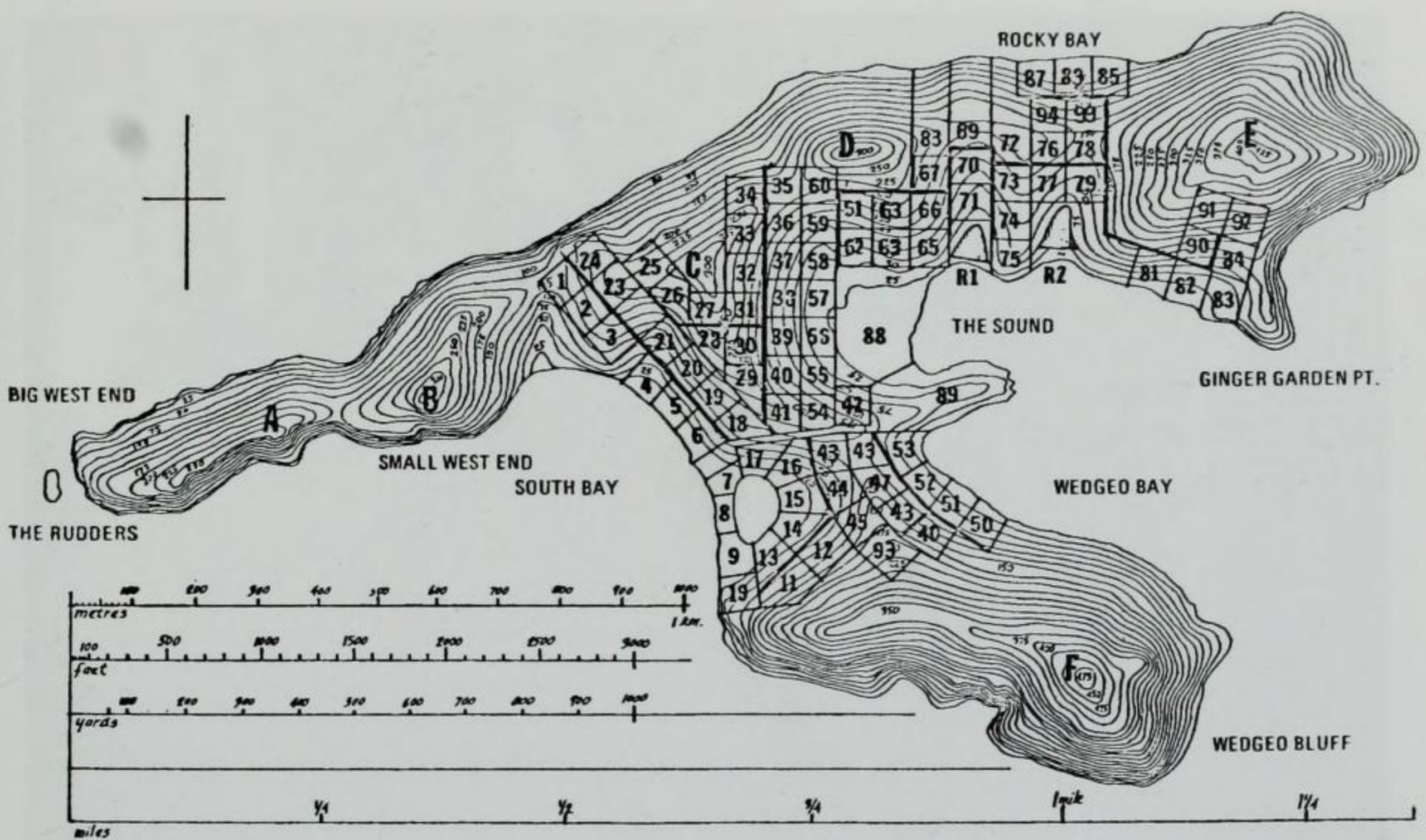
6. Nonstructural exterior walls (transparent or opaque), interior walls, cabinet doors are installed into tracks of panel edges. Exterior stair is connected to floor panel.

George approached the Soviet authorities concerning pilot production of his *Plastic Prefab Building System* in 1965. These detailed drawings of a typical 1,900-square-foot house, along with full details of his method of design development and a comparative analysis of other prefabricated building systems, appeared in the Washington, D.C., newspaper *Underground* in 1966.

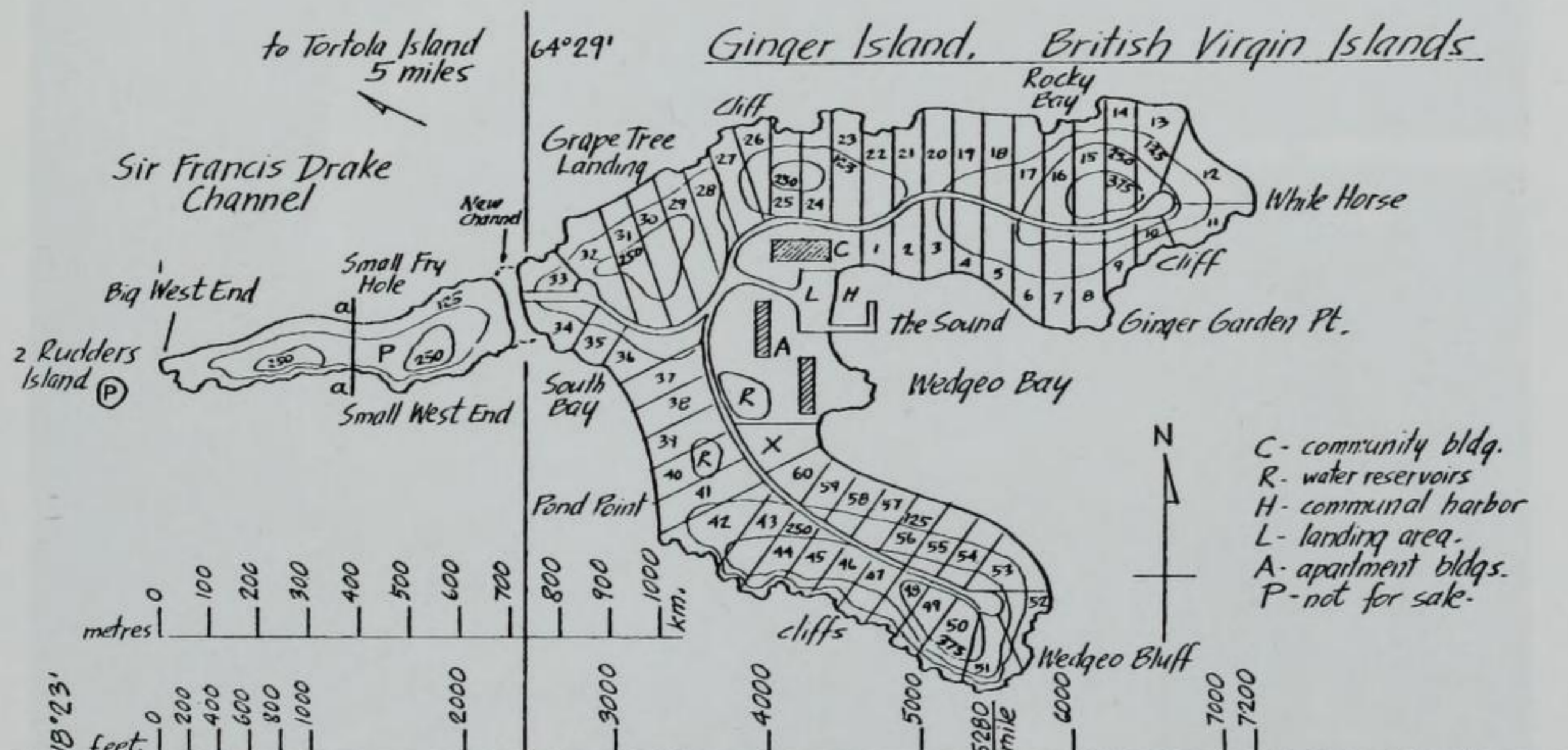
CROSS SECTION OF
HALF STRUCTURE AT
3RD LEVEL.



George's proposal for the *Flux-Snowhouse* – but alas! It didn't snow on time.



GINGER ISLAND, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS, LAT. 18°23', LONG. 64°29'



lot no.	area	price
1	1.5	
2	2.3	
3	2.5	
4	2.4	
5	2.7	
6	3	
7	3.3	
8	3.4	
9	2	
10	1.4	
11	2.6 *	
12	4.5 *	
13	4	
14	4	
15	3.6	
16	3.3	
17	3.2	
18	3	
19	2.8	
20	2.8	
21	2.5	
22	2.8	
23	3.8	
24	3.2	
25	3	
26	2.4	
27	3	
28	3.3	
29	4.4	
30	4.7	
31	4.3	
32	4.5	
33	1.8	
34	2.5	
35	2	
36	3.5	
37	2.9	
38	2.6	
39	2.6	
40	2	
41	3.4	
42	4	
43	3.2	
44	3	
45	2.3	
46	1.8	
47	2	
48	2	
49	2.5	
50	3.5	
51	3.2	
52	2.4	
53	3.3	
54	2.4	
55	2.5	
56	2.5	
57	2.2	
58	2	
59	1.9	
60	1	

231
lots: 172
P. 22
X 3



George, Yoko and John Lennon on the Hudson River Fluxus boat trip, July 1, 1971.
Right: George's mother, during the Hudson River outing.
From Jonas Mekas' film *Zefiro Torna: Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas*.





Above: Carla Liss' Fluxkit preserves relics of her sometimes hilarious tour with George in 1972 – receipts, ticket stubs and other souvenirs from museums, restaurants, airlines, busses, ships etc. (See VIII. 1.) Below: Chicken house on Maciunas's estate in New Marlborough. Photo © René Block.



IX

SERIOUS JOKER

IX. 1 GM: ... *high art is something you find in museums. Fluxus you don't find in museums. Museums just don't have it. The only exception is Beaubourg and that's only because of Pontus Hulten, and even then, he has all the Fluxus things in the library, not in the collection of art, but in the library, he has documents. So he doesn't consider it art, either; he considers it a document.*

LM: But that doesn't bother you?

GM: *No, in fact it pleases me.*

LM: Why does it please you?

GM: *Because we've never intended to be high art. We came out to be like a bunch of jokers. In fact, I gave a couple of times an answer to what bankers asked me when we applied for a mortgage. They asked Bob Watts what was his profession; he said, well, he was a professor for 25 years. Then they asked what do I make and I said I make jokes. Oh, they said, you're not going to make a joke out of the mortgage now, will you? (Laughs.)*

LM: Little did they know! (Laughter.)



IX. 2 *Regarding distributorship by Beau Geste Press, generally I have given up the efforts to distribute Fluxthings, since I never get paid for them anyway, and I can't afford to subsidize distributors, so I'd rather send things free to friends and to sell a few to collectors, than send loads of things to stores and never get paid for them.*



IX. 3 One night I was sleeping in the basement of 80 Wooster Street. I think it was the late Fall of 1967. George comes in, says, "*Come, help. I got these trees here, I have to plant them.*"

"What, at this hour of night?" I hate to get up at night. But I did, and yes, he had these shabby trees lying on the sidewalk.

"I stole them from the parking lot on West Broadway," he told me proudly, laughing. *"They were digging up the whole place, with tractors, and I asked them to give me a couple of the trees, and they said no! So I waited until the night, and I took them, you see? We have to plant them now, it's against the law to plant trees in SoHo."*

The next day, or a day later, some city officials showed up. "No trees are permitted here," they told me. "You'll have to get rid of them."

I go down to the basement, to George. He was making his Fluxus boxes or something, and he says, *"Tell them if they don't like our trees they can pull them out."* So I go back to the city officials, and I say: "No, George is not going to do it. He says *you* have to do it. And he wants me to take some pictures when you do it."

The city people looked at me, then at each other, turned around, and we never saw them again.

But the trees grew and prospered. Big, big trees they are now, happy trees, the only trees on Wooster Street.



IX. 4 One day when I needed a large bottle for mixing photo developer, I approached George hopefully. George had everything.

"George, do you happen to have any brown one-gallon bottles?"

"*Sure,*" he said. He took down a large box from a wall of similar boxes. It was labeled "Bottles." And it contained brown one-gallon bottles, just what I needed.

Six months later I needed another brown bottle, and I approached George again.

He shook his head sadly. *"No more. I dropped it."*

He took down the same box, which had been relabeled "Broken Glass", showed it to me, and replaced it on the shelf.



IX. 5 My partner, Susan Reinhold (of the Reinhold Brown Gallery in New York), had to buy a gift for Andy Warhol. She thought one of George's name boxes would make a nice one. When she asked George if he would do it, he began to scream: "Never! Never! That thief! Warhol already stole every one of my ideas."



IX. 6 MN: From what I've read I can't imagine you and your Fluxus associates sitting around in a café or bar discussing the "problem" of the function of traditional musical instruments.

GB: Never, never. Usually it was ... Maciunas would come and say, "*I'm going to nail down the piano keys tonight. Would you mind bringing in the nails?*" So he would go and sit down at the piano and I'd put out a handful of nails for him to use. It was all very flat, very practical.



IX. 7 Ludwig Gosewitz came to visit us in South Hadley after we had visited him in Tyringham. Lugo did not meditate or blow his little glass bottles for two hours, or even talk about astrology the way he did at Jean Brown's, but that is what he is really in to. Before he flew to America, he sat in the lotus position under his astral dome for six hours, facing the direction the airplane would go. When George Maciunas heard that, he asked why he didn't wait until he got on the plane and meditate *there* for six hours instead.

George is having his own problems with people whose lives are governed by the stars. He's supposed to design a nursery for John and Yoko's baby, but the project was held up for the month of March, because their astrologer advised them to make no decisions during that time.



IX. 8 When I came to New York from Prague in 1968 I bought a television set, so that with the help of different programs I could learn English more quickly.

George Maciunas (who picked out the set) handed it over to me with the words: "*Never lend Paik a television. He destroys all televisions.*"



IX. 9 DS: Well, Maciunas was a deeply unhumoristic person, he had absolutely no sense of humor. He was a very serious person who always wanted to give a political meaning to Fluxus, which was absurd, because you can't give political sense to absurdity.

AB: This seems rather strange, Fluxus was so humorous, all those artists' games ...

DS: Yes, that was part of it, and he probably liked that, but I think he was closest maybe to Jackson Mac Low with his very serious way of political thinking, and the others with their jokes were... I don't know how he felt ... We never talked about it, I didn't have long talks with Maciunas ... When he was in Paris he stayed at my place, but he was eating pills all the time, he had a huge case of different pills, he always thought he was sick – and he didn't drink like the rest of us ...

And then Fluxus was very much in flux! I mean for years you didn't hear anything from Maciunas, when he was in the States. And when I visited him there in 1970, he was happy to see me, he invited me to dinner one evening and he said, "*You know, you are one of the fifty people in the 'hard core' so you have the right to get all the Fluxus publications.*" I said, "Yes, but I can't take all that with me." He replied, "*I will send it to you, to France, but you have to pay the postage*" – that was very funny! – so I gave him fifty dollars and it all arrived in France, in Montargis, a provincial town. It was like Christmas, I had to open it all up in front of a customs officer, who said, "What is all that?" I tried to explain and suddenly, at a certain moment he said, "Come along, pack it up and go away": it was too much for him ...



IX. 10 *I am including an envelope that you should mail out (from the Château de Ravenel), you see we are trying to write impressive letters from all over the world to New School expressing our indignation on their kicking out Richard Maxfield. So I wrote from Fluxus HQ, your address, since it sounds impressive. They will think we have a real grand operation. OK? ...*

This fancy letter (typed) is to help out Maxfield, that's why your return address – to make impression. Canal Street in N.Y. just won't do. Could you mail out this letter in regular air mail envelope or so. OK? Some stamps enclosed.



IX. 11 Warhol and George. Warhol and Fluxus. Somewhere there, very deep, they were both the same, they were both Fluxus, they both dealt essentially with nothingness, they both dismissed the current life, civilization, everything that is being practiced today, as "everything is the same." Didn't take any of it seriously. Both took life as

a game and laughed at it, each in his own way, untouched by any of it themselves, looking at it all from the side, or from high above, and creating their own realities that didn't really fit into it. Andy, standing at the Studio 54 in the lobby, standing on the side, never in the middle of it, never really embracing it, and George, laughing, laughing at it all, including Warhol, and creating in its place his own fragile life, totally inconsequential, unimportant, a world of games, little boxes, puzzles, jokes, all in praise of nothingness.



- IX. 12 *Looks like magazine (Fluxus) should look very good when it starts rolling. I got this nice box of a disposable enema unit which I will use to put Fluxus prospectus in. I will get box reproduced with all the nice instructions printed over it – great box, listen to this: “... in preparation for proctoscopy and sigmoidoscopy; in the relief of constipation due to fecal or barium impactions”. Or this: “... assume knee-chest position ... insert tube and squeeze bottle gently ... maintain position until a strong urge to evacuate is felt (usually within 5 minutes)” etc. etc. Wonderful. (Got the box in London.) So I will roll up the prospectus like the tube they speak about, so people can stick it up their ass and squeeze gently ... until strong urge is felt ... Nice?*



- IX. 13 *“You say it is to be in the chapel?”*
“Yes.”
“Then we must do a Fluxmass.”

That was Autumn 1969, a conversation on the possibility for a Fluxus program at Douglass College, Rutgers University, where I taught in the Art Department, and had recently been elected to the Vorhees Assembly Board. Attendance at these weekly assemblies had just been changed from required to voluntary and the committee was interested in planning programs that would attract students. My suggestion for a Fluxconcert which I described was well received, and so I went to talk with Maciunas about it.

Since it was going to be in a chapel he felt strongly that it had to be a Fluxmass, something we had never done. As we talked he suggested expanding the project to a whole Fluxfestival. The honorarium would go entirely into materials and supplies in order

to have as spectacular an event as possible. Next to the chapel was an old gym. We must also have a Fluxolympiad and there would be an exhibition in the art gallery. If there was snow a great multistoried snow house would be built. The day set for this was February 17, 1970 ...

Maciunas researched the Catholic Mass, studied its structure and traditions, carefully examined all the parts and developed humorous interpretations for each. The priest's assistants wore gorilla costumes, and the front of the priest's vestments varied from images of Napoleon to the Venus de Milo to George Washington. Yoshimasa Wada was the priest. The sacramental wine was in a plasma tank with hose. Wafers were laxative and blue-urine cookies. The consecration of the bread, a giant loaf filled with sawdust, was done by a mechanical dove (Holy Spirit) made by Joe Jones which moved across overhead on a wire and dropped mud from a can onto the loaf.

Antiphonal "chanting" consisted of such sound effects as barking dogs and locomotives, and in another instance bird calls answered by gun shots from the priest. The Lord's Prayer was said in a dozen languages. Signal flags were used. Smoke bombs became candles. An inflated Superman filled with wine was "bled".

It was a spirited performance in true Fluxus style, enjoyed by many, but it infuriated the Episcopalian chaplain. Although he was seen chuckling during the Fluxmass, immediately afterwards he stirred up other chaplains, clergy, legislators and parishioners to protest to the college and the university. Suddenly I found myself in the middle of a lively controversy, and I was glad I had tenure. My role shifted from organizer and participant to defender. It became a local *cause célèbre*. It is certainly one of Maciunas' major works. To the end of his life he wanted to arrange for another performance of the Fluxmass, if possible in a church in Italy.



IX. 14 The person of Maciunas could hardly be separated from all the anecdotal backdrop that followed him. I should perhaps start with my memory of my first meeting with him in 1969 since it was the least tainted by the Georgeological myth. For the initial fifteen minutes or so after the introduction I felt like I had been delivered into the hands of some smalltime, imitation Fascist dictator who didn't know how to dress for the role. I was one of several Rutgers graduate students

Bob Watts had brought to meet this “very interesting guy.” In time, I learned that this casual description was on the order of a high compliment coming from the tight-lipped Watts. Bob had brought us to 80 Wooster Street to consider getting involved in George’s Fluxus plans: a Fluxfest at Stony Point, N.Y. and a Fluxmass at Douglass College Chapel at Rutgers.

Maciunas began with what resembled a briefing for conscripted troops. In contrast with the Watts reserve and very minimal discourse, Maciunas was immediately passing out information and was in-your-face making pronouncements with his staccato accent and his Dr. Strangelove grin. General George quickly outlined the “priorities” and strategic possibilities of Fluxus actions. In that beginning quarter-hour of the nine years I was to know him, I was completely turned off by his speed-freak character and quickly decided to have no part of this weird guy’s megalomania. Some previous experiences in music and theater had soured me on group dynamics and I was well satisfied with my independent identity as “artist.” But after a while I was drawn into George’s universe. The turning point began with his characteristic laugh – that pervasive, rhythmic cackle which kept coming out when he felt some normality had been perverted or when there was humor to be realized at the expense of a duped audience.

When George recounted some past Fluxus events for us his funny chuckle took on the function of Maciunas punctuation marks. Some of the stuff he described sounded to me like sophomoric jokes initially – similar to what college fraternities do to haze freshmen. But during the course of that evening I recognized that I had come into contact with the tip of an iceberg that was a synthesis of much that had motivated me toward art, despite its poor prospects for making a living. I started to see through GM’s carnival persona and into wider situations beyond the art world that he considered ripe with material for any artist’s use. Once I saw his aim as not just a joke, but as a critical forum with deep irreverence for the given order, he had won my attention. Another less intellectualized synchronicity occurred for me with George’s idea for the role of gorillas in the Fluxmass. It so happened that a big, bad gorilla had been my imaginary playmate in early childhood and I also had a caustic interest in unveiling religious dogma. There was no sense that I was “joining” Fluxus; it was more like contributing to an un-joining of the already-well-known arts.

Once George had some takers, he was like an editing machine, gathering and absorbing raw material, processing it “in-or-out” according to his liking, and reassembling it into his own formats. We came up with ideas for Fluxsports and other pieces for indoor and outdoor sites. The Stony Point Fluxfest eventually fell through and some unlucky printer got stuck with a lot of dice George had ordered printed up as announcements. The events at Douglass College worked out well, however. The Fluxsports and the Fluxmass were a hit with students – especially so with the leftist-inclined Students for a Democratic Society types who were active there at the time in 1960s radical fashion.

I met more of Fluxus there. Milan Knizak did an event, blindfolding people who lay on the floor and were unknowingly videotaped. Joe Jones’ mechanical bird flew over the Fluxmass congregation, who were anointed with “droppings” of mud. Yoshi Wada played the priest, who got doused with a full bucket of water. George, as was his pattern, orchestrated things like a stage manager, rather than taking big parts in the performance itself. I was one of several gorillas, whose various functions included passing out laxative cookies and communion “wine” by Maciunas and Watts that later made people piss in bright colors. We had made a huge loaf of bread out of chicken wire and *papier maché* in my studio beforehand, which the gorillas assaulted with clubs during a frenzied “breaking of the bread” ceremony. A good time was had by all but the Faithful.

George had lots of laughs later in learning that the chapel required an official reconsecration due to the protests of sacrilege. Geoff Hendricks, who had made the arrangements to use the chapel at Douglass for the performance, graciously took the heat from the University over the religious heresy. Maciunas himself had once again tweaked the authorities and slipped away unrepentant to plot his next flank attack on cultural conventions.



- IX. 15 George’s humor is self-referential, Brechtian. The awareness of every daily act we perform, of every daily object around us. And the critique of it all by means of humor.

Pop Art took a look at the daily banality around us also. But it seemed to embrace it, to approve of it. Fluxus brought it into a critical awareness by means of humor. In that sense Fluxus is a political act.



IX. 16 *Here I am sending you a small window. Better small than none. So now you have a window (for your windowless room), you can get your trunks, & take my clippings out & send them to me. OK? You should stay in that hotel where you are, it has a very nice sounding name—Carcassonne. Why don't you move to Versailles palace, it has been vacated for several years, many windows there, we could do a Fluxus there & afterwards do a "Versailles activities" & take the place apart – this reactionary place.*



IX. 17 Despite GM's inventiveness, sometimes the ideas didn't come off as well as on paper. George liked dice as symbols of chance and had used them in various ways. For one New Year's costume event, he built a hollow wooden die just large enough for him to get inside and close the lid. The corners were nicely rounded and the number spots became holes through which he could stick out an arm or leg so he could roll himself around. But after he finally stuffed himself inside the cramped space, he wasn't able to get the die to roll over. We kept hearing him grunting around in there, arms and legs groping out, and then poking sticks out the holes trying to get even a single ninety-degree turn. He was stuck and couldn't move so we finally rolled him around the floor for a while and after a good tumble he came out laughing at himself.

These Flux-failures, which were regularly expected, were equally successful as amusements. Georgeology was a self-sufficient subject with things sometimes done that had no special application beyond George himself as the audience. I made a long audiotape of my two-year-old daughter's crying one night with the idea of rubbing GM's nose in his exaltation of concrete sound as music and his annoyance with children. I announced it to him with the honorific "Lullaby for George Maciunas" and started playing it for him. After only a couple of minutes, he laughed his laugh and said, "Yea, yea, very funny," and didn't want to hear any more. I argued, "But George, there's much more to hear and this is concrete sound designed specifically for the human ear by evolution. It combines the Readymade and Chance by natural selection and the duration is critical to appreciation." Of course, it happened that he had some other very important things to do just then.



IX. 18 George was a generator of stories about himself and instigator of laughter, of works that might have been by-products from this interaction. My first knowledge of him was Bob Watts telling me about correspondence with him and then showing me “Hospital Events” where there were these funny old pictures that when hit with a hammer made explosions, for there were cap-pistol caps embedded underneath, and then we began to laugh. Bob laughing as he said, “Try it.” And my laughing in response as I hit the picture with the hammer. This was beside Bob’s swimming pool. Even with an ocean and a swimming pool between us, George was making us laugh.



IX. 19 Maciunas’ *Excreta Fluxorum* is a compendium of feces samples from various creatures, ranging from spiders to elephants, neatly labeled as to species. This particular work integrates some of his characteristic interests – concretism and humor set forth in a carefully charted manner with his ever-present eye on the bottom line of cost. George liked to brag about how little money he spent on food and of course kept track of the average amounts (I remember one figure of about \$1.50 a day ca. 1970). He would eat the same thing for long periods when it seemed cost effective. Even the food containers were saved from waste by gluing them together to make room dividers or furniture supports.

George’s penchant for thrift was a component in his oeuvre of products not only in a material way but also in the conceptual economy that he tried to practice and admired in other artists. Making the *Excreta Fluxorum* from animal droppings, which George referred to as the “shit box”, was a logical step in his desire for a no-waste, something-out-of-nothing art practice. He even recycled mice that he had caught and packaged them as a Flux product. He would also ask friends if they had any dead mice to bring him.

While we were building the Flux Labyrinth at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, George collected various animal shit for his *Excreta Fluxorum* edition and had a number of samples from the zoo spread out on cardboard, drying in the museum courtyard. The Labyrinth, which was like a walk-in Fluxbox funhouse, was basically a tactile

obstacle course with doors and passageways that contained some surprise or puzzle aspect. The final door had a small inset door, through which one had to reach a doorknob on the opposite side. That knob was supposed to be immersed in a trough full of elephant shit. I had arrived a week or two ahead of George to find materials and begin the interior construction, but was relieved that getting the elephant shit was an item on his *own* list. It was one of the first things he did when he arrived, so that it could be drying along with other samples for his shit-box edition.

One morning several days before the opening, George came rushing in, yelling, "*All my shit has been stolen!*" I hadn't noticed and nobody nearby knew anything about it. I figured that a cleaning crew had innocently thrown it out, but George was sure it was intentional theft. This was good reason enough for him to throw one of the noisy fits for which he was so well known. He sent me, along with the museum staff member assisting the Labyrinth, to deliver to the Akademie directors his threats of stopping all work and "*going home*" – meaning back to New York. George not only knew his value, but he regularly managed to remind everyone of it with dramatic outbursts, throwing insults and sometimes objects, and then storming out. This would necessitate a rapprochement by the offenders who would have to find him in his room or perhaps even chase him down the road to the airport if his disgust was severe enough. He was also known for reappearing with a shaved head after incidents with the requisite drama.

In the elephant-shit case, I was charged with delivery of his conspiracy theory and his retaliatory threats to the Akademie directors. I advised them of the serious nature of the situation and the institution professed ignorance, suggesting a thorough search be made. A search of the premises and trash bins proved futile and thereby confirmed George's belief in a censorship plot. He ranted sufficiently enough to receive official assurances that there was no intentional interference and that we could proceed unhindered. He then secured another supply of shit, which he again systematically organized in the courtyard. We monitored this supply carefully, watching out every day for suspicious people, but it seemed to be safe.

One day we were informed that city officials would have to inspect the Labyrinth for safety reasons. We were close to finishing and of course misled them whenever possible to avoid changes. They insisted on my putting lights in part of my section which was

They insisted on my putting lights in part of my section which was a totally dark, multilayered maze that had a surprise flash-bulb-in-your-face feature. The string of small lights that they made us put in not only diminished the effect, but it actually increased safety hazards since it happened that people broke the bulbs, exposing themselves to broken glass and live wires. But at least there were no questions from the inspectors about elephant shit. I had been concerned myself about safety issues and had all along tried to prevail upon George in my own way to modify some features of the Labyrinth because of what we called "the moron factor". He seemed to feel that nothing in a universe of possible negative results could ever be laid on his doorstep. Apart from adding some railings and making some more gentle applications of ideas, he was typically stubborn about anything resembling a direct concession. We made up a "warning" sign for the entrance to mollify those with official safety concerns. It was a sarcastic listing of those to be forbidden entry: people such as morons, drunks, women wearing high heels, people with wooden legs – and lastly those who don't like elephants.

When the day arrived to open the Labyrinth, we still had some loose ends to finish but were ready enough to run the big crowd that was gathering outside through it. George went to get what was to be literally the last touch – the prized elephant shit (batch number two) – but soon came roaring back in great outrage. At the last moment once again the elephant shit had disappeared. It had now become the intractable symbol of the war of wills. This was for him righteous proof of his prediction of what happens when you make the mistake of working with any museum. He was furious – the Labyrinth would not be opened, not then or ever, unless the non-negotiable elephant shit was returned. He stationed himself at the Labyrinth entrance, crossed his arms in classic disgust and, with his iron stare, faced off the very long line of people waiting. By then it was apparent: George was right and a conspiracy was afoot. We called a huddle, including Joe Jones, Peter Moore, and the others to figure out what to do. It was clear the Akademie would not admit any guilt and George was a permanent gargoyle at the gate, so we had to find some more elephant shit fast.

Joe and I took along a friend for translation and caught a taxi to a big circus which was in town. When we found the right tent I felt awkward about how to explain our request, but the elephant

handler just grinned and pointed to a big dumpster, saying, "Sure, no problem – take it all." Joe and I had a giddy ride back, knowing we had procured the golden grail of the moment for Sir George – that which would bring him victory in his never-ending fight for truth, justice and the Fluxus way. He was pleased with our extra-large bounty. The trough was filled and he pronounced the Labyrinth open. The crowd had a great time while also nearly destroying it, but no one sued for injuries as far as I know.



IX. 20 I met George in New York in 1973, at the home of the architect Raimund Abraham on Bond Street, together with Hermann and Beate Nitsch, Jonas Mekas and his wife Hollis, Günther Brus and other friends. It was a very pleasant evening, although the confrontation of Maciunas with the Vienna Actionists didn't exactly create an ideal atmosphere. At one point George drew me aside from the others. He had just produced the first of his *Excreta Fluxorum* editions, and he wanted to tell me all about it. He picked up a tube and serenaded me with his approximation of the sounds elephants make when they shit, and cows, and giraffes, and dogs, and sheep – a total litany of anal noises. I must admit that way back then I was somewhat shocked. There's a photo of this little event, taken by I forget who.



IX. 21 *It seems I could accept your invitation to come to Asolo this October. I would like to produce a few Flux cabinets with the help of your carpenter or cabinet maker. I would bring various components for it that may be difficult to obtain in Italy. (Being so near to Serbia I may just go there for a few months before returning to the U.S.)*

The cabinets will have 20 drawers of various depths, each drawer 12x12 inches and from 1 1/2 to 4 inches high.

- 1. Closed on Mondays by George Brecht (drawer with rubber band secured inside so it wants to pull back)*
- 2. Drawer shooting out when catch is released (sort of reverse of the first)*
- 3. Comb Music by George Brecht (prongs are plucked when drawer is opened)*
- 4. Suicide Kit by Ben Vautier*

5. Reliquary by Geoff Hendricks (12 compartments)
6. *Shit Anthology* by George Maciunas (36 compartments)
7. *Sound chess* by Takako Saito
8. Univeral Machine by George Brecht
9. Rock Atlas by Bob Watts (36 compartments)
10. Valoch by George Brecht (balls and eggs, many falling out from the bottom of opened drawer)
11. Pinball Machine by George Maciunas
12. *Drawer with compressed foam rubber, so it jumps out or gets inflated when drawer opens*)
13. Viewer by John Lennon, binoculars set to look downward (viewer sees just own feet below)
14. 16 finger holes by Ay-O
15. Flux films with viewer
16. Another game, maybe Ping-Pong rackets by George Maciunas
17. Sand timer chess by George Maciunas
18. *Spice chess* by Takako Saito
19. Music instrument by Joe Jones
20. This still has to be determined, maybe something by Larry Miller

This cabinet would be very suitable to collectors just beginning with Flux objects, because it will be a self-contained collection in a convenient cabinet and representing old and new pieces. I am making one up here for a new collector, at a cost of \$3,000. If you made them and distributed them in Europe, I could then receive \$1,000, you could keep \$1,000 as commission, and allow \$1,000 to manufacture it ...

While in Italy, we could organize a Flux Mass if you find a church not being used as a church, also sports events in some sport field or gymnasium (you should meanwhile search for suitable places) and I would like very much to do a series of events in San Gimignano. I have asked Joe Jones to try to find someone who could talk to San Gimignano town officials. Maybe you can be of help. We need permission to get to the tops of all the towers to do special tower events. There would be no damage whatever to any parts of the town. (We would, for instance, do a giant spider web from rope between all the towers.) If you know of any other town with as many towers we could do it there, but I don't know of any other such town, and I have seen many, many towns.



IX. 22 When I was a kid my world was full of poohpooh cushions, sneezing powder, stink bombs, cigar and cigarette poppers, jack-in-the-box fountain pens, pencils with rubber points, stick-on holes in your head, fake ink stains and feces and throw-up, and other innocent if worrisome wonders, including, of course, the kind of soap that makes your face dirty instead of clean.

George was fond of these American contributions to popular culture, and the spirit of gaggery in these novelties often found a way into the Fluxus editions that he designed. And he loved to play tricks on gullible friends. The trouble with George, though, was that he usually let the cat out of the bag too soon.

I remember the time in late 1962 or 1963 when I was visiting him at the house high on a hill in Ehlhalten, near Wiesbaden. George showed me to the washroom, and presented me with a cake of soap and a towel.

"This is for you," he said, *"in case you want to wash up."*

Wash up? I wasn't dirty. Darmstadt, where I lived, was only a short train ride from Wiesbaden, and he had picked me up at the station. But several times during the next few hours he asked me if I wanted to wash up. This behavior was most unlike George, and I began to smell a trick.

Before going to bed I said to him, "I think I'll go wash up." He beamed.

I lathered my face, or, rather, dirtied it up with the trick soap, and when my face looked a big enough mess I ran down the hallway shouting, "George, you son of a gun, what kind of soap is this?"

Then I had the pleasure of watching him howl with laughter punctuated with bouts of coughing. I smile now, as I recall the laughter. And you know, if I could, I'd gladly be his fall guy again.



IX. 23 Despite my great admiration for George's unique contribution to life-on-earth there was one thing at that time I was unable to do for him. He was scheduled but unable to appear in a series organized by Jean Dupuy wherein artists were invited to perform on a wooden tower constructed in the PS 1 auditorium. George asked me if I would perform his work for the tower and I immediately said yes. It was called *Target*, he said. He would supply me with a printed

target. I was to climb the tower, hang my ass over the edge, take careful aim and shit onto the target. On the one hand, it immediately struck me as being a very logical, Maciunas-like work and his punctuating laugh was part of the description as usual, but I also had a very negative reaction to it as being an emotional fall-back into an expressionistic art he had consistently argued against. Although understandable as a phase in facing imminent death, I felt I would have been a vehicle in venting his anger at an audience who would go on living. As much as I wanted to grant him every wish possible at this time, I could not bring myself to provide the butt of this particular joke.

I thought about it and realized that he had at last cornered me somehow. He had checkmated a personal limit of mine. I didn't respond to the idea as a test of personal or aesthetic "loyalty" and he also didn't chide me about my excuses for not doing it. During his slow exit, George was pushing the boundaries of his thinking toward a more symbolic expression that meanwhile still retained some elements that could be viewed as an extension of his preference for a concrete art form. *Target* symbolized this for me. Or perhaps I just rationalized ordinary embarrassment and my refusal regrettably denied both him and the audience a worthy Maciunas work. In any case he did approve of my suggestion for a very mild but still humorous variation which I performed. From atop the tower, I took aim and tried to piss into successively smaller buckets which were brought in one after another and amplified by microphone. He saw it later that day on video shot by Sara Seagull and shown during the Flux Cabaret.



IX. 24 George was an avid movie-goer. His favorite movie theaters were the uptown Thalia Theater and the Apollo (42nd Street). In later years, being a total insomniac, he spent thousands of night hours watching late night movies on his 5 x 8 black and white Sony television. Vittorio De Sica's *Miracle in Milan* and Roberto Rossellini's *The Rise to Power of Louis XIV* – and perhaps Marcel Pagnol's trilogy of *Marius*, *Fanny*, and *César* – were his favorites. The scene in *Miracle in Milan* of the poor people of Milan watching the setting sun George considered one of the sublime Fluxus scenes. Rossellini's film he admired above all for the accuracy of its historical detail. He also found it very funny.



IX. 25 George concretized his thoughts on names in his event called 12! BIG NAMES! presented at 80 Wooster Street in N.Y. He made up a flyer in his Maciunas style announcing an event with the names Acconci, Beuys, Philip Glass, Kaprow, Levine, Manzoni, Nauman, Ono, Snow, Rinke, Vostell and Warhol listed around an image of an old-style strongman flexing his biceps. People showed up and filled the chairs at Anthology Film Archives to near capacity.

George stayed up in the projection booth at the back and when everyone was ready for the show he gave them the 12 Big Names, just like in the flyer, projected "big" upon the screen, one at a time, for several minutes each, to total about an hour for the whole program – and nothing more.

After a couple of Big Names went silently by, the literal and the perverse began to sink in on the uninitiated portion of the audience. Some of the artists present, such as Al Hansen, Bob Watts, Ralston Farina and others, started a kind of sound-track by inventing word games with the names, singing and hooting. The in-group knew that George was peeking out from the booth, relishing his joke and taking great satisfaction in watching those who walked out, victims of "false" advertising.

Most professionals of the world of fine art know that it is no special refuge for idealistic or romantic behavior; its cultural endowment is laced with as much ego, opportunism, political and economic hype as any other human enterprise. But it was a special mission for George to turn up the lights on any such illusionism and he was ever out to demonstrate that the art world has no clothes. He was perhaps toughest of all on artists, reserving his strictest judgments for those he saw as self-promoting egotists who played into the hands of "High Art" barons.



IX. 26 *Very large names, about 20 feet wide, were shown one at a time for about 5 minutes each, to the audience. Since many of the works of chosen big names are imitative of work by smaller names, the large audience attendance must be because of the names and not the works. We satisfied the audience therefore by omitting the works altogether and adding instead more big names.*



IX. 27 My difficulty in writing about George Maciunas now is that it all happened so long ago. Thirty-two years have passed since we first met in Wiesbaden and about twenty-five years since our last significant meeting in New York. I don't remember being diagnosed as suffering from Alzheimer's disease, but I do know that, without reference to photographs and historic documents, already I have problems recalling details of my own participation in those early Fluxus activities, not to mention what other people were doing, saying or thinking.

To be honest, today I cannot find in my mind more than half a dozen images or memories of my several hundred encounters with George between early 1962 and late 1968. (After 1968, for whatever reasons, we had little contact. I was not at the wedding, never visited the farm at Great Barrington, Massachusetts, and did not sit at George's death bed. This was not due to any conscious animosity, but because our interests and priorities had moved off in very different directions.)

This does not mean that George was not a significant influence in my life. Quite the contrary, it was George's efforts in bringing together the Fluxus "family" that gave me a base of reference and support for my own work. (Of course it is impossible to know how my early work might have continued, or not continued, to develop without Fluxus. But it is clear to me that it was the Fluxus trademark legacy that not only kept my name and work alive during my twenty plus years of "retirement", but also allowed me a relatively quick and painless "reentry" into the art world – even ten years after George was dead.) But also do not infer from the above to mean that the influence was due only to George's organizational efforts. Intellectually, my first real knowledge of avant-garde art in early, post-revolutionary Russia evolved from our sometimes lengthy conversations in Germany and New York between 1962 and 1965. On the negative side of the coin, it was probably George's papal and dogmatic administrative style that first made me wary of life as a communist (a seductive flirt for me in those days).

So, what can I write about, today, when I possess no clear memories or "hard texts" that would do more than weakly rehash subjects to which others – with clearer memories and documents – have more valid claims? Well, there is one subject that I feel my qualifications as a musician (I remember the sounds of sounds) and

as the resident Fluxus “armchair psychologist” (see Publisher’s Foreword to *The Four Suits*, Something Else Press, 1965) allow me to address with licensed authority. And that subject is George’s *laughter*, or, more precisely: what made George laugh?

Although the academic descriptions of George (meaning the descriptions gleaned from the leavings of history by those who were not there) most often suggest that he was some sort of arid, acerbated, ascetic android, I know that this is not true. Although more warped and weird than most of us, George’s sense of humor was unmistakable and nearly omnipresent. As I knew him, the only activity requiring physical exertion that George really enjoyed was laughter ... and it was a very *physical* laughter. Forget about loud and “normal” laughter and try to imagine a sound-mix of trumpeting rogue, bull elephant and cackling, stupid goose! That was our George. (The sad part was that these perhaps psychically healthy raucous outbursts often ended with an asthmatic attack and a quick aerosol cortisone “fix”.) But laugh he could – and no one else did it better!

My subject is not, “Did George laugh?” (because everyone who knew him can verify the affirmative), rather “What made George laugh?” And now we are, perhaps, in new territory. “Perhaps”, because no one denies that humor and specifically the “gag” eventually became George’s litmus test for determining which works by whom would be included in a Fluxus performance or publication. “New”, because to my knowledge no one has yet written about the “what, how or why” of why the “gag” became such a major determinant when George was deciding what was and was not to be called “Fluxus”.

It is not necessary here to quote George’s numerous references to his ideals of humor – the gags of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, the Keystone Cops, Spike Jones, etc. These are well known. But it is important to note that, with the exception of Spike Jones, these references are all *Hollywood creations* – and, already by the 1960s, nostalgic memories. Given George’s background (well-educated, middle-class European intellectual, etc.) this selection is truly “weird”. No European artists – dead or alive – practicing humor, in paint, word or sound as either wit, sarcasm, irony, farce, parody or mimicry, is accepted. What is the meaning here? Why did George prefer the gag to all of these other classical forms of humor? Does the answer lie in the definition and attributions of a gag?

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word “gag” has a long history. Apparently, before 1500 “gag” had to do with either the action “to stop up the mouth ... in order to prevent speech or outcry” or “something thrust into the mouth to keep it open and prevent speech or outcry.” However, by 1819, Lockhart suggests that “gagging ... signifies, as its name may lead you to suspect, nothing more than the thrusting of absurdities, wholesale and retail, down the throat of some credulous gaper.” (This, of course, is a definition that many critics would consider a perfect description of Fluxus.) In another ancient usage, “gag” could describe the action “to prick or wound or to make thrusts.” (Again, in some circles, not a bad description of many Fluxus performance works.)

Okay – the word “gag” gets bad press – and for centuries! But now forget the “boulevard journals” and think about basic psychology. Above I stated that George’s humor was unmistakable and nearly omnipresent. I forgot to add that it was also generally and totally unexpected. If not in his art or his work-a-day work, at least in his humor George was SPONTANEOUS. I, at least, often wondered then, “Why is George laughing now?” And now I have a reason to think about it, and attempt some answers.

During the period that I knew George best, he was certainly the antithesis of the “bohemian artist.” Whether his abstinence was the result of poor health, his “workaholic” dedication to Fluxus or the influence of his mother, George was certainly not “one of the boys” to go out smoking, drinking and whoring. In terms of social behavior, the George that I knew existed almost entirely on an extreme, abstract, intellectual level. Indulgences of a ground-level, proletarian life were not part of George’s repertory.

On the other hand, George’s sense of “social justice” demanded respect for “proletarian” values and a determined anti-bourgeois stance. In traditional “revolutionary strategy” this would have meant getting “down and dirty” to work at the level of the proletariat’s real concerns – to try to earn “the daily bread” without submitting to more than the necessary exploitation.

Given his sophisticated mind and a relatively privileged socio-economic status, plus the abstinence mentioned above, George could not, did not participate in the dirt and grime of ordinary life. Still he vigorously rejected the normal comforts of a bourgeois life. And, as an ultimate contradiction of his professed anarchic brand of communism, he attempted to rule Fluxus as a Pope – giving

blessings and absolutions (“membership” in Fluxus), banning and ex-communicating (“membership” in Fluxus), intriguing, issuing bulls, etc.

Contradictions so personal and polarized have to find resolution or release, and “release”, as we know, comes in many forms, ranging from violent antisocial behavior (assault, battery and murder) to public comic-relief (theater, cartoons and barroom jokes).

Our current understanding of the psychology of humor is minimal. (Although the court-jester is accepted as necessary, exactly why such a jester is necessary is not an item for public discussion ... thus, no support for “jester research”.) However, the last time I researched the subject (about 1988), the ideas of Arthur Koestler seemed most convincing. His proposition was that humor occurred in a situation of “bisociation”: – that is, a situation where two mutually incompatible contexts “are tossed about in the mind until ‘tense expectations’ end.” The outcome – the relief of “tense expectations” – is a psycho-physical stimulation of such muscles as needed to produce laughter. Other research suggests that laughter is a healthy stimulation of nerves, muscles and organs – like a good massage ... perhaps, a “luxury reflex” (i.e., not necessary for physical survival, but important for ego and other psychic, survival needs).

So, what made George laugh? In my analysis, George was a most honest skeptic. In the end he had profound doubts. Were proletarian values really the solution for human misery? Could Fluxus really dissolve the Metropolitan Museums and Operas of the world? What schemes could protect SoHo New York from becoming a “capitalist” disaster?

Emmett Williams has written that, shortly before he died, George said, “*You know, maybe we were mistaken and were just charlatans.*” Emmett refuted this suggestion, as I would have also. But, my point in noting this death-bed “confession” is that it is hard to imagine that such a sad self-evaluation of one’s life was only fleeting and peripheral, a last-minute thought. I doubt that it was. I suspect that from the beginning, somewhere barely at a conscious level, George feared that his life and work (really one and the same) could be only a grand quixotic quest. Having committed himself to such a high-stakes game and not holding very good cards in physical health, George bid comic relief as his trump. And it *worked* – quite wonderfully and for all of us! Thank you, George.



IX. 28 *Now for this Paris biennale ... I have no word things unless you take this piece – see illustration – and say what you want (since it's the complete alphabet) to the audience, like:*

You are full of shit

or anything you like at the moment. Or say: "The organizers wish to announce that the next poetry evening has been postponed to (some other date.)"

George Brecht – too bad he has no words – wait a minute, you can do his "word event"!!!!!! EXIT. This would be especially good if you performed it in the middle of the program and the audience left after EXIT leaving auditorium empty – Ha Ha! very very good. Better translate EXIT to something like "out" in French – or please leave – SORTIR (is it right?)



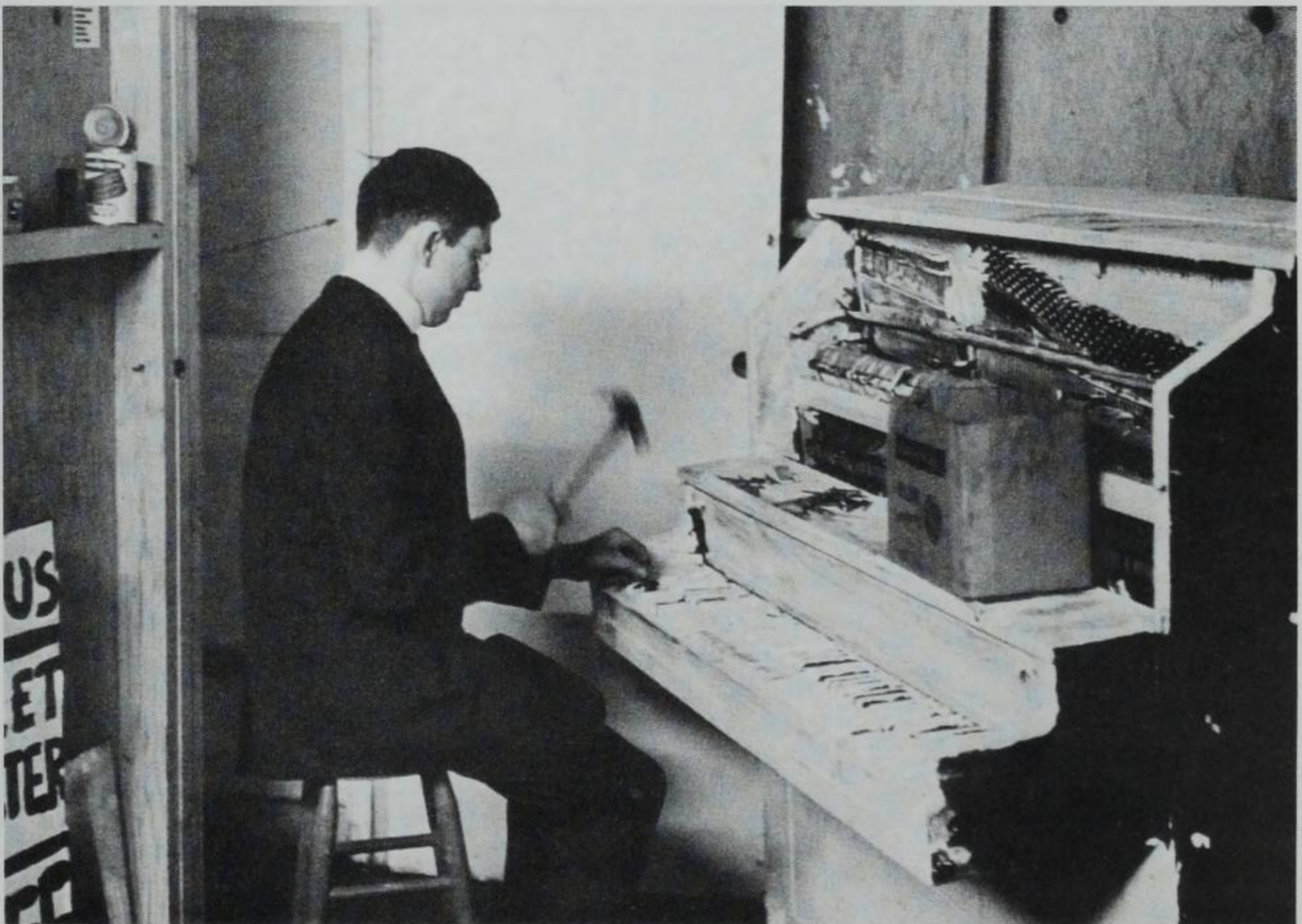
IX. 29 George Maciunas sent me a great quantity of Fluxus publications, objects and films. I can't help mentioning one particular event which occurred when I went to pick up one of his parcels at the Prague customs office. Before handing over the parcel, the employees carefully examined the contents of each of the little boxes inside, and while one was being examined a coiled spring flew out, scattering at least a thousand tiny cards on which NEW FLUX YEAR was printed in minute type. The customs people spent the rest of the afternoon on all fours picking up paper flakes from the floor of their already snowed-under office.



IX. 30 In a sense, George's stance is of one who is totally disillusioned, of one who is totally resigned to the fact that he has no longer a firm place on this earth, neither in body or geography. His country has been sacrificed on the Altar of Yalta. His body is here only by the grace of cortisone: an artificial – by now – frame held together only by his willpower. The only thing left to him is his laugh. So he became a king in his own kingdom. A court jester presiding over the games of life, jokes, insignificances, the light and the subtle. The heavy importances he leaves to the rest of the world.



IX. 31 In 1982, during a retrospective exhibition of my work at the National Gallery in Berlin, the director, Prof. Dr. Dieter Honisch, invited me to escort a group of art-history students through the show. Although there was nothing particularly “Fluxus” about the works in the exhibition (unless you generously and unwisely label everything a Fluxus artist does as Fluxus), one of them asked me how to pronounce F-L-U-X-U-S. “Some people say flookus, and some say flucksus. Which is correct?” Well, someone asked George the same question at the flookus or flucksus festival in Dusseldorf in 1963. George’s answer: “*It rhymes with fucks us.*”



1964: George Maciunas performing his *Carpenter's Piece* at Fluxhall concert in New York. Photo © Estate of Peter Moore.

GREENFIBER - TRUMPET, JOE JONES - VIOLIN, H. KAPFLOW - 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 WILMARTH - RECORDER, JOHN WORDEN - TRUMPET, ROBERT WATTS - TUBA,

ORCHESTRA MEMBERS: LA MONTE YOUNG - CONDUCTOR, AYO - TRUMPET, STEPHEN BARRY - MELODICA, LYNN BUNN - FRENCH HORN, JOHN CAVANAUGH - GUITAR, ANTHONY COX - VIOLIN, HENRY



SPECIAL GUEST - SAMURAI SWORD

Program for Fluxorchestra concert at Carnegie Recital Hall in 1965, introducing the motif of an Aztec-derived face that George stylized into a Fluxus symbol.

FLUXFEST PRESENTS: 12! BIG NAMES!
APRIL 21, 8PM. AT 80 WOOSTER



ONO
SNOW
BEYNE
BEUYS
MANZONI
RINKE
VOSTELL
GLASS
KAPRON
NAUMAN
WARHOL

George Maciunas: Poster for *12! Big Names!*, 1973.



One of the sights of SoHo in 1973, the workroom-toilet in George's "factory" apartment at 349 West Broadway. Photo by Beate Nitsch, courtesy of Archive Francesco Conz, Verona.



Robert Filliou (left), Joe Jones and George prepare the harpsichord for a Fluxconcert at the Akademie der Künste, Berlin.

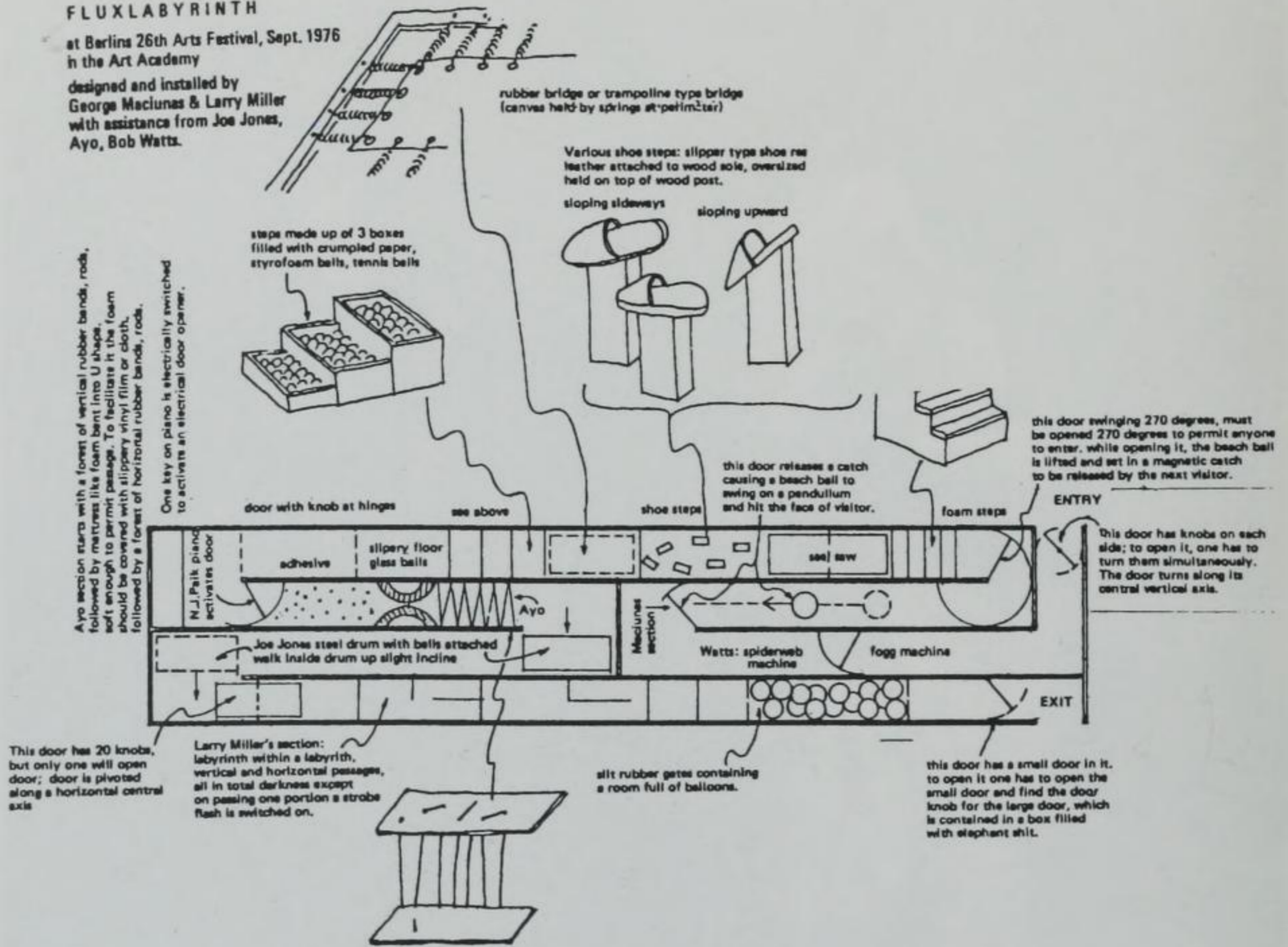


Another temper tantrum: George heads for the nearest exit after a dispute with Ben Vautier at the Akademie. Photos © 1976 Larry Miller.

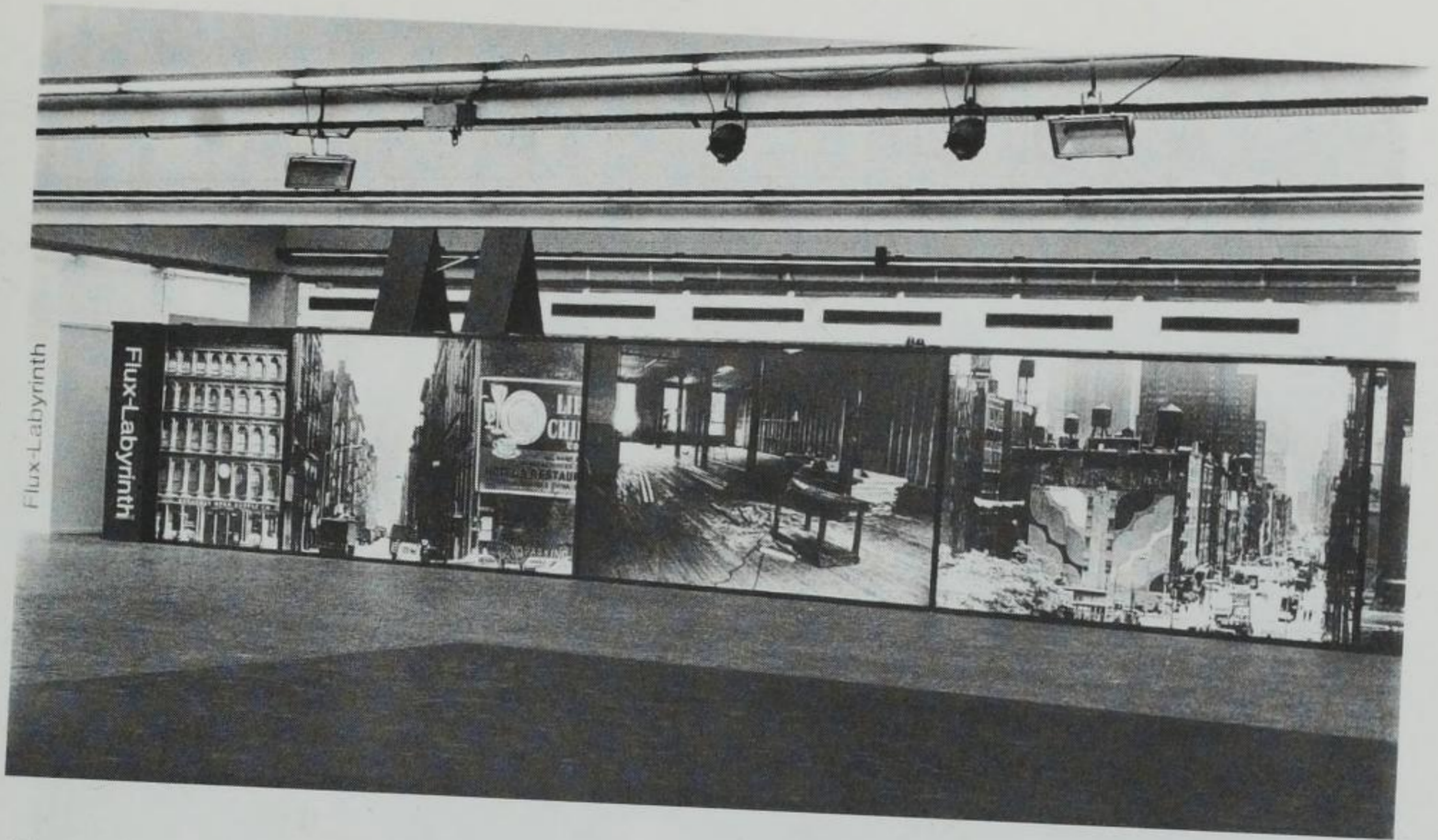
FLUXLABYRINTH

at Berlins 26th Arts Festival, Sept. 1976
in the Art Academy

designed and installed by
George Maciunas & Larry Miller
with assistance from Joe Jones,
Ayo, Bob Watts.



Design for the *Flux-Labyrinth*, a highpoint of Berlin's 26th Arts Festival in 1976.



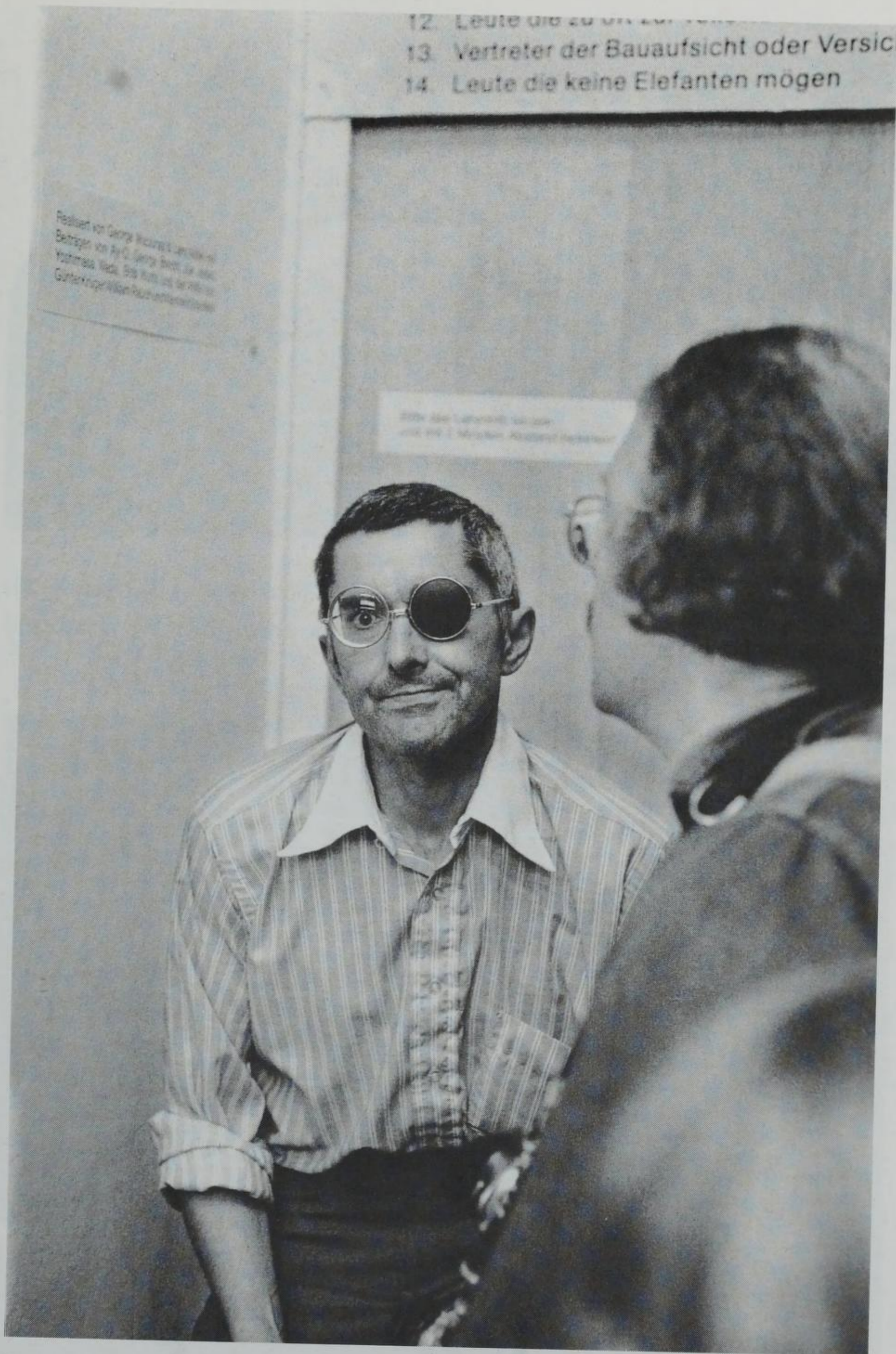
Above: Huge murals of New York's SoHo hide the mysteries of the Labyrinth. Below: Warning – No morons, drunks, women wearing high heels, people with wooden legs – or those who don't like elephants. Photos by Hanns Sohm, © 1976 Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.



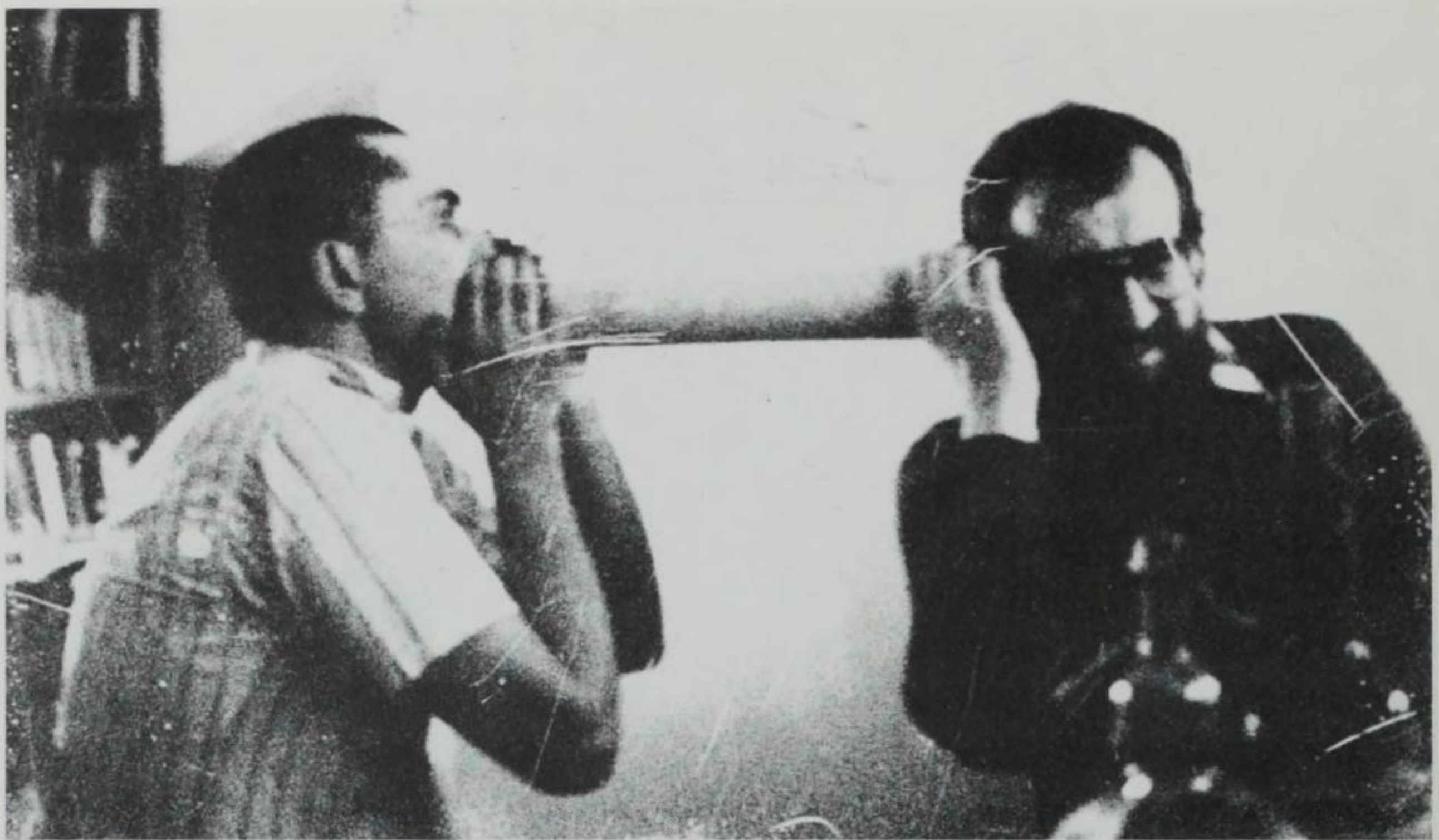
- Folgende Besucher sollten das Fluxlabyrinth nicht betreten:
1. Invaliden
 2. Leute denen häufig Unfälle passieren
 3. Gebrechliche
 4. Leute ohne Unfallversicherung
 5. Leute mit Holzbeinen
 6. Leute auf Rollschuhen
 7. Frauen (oder Männer) auf hohen Absätzen
 8. Frauen mit zu engen Röcken
 9. Aus dem Zoo entlaufene Gorillas
 10. Idioten (die nicht fähig sind herauszufinden, wie die Türen geöffnet werden können)
 11. Betrunkene und Leute die zuviel Bier getrunken haben
 12. Leute die zu oft zur Toilette rennen müssen
 13. Vertreter der Bauaufsicht oder Versicherung
 14. Leute die keine Elefanten mögen



George preoccupied with *Excreta Fluxorum* (yes, those are elephant droppings in foreground) at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. Photos © 1976 Larry Miller.



Mr. Fluxus stands guard at the entrance to the *Flux-Labyrinth* after the disappearance of his precious elephant shit: No shit, no show.



Above: Francesco Conz gets a shocking earful on a visit to New York. (See IX. 20)
Below: George relaxes (?) in a Shaker rocking chair at Jean Brown's home and Fluxus archive in Tyringham, Massachusetts. Photo © 1976 Larry Miller.



X

AT LONG LAST LOVE

- X. 1 Back from an unplanned weekend excursion to Massachusetts in hope of finding Billie Maciunas there. Ever since my first meeting with her five years ago on Maciunas' farm, I've been fond of this simple and straightforward writer from the South. I've read nothing she's written, and I know of no one else who has. "I'm a poet," she said, and would go out to look after the farm animals, the goats and the chickens.



- X. 2 Still a student, he was able to be completely absorbed in his work. Women didn't interest him. He always answered my questions about the entertainment of a girl, that he didn't need it, that he was too busy, and that girls would take away valuable time. Later I again advised him to marry, but he answered, "*I'll manage.*" ... He wanted to be free. And he cited the example of monks. Even in his youth he thought about entering a Jesuit monastery, saying that the most learned people were there ...

In his spare hours he wouldn't sit down to a book, but would read the encyclopedia. And he arranged everything neatly in his memory. When he came to visit me he could tell me interesting things he had dug out of the encyclopedia, endlessly. In such moments I saw his real essence and forgot about his unsuccessful life.



- X. 3 If I hadn't met G. I might be dead now from hunger and degradation, or I might have become a rich lady in desperation by writing J's book about her sordid affair with J.V.L. for the Christmas '79 market ...

To begin with, I had to have money, so I took a typing job from a medical researcher whose husband had been a writer. She realized from our conversations that I was suffering the unknown writer's

plight, and arranged for me to go to this farm in Massachusetts she knew about to write J's book, another chance opportunity that had come through a typing job.

The medical researcher had described this George Maciunas as unmistakable by the green lens over his left eye. He was waiting at Melvin's Drug Store in Great Barrington, with the laconic words, pointing to my yellow newspaper bag labeled *The Militant*, "*That's all you have?*" ...

We went to the Price Chopper for provisions. I was awed by the size of the supermarket, its glaring brightness, and its Muzak, since I hadn't been inside a supermarket for three years. I was used to buying food minute to minute, as I needed it, from the fruit stands and corner markets on the Lower East Side, sometimes eating my meal of raw vegetables on the street.

I saw him watching me, musing over the grapefruit juice as I considered how best to spend my last dollar.

At the farm he showed me my room, whose centerpiece was an industrial vacuum cleaner. Otherwise, the room contained only a bed, a dresser and a table.



XI 4 Yurgis got three goats and told me enthusiastically how he made cheese out of goat's milk. A young woman, one of his tenants, showed up who was able to help him with his goats and in the kitchen ... They made friends; she knew how to please him, clearly doing what he wanted.



X. 5 George solidified my determination by giving me my first real physical help, that it, by feeding me, and along with that came my first taste of self-respect. He also let me live in his house for token work and only because I insisted upon the exchange. I had no idea of his work or his fame, but was delighted by his intelligence after the legions of stupid people to whom I had to defer, considering the power of majority opinion combined with doleful lack of imagination.

He was playful and flexible, and life became miraculously smooth for me in his house. One of his most remarkable characteristics was that sexist assumptions were inconceivable to him ... He was not threatened by my intelligence; on the contrary he was glad

of it, and that particular fact helped me to drop some of my inhibitions and to become gradually receptive to his love. His passion was so refined in the beginning that I was hardly aware of it. I began to respect the purity and depth of his emotions and admired his masterfulness in winning my affections.

What troubled me was his increasing internal pain and the strain he was under in taking care of the huge house in Massachusetts, which he maintained by renting out rooms and doing all the maintenance work himself. He never had enough money. When he received a grant of \$7,500 in September 1977 he spent all of it paying bills past due for renovations he had had done on the house.



- X. 6 I am enclosing a poem written sometime shortly after I moved to Great Barrington. It was August, I think, 1977. I had caught on somewhat to George's subtle kind of erotic pleasure because he would invite me to the laundromat with him and insist that we fold the sheets together, each holding one end. Very simple activities had the luminous quality of an event with him – hard to explain. Anyway, I interpret this poem as an homage to the humble sock, which I wore with sneakers before I graduated to heels in the interest of satisfying George's own interest in wearing them – the heels, not the socks.

how deliciously concealed
her sock
only later to be
tantalizingly revealed
at the laundry
the over strident shoe
enshrined



- X. 7 He very simply wrote me that he liked Billie, that he could talk with her, that she helped him, but that there was no intimacy between (them) and that he had told her that he was still a virgin, and simply didn't know how to approach a woman, and put the initiative in her hands. But she hadn't decided to approach him, and as he expressed in his letter, each treated the other like fragile glassware.



X. 8 George is in town, stopped to eat with us, with a friend, Billie. Hollis thought she was his girlfriend. They were so nice together. And George was really happy. Most of the time he is happy anyway, no matter what. But he said he's taking morphine every day, by prescription. Can't stand the pain. Stomach. It has been like that for four months, doesn't know what else to do, tried everything. The pain is like "*pulling tooth without anaesthesia all day long, how could I stand it without morphine?*" He said he can't sleep either. And eats very little. But he ate a lot of tongue and sheep cheese. Said he has four goats on his farm, is making a lot of goat cheese. Billie milks the goats. Twenty people live up there now, some he never sees. None of them smoke, he said, he saw to that. Complained that I seldom go to Fluxus events, I must hate them. No, I said, I really like them, but I always have so much to do. Then George said that we have opposite tastes. He likes Vanderbeek, for example, and hates Brakhage.

Anyway, he had a very good time, was very happy, ate a lot of tongue, even tried some ice cream. It was good to see him in such a good mood despite his stomach troubles. When Hollis remarked that morphine may not be good for him, he said that without morphine the pain would be unbearable and he'd have to shoot himself.



X. 9 George was, among many other things, a transvestite. The closets in the Massachusetts house were full of 1950's prom dresses that he scavenged from the Salvation Army. He also confessed to being a masochist and a shoe fetishist. Shortly after I arrived in Great Barrington, we went shopping for high heels. We bought two pairs, one for me and one for George. When we got to know each other a little better, he obtained a small riding whip and begged me to beat him with it. Life with George always entailed performance.

I sometimes borrowed his dresses, so that we would both be in drag. One time we went to visit Jean Dupuy and Olga Adorno on Broad Street. I made up George's face and he put on a purple sheath and high heels. He had a blonde wig, and he wore little wire spectacles with one lens missing. We went shopping on Canal Street, where a lot of shopkeepers knew George and seemed to take him in stride; after all, he didn't bother to disguise his voice.

He sometimes thought of us as “two elegant sisters.” I also liked this image and cannot imagine a more elegant companion than George to this day. The “Black and White Wedding Piece” perfectly captured the complexities of mixing high romance, camp, and that elegance all at once.



X. 10 During his last year, George’s love of costume came into full bloom and he could reveal his transvestitism secretly practiced for decades. Photographs showed him to be quite adept at the transformation and looking convincing in a series taken in 1968. Due to his chronic need for prescription drugs he had complained of difficulty in sleeping and would be active late into the night. I always supposed that besides working, poring over encyclopedic texts and listening to Elizabethan music, he must have found some form of physical satisfaction in his private chamber. But I hadn’t pondered it beyond the entertaining speculations about possible women friends. When the cross-dressing came to light it wasn’t that astonishing and was readily incorporated by everyone as more Georgeology. At the 1977 Halloween party – which I could not attend – he dressed as a woman and asked the same of others.

His romance with Billie Hutching had evolved over this period. She was a quiet young woman with a physical beauty which reminded me of some figures in Renaissance paintings. She and George became One in the double-bride Flux Wedding and within a dynamic of romance only they could understand. They served as reversed-gender waiter and waitress at The Ear Inn in New York one evening, and during the Flux Cabaret performed an artful exchange of formal attire to the accompaniment of taped classical music from George’s archive.

George was interested in having photos of himself as female and had been mildly disappointed that Peter Moore had not gotten a shot sufficiently showing his high heel shoes. He asked Peter to set up a photo shoot to produce a special *Flux-Deck* of cards with the four suits based upon aspects of the body. The face cards of each suit and jokers were all to be photographs of George, Billie, Geoff Hendricks, Brian Buczak, John Attaway and myself, variously outfitted in funny costumes as Jack, Queen and King.

All during these final months George was in much pain, but got much gratifying compensation from playing dress-up with friends.

The S&M references portrayed in the photos and planned as part of the suit designs further revealed his exploration of ways to assert his psychic freedom and ameliorate his physical suffering (the Flux-Deck was later completed for the 10th anniversary of his death and published by Barbara Moore). George was not posing around as a conceptual Rose Selavy, he was abandoning himself at last to a declaration of psychic and physical celebration.



- X. 11 His pain became worse, and changed the tone of our romance, so that we became more dependent on one another for emotional and physical support, his need having an urgency that I could only dimly perceive. The house for me had an increasing aura of horror which was relieved only by the memorable parties George held with such ease and success that I confess I was dazzled.

He installed a speaker in my attic room so that I could hear the music of Monteverdi and Purcell which he loved ... My starved soul was lightened, while simultaneously preparing for the grief presaged by his mysterious intense pain. Sometimes my emotions were so mixed that I flung myself on the floor in sorrow, not knowing what else to do; next moment I would be transfixed by angelic voices singing songs I had never heard before. George was conveying his moods to me through the music, and I was captivated by the ineffable and undeniably decadent mixture of love and death in the same house. I was not innocent of the erotic nature of these mixed elements; in fact, the theme had been a life study. But I was susceptible nevertheless because my imagination demanded a hero and my Dionysian nature would not be distracted from the fatalism increasingly intensified by all that went unspoken between us.



- X. 12 I asked George if he would let me practice with him a method of therapeutic body relaxation that I had learned from Seymour Halpern in New York at Queens Psychiatric Center. Dr. Halpern's training had been in hypnosis as well as traditional psychotherapy, and he had developed what I thought was a successful method of utilizing the body's natural tendency to rest by simply lying on a flat surface and keeping still. Beyond that, released images can be discussed and analyzed, but the involvement with a therapist is kept minimal and the first object is to maintain the person's dignity, as

opposed to the Freudian assumption that we are all perpetual children seeking animal gratification. I had been using the therapy, called “immobilization”, on myself for over a year.

I realized that George was in love with me, and that these sessions of immobilization therapy were erotic events to him. I wrote to Halpern to advise me and described George as I saw him then. He was not always rational and had outbursts of temper, aside from his fixation on me in his transvestite fantasies. He was in a great deal of pain as well. I wasn't sure that I had the stamina and particularly the scope to be responsible.

An answer from Seymour arrived.

“Your letter comes as an astringent reminder that one must always be prepared to entertain the messenger of darkness. I am at a loss as to how to be of assistance insofar as there is no mutual foundation for my participation in your affairs. My intuition recommends that you strongly heed those positive forces of your own survival – you are flirting with evil ...”

George was curious about Seymour's answer, so I read him the paragraph. We both had a good laugh over the first sentence. I decided to forget about asking for guidance from this pious patriarch, even if it meant commending myself forthrightly to the underworld. I couldn't hide my discouragement from myself, though, for the next two days.



X. 13 The second session took place in early evening. We had agreed to use an isolated room on the 3rd floor because it was equipped with a wood-burning stove. The floor was padded with a braided rug.

He hadn't eaten, hoping to avoid pain. He removed his shirt and shoes. I removed his glasses. This time we used a cylinder under his neck, so he would have to breathe deeply. His eyes were wide open, and the right side tense with the right foot pointing at a higher angle than the left. After a minute he swallowed and took a deep breath. He said the sensation of hearing my pencil scratching on the paper produced erotic sensations, which prevented him from thinking of anything else. He then became verbose, beginning with talk of setting up a microphone in my room so he could listen to me writing. He recalled the film version of *And Quiet Flows the Don* in which all

sound was magnified. He gets pleasure from hearing certain sounds, like a carpenter sawing wood. No. On second thought, too noisy. Say, a watchmaker. He goes on to tell me that the sight of my dress when he entered the room made him weak in the knees, as if he would not be able to stand.

His arms now had the feeling of wanting to embrace a cylindrical object, like a large tree trunk. I interpreted this statement to mean that he felt confined, and suggested that he move. He said, "*No, I'd like to see what happens.*" In a moment he added, "*I think I'll dress up all day tomorrow. One of my fantasies is to stay always dressed up. Yet I'm not a transsexual. Men wouldn't attract me at all.*" Later he asked me whether I would tell him, rather than ask him, when I wanted something. I asked if he still had the same feeling in his arms as earlier. He said it had gone away.

Suddenly his right hand twitched. He noticed he had no stomach ache. He said, "*I think I'm a sensual person.*" I agreed that he was. He made a joke about his stomach, laughed, took a deep breath. He said, "*My hands seem to be in the air. My legs seem to be in the air.*" The only part of him that seemed to be in contact with the floor was his coccyx, which he called "*the opposite of the nipples.*" I adjusted his right foot so that it pressed closer to the floor, and stretched his arms farther from his body. Then I lightly pressed his stomach, hoping to bring his lower back closer to the floor. There was a quick, reflexive resistance, so I didn't press long or hard. He remarked that the sensation was pleasant. Perhaps he would build a chamber of fantasies, rather than a torture chamber, in which he would be a piece of furniture. His ideas ranged further, so that finally he began talking about an idea for dispensing cream from four suspended fake udders.

All at once a flood of information poured out. His mother and sister "accuse" him of being infantile. His sister says the mother was overprotective, preventing him from knowing any girls. He is still a virgin. He compared immobilization stretching to a monk's confessional, only a monk would lie on his stomach. He has often mentioned that he once wanted to be a monk, and his life has been monk-like. I said to him that he might move, or adjust himself if he would be more comfortable. He said he was okay, just feeling suspended. I asked him how his mother controlled him so much.

They lived together until 1968, when George was 37. His father died when he was 23. His mother seemed entirely lost, so he couldn't

leave her. In 1968 she began to encourage him to meet women. By this time, however, he was too shy, too isolated and passive. He called living with his mother a sad situation, because it "*affects one's whole future.*" He said masculinity repels him, so that he would not, for instance, want to be hairy. His father was very masculine and domineering. He, his sister, and mother were afraid of the father, though he never hit any of them. He describes the father as imposing. George still has the habit of being punctual because his father used to be upset if any of the family was five minutes late.



X. 14 He got into his purple sheath, I in my black velvet skirt to go out shopping. The shopkeepers we visited went along with our little drama, good naturedly calling us "ladies." Most of the people on the street merely gave us strange looks or nodded to their companions at us. A street vendor selling hosiery and hats called to us as we passed, "Hello, lovelies!" I had the time of my life, prissily promenading in tawdry splendor with the exotic George. He wore a tiny pair of spectacles with one lens missing, caring that only from a distance of five feet he looked like a woman. Close inspection devastated him. Twenty memorable blocks later we rounded out the adventure over tea back at 530 Broadway, in sane clothes. We went out again dressed normally. Our pace was still frenzied, we bought books, makeup, a dress from Leon's Place, some Very Berry Lipstick. We had not a minute to rest. I was frazzled and uncommunicative by the time we boarded the bus for Great Barrington, but George didn't seem at all affected. He took a rear seat so he could read while I used two of the four front seats to sprawl out.



X. 15 In January Hala Pietkiewicz came to the farm. (George told me that she was one of the few people he knew who had no self-interest in helping him.) One day, in answer to his cynical question about who would receive his Social Security benefits after his death, Hala suggested he marry me. She came and asked me if I was already married – and I said no. She said I should not be surprised if George asked me to marry him ... I told Hala that I would marry him, not for his Social Security, but for love, if he would come and ask me himself.

That night he came to my room and proposed marriage. I had been thinking about my answer, realizing I'd be taking on unknowns by marrying him in tragic circumstances after knowing him only six months. But then, doesn't every decision involve unknowns? The circumstances hadn't changed our characters, or our nearly telepathic understanding of one another. Other than that, we still had what we'd had in the beginning: our chance meeting. I said yes. George said that my answer made him very happy, only he regretted he wouldn't be around very long to enjoy the relationship.

I accepted that the pain and the drugs he was taking prevented love-making. Anyway, I knew from the immobilization sessions that his sexuality was at least as complicated as mine. Still, George was tender and delightfully imaginative in inventing games that would have enlightened even the Marquis de Sade had he been present. I regarded the relationship as wholly suitable to both our temperaments, though as time passed neither of us could help being frustrated by the limitations.

In early February, we were married in Lee, Massachusetts, with Jean Brown and Emilio (a friend who had happened by) as witnesses. George arranged a FluxWedding to take place in New York a week or so later, where we performed a piece for "the coming of Eros" which had been postponed since New Year's on account of George's illness. The piece, conceived by George, symbolized our union perfectly because in it we exchanged clothing so that at the end I wore the bridegroom's clothes and he the bridal costume. It was my first experience of Fluxus as theater.



- X. 16 The disease was, in the meantime, developing and he faded with each day, losing strength. The doctor had told him that he would die between March and April and he decided to get married at the end of February. He wanted to repay her, and most importantly he felt depressed at night and panicked at being alone. After the wedding she slept next to him, and that is the only reason he got married. He never touched her as a woman and never experienced any sexual feeling for her, and later, when we were in Jamaica, he told me that he had never (made love to) her and that he didn't know what the feeling of passion meant which morphine had long ago deadened for him, this morphine so necessary in delivering him from inhuman pain.

She, of course, knew that he was at death's door and decided to get married (she was not a girl; she had a daughter from her first husband from whom she was divorced) because she couldn't, as a good Christian, be close to him even at night; her name would not have suffered from this, though, since everyone could plainly see that he was a fatally ill person. On the contrary, only those who didn't know the tragic news (of his approaching death) judged her as a cunning and egotistical woman.

The wedding was celebrated at my daughter's, who arranged the celebration so beautifully, sparing neither energy nor money. Only the most immediate family were invited. I flew from Florida. But I didn't even take a gala dress with me, it seemed to me that the celebration was a very sorrowful one, like "a feast during the time of the plague." My heart wept from the depression and pain of seeing my son so strangely changed, thinner, weak and terribly pale. They had already rushed to be registered in Massachusetts and came as man and wife. It seemed that Yurgis had undertaken a new game that was unusual – as was everything that he did.



X. 17 In the morning at breakfast I spoke with Billie alone and she asked me why he had married her. I told her plainly and truthfully that it was terrible for him to be alone and he wanted to have someone near him. Yurgis also married because he wanted to repay her, thinking she would receive a pension after his death. But she would receive the pension at 62 and not earlier – Yurgis didn't know about this. In the beginning he wanted to leave her everything, but later, obviously disappointed, he didn't write any will and his papers were in disorder. Everything that my daughter had given him – thousands and thousands of dollars – and my own savings went to him as down a bottomless well. All this was lost. But she retained many valuable things, his work, and most importantly his NAME, which this alien woman was completely unworthy to bear.



X. 18 I had to laugh at the idea of some of George's friends that he was asexual, just because he didn't display the usual readily understandable mating ritual. If his expression was eccentric, at least he could share it with me without fear of shocking me. Also, the fact of his approaching death caused him to abandon the habit of repression

just to have the experience of a sexual relationship before it was too late.



X. 19 He often took morphine, but it didn't take effect immediately, and even after a large dose of the drug he rested only a short time, unconscious. But he wanted to live ... He read the novels of Balzac where he learned the dictum: "Before the wedding people spoil each other's mood, and afterwards, the air ..." And he found it funny that this was surprisingly true. When we talked about his wife, he spoke without enthusiasm, clearly disappointed.

This person was born for high feelings; he was born too early; he was a person of the future, when the soul will long for the heights. He was pure and bright of spirit. His enthusiasm, his limitless fantasy went along a crooked path. An essence too delicate and too sensitive was crushed prematurely before it had time to grow strong. God took him earlier than his time for a future, better life ...

I wanted to be near him his last numbered days and minutes very much, but I was restrained by the thought of his wife who might not like my presence, especially as one had to drive a car on the farm, and I didn't know how to. If she got angry and left him we would both be helpless ...



X. 20 It was April. The flow of visitors had lessened, so my only obligation was to cook the high-protein digestible meals G. needed. That alone took most of my time, but I still had time to go into the meadow to lie in the sun and think. I tried to put myself in G's place, but could sustain the terror only a moment. There was no way I could die, no way he could live; we were separating, and he had been the first to understand it. All meaning in the things he had loved in life was fading. Even music couldn't reach him. He selected the pieces he wanted played for his funeral and stopped listening.

One morning I awakened and G. wanted to hold me. His arms were like a trap, as if he couldn't move except by a concentration of will. Then I knew he was nearly dead. The final stage of jaundice had also begun. He told me that if he died in the night I was not to be afraid. Maybe he was trying to imagine how it felt to be alive, not questioning in one moment that the next would follow.

He went to Boston University Hospital where his niece was a nurse, ostensibly for another cure, but actually so that the burden of his death would not fall, he said, on my shoulders. I drove him to the hospital, and am puzzled even now why he urged me to return right away to the farm. But for that, I would have stayed with him. The last time I saw him he asked me to sit for a while so he could remember my face. He tried to explain something to me, starting with the words, "*You have done a lot of work for me ...*" but I stopped him, saying "because I wanted to." I was afraid he was about to express some formal politeness, which I didn't think I could bear. It had been my choice to stay for love of him. If too many things had gone unexplained, at least the choice remained for me.



- X. 21 How inscrutable are the ways of the Lord. Everything turned out differently; Billie remained, but she was cold with him and often left him for hours and he suffered alone. In the end this woman prevented me from being close to my dear suffering son, and she herself didn't give the necessary attention to a dying person. In total she was near him, if one counts, not even two full months ...



- X. 22 She thought George was sacred and real when they listened to Monteverdi. They were both idiots. Everyone thought he was out of his wits for marrying her. Everyone was angry when he tried so hard yet failed. He thought, too, when he married her, that she would be what he wasn't. He died, as expected, of cancer, three months after the wedding. He was the only man she knew in America who wasn't a brute; and then, he wasn't American to his roots, only in his perception of the cheapness of heroes, at which he had to laugh, like a skeptic.



Dress-up time at the mansion in New Marlborough. Above: René Block, Olga Adorno, Jean Dupuy, George, and Billie Hutching. Below: René and Olga, George, Billie, and Jean. Photos © 1977 René Block.



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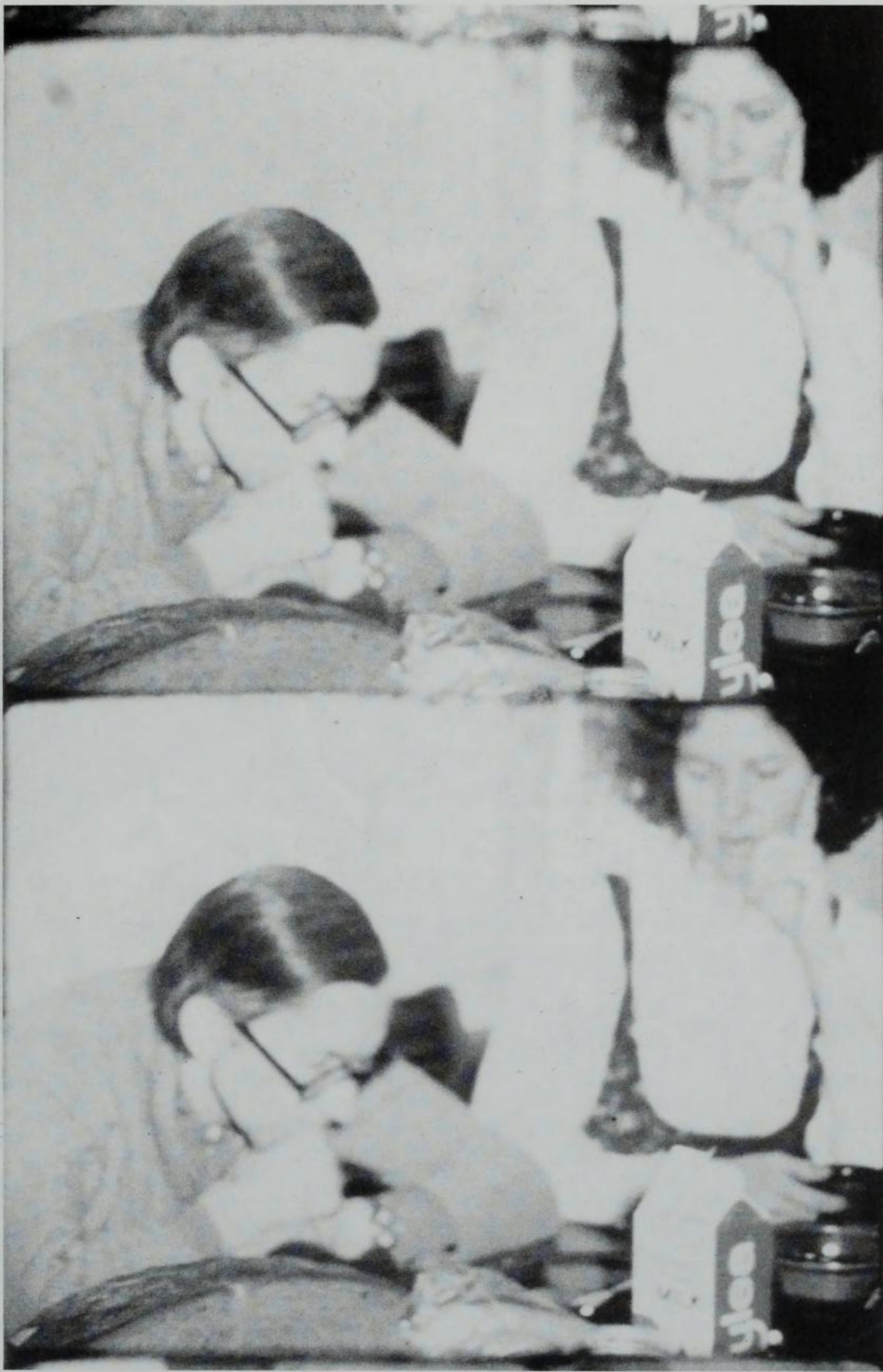
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In January 1978, a few weeks before George married Billie Hutching, the unlikely lovers posed for a Maciunas project that was published only after his death, the *Flux-Deck*. In the sampling shown here, Billie is the King and Queen of Whips and George the Joker. Photos © by the Estate of Peter Moore.



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

Several weeks after their marriage in Lee, Massachusetts, Billie and George performed a piece called *Black & White* at their Flux-Wedding in SoHo. "The piece symbolized our union perfectly," Billie wrote in her diary, "because in it we exchanged clothes so that at the end I wore the bridegroom's clothes and he the bridal costume. It was my first experience of Fluxus as theater." The celebration "for the coming of Eros" took place in the loft of Jean Dupuy and Olga Adorno. Photos © 1978 by the Estate of Peter Moore.



Mr. and Mrs. George Maciunas at New Marlborough, February 27, 1978. From Jonas Mekas' film *Zefiro Torna: Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas*.



"These poems were written between 1978 and 1979, and typeset originally on an IBM Composer bequeathed to Billie Maciunas by her husband following his death in May 1978." From the book *Unsettled Oranges* by Billie Hutching. Photo portrait by Hollis Melton.

XI

END OF A LIFE IN FLUX

XI. 1 *I have some bad news – discovered I have advanced cancer of the liver and pancreas. That explains the pain I have had since August. They discovered that only through exploratory surgery. They can't do much here except give me morphine to kill very severe pain and some chemotherapy with 50/50 chance of survival.*

I have 2 favors to ask you. I found that at National Cancer Center Hospital in Tokyo Dr. Ichikawa has discovered a method of operating on cancerous liver. This was never yet done in U.S. Procedure takes about a year since plasma has to be fed while remaining liver grows back, but I would be willing to stay in Japan for a year. Maybe I can receive plasma in a place like Nara.

In other words operation in Tokyo and plasma in Nara where I could take archery lessons.

Could you find out as soon as possible how soon I could be admitted for surgery and the cost of the whole procedure – surgery, hospitalization & plasma (which I suppose could be given me as an outpatient).

2nd request – Do you think it would be possible to organize a retrospective of your works either in NYC or Japan? I could bring your foam room & rainbow staircase – both in perfect shape.

Best regards & thanks.



XI. 2 *George says he is really looking forward to listening to all 38 lost Monteverdi operas after he dies. "It's worth dying just for that," he says. "Nothing of great interest has been composed after him."*



XI. 3 *They have to do it every month, this damn needle, through the back. Both sides of the spine, and very slow, because everything is in the way, muscles, not safe. And I say to them, "It's hitting the bone,"*

and they say, "No, no, no, it's something else." So I used to say, at first, "You know, I am not too tolerant to pain," but they said (laughter), "Sorry, you'll have to cope with it."

I told you about the appendix operation, with no anesthesia? ... I still remember, I was screaming constantly during the whole operation. It was (in Lithuania) during the war, and the appendix was about to break, so they said there was no time to go to hospital, and they just cut it. And they had no penicillin. They were afraid it would burst any minute. You know, for a little kid – cutting your stomach. They tied me to the table with belts and they cut it out. And I never passed out. That was the worst of it.



- XI. 4 To be aware of approaching death is one thing, to accept death is another thing. But George has accepted living with death, in a perfect Fluxus spirit. Ah, he has been used to death all his life. He says he's so full of medicines & drugs & cortisone that bugs do not bite him, and those that do bite him drop dead immediately. Already in 1960 doctors gave him only a few months to live. But he's still around, George, making his art. George is not using his body to make art, there isn't much of it left, there never was; he's using his life to make his art.



- XI. 5 *I went (to Arizona) in 1962 for two months. And then again in 1967, for a month. I remember, in 1962 I went there with two suitcases, you know – like a man from New York ... And there were only cowboys and Indians in that town. And I get into this rooming house and they talk only about the horses. And they say, What the hell's this guy doing here. (Laughs.) And I stayed there, whole two months there – and it was cheap cheap cheap, like one dollar a day, and all those cowboys, coming and eating there and talking only about cows and no interest at all in anything else, and they all look at me, What the hell is this guy doing here? ...*

This medicine makes me very sleepy. It takes ten times longer to do anything ...

Then you fall asleep?

I sleep, but not really asleep. (He laughs.)

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XI. 6 He is a sucker for wide open spaces and fields, he says, and dreams of raindrops on blades of grass.



XI. 7 In his last year, there was a more personal freedom that George permitted himself that softened his customary hard-line behavior. Not only did he “come out” about his cross-dressing and even take a wife after a life of apparent celibacy, he also let a greater expression of emotion enter his vocabulary and work. Despite that loosening, his systematic personality still ruled him and you could not just walk up to George and give him a spontaneous hug like you might do for a friend who needs it. It was heartbreaking to see someone who had always demanded control – and who was loved and respected enough to have been humored in that need – call on those around him to continue playing even harder to the end.

Everyone rallied to his directives with sadness about death’s approach but also with a willing and heightened sense of glad celebration for this remarkable man. He had no money and no rich patrons to buy his remaining time. There were Fluxus editions to make for filling orders and generating money for his expenses. The usual odd materials to be found at this or that location. The events in the last season of George were all attended with a sense of special urgency. One tried to give over to his unstated farewell parties in the Fluxus way, well aware of the intimate little history unfolding around George. It was soothing to feign believable interest in future projects he would plan and also join his chuckle about how they might turn out. Even in the eleventh hour, George let his plans exceed the possibilities; nevertheless he managed much fulfillment in squeezing out every usable drop of life left in him. He didn’t choose to hide away or to stop being GM. He was even more himself.



XI. 8 His friends arranged a banquet in their own style for him; knowing his poor condition, they honored him by collecting several thousand dollars so that he could fly to Japan ... to get cured. During the evening they called Japan and got hold of the doctor who did successful cancer operations. But alas, the doctor said he wouldn’t take on the operation and advised us to turn to the American doctors with whom he, himself, had studied.



XI. 9 “He’s been beaten up by thugs. It looks like he’s going to lose his eye,” said Barbara – the lady with the glasses and the long, thick braid all the way down her back. I don’t remember how Barbara Moore, the Fluxus organizer and wife of Peter Moore, the Fluxus photographer, came to be the one to tell us – us being my twin sister Jessica and I, and maybe my mother or father. I also don’t know if she told us in person or on one of her Flux-news network phone calls.

It was in May 1976. We were about eleven. I had already heard that George was having some sort of problem with thugs or the police or someone in SoHo, so we imagined a kind of eccentric hermit living underneath the city. Henceforth in my mind the hermit lived behind a solid steel door and had a lead pipe sticking out of his head, with bruises all over his body. This image stuck with me even when we saw George later – now apparently recovered except for the opaque lens in his right eyeglass.

On the way to a Flux-weekend in New Marlborough, Massachusetts, the next year, Jess and I were warned. This ultimate oddity, something like a cross between a one-eyed mummy and Fred Kruger from subsequent Halloween movies, “doesn’t like children.” We were to be on our best behavior. We drove up to the rickety old mansion that George had bought as a possible Flux-nest for everyone and the building confirmed our greatest fears. It was the dead of winter, the trees were dead or dying and the old building was a shambles. It looked kind of like a prototype for Scrooge’s place.

Fortunately, other Flux-kids waited outside. These included some assortment of the Moore kids, Rebecca and Robin, the Hendrickses, Tyche and Bracken, the Mac Lows, Mordecai and Clarinda, and probably others from the Flux-clan. At least the impression of all the Flux-kids remains. Whether we were all there or not, I don’t know – but we’d known each other literally forever and while I’m not sure exactly who made the trip, I feel as if they were all there. The house was full of people laughing, talking, catching up with each other, and eagerly awaiting the weekend. There was a lot of food on a long table in the palatial, oak-panelled dining room and we ate near a great log fire.

There was a small room to the side of the dining room made immeasurably attractive because we couldn't go in it. "That's where George keeps his shit collection," someone said. What on earth is a shit collection?, we wondered. What do the boxes look like? Who collects it? And is it dried first? What does crocodile shit look like?

The next day someone pointed out an enormous cotton-candy machine in a room across from the dining room. One of the Flux-kids ran upstairs and established that George had the ingredients for cotton candy. George soon appeared with green and red sugar crystals and made mountains of the stuff with and for all of us. And we made a glorious mess, George was laughing and joking, acting downright silly – the polar opposite of the man with a lead pipe sticking out of his forehead, who lived like a hermit behind a barricade somewhere beneath the streets of SoHo, and who collected shit for a hobby!

A few months after the cotton-candy weekend we returned to New Marlborough with my father, Dick Higgins, and my mother, Alison Knowles. A lot of tension had passed between the two men, and the air was heavy with it as soon as we entered the great dining room. The silence was positively pregnant. My mother remembers it today as vividly as I do. It was apparent that they just didn't know where to begin. This time the room was completely empty – resembling more an abandoned mansion than the loved but rickety one it was. There was no trace of the frenzied meeting of a few months before. No food on a long table, no fire in the fireplace, no Flux-kids and no candy machine. In front of the great stone fireplace in the middle of this evacuated cavern lay George on a small pad. He was wasted away, emaciated, curled up like a child napping with his rear end in the air and his one-eyed face turned towards us, the way I used to sleep in nursery school.

We sat in chairs a few feet away from him, the echoing space intensifying the scale and intimacy of our final goodbye. I wondered if the shit collection was still in the next room, the door was open. Grimacing, George spoke in his thick, harsh accent, "*Hallo, Deek...*"



XI. 10 Sporadically throughout the 70's Maciunas elaborated on a particularly grotesque image of a grimacing face with mouth distended to show the teeth (possibly taken from a dental treatise on gum diseases). Its first appearance is on the label for the Smile

Machine box (first attributed to Yoko Ono, but later, after her rejection of his realization of the idea, claimed by Maciunas himself). Shortly thereafter another version appeared as a full-size, printed paper mask face. This series culminated in Maciunas' second set of 42 Fluxpost stamps, which he designed in late 1977 for an artists' stamp exhibition; each image was a photographic variant of the original "smile," although some are apparently from a different source. Despite these latter new faces (which are engaged in genuine laughter), the cumulative impression of the large number of bizarrely distorted mouths, many held open with some force, is not only of perverse Maciunas humor, but of a concentrated cry of pain.

These stamps were in fact done at a time of real pain, the period of his final illness, during which he took handfuls of morphine each day. No stranger to pain, he compared his physical trauma to what he had experienced at the age of nine when, in his native Lithuania, he had undergone a ruptured appendix operation without anesthesia. Sick with asthma throughout his life, he seemed to survive on pills, inhalators, and self-administered injections of cortisone (the empty vials and hypodermics of which became raw materials for Fluxus editions). At some point he acquired an attraction for pain so intense that he enjoyed flagellation. How long this had been present in his life no one knows, but soon after he designed the Smile Stamps, he openly told friends that "the pain kills the pain." Whatever private obsessions had been sublimated into his work and imagery, his pleasure had finally become public.



- XI. 11 A general mobilization got under way to help him in as many ways as possible. Joe Jones came over from Europe. Brian and I went up to New Marlborough as many weekends as possible to assemble Flux boxes and do whatever we could. As we worked, George would struggle off his mattress on the floor in the middle of the living room/work room, so he could be in charge, to instruct us exactly how a label had to be trimmed and attached to a plastic box. He was very insistent about what was right and exactly what the procedure was in putting each work together – and also in how a joke or some bit of humor might be generated, and would explain this with his proverbial laugh, as ill as he was.



XI. 12 The last time I saw George was in March 1978, when I visited him in the mansion in Massachusetts. He was already too weak to get up from his mattress in the banquet room in front of the fireplace. But all around him people were scurrying, helping to finish Flux-boxes and Flux-constructions of one sort or another; his wife Billie was sitting quietly by him and occasionally took some phone call or other about exhibitions for the autumn, messages from well-wishers – it was the most bustling sick room I have ever seen. George was joking about everything – his death, his work, the people who had come to see him and those who had not come, the final trip he had taken to the Bahamas with his mother in a futile trip to some clinic, about Turkish music, about jargon and terminology. Every so often he would be quiet for a minute – from exhaustion – but a minute later he would be back, with some ironic observation or word play or other.



XI. 13 It happened that George hated Jamaica and shortened the stay at the Laetrile Clinic by two weeks to return to Massachusetts. He had told me before he left not to cry because he would return cured; but when I saw him at the airport, with Jean Dupuy accompanying me, I knew he wasn't cured. He couldn't walk and came toward me in a wheelchair. The cancer was killing him so fast that two weeks had made this difference. My heart broke when I saw him. He was reading my face as well as I was reading his, but neither of us spoke about his certain death.



XI. 14 Scene: University Hospital, Boston, (date – first week of May)
A nurse and an orderly enter.
“We’re moving you to a new room, Mr. Maciunas,” the nurse says.
“*Where are you taking me?*”
“A nice room on the fifth floor, one flight up.”
“*A little closer to heaven, eh?*”
There wasn't much to laugh at, but we all laughed. George, too.
“*I'm going to die,*” he said.
“Now don't talk like that, Mr. Maciunas.”

"I know all about hospitals. I know why you're moving me. I'm going to die."

"He's a filmmaker," the nurse tells the orderly.

"Have I seen any of your movies?" the orderly asks.

"No, you can't see them. They're all inside my head."

There were more things than movies reeling around inside that head. Once in the "nice" new room – windowless – I adjusted his pillows. And I watched him sleep. But not for long. He sat up.

"The dome with a crack in it. MIT? Who made it, the dome with a crack in it? Can you show me a picture?"

He was referring, of course, to Eero Saarinen's Kresge Auditorium at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. George had attacked Saarinen, along with Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Gordon Bunshaft and Frank Lloyd Wright years before, in his essay "The Grand Frauds of Architecture", and he never tired of exposing their deficiencies that his own Maciunas Plastic Prefabs would correct. His prefab system was once considered for pilot production in the Soviet Union.

"Did they ever fix it?"

And then there was the globular chair.

"Like a ball. You know. You sit on the ball. Very expensive. I'm going to make them cheap if I ever get out of here."

"And then you can sit in one while you are recuperating."

"It's no worse than being born."

"What?"

"Dying."



XI. 15 Visited George at the University Hospital in Boston. He looks so thin, sitting on his cot. When I came in, the nurses were preparing to wheel him out to the surgery room. He asked them to wait five minutes so he could talk with me ...

We spoke for a few minutes. His voice was so weak that several times I had to ask him to repeat what he said.

"They are amazed that I am still around," he said. *"All I can hope is that they'll keep me going until the miracle drug arrives."* He laughed. He said he was putting his hopes on a drug they were working on in Texas, or somewhere.

"They are very serious scientists, I spoke with them," he said.

He couldn't get on the surgery bed by himself, so I lifted first one foot, then another, and helped him to get in. He hadn't shaved for several days, since he arrived in the hospital, and he was an image of sickness and weakness. He said he had had to move to the hospital because they were all panicking about him there in New Marlborough and he couldn't eat anything. When he arrived at the hospital his legs were all swollen.

"Look," he said, "*film them,*" so I filmed them. "*There will be a lot of pictures of me sick, I have always been sick. Doctors said I was dying of hunger, I lacked protein, so now they are feeding me protein ...*"

We sat silently for a moment or two.

George: "*So you have to take the train ...*"

Me: "At three o'clock. I have time."

Doctor (to the nurse): "Roll it."

George: "*Shigeko has gone back?*"

Me: "No, she is in New York. She is still here."

George: "*Film Archive should get more money ...*"

Me: "I am working on it."

George: "*This may take a long time*" (referring to his surgery).

Me: "As they say, it's not easy to kill a man."

George: "*Nothing to hurry now ...*" (He laughs.)

The nurse began pushing the bed towards the surgery rooms. So he stretched out his hand and I said, "*Tai laikykies*" in Lithuanian – hang on, more or less – and he gave me a weak smile and they wheeled him away.



XI. 16 I shall never forget one of my last conversations with George several days before his death. The fact of his fast approaching end was staring him in the face, and sometimes it stupefied him as much as the drugs they were feeding him to ease the pains in his bloated body.

I myself was nodding off in a chair by his bedside when I heard the word Charleston.

"Charleston? You mean the dance?"

"*Charlatans. Maybe we were mistaken,*" said the founder and prime mover of Fluxus, "*and were just charlatans.*"

I objected strongly, reminding him that charlatans play the game for money, and that most Fluxus people, including especially

himself, after all his years of work, were still as poor as Lithuanian church mice.



XI. 17 Barbara Moore has called me from New York (an unprecedented event) to say that George is in a Boston hospital, and could I find out which one.

I interpret this as meaning that his condition is grave, his cancer terminal. I do not stop to wonder why Barbara has not called Billie, George's wife. I call her. He is at University Hospital. I go to visit him. He is in bed, eyes closed; if not sleeping, then in some very deep state. I learn later that he is heavily doped with the morphine-codeine tranquilizer "cocktail" they give you in the hospital when they don't care any more whether you will become addicted, because you are as good as dead to them, anyway. Which means that they have tried everything they are willing to use, everything that is approved of in traditional Western medical terms. He opens his eyes and sees me sitting in a chair at the foot of his bed, smiles weakly, Hello.

I hardly recognize him. His skin is parchment yellow, his hair needs cutting and sticks out, straight and fine and black in all directions, like some goony bird. His one good eye ... but I can't remember: glasses? black patch? ... or just George.

He fades in and out of some reminiscences of sailing up the coast with a crew of artists, and putting in at Hadley Harbor – "*The most beautiful place of all*" – and how he had not known, at the time, that that place was connected with me. I flash, irritably, on the thought that nobody ever knows these things about me; without taking responsibility for how this might come about, how elaborately I camouflage myself, or how deeply I hide.

George rambles on, fading in and out of his fantasy of an international voyage which he would be taking later on, with Billie. I sense his denial of death, his need to hope and plan, or anyway fantasize. Billie has asked me to serve as his "therapist," and I have eagerly agreed to be available in any capacity that might be helpful. I am new at this work, do not understand that the contract is only valid when made between the parties involved, and I feel totally helpless, not knowing what to do next.

In the absence of a clear imperative, I wait. Which proves to be the best thing I could have done. I resolve simply to be there, as often

as I can, for as long as it seems useful. We were, after all, not intimate: I do not want to add intrusion to his list of woes.

I perceive George as a very courteous, private person. I am grateful, as he prattles along, entertaining me, trying to help me feel at ease. George is not my first friend to die, but he is the first I have watched *in process*. I am impressed by everything – by the final, end-game, inevitable reality of it. This is the *last reel*, and I am here, watching the action wind down. I am also struck by how close he is to my age.

I visit George every day, mostly to sit and witness, to do small chores, mainly in getting the attention of the busy staff when he needs something. I wonder why Billie isn't here, but accept her (and his?) explanation that she cannot leave the farm (which is not being farmed, but still, she says, needs looking after). I don't question whether there is something wrong between them or think that, maybe, she simply cannot face the reality of death. I never see any other visitors, although he tells me Emmett comes, and a niece of his who works in another hospital in the city. I haven't the faintest whether my visits are appreciated or a burden to him. I don't know how to ask. I just keep coming. I feel that I ought to be doing something differently, with more "style". After all, George made every event in his life into an art work of the absurd. It was his hallmark as an artist. By contrast, I feel very plain. I bring him a pot of orange marigolds (all I can afford at the flower store). I want them to last, so I don't buy cut flowers. But last ... how long? No one knows. I set them on the window sill, hoping he can see them without straining.

One afternoon, he asks me to help him walk to the john. His arms and torso are so withered up that I feel I can handle whatever might arise. I help him swing his legs over and down, noticing how swollen they are, filled with fluid, discolored, and the skin seeming as though it would burst if handled roughly. As he got his feet under him and I helped him up, it was like an intellectual exercise – mind over matter. He seemed to have lost direction and contact with the floor. Together, we staggered a step or two, and then George sagged and fell, the weight of his tree trunk legs pulling him down. I could not counter the fluid dead-weight of his legs. All I could do was buffer the fall, guide his descent, and prop him up while I went to get an orderly, someone strong enough to wrestle him back to bed and give him his pee-bottle while I wait outside feeling scared and foolish,

and wondering if I was to blame. George looked drained and exhausted, grey with pain.

Another day, a doctor comes in to talk with him. I catch him for a few minutes in the hall afterward. I ask about George's legs, what makes them that way ... something about protein metabolism, and cell walls breaking down. That means we are near the end. What makes the pain so bad, I ask him; why is cancer so specially bad? He tells me that the cancer cells invade the nerve fibers themselves, so that the circuits are just "on" all the time, one continuous D.C. pain signal, without relief. Oh. Now I see. Godde.

Another day, I come in and George is not in his room. My stomach falls. A nurse comes by and I grab her and ask ... No, he's moved across the hall. He's being X-rayed with a mobile unit:—pushed upright, shoved around. He is in terrible pain, crying out as they position him for the different views they want. Again, I wait outside, hurting for him. Afterward, his face is grey again, his jaw set, angry. What do they have to do that for? Not to help him; they can't help him. Nothing can. Why don't they let him be? He lets me know that's what he's feeling, too.

Emmett has come in again. Got George into a wheel chair, and made up some silly kids' game, wheeling him around. Of course! Why don't I think of those things? I feel stupid and plain, again. It was such a simple kindness, playing like kids. I'm glad for them both, but I feel jealous and left out. George is eating something, picking at a dessert from his meal tray. He offers me some from his dish, with his spoon. Canned peaches. I've just eaten. I say no thanks. Then it comes to me that people probably act as though cancer was catching, a lot. I've fallen into an appearance of that, unawares. I must redeem myself. We visit for a while. Then I say I've changed my mind, I would like the peaches now. I eat them, feeling self-conscious. I get up to go. I'll be back tomorrow afternoon, around one. Just for good measure, I kiss George on the cheek, so he'll be sure to know I don't think he's disgusting or contagious. I look back, from the door. There is a faint little smile on George's face. He lifts one hand, from the elbow. He wiggles his fingers, waving. He knows something I don't know, yet.

Next day, I realize I've set up a special meeting with a client and another therapist. Can't change it. Can't get to the hospital by one. Phone the nurse, be sure he gets the message that I'll be there by four. At three o'clock, I stop home for some reason, on the way to

the hospital. I'm coming up the stairs. The phone rings. My daughter answers it. She screams, comes flying down the stairs, sobbing, into my arms. George is dead! Tyche clings to me. She is twelve. George always acted like he hated kids. I didn't know she cared so much. Young Bracken joins us. We hold each other in the stairwell till we are calmer. Then I go upstairs to telephone Emmett and tell him the news.

It's the only time I ever knew Emmett to be nonplussed: *Well!* he splutters, *Now* what do I do? I'm feeling that way, too. Something must be *done*, for decency's sake. But there's nothing to do. We decide to meet after supper, and go to the house of some friends of his. He proceeds to get drunk and recite his own poems. I'm driving, so I don't even get loaded. Just angry. I hurl my poems back at him. This wasn't how I thought it would be. Actually, I hadn't thought ahead, at all. I just feel empty.

The following day, I go in to talk to the hospital staff. I thank them for their kindness to George. The marigolds are still on the window sill. I take them with me. The mattress is folded over on itself. They're hoeing out his stall. He is gone, I can see that now. It's over.

I go and meet his niece, for lunch. Tuna fish sandwiches. I punctuate my life on important occasions, it seems, with tuna salad on whole wheat. [Remember Geoff bringing tuna sandwiches right after my children were born ... Flash on pix of George eating Alison's *Identical Lunch* ...] We talk about George. She is kind, but I'm sure she wonders who I am. Just somebody who knew him. She says it would be good if I wrote to the hospital, thanking them for their care. She is a nurse, herself, and knows how much that means. I promise I will. But I forget.

On the way home, I pass a hospital supply place and go in, on impulse. There is an enamel enema container hanging in the window. Very pure and white. I buy it, and some press type, on the way home. I remember that Fluxus, which George founded, means enema in Lithuanian. At home, I stick a quotation from Rilke across the front of the white enamel can, very stark, pure, elegant, and ridiculous in press type, one of George's favorite media:

DU MUSST DAS LEBEN NICHT VERSTEHEN
DANN WIRD ES WERDEN WIE EIN FEST.

[You must not understand life, then it will be like a festival.]

I am finished, finally ... George would have approved.



XI. 18 Well, George came to Boston's University Hospital to get cured. So I went to see him every day, and we became friends again after all these years! On Monday, the 8th of May, I told George about the great Shiga-kit we made in Japan and he made me promise to bring it to the hospital the very next day, and to bring a tape recorder so he could hear the cassettes. Well, to make a long story short, George died the next day, at four o'clock in the afternoon. (That's my wedding anniversary, the 9th of May!)

George also told me that he saw no reason to go on living in such pain, that he would just like to disappear. I told him to think about it very hard, and maybe it would happen. And yessir, Ay-O, the next day he just disappeared.

I will tell you all about it one of these days.



XI. 19 Another Fluxus subject of conversation is Maciunas' deathbed. How Maciunas said this and not that, how this one was there and that one not. Soon Maciunas' deathbed will have to be as big as Carnegie Hall to contain all that said they were there.



XI. 20 Once Yurgis told me bitterly how he had been unlucky his whole life! He had so many operations, so many different illnesses, and now diabetes had shown up with the cancer. Soon after he returned home, his legs began to swell and the doctor said it was a blood clot. In the hospital in Boston they found out that jaundice had started owing to the hunger, and that he was completely weak. I longed to go to the hospital, foreseeing the end was near, and I wanted so that he should die in my arms. I prayed to be with him before his exit into the other world. But the doctors didn't allow it; there were instances where they had to cure the relatives afterwards; they suffered such torment at the bed of the dying. My daughter visited him two days before his death; she couldn't speak about him without tears, he looked so terrible. But he still hoped to get better, and he clearly wanted to live.

On the ninth of May at three o'clock in the afternoon my daughter phoned him. He seemed to have been waiting for the call; he was

very happy, but spoke confusedly, and my poor daughter couldn't make out a word. But she did understand by the tone that he had lost the hope of getting better; the doctors were not undertaking anything, and there was no sense in fighting. Fifteen minutes after this conversation he was dead.

My son had gone, my little son, my joy and my sorrow. He told me at the time of his "wedding" that he wasn't afraid of dying and that when he died he would soon call me to him ...

In the coffin, which they opened especially for my request, he looked young, even his thinness was not so terrible, but the expression on his face was strangely offended. He was offended by fate, so many failures and so much suffering! ...

I didn't weep, but my heart screamed; something painful and tangible trembled in me like an electrical current. I spread a rose colored oil on his lips, the dear unforgettable lines of my boy, and placed fragrant freesias and a white rose near his face. On the lid of the coffin was a huge bouquet of white flowers: freesias, lilacs, tulips and peonies, like a bride at a wedding, a sign of INNOCENCE to my pure angel.

Already sentenced to death, he had selected his favorite music and recorded it on tape and asked that everyone listen to his beloved music during the farewell. All his friends came to pay their last respects; his family and all were grieved by his early death and listened to the music with feeling, and it seemed to me that his spirit was amongst us, touching each of us and listening with us and approving of us.



XI. 21 Shigeko, Carla, Francine, Hollis, Oona, we drove to the Fresh Pond Crematorium in Queens where George's relatives had arranged a small wake ceremony, just before cremation. His mother came, his sister, cousin, and a few other relatives, and a good thirty-fourty Fluxus community friends – Moores, Hendricks brothers, Dick Higgins, Yoshi, Alison, Almus with Nijole, La Monte Young, Miller, etc. etc. I went up to George's mother, and she said: "I saw him ... He is so serious, so calm."

Billie brought the Purcell and Monteverdi tapes that George himself had selected for this occasion. I set up the tape recorder in the chapel and we played twenty-five minutes of George's favorite music. It was very sad now to listen to this music. George's coffin

was right there, and flowers – dahlias and others – on top of it, and George’s mother said to us, “Come and take one, take home with you, from George,” – so we each took a flower and later we stood outside and nobody wanted to part, and George was still here, near us –

Later we all drove home and had wine and cheese and bread ... We spoke about George, how everything that we have, that we see here is connected with George – there simply wouldn’t be SoHo without George, we wouldn’t be in this building, in this home, sitting now around this table, without George. Shigeko said George brought her from Japan and she is here only because of him.

Later we decided to have a walk through SoHo, to relax. We just had to walk it out. He was so good, and even when he was suffering, he tried not to impose his suffering on others. He used to retreat to our back room, curl up on the bed, and suffer by himself. He said it hurt less when he curled up into the baby-in-the-womb position.



XI. 22 I thought to share “Time Piece, for George” with you as a souvenir of our departed friend Maciunas. It actually happened to me recently upstate that while I sat by a stream in the woods I was reminded of a friendly exchange George and I once had regarding reincarnation. It was years before, in June 1975, in New York City, he had told me he could see himself reviving as a frog, and then, years later, just as I was remembering this, there was the frog, right in front of me, about to jump by the edge of the stream. So the poem is what I saw, then and there. Of course, as you may know, George had little tolerance for poems, at least in the time I was acquainted with him; he had made the point, when I was showing him a poetry journal with my translation of a Lithuanian poem by his colleague Jonas Mekas, of refusing to open it “*unless it has something visual.*” It was partly in deference to this conviction that I decided to keep my dedication to him first-name-only. (Earlier, I had tagged a full formal dedication to a “visual” shaped poem which I managed to cook up as presumably more acceptable to him; though it’s not been published, and George never got to see it, but that’s another story.)



XI. 23 (Norbert Wiener) developed the concept of time series by hurting & killing frogs in order to see how the animals’ nerves would react

to the continuing stimulus (largely negative) and applied this knowledge to the invention of radar. What a result a few dozen frogs who died in the torture chamber of this MIT professor brought in. George Maciunas, the Chairman of Fluxus, confided to his Lithuanian poet friend Vyt Bakaitis that he would like to be a frog in his reincarnation. I hope he got caught by a French restaurant owner to be boiled and eaten quickly rather than be sold to MIT.



XI. 24 Appropriate choice: The mausoleum that George proposed for his ashes. The structure was to be magnificent, a huge Fluxkit: an enormous domed room with a stained-glass skylight and floor-to-ceiling compartments/kits, strangely arranged reliquaries, each containing mysterious mementos from his personal life.



XI. 25 SoHo again!

Downtown New York via Amsterdam. I'll be staying in Yoshimasa Wada's loft, at 110 Mercer Street. Ay-O, Shigeko Kubota and Nam June Paik live in the same building.

Although I have a crowded schedule as usual for my two weeks in New York, on this visit I decided to keep the first few days slow and peaceful. No appointments, no telephone calls. Simply wandering through SoHo again, seeing the familiar again, discovering the new.

But before strolling through SoHo I had something else planned, and at breakfast I surprised Yoshi with: "I want to visit the grave of George Maciunas."

"Oh boy, that won't be so easy."

Yoshi was there at the burial in 1978. He had been driven there by somebody or other. But he couldn't even remember where the cemetery was located. Alluding to Maciunas' penchant for buying bargains in great quantities, I attempted a joke: "How many graves did you buy for George?" ...

In the spirit of the throwing of the dice in Mozart's *Würfelmusik* – (George is like Mozart, nobody knows where his grave is) – I choose at random a section of the cemetery, colored green on the map. It is one of those sprawling areas through which the highways, set on concrete props with two driving levels, lead avalanches of autos into Manhattan or outward to the eastern suburbs.

And here a version of Emmett Williams' *Voice Piece for La Monte Young* seemed appropriate: "Ask if George Maciunas is in the audience, then exit." A wonderful spring day, a warm sun, deep blue sky that made the white stone crosses and plaster angels even whiter, and in the distance the gleaming silvery silhouette of Manhattan as a backdrop.

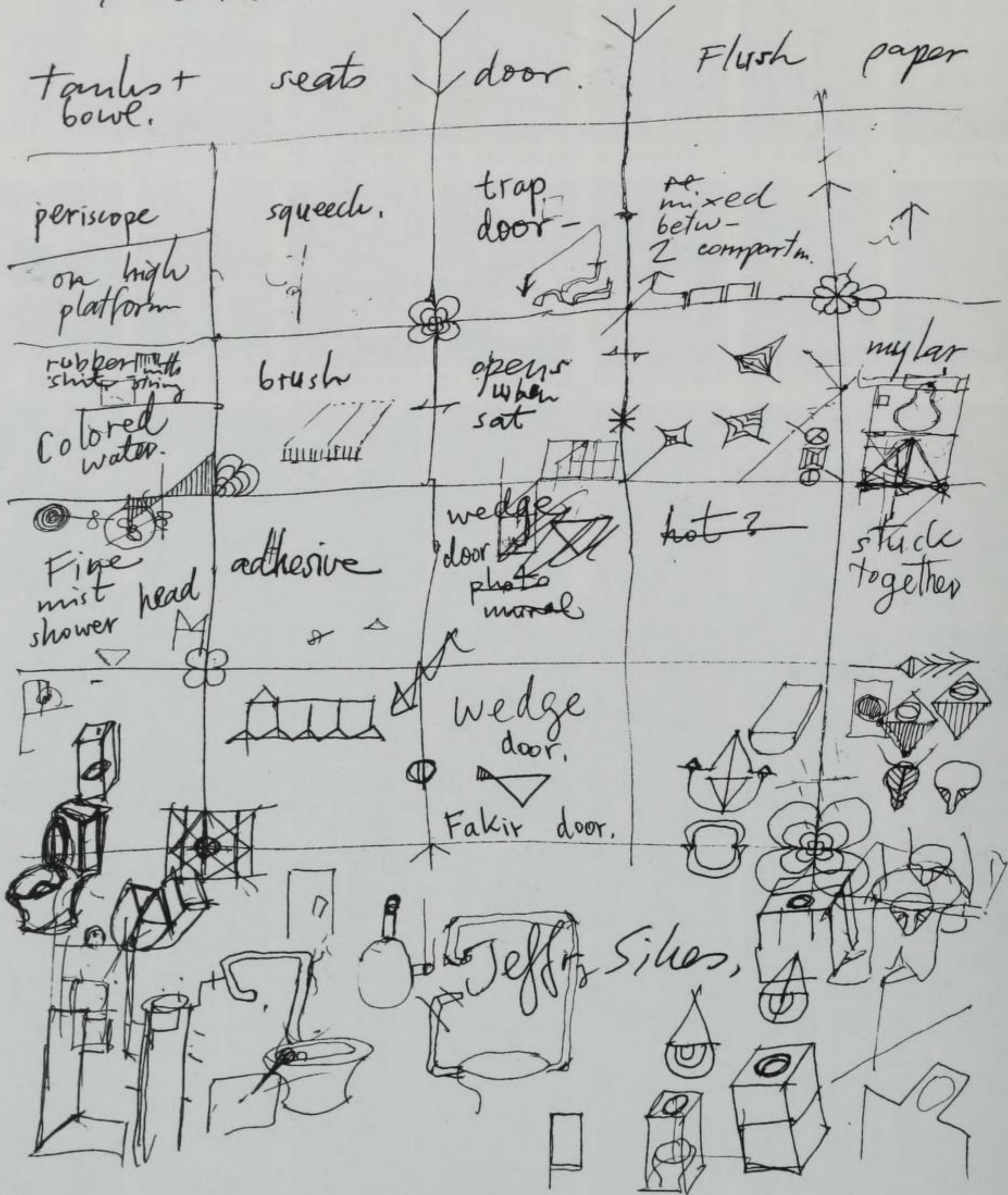


Photos © 1982 by René Block.



George's second edition of Fluxpost stamps (1977) were done at a time of real pain, the period of his final illness.

4 toilets.



TOILET INAUGURATION

Tuesday, September 27, 1977, 4.30 - 7 pm

Inaugurate the "prepared" toilets at Triangle Studios, 4th floor of 83 Columbia.

DRINK A LOT BEFORE YOU COME!

The Fluxfest in Seattle was the last festival George directed before his death. Courtesy of Sohm Archive, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.



George at New Marlborough in March 1978. From Jonas Mekas' film *Zefiro Torna: Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas*.

Dear Ayo.

I have some bad news - discovered I have advanced cancer of liver and pancreas. That explains the pain I have had since August. They discovered that only through exploratory surgery. They can't do much here except give me morphine to kill very severe pain and some chemo-therapy with 50/50 chance of survival. I have 2 favours to ask you.

I found that at National Cancer Center-Hospital in Tokyo Dr. Ichikawa has discovered a method of operating on cancerous liver. This was never yet done in U.S. Procedure takes about a year since plasma has to be fed while remaining liver grows back, but I would be willing to stay in Japan for a year. Maybe I can receive plasma anywhere like Nara. In other words operation in Tokyo and plasma in Nara where I could take archery lessons. Could you find out as soon as possible how soon I could be admitted for surgery and the cost of the whole procedure - surgery, hospitalization & plasma (which I suppose could be given me as out-patient).

2nd request - Do you think it would be wise to organize a retrospective of your work either in NYC or Japan. I could bring your foam room & rainbow staircase - both in perfect shape -
Best regards & Thanks. - George



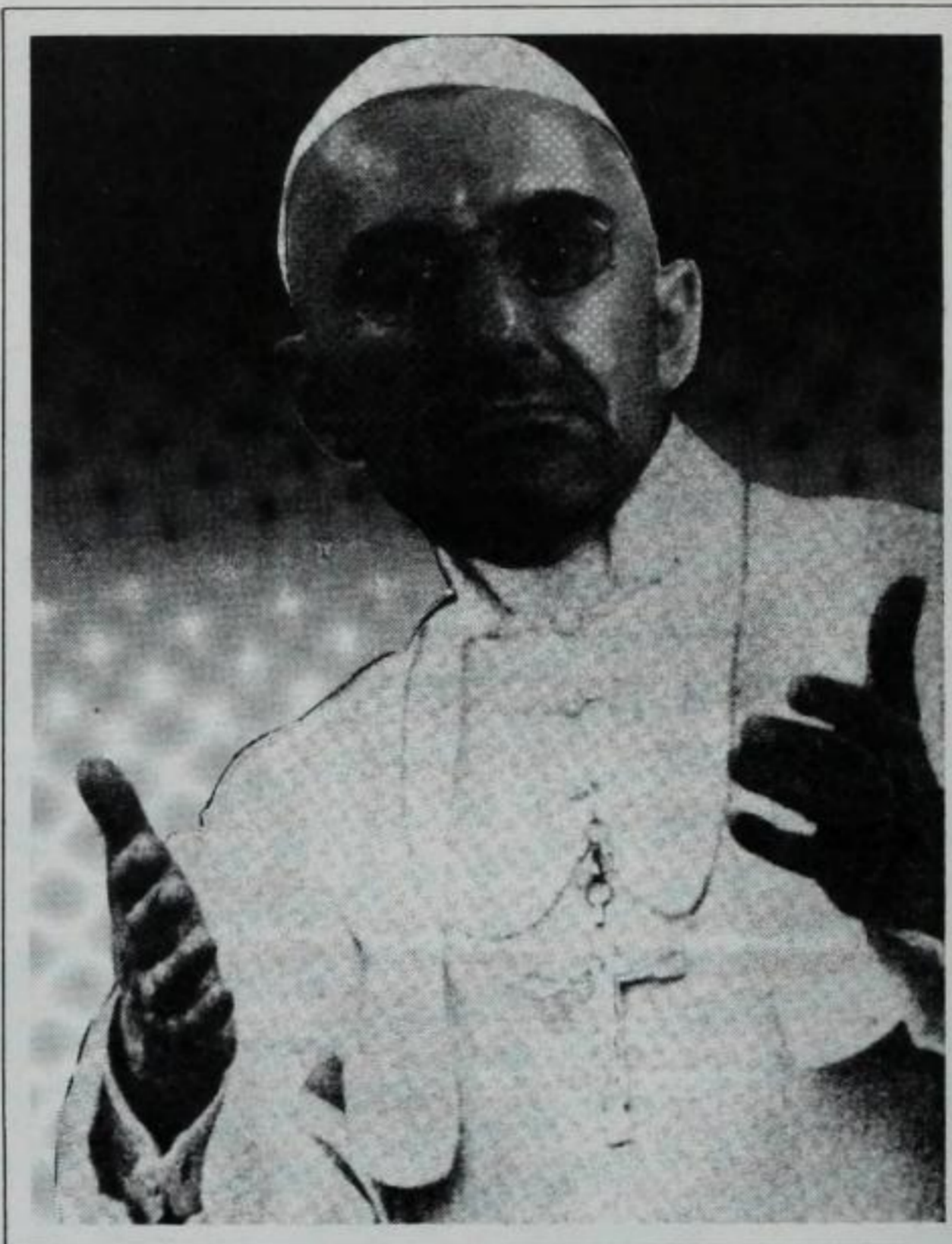
Video frame from Larry Miller's *Interview with George Maciunas* on March 24, 1978, only two weeks before the death of Mr. Fluxus. Photo © Larry Miller.

a V T R E EXTRA

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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.

Cover of V TRE Extra (Fluxus Newspaper No. 11, 1979).

XII

GEORGE WHO?

XII. 1 nobody wants to be a fluxus saint
 all we want today is glory
 who cares about theory
 all we want is we want money press
 get the press conference ready
 and each of us will be there to tell
 how we did everything
 how without us
 maciunas would have been lost
 how with many thanks to yoko he learnt to walk
 who cares about maciunas
 let's rewrite history
 if the key to glory is maciunas
 why tell the press we were jealous of him
 why tell the press that
 with our ego as big as our ass
 let's tell the press we understood him
 let's tell the press we did everything



XII. 2 Jean Brown picked George up at Great Barrington and drove him to South Hadley for the opening of Emmett's exhibition at Mount Holyoke College. It was the first time I had ever met George. In dark suit and tie, dark patch over his eye, he looked most distinguished, with an aura of mystery about him. He seemed to be quite interested in the work Emmett had done recently, but was *really* impressed when he learned that the college's art collection included hundreds of pairs of tiny slippers worn by Chinese women with bound feet in the last century.

After the vernissage, Janet Murrow hosted us and a few friends at an intimate dinner party. Janet is the widow of Edward R. Murrow,

the brilliant and influential radio and television journalist. She had mingled with statesmen and royals, and stars of stage and screen, on two continents. During dinner she confided to Emmett, "This George Maciunas, you can tell he's really *somebody*."



XII. 3 ES: John, because so many of the people involved in Fluxus had formerly been students of yours at the New School for Social Research in New York, you have been thought of as the spiritual father of Fluxus.

JC: You could also say not a spiritual father but a kind of source, like a root; there were many roots and I was just one. You've seen the tree design that George Maciunas made of Fluxus. Well, you recall that the roots are given at the top and my name is connected with one of the roots. So I wasn't the only one who brought it about, but I was one of the ones. And I never had ... oh, a sense of being one of the roots. It was George Maciunas who actually thought of Fluxus, who actually put me in his design of the tree with roots. It was his idea. But his idea of Fluxus is not necessarily another person's idea of Fluxus. So that there could be, and I think there must be, so many people involved with Fluxus who don't think of me as a member of Fluxus, or having anything to do with it ...

ES: I tend to think of Maciunas as the Diaghilev of Fluxus. Does that make any sense to you?

JC: Yes. I think, though, that he was a very interesting artist himself. He gave me a piece that was somehow based on my name. He worked lettristically to make the C of Cage and then the A and the G and the E, much as I make my mesostics (you know, paying attention to the letters). He paid attention to the letters and made something in a box that was based in part on the principles of collage and juxtapositions. His craftsmanship was extremely elegant. The box, for instance, was filled with beautifully chosen material. And everything was arranged in such a way that there was no wasted space. One thing abutted another and it was very beautiful. I don't have his work now because I gave it to someone who had an interest in Fluxus ... I've forgotten his name ...

ES: Fluxus is another case of intending not to make art, which turns out to be art.

JC: Well, I think that what George Maciunas was doing was clearly art, but it was not an art based on two plus two equals four,

or even upon I love you or I hate you. And those are common conventional views of art – that you should have something to say that can be expressed in numbers or in emotions and say it. But he wasn't doing that. He was involved in collage.

ES: But he did say that the artist shouldn't be doing what we call the fine arts, he ought to be doing practical arts, such as journalism or design. That the artist should do something practical from 9 to 5.

JC: Yes, but what does that mean, though? I mean, the practicality of one person is not the practicality of another.

ES: Well ... it seems as if he wanted to make a kind of anti-art statement.

JC: Yes, but his own work was very elegant and beautiful ... I doubt whether all that has happened in the name of Fluxus would be enjoyed by Maciunas were he still living. Some people have taken it as an excuse for not doing their work carefully.

ES: The work that was done was, as you say, elegant.

JC: His work.

ES: And inventive.

JC: Yes. And a great deal of other works are things one can enjoy. But some of them seem to move toward the acceptance of the careless ...

ES: But could an artist intentionally be careless? I mean, if you considered it to be a kind of spontaneity. There are some people who think certain forms of abstract expressionism are careless ...

JC: Well, there is certainly some Fluxus that goes in that direction.

ES: Spontaneity shouldn't be construed as license.

JC: Yes, well, I think they do. I think many do. And when I say many do, I mean it. But what happens when we go to an exhibition of Fluxus? Do we see the elegance of Maciunas, or do we see the principles of spontaneity, and so forth, taken to the extent of license?

ES: Well, I quite agree that we see a lot of that. But the problem is that if you choose to use mundane materials, there is a great tendency to then use them in just any old way.

JC: Well, there's also the possibility of using them beautifully. There's a great deal of Rauschenberg that is beautiful and the materials are clearly inelegant, where the result is revealing. All right? And we can also see works by lesser artists that are in no way revealing, which are simply careless and sloppy.

ES: Do you think Fluxus is depersonalized art?

JC: Oh, you mean that a Fluxus work is a work that doesn't have any personality?

ES: I was thinking more of how much ego removal is there?

JC: Well, I think in the case of Maciunas there is a great deal. I think in the case of some others, there's not. That could be another way in which one could criticize, or think about Fluxus work.

ES: Or help draw the line between that which ...

JC: ... seems to be good and that which doesn't.



XII. 4 George, as he appeared to me: A cloud, crossed with Hitler. Dreamer. Child. Utopian, Fascist, Christ, Democrat, Madman. A realist whose realism always needed another kind of reality. (His conceptions of reality never coincided with the accepted reality.) He was beautiful, foolish, dogmatic, charming. Impossible.

He didn't fit in. Where *did* he fit in?

I was very fond of him.



XII. 5 I met George Maciunas in 1960 when we were both students in the late Richard Maxfield's pioneering electronic music course at the New School. George organized a series of concerts at AG Gallery in which my work, as well as his own and that of several other composers, were presented. Even at that early point in our relationship I was very impressed with his talents. He was an organizer, publisher, designer, artist, and possessed a remarkable ability to bring the efforts of diverse artistic personalities into successful collaborative events.

In the early 60s I edited *An Anthology*. George's exceptionally original layout and design created a unique visual presentation to this unprecedented book which was destined to influence scores of similar works in the generations of books to follow. Inspired by my *Compositions 1960* and the work of some of the artists in the anthology, George went on to found the entire Fluxus movement.

Not only did he coin the word Fluxus and organize the first Fluxfests, but in addition he performed his own "events" as well as the works of others and actually provided the energy on every level to make the concerts happen. Indeed the very notion that there was even a need for such an organization as Fluxus and that it could ever work was George's own conception. It is now a matter of history that

Fluxus became a self-propelling art movement of international dimensions, drawing such a large group of artists from all over the world that many of them did not even have the opportunity to meet George.

But along with George's singular achievement as an artist, there is an aspect of his personality that must not be overlooked in even so brief a resumé of his accomplishments as this text. George was extraordinarily generous to the needy. I remember several times when I was virtually starving and without money, whereupon going to George, he would give me cans of imported food he had earned as payment for a layout or design job. He also shared with others his expert knowledge of design and production and while he himself lived a spartan life, spurning unnecessary possessions and priding himself on living within a budget of one dollar a day, he usually completely financed the publications of Fluxus editions of other artists' works.

It is only fitting then at this time of great need in George's life that we all rally to the cause. Here is an opportunity to give in return to one who has given us all so much. George is an artist who has already made his mark in history during his own lifetime. When considered in the context of finished projects he has perhaps accomplished more in his lifetime than most of us may accomplish in several. In 1961 George suffered very severe asthma and the doctors gave him only one year to live. George, however, responded to the challenge with even more vigor and before the year was up medical science had discovered alternative remedies for his problem. As we all know he simply went on to increase his output of artistic activities over the years.

George Maciunas unquestionably meets the high standards of those deserving grants and public funding. In 1977 he was awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and there is no doubt that his work will continue to be important to the history of Art and will reflect distinction upon those who contribute toward its further support. Both on the basis of his achievements and in consideration of his urgent need, I strongly recommend that every possible means be directed toward his assistance.



XII. 6 Although I suppose I'll never shake the label of "Happener", I also could have been a "Fluxist". As a matter of well known fact, most

of the regular Fluxists have been my friends and colleagues. Some of them (Bob Watts, George Brecht, Dick Higgins and Alison Knowles, Geoff Hendricks, Wolf Vostell, Nam June Paik, Milan Knizak) predated Fluxus by years. Indeed, Fluxus has always been for me a clarifier, or should I say, a *flusher?* of inessentials. Inessentials like individualism, important subject matter, lofty formalisms, career, market ... (That Fluxus now has begun to be successfully marketed has more to do with museums and collectors than with its artists. And it is once cheaply-priced objects of Fluxus production that sell today, not the equally important performances of its earliest phase.)

The little-known reason I wasn't a Happener/Fluxist was simply George Maciunas. That great impresario and creator of Fluxus' distinctive identity apparently couldn't abide me, and I soon felt the same about him.

It all began in 1962 shortly after his first Wiesbaden festival when, in Paris, he included a do-it-yourself Environment of mine in one of his typically vast prospectuses of upcoming performances. I never found out if he actually realized it. He didn't ask or inform me. I saw the prospectus some time later, and it has since been lost. George was scouting for members then, and he was inclined to signing up people who might have had other interests.

For example, when he came back to New York City in 1963, I received a form letter from him that seems to have been sent to a long list of artists appended to the letter, among them names we now recognize as Fluxus classics. It proposed that I should give him exclusive and eternal rights to my career (such as it was). And in return, he would promote me. Visions of P.T. Barnum in command of a flea circus came to mind. I was amused and amazed at the grandeur of his ambition, and was put off by it, too. I had published several articles on Happenings by then, and was uncomfortable with the inevitable responsibility I was expected to take for a dubious art movement. So were the other Happeners uncomfortable, and the flimsy association that had brought us together quickly dissolved. As I was pulling away from an unwelcome job of *chef d'école*, George clearly relished the idea and was moving fast toward what he became good at.

So, with his letter in hand, I called him on the telephone and said that I had no plans to be managed, but that I enjoyed his joke at a time when most artists avoided any form of organization whatso-

ever. To my great surprise, George was deeply offended. The master of "gag art" wanted to be taken seriously in the ordinary sense of the word. In retrospect, it could be this conversation that drove the wedge between us.

In retrospect too, back in 1963 I was a lot more serious than now about which directions I believed art should travel. As Fluxus was coming into its own as a genuine presence, it attracted newcomers to a growing number of performance fests. While these presentations were loosely programmed and included proto-conceptualists, cabaret performers, dancers, music makers, poets and Happeners (typical was the weekend Yam Festival at George Segal's farm in New Jersey), my impression was that at the core, Fluxus was too conventional.

Most Fluxists initially came from a background in music, I perceived, and seemed to take for granted the immutability of the concert situation, the stage, the professional performer, the presence of an audience, its code of behavior, and the usual after-dinner hour of art. There were a few adventurous pieces by Robert Filliou, Milan Knizak, George Brecht, Yoko Ono, and Mieko Shiomi, which were truly environmental and bypassed artistic habits; but the café-concert, entertainment format dominated Fluxus. I preferred an across-the-board elimination of all references to the arts. So, there were significant theoretical differences between George Maciunas and myself, which might have been interesting to discuss as a friend of Fluxus, but we never had the chance.

During 1963 and '64, there were several more telephone calls that were irritating to both of us. George warned me to stay clear of his people, and not to speak of them in articles I might write. In effect, I told him to bug-off, which didn't do our relationship any good.

After one of these exchanges, and feeling much annoyed, I drove from my home in Long Island to Manhattan to take part in a panel discussion on radio station WBAI about Happenings and Fluxus. George Brecht was on the panel along with two others (Robert Morris and George Segal?). At some point I said, still irritated and feeling ungenerous, that Fluxus artists were irresponsible and cutesy-pie. That opinion, quoted in *V TRE* and much reprinted, will probably mark me forever as the enemy I was not. Therefore, for the record, I apologize. In a calmer moment I would have simply described the otherwise interesting contrasts between our points of view.

Matters came to a kind of head later in the summer of 1964. Karlheinz Stockhausen asked me to direct as well as participate in his performance piece *Originale*, which was to be part of Charlotte Moorman's Avant-Garde Festival of that year. *Originale* was a large work and a number of Fluxus members were curious and open to taking part in it. Keep in mind that in 1964 the international vanguard was relatively small, most of its figures knew of each other, and an event like *Originale* was bound to be of interest to all persuasions.

Nevertheless, George Maciunas telephoned me and said that he would forbid Fluxus members to participate because Stockhausen's music was "ruling class" and "fascist"; and that he would banish any Fluxist who disobeyed him. I was a little worried about that because I knew that he had helped some of the Japanese Fluxists with their visas and had given them money when they needed it. I said that the artists were my colleagues as well as his, and were free to decide what they wished to do. The result was that some withdrew, while others who had no strict ties to Fluxus (Dick Higgins, Jackson Mac Low, Nam June Paik, and Ay-O) did take part.

But the most ludicrous thing of all, from my point of view, was George Maciunas' threat to picket *Originale*. I told him, to no avail, to reconsider it for the simple reason that next to the collage of art and life of our version of the work, a picket would appear to the public and press as part of it, not an attack. And that's indeed what happened. To make sure, I briefly joined the small group of marching protesters during an intermission of the piece. As Maciunas hissed at me to go away, I replied that it was a free country. Henry Flynt, who was one of the marchers, does not recall my brief engagement, but it did happen; and some people told me it was a brilliant political move of Stockhausen's at the height of the Cold War, the Civil Rights movement and Viet Nam. For a few short hours, Fluxus was co-opted by ruling-class music.

After this, I never saw or spoke to George Maciunas. It's a pity. He was a remarkable man and his stature grows with time. From that moment, as the record shows, Fluxus shifted away from new performances to a greater emphasis on small editions of low-priced art objects and, in the spirit of this anti-elitism, on real estate purchases for affordable artist housing. Of course, those elegantly designed editions would eventually cost fortunes; and Maciunas could not match artist housing such as TriBeCa in Manhattan. It was certainly the idealism of the 60s and its profound and absurd

confrontations with the status quo that, in part, moved George and the rest of us to try anything that promised an alternative society. But the best thing about him was not his efforts to improve the world. It was an intuitive sense of how to flush his angry and authoritarian nature into an art movement of deadpan wisdom.



XII. 7 There are so many articles now being written about Fluxus and historically filled with dates and philosophy, some correct and some incorrect, that I thought as a member of "Fluxus" for some years to put a little humor, and what I believe "Fluxus" was all about to me, on paper.

FLUXUS = MACIUNAS = FLUXUS = MACIUNAS = FLUXUS

My first encounter with George Maciunas was a no-smoking sign, not only on the door, but the ceiling, the floor, and in the toilet. Since I was and still am a heavy smoker, I spent much of my time on Canal Street smoking, or in the Canal Street Bar which was under Maciunas' Flux-Shop loft. The bar became a meeting place for all the smokers, George Brecht, Bob Watts, Alison Knowles, Ben Patterson etc. ... George Maciunas would be upstairs setting up for a performance and we would be downstairs smoking and drinking beer. Finally, when performance time was to be, we would go up, do the performance and return as fast as possible to the bar.

George Maciunas was and still is a prime mover of people, getting artists from Japan, from Europe and sometimes I thought from Hell to his Flux-Shop on Canal Street. As I came directly from music, via Jazz-Cage-Brown, I was overwhelmed by the energy of this man who could I still believe be the Pope, if he wanted.

The Flux-Shop became really a center for ideas. Brecht, a scientist by trade, an artist by heart, developed until he could no longer be a scientist and moved to Europe.

What I am trying to say is people came, people went, but we were all influenced by Fluxus. George would encourage, help and provide the space and the material, we could be ourselves, there were really no demands from George except the No Smoking.

There also comes a time to graduate, and somehow we did. I tried flying, gave up my Music Store, and followed Brecht to Europe.

So what is Fluxus? Fluxus is one man called George Maciunas.



XII. 8 ... about Maciunas, I can't write much, he has not given me fun – met him 2 times – . Kind of teacher: compensates lack of talent with scolding ... (remember his KARTEI?). Even scolding non(his)-pupils; gets envious fellows (the girls were softer) together (Flux) and makes lack of liveliness into a (restricting) morale. Ornamenteer, though.



XII. 9 I regretted not including an interview with George Maciunas in *The Theatre of Mixed Means* (1968), because he certainly belongs there. My recollection is that, in my mid-twenties, I wasn't mature enough to accept his extreme eccentricity. I've apologized for my error many times since, most recently with an individual entry in my *A Dictionary of the Avant-Garde* (1993).

There were in the mid-1970s SoHo dinner parties where the conversation was almost entirely devoted to telling stories about George, although none of the people present would have invited him to dinner (perhaps because we felt that, if he were invited, he would not come). It was probably his wild eyes that undermined your confidence in him, because as he was looking somewhere else you thought he was thinking about something else.

I'm reminded of George every time I walk past 80 Wooster Street and see the trees he planted in front of it, initially, I was told, to protect a tap into Con Edison wires. (The clever assumption was that Con Ed would not tear up saplings.) The trees are now nearly as tall as the building, so long ago (1967) were they planted. I also remember the marvelous supergraphic decorating the basement walls, its large letters warning: NO/SMO/KING.

Looking at the recent large Fluxus exhibition, I still think him the strongest artist, with the best examples of particularly Fluxus art. His single strongest work, which is so uniquely beyond anything like it, is, of course, the Expanded Media diagram that also becomes a charting of Fluxus history. Had I installed the exhibition, I would have enlarged the diagram to fill the wall. Not only is the whole brilliant, but the details are rich as Maciunas makes the viewer become involved in figuring out why certain examples are included and then why they are placed where they are in the chart, rather than somewhere else. The work must be a classic because no one since has done anything comparable in any field known to me. It also reminds us that George was trained in art history and that this

education, along with architectural studies, gave his mind a particular cast.



XII. 10 I first became personally acquainted with George Maciunas at the beginning of the 1970s. But by the middle of the 1960s I already considered him a friend whom I hadn't yet had the luck to meet.

In 1966 I had read his manifesto *U.S. Surpasses All Nazi Genocide Records*, the Italian translation of which was published in Milan by Edizioni ED 912. At the time my thoughts and interests were involved very much with the Russian avant-garde; and George, the American Lithuanian, struck me right from the start as embodying a true continuation, simply as a cultural phenomenon, of so many of that movement's wildest hopes and extraordinary expectations. I could see it in his way of thinking and also in his fabulous talent for creating activity, stirring things up, and keeping them on the move.

What most impressed me when I met him was his moral rectitude. He lived in New York, but in many ways he might just as well have been a Buddhist monk in Tibet. Rather than scholastic, the foundations on which his culture rested were biological. George had a lucid and powerful mind, and it furnished the essentials of a whole new way of conceiving and thinking about the world. He wasn't a poet, and he wasn't a philosopher. But his way of "being" and "doing" were a new rebirth of poetry and philosophy.

His guiding impulse was absolutely pure, and so much so as almost to turn into an obstacle to what I myself might think of as an entirely natural coming together of that whole group of likewise extraordinary people who produced such encouraging work in the 1960s, scumbling and transfiguring criteria that already had grown too crystallized and that yet had continued for far too long to control the relationships between art and life.

I met him at a moment when everything was once again turning back towards a restoration of the old. The art system was recovering its most typical and senseless form. The great excitements and breakthroughs of the 1960s were being marginalized if not canceled out. George was disappointed, but for a moment my enthusiasm rearoused his own. He prepared the edition of Fluxpack 3 for me. He began once again to think up projects and he repeatedly asked me to organize a Fluxus Festival at Rome's Olympic Stadium or in

the medieval city of San Gimignano. I failed to bring it off, and still today I feel ashamed of my incapability.

What now remains of him?

The fact that my life was greatly changed “because of George.”

The fact that when I meet my Fluxus friends we sit around a table at a bar and pass our time in very pleasant ways “because of George.” (Fluxus shows have recently become quite fashionable in the world’s museums. My suggestion for some intelligent and enterprising museum director would be to invite all the Fluxus artists to a bar. And then film what happens and tape the conversations. This surely would, if nothing else, be the very best way to approach a spirit that otherwise can’t be exhibited.)

The fact that years can pass without my seeing a particular friend and that then, when we’re back together, it seems as though we had always been constantly in touch with one another, since we’re part of a single family “because of George.”



XII. 11 The time that I knew GM – 1969-78 – proved to be the second half of his “official” Fluxus years. Some regard this period of Maciunas and his Fluxus activities as weakened and more insular in contrast to the formative glory days. I won’t take issue with that except to point out the obvious; the 1960s must surely be seen as inherently more dynamic than the following decade for cultural reasons vastly larger than Maciunas’ singular capacity to maintain a cutting-edge strategy for Fluxus. His earliest collaborators, who were innovators themselves, had largely dispersed along their individual paths with much success while George went on to spend a lot of his energies on other timely things like getting SoHo started with his Fluxhouse cooperatives. Along with his role as art publisher/promoter, he had been always trying to help people – sometimes directly by employing them, feeding them, getting them through immigration law and otherwise by doggedly trying to design what he thought a better social system.

He nonetheless continued producing editions, objects, networking promotions, and a number of significant public events in this period. He continually adapted his vision of an active Fluxus with himself as center. This doesn’t mean to imply that GM thought he owned Fluxus as a distinct phenomenon, but it did appear that Fluxus owned GM.

Apparently George had been a parade waiting to happen since childhood. He loved to be the director of things large and small and acclaimed team captain. Even as an adult he was somewhat like that kid most people knew in their neighborhood – the one who had lots of stuff to play with and who dragged it all out for playmates – that is, as long as he liked you, got to make up the games, and also be the referee. After my initial enthusiasm in “discovering” George, and after I had become more aware of the vast amount of work done by the wider group of artists, I judged that most innovations of Fluxus were a matter of early record. I found the work in general and some artists in particular to be seminal and was astounded that it was buried by critical ignorance. But it seemed redundant to continue developing the printed-score form or new Flux box variations. The great ones were done ...

I considered my own work at that time as addressed to the broad arc of art history. George’s theoretical predisposition to concretism and harangues against anything expressionistic or art-like struck me as an undermining of positive liberation. For me, his analysis had fascinating insight but then narrowed down into contradictory dogma. His attacks on the economic elitism of the gallery system and prima donna artists were accurate enough, but I couldn’t agree with a need to eliminate art or even be convinced that George himself was not an artist. I liked art and anti-art, Fluxus and not-Fluxus, and I liked exhibiting my work in alternative spaces and galleries. It was George Maciunas himself that was interesting and compelling, much more so than his Fluxus banner and stricter theory.

George was Fluxus all the time, around the clock. He was endlessly cooking up things to do and talking everyone into some part of it with his compelling enthusiasm. After engaging in a number of adventures with him, one would realize that you could not go on the whole program with him lest you became fixed in a potentially grandiose and uncharted vision which was ultimately personal – just like that of any other obsessed artist. But you could still marvel at him for his cerebral dazzle and also have the simple pleasures of games and an “art” that laughed at itself. This aspect of humor in art practice was suffering atrophy before Fluxus helped revitalize it. So it was possible and more desirable to check in and out of GM’s universe, knowing that he was there somewhere boxing it all up in concrete packets, flow charts and maps of playing fields ready for action.

As occasions came up, I would submit some ideas to him for performance or objects, and before long I got more involved than I planned. He would maybe get some ideas or prototypes produced while others were filed into eventual oblivion. He also felt free to change more to his liking what you had originally proposed and you would sometimes not even see the end result. There was never money – you got other Fluxus products. His appetite was always larger than the time he had to satisfy it. It was as if all his friends helped feed his flux-fix in order to share in the joy he got from it.



XII. 12 The final truth is that Fluxus was never much more than a pragmatic episode (not even a collective), which floundered into a circumstance rich enough to accommodate a very wild, but also a very focused bunch of 1960s radical artists. Without George Maciunas, the various “strains” of Fluxus probably would have disappeared as “early attempts” at this or that recent art form (Pop Art, minimalism, conceptual art, mail art, etc. etc. etc.) But, because of George Maciunas, not only is the Fluxus legacy still alive, but it is also dead.

As a non-believer, I have no idea how George M. may or may not be enjoying “life after death.” But I do believe that Fluxus has not only survived George, but now that it is finally free to be Fluxus, it is becoming that something/nothing with which George should be happy.



XII. 13 I’d love to help remember George sure I think of him so often – his logic so apparent now afterwards – the accent gone, his penchant for orange juice and mineral water, the long terrible trail of immigrant memories and refugee realities. Fumio Yoshimura helped me see the outsider-ness of George, the political acumen, the economic prescience ... We would be three nobodies during morning coffee hour since we lay for a while in George’s driven shining manic path – times so sunny one remembers that long easy life with tears of regret. Time past, youth maybe, a simpler time when the world made so much more sense & was so much easier to deal with.

We had hope, we were sure – well pretty sure & this nutty guy from middle Europe really did make sense ... It was all possible. Probably it still is.



XII. 14 John Lennon often said that he had never met anyone so bohemian and so eccentric as George Maciunas. Lennon was very fond of describing George's lifestyle to others, as though his sleeping on a shelf in a cubbyhole in a dampish basement space, his busy Fluxus cottage industry, his making tea from rope were John's discoveries. He was rather proud to know someone at such odds with conventional society. The two of them were very comfortable together. They shared a common color-blindness: a testament to this is Lennon's Fluxkit, a large water-color set carefully organized with tubes of bright colored paints that can't be distinguished by color-blind eyes. When John reminisced about George, Yoko would often chime in, speaking of how handsome and striking and elegant he had been as a young man.



XII. 15 *In general I don't like to use myself or my biography or my face for advertising purposes. In place of a biography you can say:*

"George Maciunas (alias Gerontius).

"Deacon in Milan under Ambrose, who had an extraordinary and singularly unedifying dream, but instead of doing penance as commanded, went to Constantinople, won favor at court, and was made Bishop of Micomedia, but was deposed by Chrysostom in spite of popular favor."

Or say simply: "Biography unavailable."



Only time will tell! ... Wiesbaden 1992



НА ЭТОЙ ФОТОГРАФИИ
 НЕТ НИ ОДНОГО МОСКВИЧА
 НО ВСЕ ОНИ ПОВСТРЕЧА-
 ЛИСЬ И ПОЛЮБИЛИ
 "ФЛУКСУС" В МОСКВЕ.

Nobody in that photo
 is moskowate but all of this
 meet and loved Fluxus in
 Moscow

Moscow 1996: Another dream come true! Young Russian artists and actors welcome Fluxus to Russia with a spirited version of George's old war horse, *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti*. The performance, on the stage of the Central House of Artists, was also In Memoriam to George Maciunas. Photo © 1996 by Wolfgang Träger.

BIOGRAPHY

- 1931 Yurgis Maciunas born November 8 in Kaunas, Lithuania, to Alexander M. Maciunas, Berlin-educated architect and engineer, and his wife Leokadija, Russian-born dancer affiliated with the Lithuanian National Opera.
- Yurgis spends several years at sanatoria in Switzerland recuperating from bronchial and ear infections, and, after age 3, tuberculosis.
- Schoolmate and close friend of Vytautis Landsbergis, first president of free Lithuania after the collapse of the Soviet Union.
- 1944 Family flees to Germany as the Russians invade Lithuania. Father works for German engineering firm. Yurgis and sister Nijole attend primary school in the resort town of Bad Nauheim in the Taunus Mountains. After the war they attend secondary school at the Lithuanian Displaced Persons Camp in Hanau. Yurgis excels in mathematics and drawing. Father works as electrical engineer for the Americans.
- 1948 Family emigrates to the United States, live in middle-class housing area in Long Island, New York.
- 1949-52 Yurgis studies art, graphics and architecture at Cooper Union School of Art in New York City.
- 1952-54 Studies architecture and musicology at Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburg. Bachelor of Architecture degree.
- In connection with his studies he produces an *Atlas of Russian History*, a series of superimposed maps and data hand-drawn on transparent pages indicating the major historical changes in the Russian state up to the time of the Revolution. The first of many large-scale historical charts and atlases that would preoccupy him for much of his life.
- 1954 Father dies. Sister Nijole marries. Mother sells house in Long Island and moves with Yurgis to Manhattan.
- 1954-60 Continues art-historical studies at the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University, specializing in the study of European and Siberian art at the time of the early medieval migration of peoples.

Atlas of Prehistoric Chinese Art.

History of Art (incomplete), a 6-foot-by-12-foot time-space chart categorizing all past styles, movements, schools, artists et cetera.

1960 Works as designer for Knoll Associates, New York.

The word "Fluxus" first used in reference to a Lithuanian cultural journal to be published by Maciunas and his fellow emigré Almus Salcius. The journal never appeared.

Attends composition classes of the electronic composer Richard Maxfield at the New School for Social Research in New York. Meets La Monte Young, George Brecht, Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, Allan Kaprow, Jackson Mac Low and others who would soon figure in the history of Fluxus.

1961 Yurgis changes his name to George after a political misunderstanding with the militantly anti-communist Board of Directors of the Lithuanian Society of New York, who deny him use of their auditorium for rehearsals of avant-garde works by Maciunas and his friends.

George and Almus Salcius open AG Gallery on Madison Avenue.

Attempts (unsuccessfully) to earn his living, support his mother, and finance AG Gallery from the sale of imported delicatessen foods and rare musical instruments.

Organizes literary and musical programs at the AG Gallery, featuring the works of Richard Maxfield, John Cage, Storm de Hirsch, Dick Higgins, Toshi Ichiyanagi, Yoko Ono, Jackson Mac Low, Joseph Byrd, La Monte Young, Henry Flynt, Walter de Maria, Ray Johnson and others, and festivals of *Musica Antiqua et Nova*. Incurs enormous financial losses.

Designs *AN ANTHOLOGY*, published by Jackson Mac Low and La Monte Young, the important and influential collection of works that became a source book for Fluxus and the "new arts", and a kind of preview of the graphic style identified with Fluxus ever afterwards.

Bankruptcy of the AG Gallery. George and his mother fly to Wiesbaden, where he works as a designer for the U.S. Air Force. Contacts leaders of the avant-garde in Germany and France.

1962 Initiates the Fluxus group with the first European Fluxus Festivals. Performers: Maciunas, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Benjamin Patterson, Wolf Vostell, Nam June Paik, Emmett Williams, Tomas Schmit, Addi K pcke and Eric Andersen.

14 concerts at St dtisches Museum, Wiesbaden

6 concerts at Nikolaikirke, Copenhagen

7 concerts at the Centre Am ricain des Artistes, Paris

Starts long-range plans to design and publish Fluxus editions.

- 1963 Ben Vautier, Daniel Spoerri, Robert Filliou, Joseph Beuys, and Willem de Ridder join the Fluxus troupe.
Fluxus festivals in Dusseldorf, Amsterdam, The Hague, Nice.
Contract with the U.S. Air Force terminated because of chronic illnesses.
Returns to New York, against his will, on September 3.
- 1964 Grand opening of the Fluxhall, at 359 Canal Street. Twelve Fluxus concerts between May 11 and April 13.
Publishes *The Great Frauds of Architecture: Mies van der Rohe / Saarinen / Bunshaft / Frank Lloyd Wright*.
Henry Flynt's "Action Against Cultural Imperialism", August 30. This attempt by George and his friend Henry Flynt to picket and disrupt a performance of Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Originale* at Judson Hall backfires, seriously weakening the "solidarity" of the Fluxus collective.
- 1965–69 Emphasis shifts from performances to production of Fluxus multiples and publications.
- 1965 Publishes *Maciunas Prefabricated Building System*.
- 1967 The Ginger Island project, an attempt to establish a Fluxus cooperative settlement in the Caribbean with 70 artists. The first of many dream schemes doomed to failure because of the lack of funds and the unwillingness of George's friends and colleagues to risk their futures on such "mad" ventures.
Fluxfilms win Walker Art Center and Ann Arbor Film Festival awards.
Establishes Implosions, Inc., an unsuccessful attempt to find a way to mass produce and distribute Fluxus materials, after he finally realized that the distribution system he had established over the years was totally inadequate.
- 1968 Incorporates Fluxhouse Cooperative Building Project to buy and renovate loft buildings, designed to provide artists with affordable living and working spaces. Maciunas' pioneering work led directly to the creation of SoHo as an artists' district in New York, but despite the time and energy he spent on the project, he gained nothing personally from his efforts, and was constantly in debt.
- 1970 Renewed interest in performance activities, "Fluxgames" and food events.
Publishes *A Preliminary Proposal for a 3-Dimensional System of Information Storage and Presentation*, in *Proposals for Education*, Carnegie Corporation of New York.
Fluxmass performed at Vorhees Chapel, Douglas College, New Jersey, followed by protests from clergymen.

- Exhibits *in absentia* at Happenings and Fluxus exhibition, Cologne.
- 1975 Running feud with the Attorney General of New York State concerning the legality of the Fluxus Cooperative Building Project.
Loses an eye and suffers other permanent body damage after an attack by hired "Mafia thugs" for alleged non-payment of debts incurred in Fluxhouse project.
- 1976 Moves to New Marlborough, Massachusetts, where he attempts to transform a delapidated manor house and stud farm into a Fluxus-oriented center of the arts.
The Festschrift Banquet in George's honor – "Laudatio Scripta pro George Maciunas concepta hominibus fluxi" – at Zaccar's Offset Print Shop in SoHo.
George and Fluxus colleagues fly to Berlin for the realization of his Flux-Labyrinth at the Akademie der Künste.
- 1977 Artist's grant of \$7,500 from the National Endowment of the Arts in Washington, D.C. Money spent to pay past-due bills for renovations on New Marlborough house.
Fluxus Festival in Seattle in September, the last festival organized and directed by Maciunas.
- 1978 Diagnosed as suffering from cancer of pancreas and liver.
Marries the poet Billie Hutching, one of his tenants at New Marlborough, in early February at Lee, Massachusetts. Flux-Wedding celebrated at the SoHo loft of Jean Dupuy and Olga Adorno on February 25.
Dies at University Hospital, Boston, on May 9.
Wake and cremation ceremony at Fresh Pond Crematorium, Queens, New York, on May 11.
Fluxfuneral for George Maciunas on May 13 at 80 Wooster Street.
"In Memoriam George Maciunas," performance by Joseph Beuys and Nam June Paik, Staatliche Kunstakademie in Dusseldorf, July 7.

INDEX

(Conz) = Archivio Francesco Conz, Verona.

(Getty) = Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Santa Monica, California.

(Silverman) = The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Foundation, New York, N.Y.

(Sohm) = Archiv-Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

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- X. 8 JONAS MEKAS, from work cited in VI. 19, entry dated April 16, 1977.
- X. 9 BILLIE HUTCHING MACIUNAS, letter to EW, Hillsborough, North Carolina, July 3, 1993.
- X. 10 LARRY MILLER, from manuscript cited in VI. 16.
- X. 11 BILLIE HUTCHING MACIUNAS, from diary.
- X. 12 BILLIE HUTCHING MACIUNAS, op. cit.
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- X. 15 BILLIE HUTCHING MACIUNAS, op. cit.
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- X. 17 LEOKADIJA MACIUNAS, op. cit., p. 16.
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- X. 21 LEOKADIJA MACIUNAS, op. cit., p. 18.
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- XI. 1 GEORGE MACIUNAS, letter to Ay-O, New Marlborough, Massachusetts, February 15, 1978.
- XI. 2 JONAS MEKAS, from work cited in VI. 19, entry undated.
- XI. 3 GEORGE MACIUNAS, in work cited in VI. 19. dated Feb. 20, 1978.
- XI. 4 JONAS MEKAS, op. cit., entry dated Feb. 11, 1978.
- XI. 5 GEORGE MACIUNAS, in Mekas work cited in VI. 19, Feb. 20, 1978.
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- XI. 10 BARBARA MOORE, from work cited in II. 9.
- XI. 11 GEOFFREY HENDRICKS, from manuscript cited in V. 29.
- XI. 12 DICK HIGGINS, manuscript (1980).
- XI. 13 BILLIE HUTCHING MACIUNAS, from diary.
- XI. 14 EMMETT WILLIAMS, manuscript (1993).
- XI. 15 JONAS MEKAS, op. cit., entry dated May 5, 1975.

- XI. 16 EMMETT WILLIAMS, from work cited in III. 1, p. 309.
- XI. 17 NYE FFARRABAS (formerly Bici Forbes [Hendricks]), 1978, May 2–May 10, manuscript written “somewhat after George’s death.”
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- XI. 19 BEN VAUTIER, *BullShit 0*, Multhipla Edizioni, Milan 1992.
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- XI. 23 NAM JUNE PAIK, from “Decomposition in the Media Art”, in exhibition catalogue cited in IV. 28, p. 18.
- XI. 24 CARLA LISS, letter to EW, San Francisco, Sept. 1993.
- XI. 25 RENÉ BLOCK, from work cited in II. 16, p. 329.

XII: GEORGE WHO?

- XII. 1 BEN VAUTIER, undated Ben newsletter.
- XII. 2 ANN NOËL, diary entry for April 3, 1977.
- XII. 3 JOHN CAGE, from an interview with ELLSWORTH SNYDER in *Visible Language* 26, No. 1-2 (Winter Spring 1992).
- XII. 4 MILAN KNIZAK, from work cited in VII. 9.
- XII. 5 LA MONTE YOUNG, letter “To Whom It May Concern”, New York, Feb. 18, 1978 (Sohm).
- XII. 6 ALLAN KAPROW, “Maestro Maciunas”, manuscript, Encinitas, California 1993.
- XII. 7 JOE JONES, from *Joe Jones in Europe 1973-1975*, Edizioni Conz, Verona.
- XII. 8 DIETER ROTH, letter to EW, Basel, Nov. 21, 1993.
- XII. 9 RICHARD KOSTELANETZ, letter to EW, New York, Aug. 20, 1993.
- XII. 10 GINO DI MAGGIO, “Because of George”, manuscript, Milan 1993. Translated from the Italian by Henry Martin.
- XII. 11 LARRY MILLER, from manuscript cited in VI. 16.
- XII. 12 BEN PATTERSON, from “Self Interview by Ben Patterson”, in *BullShit 02*, February–March 1992. Multhipla Edizioni, Milan.
- XII. 13 KATE MILLETT, letter to EW, Poughkeepsie, New York, July 15, 1993.
- XII. 14 SARA SEAGULL, manuscript, New York, February 1996.
- XII. 15 GEORGE MACIUNAS, from a letter to Wolf Vostell, New York, Nov. 3, 1964. (Sohm).

EMMETT WILLIAMS has been a Fluxus activist since the first Festum Fluxorum in Wiesbaden in 1962. Internationally acclaimed as a poet, performer and visual artist, he has lived in Berlin since 1980. In 1996 the Berlinische Galerie awarded him the first Hannah Höch Prize for "a lifetime of achievement in the arts."

ANN NOËL, the British painter, designer and printmaker, worked for Edition Hansjörg Mayer of Stuttgart and London, and Dick Higgins's Something Else Press in New York. Over the years she has met and worked with most of the Fluxus artists. She lives in Berlin.

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