

# FLUXUS

**A Long Tale  
with Many Knots**

**Fluxus in Germany  
1962-1994**





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1962 – 1994**

**An Exhibition of  
the Institut  
für Auslandsbeziehungen  
Stuttgart**

Conception of the exhibition  
and catalog  
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Gabriele Knapstein

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Nam June Paik in "Simple"  
Wiesbaden 1962

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## Contents

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4 Introduction

6 Johannes Cladders and  
Gabriele Knapstein  
"every communication is a collage"  
Johannes Cladders reminisces  
about early Fluxus in conversation  
with Gabriele Knapstein  
on November 7, 1994 in Krefeld

---

18 Ina Conzen  
From Manager of the Avant-Garde  
to Fluxus Conductor  
George Maciunas in Germany

---

30 René Block  
Fluxus Music:  
an everyday event  
A Lecture

---

42 Klaus Schöning  
Fluxus Radio Art in the WDR Studio  
for Acoustic Art

---

52 Exhibition artists

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**"You have to spill rice and beans so that  
you don't take rice and beans so seriously.  
And when we don't take these and other things  
so seriously, there's less fear in the world.  
This is the task of art: We should be less afraid.  
I've got to spill lots more rice and beans."**

Nam June Paik  
on his piece "Simple"  
in a magnum interview:  
Fluxus Folk, 1963

The first Fluxus Festival took place at the Städtisches Museum in Wiesbaden in 1962. George Maciunas, an artist-impresario who came from Lithuania and was trained at various art schools in New York, had planned a concert series for September 1962 with the title "FLUXUS \* International Festival of the Newest Music". Over four weekends, artists from various fields appeared together in Wiesbaden in "action music" pieces and "happenings", in "events" and compositions of "concrete music"; tapes were played and films were shown.

The term "Fluxus", which Maciunas had originally thought of as the title for an "International Magazine of the Newest Art, Anti-art, Music, Anti-music, Poetry, Anti-poetry, etc.", served the tireless organizer from then on as the name for numerous concerts and events, manifestos and editions that have come into being and been publicized, thanks in large part to his initiative, during the following years in Europe, the United States and Japan. Although the magazine never was published, the term "Fluxus", as a description for a wealth of the most varied artistic activities, has been retained from the sixties until today.

Fluxus – it is first and foremost a many-dimensional web of encounters, performances, ideas and objects that extends over a long time period and many countries. Fluxus – it is a field phenomenon, whose borders are indistinct and difficult to determine. Fluxus – it is, in a free translation of Lewis Carroll, a long tale with many knots.

The web of contacts and activities that make up the Fluxus phenomenon is especially closely-meshed in the early 1960s, as well as around the anniversary "birthdays" in 1972, 1982 and 1992. Important nodes formed first in New York and in the German cities of Darmstadt, Düsseldorf, Cologne, Wuppertal, Wiesbaden and Berlin. Lively connections developed with Japan, and with Paris, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, London, Stockholm, Prague and Madrid. But in the long history of Fluxus, the two main scenes of action were New York – where George Maciunas lived – and the Federal Republic of Germany – which since the late sixties has become the provisional, or more permanent, place of residence for many Fluxus artists.

During the last few years, much important material about the history of Fluxus has been reappraised and displayed in the exhibitions and publications of Detroit's Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, as well as in the traveling exhibition "In the Spirit of Fluxus" assembled by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. The accent in these projects was on the activities that George Maciunas initiated from New York.

Now, in addition to documenting Fluxus events organized in Germany by Maciunas, the exhibition by the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen also takes up other strands which have intermeshed Fluxus with the German arts scene since the late fifties. Characteristic of the history of Fluxus in Germany is that artists such as John Cage, Nam June Paik, George Maciunas, La Monte Young and Emmett Williams met with a lively scene there in the late fifties and early sixties in the areas of new music and concrete poetry. That scene promoted interdisciplinary approaches and reacted immediately to new impulses. In the Federal Republic of Germany, which was beginning to reorient itself not only politically and economically but also culturally, a favorable climate developed for artistic experimentation that linked up with the avant-garde movements of the early 20th century and was able to develop new, "intermediating" forms.

Unlike other European countries or the USA, in the Rhineland and Berlin there were, from the start, not only artists who created a platform of one kind or another for themselves and their friends. There also were a number of engaged individuals in galleries and museums who experienced Fluxus as irritating, therefore important, work on the concept of art and who tried to communicate this. But it was the artists such as Joseph Beuys or Wolf Vostell who saw to it that Fluxus remained a continuing presence in the West German art scene into the seventies. Fluxus had provided decisive impulses for their own work and, despite some clashes and distancing, they never gave up their contact to the Fluxus circle.

Thanks to the Berliner Künstlerprogramm of the DAAD, thanks to a number of lecture posts and chairs at German art schools and thanks to numerous exhibition activities, Fluxus artists came again and again to the Federal Republic of Germany from the USA, Japan and countries in western and eastern Europe throughout the seventies and eighties. There they found a small but friendly circle of collectors and supporters who attentively followed and documented their work earlier than elsewhere – sooner than, say, in Italy or the USA. Since the ideas and works of Fluxus artists were largely beyond the ken of the art market, artists depended on these forms of sponsoring and support. Some notable Fluxus collections – such as that of the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen – could only be assembled because important Fluxus works and documents could be acquired, even until recently, with relatively modest financial means.

In presenting various aspects of the long history of Fluxus in Germany, the exhibition and catalog document, on the one hand, important festivals, concerts and appearances by the artists in Germany. Among the photographic documents, the series by Ute Klophaus and Manfred Leve from the sixties are especially featured, because they represent two fundamentally different modes of “recording” and “reproducing” Action Art. Manfred Leve tried to portray the events as they were perceived from the more or less accidental standpoint of a visitor, whereas Ute Klophaus created a distance to the depicted events using artistic means such as treatment of the negative or print. Both records have the limitations of photography itself, which can only give presence to past events as past. But in connection with other preserved documents such as posters, letters, film or sound recordings as well as scores and artists’ books, they do make it possible for today’s observer to form an image of the actions and events of those times. On the other hand, the exhibition shows original works by Fluxus artists, works that were created during the early days of concerts and activities together, and also newer works by artists who have lived and worked in Germany or who still live there today. The multiples and publications chosen were, with few exceptions, published either by Maciunas or in German editions.

Along with documentary film material, the exhibition presents some artists’ films as well as the Flux-films released by Maciunas. Sound documents, such as live concert recordings or taped readings, are difficult to present within the framework of an exhibition because of their often poor sound quality. Therefore, other than a few examples of this kind, the exhibition focuses on presenting some of the records made by artists and on the Fluxus Radio Art produced by West German Radio in Cologne.

A special edition accompanying the catalog presents previously unpublished material from the correspondence piece “REVUE RENDEZ-VOUS”, a newspaper project that was conceived and initiated in the sixties by S.D. Sauerbier in Berlin and – like the Fluxus magazine planned by Maciunas – never went beyond the stage of collecting material. This piece illustrates, in its way, the weblike structure of Fluxus that the exhibition and catalog attempt to portray.

Given its many diverse sources and forms of expression, Fluxus repeatedly eludes ultimate attempts at definition and definitive art historical categorization. If one searches contemporary thought for concepts that might characterize the unsystematic, intermediary and ephemeral nature of Fluxus, one encounters, for example, the concept of the “rhizome”, taken from botany by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The “rhizome”, so the philosopher and psychoanalyst describe it in their book “A Thousand Plateaus”, “can take on the most disparate forms, from a branched spreading in all directions on the surface to a compression in bulbs and tubercles... There are good and bad rhizomes: the potato and couch grass, a weed... A rhizome has neither a beginning nor an end, it is always in the middle, between things, a connection, *intermezzo*... The middle is really not an average value but, on the contrary, the site where things precipitate. No localizable relation going from one thing to another and vice versa can be described; rather there is a pendulum motion, a transversal movement that goes in one and another direction, a river without beginning or end that washes away both of its banks and that always flows more swiftly in the middle.”

René Block  
Carola Bodenmüller  
Gabriele Knapstein

**Knapstein:**

Mr. Cladders, during preparations for “A Long Tale with Many Knots. Fluxus in Germany 1962–1994” it became evident that the very process of trying to confine the exhibition to a part of the international history of Fluxus – to concentrate solely on the concerts, actions, exhibitions and publications of Fluxus artists and their friends in Germany – itself suggests a description of the Fluxus phenomenon: a difficult-to-circumscribe, weblike formation open to connections in many directions. Unlike some attempts to more clearly define the Fluxus movement as an historical object and so make it easier to handle for research – for instance, trying to reduce it to the initiating and edition-making activities of George Maciunas, who named it – a look at Fluxus’ history in Germany confirms statements by participating artists who repeatedly point out the disunity and many-dimensionality of the artistic activities known as Fluxus.

You have followed the Fluxus movement, from your Rhineland location, since its beginnings, from your perspective as both a museum expert and an artist. I would like to ask you whether the broad conception of Fluxus that underlies our exhibition, and that includes names such as Joseph Beuys, Dieter Roth or Daniel Spoerri, is justified according to your experience?

**Cladders:**

I became aware of Fluxus – I can no longer say with certainty whether I was familiar with the term at that time – from my Rhine area perspective first as a movement that developed at the end of the fifties and in the early sixties through activities by artists such as Nam June Paik, Wolf Vostell and Mary Bauermeister and by gallery owners such as Jean-Pierre Wilhelm and Rolf Jährling in cities such as Cologne, Düsseldorf and Wuppertal. Important early contacts for me also came by way of Addi Köpcke, who had already invited many artists participating in Fluxus to his gallery in Copenhagen around 1960. Only later did I learn about John Cage’s courses in experimental composition at the New School for Social Research and about George Maciunas’ activities at the AG Gallery in New York, since I didn’t know about any American Fluxus activities at all from my own presence on the spot. I saw artists like Joseph Beuys, Robert Filliou and Addi Köpcke connecting to Fluxus and how Fluxus networked into the artistic life of the Federal Republic of Germany. The experience confirms how difficult it is to demarcate or define this movement.

**Knapstein:**

Without a doubt, George Maciunas, with his enormous organizational commitment, understood how to bring artists from very different areas and approaches into actions together under the name “Fluxus”. But the artists certainly identified only in part with the definitions that Maciunas tried to give this term during the early sixties. And from the mid-sixties on, there were continual differences of opinion as to who would be allowed to lay claim to the term Fluxus and who wouldn’t.

**Cladders:**

Well, art history is full of such descriptions of groups and movements. They become characterized partly by the artists themselves and partly by critics, with more or less conclusive reasoning. Such namings often remain fuzzy and unsatisfying, yet they still possess a certain utility value.

**Knapstein:**

Maciunas found a good term for the approaches he perceived in the different branches of the arts around 1960. The term is both concise and open. It suggests fluidity, liquefying of conventions in the arts, and it leaves open the details of how this liquefying should be interpreted. So the term can still be used to indicate certain approaches from artists as diverse as Joseph Beuys, George Brecht, Nam June Paik, Daniel Spoerri or Wolf Vostell. They all had opposed art’s rigidification since the late fifties by reconnecting to the avant-garde movements of the 1910s and 1920s. In the face of the strong presence of abstract painting and sculpture in the postwar era, they pushed ahead with their interdisciplinary approaches to broaden the conception of art.



**Cladders:**

But for all his organizational and theoretical work, Maciunas didn't take on the role of theoretician-promoter for the Fluxus movement as, for instance, Pierre Restany seems to have done for the Nouveaux Réalistes or Achille Bonito Oliva for the so-called "Transavanguardia". Fluxus lacked people who could communicate its approaches. These could be quite difficult for an art audience to understand. The artists themselves, people like George Brecht, Arthur Köpcke and Tomas Schmit, certainly possessed the intellectual potential to represent their work on the basis of art theory. But they always refrained from any statements in this direction, from any definition of Fluxus. They always preferred that their audience be, so to speak, "their own thinkers".

**Knapstein:**

Then who could Maciunas rely on when he came to Germany with his program in autumn, 1961, and wanted to build on the gallery and impresario activities he had already begun in New York? Where were the meeting places for Fluxus in Germany? Where could the "long tale with many knots" develop?

**Cladders:**

Along with the circle around Mary Bauermeister and WDR's Electronic Studio in Cologne, Vostell's studio was at first an important place for contacts here in the Rhineland. He organized concerts and exhibitions and introduced many people to each other. Another important place after 1961 was the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf with Joseph Beuys, who became an important mentor for many artists. Finally, many early contacts go back to Nam June Paik.

**Knapstein:**

Vostell certainly had great organizational skill and knew how to win people over for his activities and happenings, which could be very elaborate. He had also published the first material on Fluxus and Happening artists in 1962 in the magazine "dé-coll/age". Fluxus archivist Hanns Sohm had also gotten to know many artists through his contact with Vostell. By the mid-sixties, he had already begun to document all the actions and performances of these artists and to collect invitations, posters, correspondence, publications and relics. Vostell suggested this to him and gave him many addresses.

**Cladders:**

I think that for Vostell, being integrated into a certain circle was much more important than, say, for Beuys. Artists who develop – for whatever reasons – a certain ambition always tend more to form and maintain an artists' group, unlike artists who can establish an existence, both material and ideal, on their own. That's entirely normal; I say this without any evaluation whatsoever. This role of organizational mediator was certainly assumed more intensively by Vostell than by Beuys, who also took on the role, but more or less only within the framework of his possibilities at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie with its large auditorium. For instance, he presented a Cage concert at the Akademie, he invited dancer Yvonne Rainer, and the major Fluxus concert took place here in February 1963 and so on. I don't believe I missed any of these concerts or any of the performances.

Vostell's role was also an important one, in many respects, because he had a great ability to carry things through and so could create the organizational preconditions. I seem to recall that the happening at Rolf Jährling's also went back to Vostell's activities.

**Knapstein:**

The "24 hour" happening in June 1965? The year before, Vostell had done his "9 Décollagen" in Wuppertal, also with Jährling. But Paik too had contact with Rolf Jährling. His first exhibition was in 1963 at the Galerie Parnass.

**Cladders:**

Vostell comes from the Wuppertal area, from Leverkusen. So, these spheres of influence were less available to Beuys. But when it concerned certain ideas and concepts, artistic content – and that was what principally concerned Cage, for example – then the actual contact wasn't Vostell but Beuys. When it didn't concern the organization of an exhibition, an event of some kind, a concert or whatever, but rather the cultivation of a certain specific intellectual exchange, one turned more to Beuys.

**Knapstein:**

There were many different strands of tradition, if you consider Cage and Beuys. Or other Fluxus artists who had their problems with Beuys' so-called "symbolism" and who were actually making an attempt to get away from everything involving symbols. There was interest in the intensity of an artistic work. And there you naturally become interested in someone you expect a certain intensity from, or someone you have gotten to know. But still, the intellectual ties that connected Cage with artists like George Brecht are certainly very different from, say, the ones that can be found with Beuys.

**Cladders:**

Yes, Beuys certainly was not uncontroversial among the Fluxus artists. But someone like Cage found in Beuys much that was congenial to his own thinking. Besides, it wasn't mere coincidence that both had something like common "hobbies" in the natural sciences and completely alternative ways of living and thinking. The mushroom collector appreciated the bee expert. A man like Beuys, who knew exact homeopathic doses and such things, was naturally appealing to Cage. He sought the contact. For example, when Cage gave a concert in Krefeld in the early sixties – with Tudor – I picked him up at the Düsseldorf airport. His first question wasn't about the performance; he wanted Beuys' telephone number. He called him while we were still at the airport.

**Knapstein:**

And Beuys, of course, found in Cage a great match for his interest in things musical.

**Cladders:**

Exactly. In this area, he was in much better hands with Cage than somewhere else. To return once more to the subject: there were always these two contact points, Beuys and Vostell, where Vostell was usually more active than Beuys. Beuys went along, but he always stood with only one foot in the boat that Vostell stood in with both feet. I do believe that Vostell was a very decisive figure with respect to something like an organization or movement "Fluxus". Connections like the one to Something Else Press or to Addi Köpcke in Copenhagen were being made through him early on. Vostell at that time also felt himself completely tied to the Rhineland – until he made his break with Cologne.

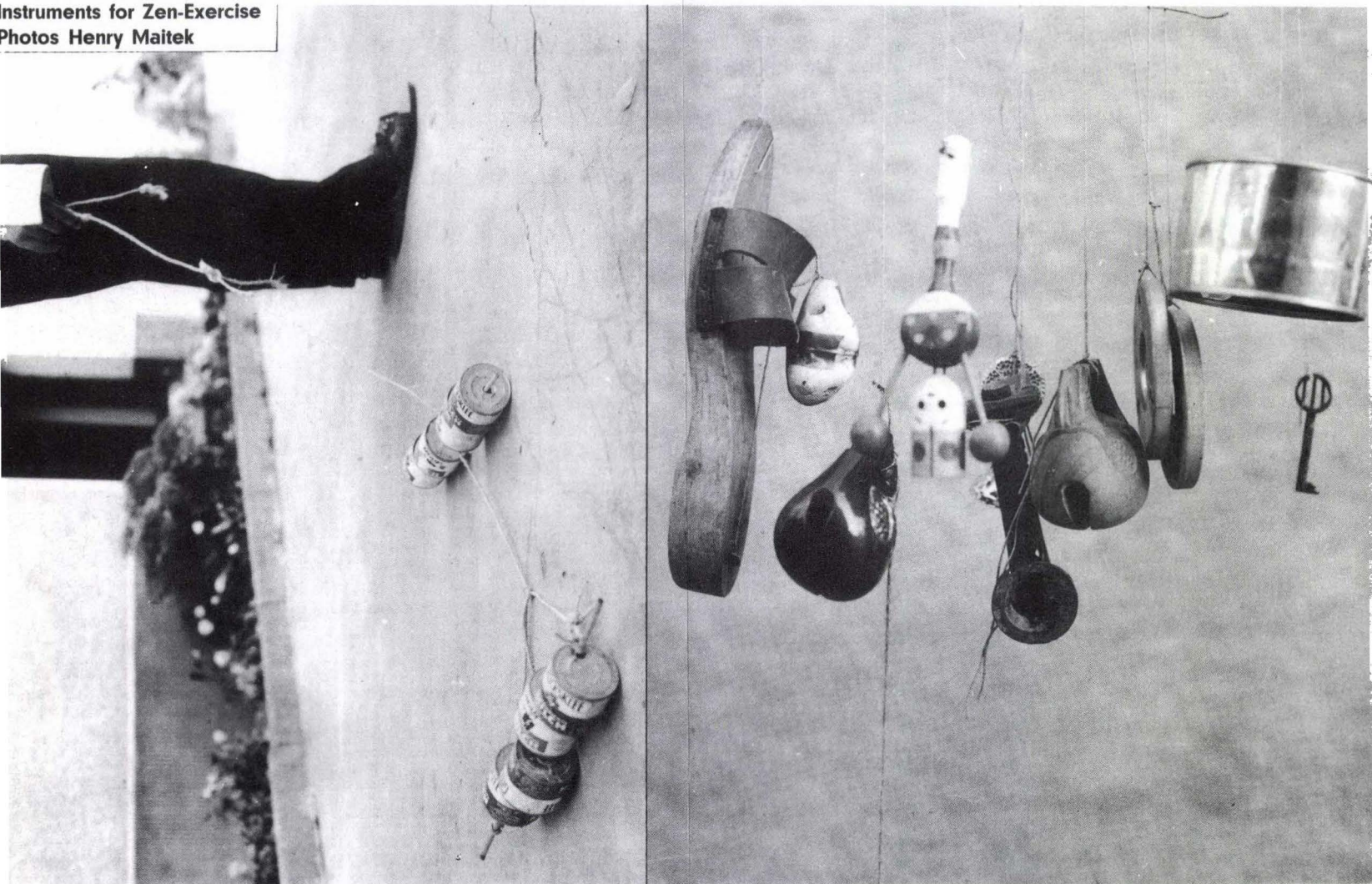
**Knapstein:**

Addi Köpcke was an important branch office, so to speak, for Fluxus in Germany.

**Cladders:**

Not just a branch office for Germany. Köpcke also tried to get into the Paris scene via Robert Filliou, but such contacts also had a lot to do with Vostell. Besides, Vostell had his own space in Cologne where exhibitions could be mounted – all important prerequisites.

Nam June Paik  
Instruments for Zen-Exercise  
Photos Henry Maitek



Instruments for walking

Zen for walking

**Knapstein:**

The contacts through Vostell to Cologne were surely important for Filliou and Spoerri too, but there was also, for example, Galerie Schmela as a meeting point. It was known that Schmela was interested in things like New Realism. So there was one more person to look up if you came to the Rhineland from abroad. And there must have been still other meeting places?

**Cladders:**

Schmela was very strongly influenced by Beuys, since Beuys was a good crowd puller for him – not least in a purely commercial sense. Schmela also relied a great deal on Beuys' judgment. Beuys brought people like Bob Morris and Yvonne Rainer to the Akademie for events. Often these artists then had a show with Schmela.

Vostell had no noteworthy influence on Galerie Schmela. It was well and good that Vostell had his gallery on Spichernstrasse in Cologne, but that, of course, wasn't really a commercial enterprise. I have no idea what, if anything, was ever sold there. In any case, it was never enough to pay the rent for the space. But Schmela was a real commercial business, where things were accounted for and it had to be self-supporting and it was. And Schmela simply had a reputation among collectors who relied on him blindly and bought from him. Whether it was the Baums or Frau Neuerburg or the Hahns or whoever.

**Knapstein:**

It's very interesting to look at the various private collections that had concentrated on Fluxus and New Realism early on. There is a collection like the Hahns', that very consciously bought through galleries – Schmela among others – not directly from artists themselves. And there is someone like Hanns Sohm, who got to know about the whole thing from Vostell, and who then started to collect these documents that were left over, so to speak, from actions and events. The other collectors bought the objects.

From: décollage 3  
Ed.: Wolf Vostell, Cologne 1962

In 1961, I have written a sketch to the "Symphony for 20 rooms", where the audience has a choice of at least 20 different sound sources, between which they can freely circulate. The free time leads the music necessarily to the space-music (room-music) because the free time requires more than two vectors (directions), and two vectors constitute necessarily the space (room). In this case, the room (space) is no longer merely the enrichment of the sound, but the indispensable "better-half" of the sound. (without pedantry, such as demanding the ears to do what they cannot do)

As the next step toward more indeterminacy, I wanted to let the audience (or congregation, in this case) act and play by itself. So I have resigned the performance of music. I expose the music. I made various kinds of musical instruments, object sonores, to expose them in a room so that the congregation may play them as they please. I am no longer a cook (composer), but only a feinkosthandler (delicatessen proprietor). This self-degradation gives me also some other unexpected joys, as every self-degradation usually does. For instance:

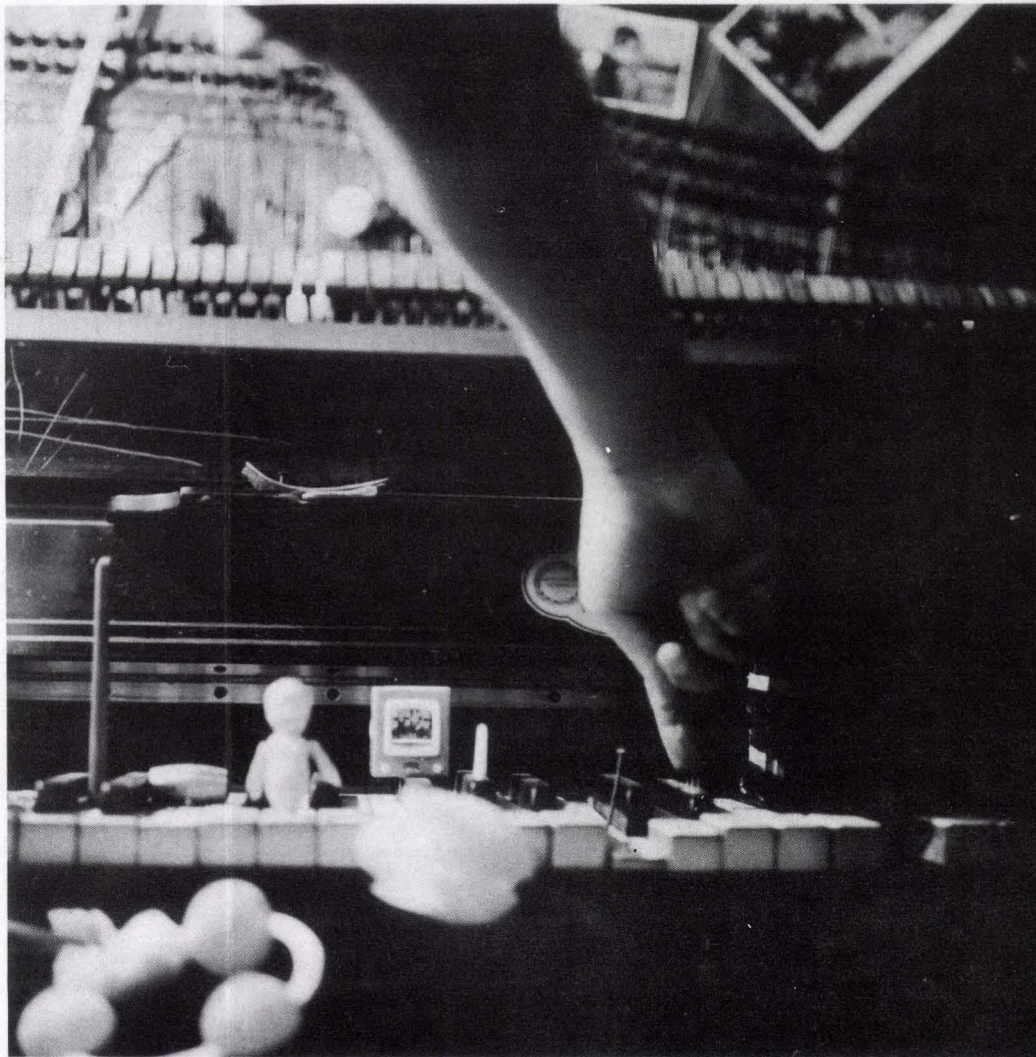
(1) they give me possibilities of combining many senses; touching, blowing, caressing, seeing, treading, walking, running, hearing, striking, etc;

(2) they make music more calm than any former calm music, and they make the room more mobile than any former mobile room; therefore, they can exploit a new category between music and architecture;

(3) perhaps I can sell them. "What you really posses in this world is only what you can sell." A. Miller ?!?!?!?!?

(4) the wise play the wise music, and the stupid play the stupid music; this curious fraternité is perhaps a necessary evil of democracy; even the wisest has no right to compell the idiot to happiness; the freedom is the good, but the compelled good is no longer the freedom, and no-freedom is no more the good. (Berdjaiev)

music for the people  
by the people  
of the people



Zen for finger

**Cladders:**

That's the point, these things that most deeply characterized Fluxus, the little notes, the notations and so forth. Naturally, this was not Schmela's kind of material. All of the magazines that folded after the first issue, photos, all of these things. Here a person like Vostell was the right address for a collector like Sohm. Hanns Sohm missed a lot of things, even though he started to collect all these documents so early on. Think, for example, of all the correspondence that Spoerri used to wallpaper his restaurant. It would have been a real treat for Hanns Sohm to get all those letters. But at the opening of Restaurant Spoerri, the walls were already papered from top to bottom with the precious correspondence.

**Knapstein:**

Restaurant Spoerri was surely an important address in the late sixties?

**Cladders:**

Certainly, though that was already the period after Spoerri's return from the Greek islands, where he had retreated. Before that he lived in Paris as Tinguely's "assistant" – as he called it. And he also did some things there with Filliou, Arman, Hains and so on. He also cultivated contacts with New York, with Higgins but also with Rauschenberg and others. Spoerri had begun early to produce editions – from Germany, at first – with Dieter Roth and Emmett Williams, for example. Then he was also a major player in helping the "Movement in Art" exhibitions in Stockholm and Amsterdam to materialize. Like Vostell, he had a great talent for organization. But Beuys and Vostell were still the contact points with the most continuity. Since both of them lived in the Rhineland, Fluxus actually happened first in the Rhineland – if you don't include for now the Wiesbaden concerts and other isolated actions, or other precursor situations elsewhere, such as in the area of concrete poetry. Apart from these, the Rhineland was actually the place all the artists went to, where they had to go. They would often go to Berlin to do actions and to present Fluxus concerts. But these were all actually touring ventures, tours made from the Rhineland. In Berlin's case, these concerts took place primarily thanks to the activities of René Block, who invited the touring theater to put on a performance. And if René Block hadn't been in Berlin, probably nothing at all in this context ever would have happened there. René Block invested a great deal in things that were unsaleable or could be sold only with great difficulty, things that basically had already faded away by the evening of the performance or the exhibition. Galerie Block was truly an idealistic gallery. And that's why it also achieved the most in relation to Fluxus and its circles. Also in the sense of getting through to the public, of publicizing. That called for a certain skill in dealing with the media, with the public. Someone like Schmela, for instance, had virtually no interest in television. According to him "what good are ten minutes on television if I don't sell anything". But all in all, I think it can be said that, along with the Fluxus base in America, a very significant base – indeed the strongest – for Fluxus in Germany was found here in the Rhineland. Many contacts were made here and many important events also took place here. I'm thinking now of the exhibitions and concerts at Lauhus' at the Buttermarkt in Cologne, say, with Spoerri, Tinguely and the people who tore up posters. Also of Galerie Rywelski, and even so established a business as Zwirner, who once did an exhibition of the "proverbs" of Spoerri and Filliou.

If I compare this with, for instance, the situation for Fluxus in France, then I have to say that nothing much was happening there. It never got going. The people there weren't really suited for the role of attracting, of organizing. Let's see, who was there then – it was Filliou, then...

**Knapstein:**

...Ben Vautier...

**Cladders:**

Concerning Ben Vautier, I recall him in connection with activities by George Brecht and Robert Filliou, who developed the idea of the "Fête permanente" at their studio called "La cédille qui sourit" in Villefranche-sur-Mer near Nice in the late sixties. So things happened in Villefranche-sur-Mer, and everyone made a pilgrimage there, even if they flew over the big pond like Dick Higgins and Alison Knowles. Everyone always tried to convince me to go with them, but I had my position and responsibilities, I didn't have the time to jump into a car and say to my secretary: "I'm out of here, kids, I'm going to see Robert and George in southern France." Such trips were only very occasionally possible for me. But characters like Brecht, Filliou or Vautier weren't very organized.

But this was the case elsewhere, namely with Addi Köpcke in Copenhagen, where perhaps you wouldn't expect it. He always was trying to get his friends together. That also had its reasons, because he was way up there in faraway Scandinavia, seemingly alone. Whereas in Paris at the start of the sixties there was still something going on, everybody was still going to Paris. But that soon stopped, Paris became uninteresting. It's also no coincidence that all these characters wandered off, to Villefranche-sur-Mer, for instance...

**Knapstein:**

...and also back to the Rhineland, to Düsseldorf and Cologne, where Robert Filliou, Daniel Spoerri, George Brecht and Gerhard Rühm had settled as of the late sixties.

**Cladders:**

Exactly, to Düsseldorf, Cologne and wherever. But Köpcke sat far away up there and took advantage of every opportunity to travel to Paris. He also played with the thought of staying there in Paris. But his friends didn't like that at all, because all the artists thought that the base in Copenhagen, this address at Addi Köpcke's they could go to, was so wonderful. Often he grumbled to Robert "you can all talk, you sit here in Paris and say to me, now get back to your doghouse back there and do something for us." Which he also did – after all, he organized all the exhibitions in his gallery on the Lille Kirkestraede – Tinguely, Niki de Saint Phalle, Dieter Roth, Wolf Vostell, and the Fluxus Festival in November 1962 in the Nikolaj Church. At the same time, he was also an important figure for young artists in Denmark, for people like Henning Christiansen, Bjørn Nørgaard or Per Kirkeby. Today he has become quite a legendary figure in Denmark. Really everyone went there: Beuys was there several times, Filliou, Spoerri, I also went there a few times ... the whole family. And these journeys were always exciting. We had no money; we took our tent with us and lived at the campground in Copenhagen – you could also cook there. I could tell stories for hours about how it was, in his house in a little garden colony where he lived. Later this area of gardens was cleared out and highrise apartments were put up there. It became a "suburb situation" and Köpcke was assigned an apartment. It was a nice, clean apartment, but it couldn't match the atmosphere of the garden house. You couldn't really sit down anywhere. It had a few small rooms and a foyer, but you could only thread your way through sideways, because he brought along and kept all the junk that he found. "I need this, all this material. When my friends come and need to make something, then I want to have some stuff around."

**Knapstein:**

Now that Köpcke's texts have been published under the wonderful title "begreifen erleben" (comprehend experience), Köpcke can finally also be grasped as a thinker and author. It's clear that he had an intellectual and theoretical bent similar to George Brecht or Tomas Schmit, for example, and in these texts one finds additional clues in the search for the central principles of Fluxus. One of Köpcke's pieces shows how a formulation as simple as "What is that?" can develop extraordinary explosive force when it is interspersed throughout an entire text. Here, a simple means generates a great effect – as do Brecht's Events in another mode. This breaking-open of conventional patterns of thinking and behavior using simple, spare actions is not least an attempt to keep small explosives ready to hand. Experiencing just such minimal actions makes it possible to comprehend social conventions.

**Cladders:**

That's certainly one of Fluxus' main ways of proceeding, creating explosive power with relatively small means. And I also think that many of the Fluxus artists were extremely intellectual. Someone like George Brecht or Tomas Schmit or Ludwig Gosewitz. Also the artists who came from concrete poetry like Emmett Williams. I always thought Addi Köpcke was an outstanding intellectual personality, though you did not see this intellectuality in all of his work – think of his silver coatings, for example – and from time to time his talent was also clouded by alcoholism. But in his "Reading/Work-Pieces" his intellectualism, which I always admired, is clearly evident.

As unprepossessing as the means may be, and as little one sees the artists' intellectualism in some individual works, these aspects of Fluxus did indeed have a major effect. For example, I can't imagine that something like Conceptual Art could have come about in the late sixties and early seventies without these forerunners. Conceptual Art was able to make use of a great deal from Fluxus – take Hamish Fulton or Richard Long and the different "Walk pieces", action art that really can be represented only through photographs...

**Knapstein:**

...but that also has a kind of score or a concept...

**Cladders:**

...that has a concept, a score. Think about Hanne Darboven's strictly designed written sequences. Or about someone like Lawrence Weiner, who sets down a sentence just based on the pure power of imagination, which then evokes that imagination. All of that is, I believe, unthinkable without Fluxus and especially without these people of high intellectual capacity in the Fluxus movement. This wasn't just one thing arbitrarily coming after another. These were mutually related approaches that were then further developed. The name changed, but at the core, these things have a great deal to do with each other. So Fluxus' repercussions in the area of Conceptual Art certainly are very great and they extend far beyond the intensive phase of Fluxus in the sixties. They're still virulent today. Or take the poetic pieces by Emmett Williams and then the poems of Carl Andre – there's a continuum, there are no sharp breaks.

**Knapstein:**

But looking back now, the differences between Fluxus and Concept Art, between Fluxus actions and performances are also much more clear. George Brecht always stressed that he saw his Events as total expe-

# décoll|age

Bulletin aktueller Ideen NO 1/1962

Arthur Köpcke George Maciunas Benjamin Patterson Braun  
Name June Paik Pera Wolf Vostell La Monte Young

**décoll|age** (dɛfɔlā'G) *m* Los-machen  
*n*, -gehen *n* des Geleitens; ✂ Start;  
Aufsteigen *n* des Flugzeugs vom  
Boden; ~er (dɛfɔle') [1a] Geleimtes  
losmachen; F trennen, weggehen;  
P sterben; péj. abkratzen; ~eter  
(dɛfɔlte') [1c] Kleid weit ausschnei-  
den; ~ q. j-m Hals und Brust ent-  
blößen. [aus-, ver-blassen.]  
**décolorer** (dɛfɔlore') [1a] entfärben;]

Cover of décoll/age 1  
Ed.: Wolf Vostell, Cologne 1962

From: Arthur Köpcke,  
begreifen erleben.  
Gesammelte Schriften  
Ed.: Barbara Wien  
Cologne, Stuttgart/London,  
Berlin 1994

jede kommunikation ist eine collage von signalen unterschiedlichen charakters –  
ich kommuniziere, indem ich aktivitäten ins leben rufe, die aufgaben, forderungen  
stellen, um nach neuen zusammenhängen, strukturen, relationen, proportionen  
unter den mitteln zu suchen, um neue bedeutungen, gewißheiten zu entdecken  
diese zusammenhänge etc. sollen deutlich gemacht werden, darum logische energie  
und die intention, die lebensaktivität autonom zu begründen mit hilfe von  
verstand, vernunft

also: allgemeingültig –

die konsequenz ist deshalb, das primäre ist, zu begreifen und nicht zu erleben, was  
einen doch nur einem permanenten alltags/handlungszwang unterwirft, der keine  
analyse erlaubt –

schließlich wird die aktivität selbst zu einer neuen gewißheit, zu einem bewußtsein –  
und weil sie frei ist von darbietungen schönschriftlichen oder handwerksmäßigen  
charakters: ist sie ehrlich und ohne diskrimination und auch frei von  
alltagspolitischen, epischen funktionen –

dies ist der standpunkt, von dem aus neue bedeutungen, gewißheiten zu finden und  
zu schaffen sind, mit denen sich ALLE beschäftigen können – NICHT um  
nachzuahmen, varianten herzustellen oder „nachzuerzählen“ (zu unterhalten)

sondern: weil es eine humanität ist –

diese haltung führt dazu, daß man konsequent seine umgebung, seine umwelt und:  
sein ego auf einer ganz neuen grundlage beurteilen muß, um ein zeitgenössisches,  
menschliches milieu zu schaffen, wo der einzelne durch sein mitwirken zum aktiv  
handelnden werden würde hier – JETZT!

FORTSETZUNG

riences, where the conceptual was not privileged over perception or memory or associative thinking. And in the film documents that have been preserved, the simplicity and spareness of the movements of Fluxus participants can be studied and contrasted to the expressive gestures and story-telling moments of later performances. So later developments do build on Fluxus approaches, but the forms then naturally differ from each other.

#### **Cladders:**

Well, but even the form of Fluxus itself isn't uniform. Let's take, for instance, what happened in 1964 at Aachen. Already at its conception, it was much more spectacular than most other Fluxus concerts, which actually weren't all that spectacular. What was spectacular about typical Fluxus events was merely the unusual, the unexpected – which didn't correspond to prejudices and judgments about art. But from the beginning, the Aachen Happening had a certain aggressivity built into it that really came out. Naturally, the element of chance also played into it, because they couldn't figure in advance that the auditorium would react accordingly. But it also showed just how diversified Fluxus essentially was.

It was very typical, how the participating artists behaved after the whole spectacle was broken up by the police. Everything had gone to pieces, and as always when the pieces are lying there, certain reactions occur. I remember that the protagonists sat together in a side room off the main auditorium with a few friends, very few, as if after a battle that had been lost – or a battle won, it's all the same, which way you want to declare it. Anyway, they sat there after their work had been done and the individual reactions were very characteristic. There was Vostell, the organizational type, who had also made the biggest mess with his brown color pigments. He started to clean up. Typical organizational behavior: "now we've got to clean it up again". But he was also the one who tended to be the most aggressive in his actions. So he simply went over and tipped bucket after bucket over the podium to remove the brown paint. Instead of mopping it up, he added water, so that the soupy muck ran through the hall, under the door, into the stairwell, and then down the stairs – which didn't make the whole thing any simpler or prettier. Then there was Beuys, who stationed himself downstairs in front of the door and debated with students. This went on into the wee hours of the morning. When we got back from our drinking, he was still standing there and talking with students – Beuys the pedagogue. That is, Beuys didn't clean up, but he disseminated ideology down there in front of the door. All typical modes of behavior. Vostell got it in shape; his making it better just made it worse. Beuys imparted ideology. Addi Köpcke sat upstairs and had a beer and carped that this wasn't his thing at all, and he didn't think it was good anyway...and by the way, he also hadn't left behind any mess. He didn't agree with it all, he had danced a waltz with Tut and he had held up his little porno pictures. He had packed up the pictures again, and the dance with Tut was over, so what did all this have to do with him. He had done something with his small means, and he could have done it on any street corner, anywhere. There was nothing for him to clean up.

So the very different characters were expressed, along with the diverse attitudes that were behind the art of each one of them. And to that extent, maybe the performance in the little room next to the auditorium was more enlightening than all the rest of it. You could clearly see that this was not a homogeneous group.

#### **Knapstein:**

The whole spectrum of Fluxus is evident also in their dealings with the public. At one extreme there is George Brecht, who completely keeps to himself, then someone like Vostell with a strong need for self-presentation, and a figure like Beuys, for whom going-outside, debate, was part of the work.

#### **Cladders:**

George Brecht knows very well that his work and his thinking will not be improved if he himself is applauded. That the work will not be better if he establishes his own museum, like Vostell is doing in Spain. For Beuys, though, making connections was certainly part of his work. This question of connections plays no role at all with Brecht. In this sense his work is very aloof, although the pieces themselves are not at all unapproachable, but extremely lyrical and sentimental, I'd say; at any rate very lyrical, very poetic.

#### **Knapstein:**

The poetic gift and an interest in various literary traditions connects a whole series of Fluxus artists. Think about Jackson Mac Low, Dick Higgins and Ray Johnson, or Robert Filliou or Emmett Williams.

#### **Cladders:**

This poetic aspect also brought with it contacts to artists who came from concrete poetry. Or to someone like Marcel Broodthaers, who actually didn't want to have anything to do with Fluxus, but you can't bring up a name like that without being reminded of Fluxus. Now Broodthaers comes into this nebulous circle from a very different place. He also comes from Duchamp, but takes up Duchamp's surrealist aspect, carrying it forward with Magritte and Mallarmé on a poetic basis. So in the end, he too is close to concrete poetry, by way of a completely surrealist path.



Cover of catalog  
 "Actions, Agit Pop, etc."  
 Aachen, 1964

**Knapstein:**

Of course these strands of tradition are completely different from authors such as James Joyce or Gertrude Stein, who were very important for Cage and the American Fluxus artists.

**Cladders:**

But with all the diversity of sources, this poetic moment led finally to a kindred sensibility that enabled and promoted contacts among all of these artists.

**Knapstein:**

Let me go into yet another aspect of the subject "Fluxus in Germany". How did it actually happen that a climate arose in the late fifties and early sixties that was favorable for artistic experimentation in Germany of all places? Did a special curiosity develop here for art forms that connected with avant-garde movements like Dada and early Surrealism, since these traditions had been broken-off in Germany during National Socialism and World War II, while they had developed further in Paris or New York? Obviously, with the younger generation in Germany that first had no contact with contemporary art, an interest for art forms that broke with the conventions of fifties art was very quick to awaken. Spaces opened up where experimental artists met an interested public; galleries opened that programmed actions and concerts along with their exhibitions. There were notable collectors who dared to buy at a time when the pieces were still absolutely controversial and were only shown in very few museums. Did a special curiosity develop in Germany from a need to catch up, encouraging openness and a willingness to experiment?



**Cladders:**

That was certainly the case. Consider how it was after the war: It took at least until the mid-fifties and in some parts of the country much longer, into the late fifties and early sixties, for us Germans to be able to move from the situation of being the ones lectured to, the ones who needed outside instruction; for us to become thinkers on an equal basis, perhaps even teachers from time to time. It was first the lecturing – and I remember very clearly the years right after the war, when the young generation was presented with all of what had been forbidden by the Nazis. There were exhibitions where Schmitt-Rotluff and Heckel, and also Kandinsky, Jawlensky and Macke were shown. This was basically meeting the need to catch up, but with a distinctly didactic aftertaste.

**Knapstein:**

It wasn't Dada at first?

**Cladders:**

It wasn't Dada at first, Dada was still to come. After all this had been dealt with, after about the fifties, the artists, who until then still had been oriented mostly towards what went on in Germany before the war, began to perceive the developments that had taken place abroad. Contact with the outside was even then not a matter of course; the first exhibitions took place without Picasso and Braque. The borders were still closed. As long as there was no Federal Republic of Germany, there were also no borders that had any kind of legal permeability, for instance with the help of a passport. Only a few people possessed an early passport with a low number, issued by the military government. We also had no money; that is, we had Reichsmarks that could hardly buy anything even inside the country and nothing at all abroad... But this isn't part of the subject of "Fluxus in Germany", I only wanted to illustrate for you what the situation was like to start with after the war.

So, reappraisal first occurred in the sense of getting to know what had been forbidden in Germany since 1933 as "degenerate". What had gone on abroad was not yet able to be perceived.

**Knapstein:**

And then in the fifties you could travel to Paris and follow the developments in abstract art?

**Cladders:**

When the Federal Republic was founded – when the German mark was brought in and with it a currency with some purchasing power – then an interested public could see Picasso and Braque and later Miró and the like. That was in the early fifties. And the young artists, who now had the opportunity to go to Paris – Peter Brüning, Karl Otto Götz, Gerhard Hoehme and these people – they picked up what had developed in American Action Painting and Informal Painting. They saw works by Wols, Soulages and Hartung in Paris and brought this back to Germany with them in their intellectual baggage. Then these artists also began to paint tachistically here; you could say they imported Informal Painting and Action Painting. This was not their discovery, but rather their import. Completely legitimate.

It took a long time for independent things to get going in Germany; at first they were quite hidden away. These were the people like Beuys, who never allowed himself to be infected by Action Painting or Tachism, who went in remarkable directions, not uninfluenced by his teacher Ewald Mataré. Here a whole new world of thought opened up.

Also, the young generation from Paris who had found no place in the established market came to Germany. Space in the major French galleries was taken up by Poliakoff, Hartung, Soulages and others. There were only a few small galleries, à la Iris Clert. And so young artists tried their luck here – their relations to Germany, to West Germany, had in the meantime become much more normal. During the latter half of the fifties, artists emerged who later would be counted among the Nouveaux Réalistes in the broadest sense, artists like Tinguely, Arman, Yves Klein. They, too, found their contacts in the Rhineland, among them gallery owner Schmela and Paul Wember, the museum director in Krefeld. So when an artist did not get an exhibition in Galerie Leiris in Paris, Schmela arranged a show for him. When the artists couldn't exhibit in a museum in Paris, Wember showed their work at the Museum in Krefeld.

So lively contacts developed with these artists from Paris, who now encountered a situation in Germany where something comparable and akin to their own ideas had been conceived and developed independently. And then the Yves Kleins met the Ueckers – these contacts developed into quite close relationships. The "Zero" group in Düsseldorf played an incredibly important forerunner role in Germany.

**Knapstein:**

And the historical material of Dada again gained recognition in this situation? The exhibition at the Düsseldorf Kunstverein in 1958, for example, was an important experience both for the German public and for invited artists like John Cage.

**Cladders:**

After Expressionism and the Blaue Reiter had been dealt with in Germany's catch-up process – Neue Sachlichkeit wasn't part of that cycle of rediscovery – Dada came in at the end. Not coincidentally, this reappraisal of Dada was concurrent with a greater openness on the part of artists to Dada. Here too, connections to France played a certain role. Tinguely, Arman and their colleagues didn't only hark back

to Duchamp, they also transmitted principles of Dada – though they didn't like to use that word. Often one doesn't like to name one's fathers. But after all, they worked with collage techniques, with assemblage and such things that had been developed in Dadaism and Surrealism. So that was a certain conclusion to the process by which something that could be called an avant-garde had again formed in Germany. These developments were certainly adopted with special enthusiasm in Germany since very important parts of Dada had been played out in Germany, though not concentrated in the Rhineland as the developments were after World War II.

Now, the Rhineland had a great appeal, and not only through figures like Jean-Pierre Wilhelm, Alfred Schmela or Paul Wember. Its closeness to the French border also played a role; the more easterly parts of Germany including Berlin were out of the way. So a real scene developed in the Rhineland around about 1960 that mostly was sustained by foreigners, and this situation lasted a long time. In many cases, the Fluxus artists that we're talking about weren't German. Naturally, we're talking about Gosewicz and Schmit, Vostell and Beuys but we are also speaking about Paik, about Filliou, Ben Vautier, George Brecht, Emmett Williams, Daniel Spoerri and so on. None of these was born in the Federal Republic – they all had and still have, to some extent, other passports in their pockets.

Finally, German receptivity was so great not least because this country won the war economically, even though it lost it militarily. So a market for art could develop here. After all, it's not just an accident that the first art market for contemporary art was established in Cologne.

**Knapstein:**

So there was a public that invested money in contemporary art.

**Cladders:**

The war was lost militarily and won economically, but in the whole process, our national identity was lost – and it still hasn't recovered from this. These German identity conflicts were among the decisive factors that allowed a strong internationality to unfold. What destroyed Paris, namely artistic chauvinism, did not come to fruition here – precisely this could not arise in Germany. Here anyone could take up residence. At least in the arts scene, everyone was welcome. That was a wonderful situation, the best time of my life, this complete freedom of identity. The only thing that mattered was where were the people with whom I had an inward affinity.

**Knapstein:**

For the artists of the Fluxus circle who came to Germany, the developing market for contemporary and experimental art offered a very crucial opportunity for survival.

**Cladders:**

Yes, since they could hardly penetrate the market in their own countries because their work was so difficult to sell, they relied on the support of some few promoters and collectors who were here in Germany. That also led people to Germany who God knows had, and have, their inner reservations about this country. Despite this, it was a country that made a certain economic existence within a modest framework possible for them.

**Knapstein:**

That's also a positive development, in a prosperous country like the Federal Republic where the most diverse forms of culture and cultural life are fostered and financially supported. The artists who to a certain extent have withdrawn from the usual brokering and commercializing, who have never given up their scepticism about the art market, can also survive. Economic surplus did allow for some flexibility in the Federal Republic, and you wouldn't want to go back again to the way it was.

**Cladders:**

No, God knows, I certainly wouldn't want to go back to the way it was. But unfortunately I'm afraid that the year 1989 has brought up some difficulties in this respect, but that's a whole other chapter. At any rate, in Germany and especially in the Rhineland in the early sixties, a scene built up where people who didn't have a German passport in their pockets could encounter corresponding approaches and thinking that had been taking shape here. I want to emphasize again that these approaches that had developed out of Dada were not borrowed after World War II – whereas Action Painting was imported and then later Pop Art was borrowed. Though it's not possible to establish clear demarcations between Pop Art and Nouveau Réalisme and Fluxus. Pop Art also based itself on some aspects of Dada, and artists like Robert Rauschenberg or George Segal, who always are listed with Pop Art, were working in New York around 1960 in the immediate vicinity of the Fluxus and Happening artists. But I would only classify the two of them under Pop Art with reservations.

So a scene could build itself up here under favorable atmospheric conditions, where artists who lived in this country – you see how I'm avoiding the term "German" – had good encounters with artists who had immigrated here – and now I'm also avoiding the term "foreigner". And this continued for a long time, into the seventies. Conceptual Art, for example, became big mainly in the Rhineland. All the concept artists came here too. Galerie Schmela wasn't their entry point, but Konrad Fischer's gallery, among others.

Museums also took part in the growing prosperity, the rebuilding of the cities. New museums were springing up like mushrooms here. Just compare it with the same time period in France or England. These newly-created museums could not, of course, fall back on the "Mona Lisa", because she was already hanging in the Louvre. So they had to find a new field of collecting, a new subject, another focus. Since the old inventory was already housed, this could only be modern and contemporary art. There was no other possibility. I remember exactly how it was when I took over the Museum in Mönchengladbach. Should I have gone to Paris to the Louvre and said: "You want four billion for the 'Mona Lisa'? I'd like to buy it." That just wasn't possible.

And so a field opened up here that at first wasn't so interesting for the artists, since artists have never been able to live from museums – the acquisition budgets are much too small. Museum acquisitions were always a little "extra" added to the sales to private collectors. But a situation developed where artists in these new streams of art could acquire prestige in the museums.

That is, artists here had access to an institution that represents the societal agreement as to what is art. Since the emergence of museums in the 18th century, works that can be seen in museums are considered works of art. In the sixties, the New Realists exhibited at the Museum in Krefeld, and Beuys, Filliou and Brecht exhibited or appeared at the Museum in Mönchengladbach. The work of these artists was, so to speak, "officially" received as art. Yet it has been the Fluxus artists who have most persistently questioned the institution of the museum in the latter half of our century. It's especially difficult for museums even today to present this movement within the framework of, say, a chronological presentation of the art of this century. It was Fluxus that, in examining Duchamp's question "can one make works that aren't 'art'", developed approaches that actually pointed beyond the framework of the museum. Fluxus goes against anything fixed – whereas the museum is an institution that attempts to establish cultural stability in the face of evanescence and transitoriness. And yet it is still the museum that presents these approaches for debate and mediates. This task had already been recognized in the Rhineland by the early sixties.

**Knapstein:**

For the Joseph Beuys exhibition at the Städtisches Museum in Mönchengladbach, which was Beuys' first museum exhibition, you also brought out the first of your catalog boxes. In the meantime, they have taken on the character of an edition and are sought-after collectors items.

**Cladders:**

At the time, I had a very modest budget and couldn't take on any printing costs for catalogs. So I hit upon the solution of producing catalogs as small cardboard boxes that I wanted to fill, with the artist's help, with printed materials that cost nothing or were sponsored. In consultation with the artists, I published these boxes in various numbers of copies, according to the artist's contribution. Beuys, for instance, decided on a piece of felt with a stamped cross, and we arranged an edition of 330 pieces.

At the opening of his exhibition, even as Monsignore Otto Mauer from Vienna was giving his talk, the catalogs sold out. Lots of complaining from all of those who hadn't managed to get a catalog, but there was nothing to do about it. In the end I didn't want to risk having to store catalogs after the respective exhibitions were over. I stuck to this principle of the catalog boxes and some very beautiful specimens were created, like those by Daniel Buren, Hanne Darboven, Panamarenko, Marcel Broodthaers, Carl Andre, Jannis Kounellis or by Robert Filliou and George Brecht.

**Knapstein:**

To conclude this conversation, wouldn't you like to quote some passages from the talk that you mention by Monsignore Otto Mauer? His thoughts on the subject of Beuys and Fluxus are an impressive historical document that could provide us with a good closing.

**Cladders:**

Sure – only unfortunately, I can only approximately recreate the Viennese priest's talk. I still can remember the scene quite well. He had only prepared a sheet of paper with several points, each just a key word. That was the only thing he referred to. His talk, which I also printed later, went so: "A seventh thing occurred to me in connection with all this: Beuys makes happenings, or actions, Fluxus; these are events, these occur – 'to happen' means to take place. But they also are fluctuating, the river of our lives that flows into death. Everything that exists is approaching death, death is the goal, all thinking is a science of death and there is a deadly seriousness in these things. Perhaps it's an alliteration on humor, this lightning bolt whose point is blunted with felt – perhaps. But perhaps it's also merely a sign of futility, and the fact that this deadly seriousness is present. A sign of the flow of things, the panta rhei, but not in the ancient sense of Heraclitus; rather in the sense of actually pursuing a goal to the end. At any rate it is our individual lives...This fluctuation prevents anything from being turned into a cult, from being made absolute. It thwarts triumphalism, and that is immensely important; for that is the greatest sham in life and in politics. That creates a new Hitler or Stalin, that creates a new absolute state, that creates the next world war. And that which is fluctuating, broken, futile, contingent, afflicted with death – that is what resists the false absolutisms."

## From Manager of the Avant-garde to Fluxus Conductor

### George Maciunas in Germany



George Maciunas, Terry Riley, Jed Curtis and Nam June Paik at the concert "Après John Cage", Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal 1962 (Photo Courtesy The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit)

The controversy about the lifespan and contents of Fluxus has persisted until today, depending on whether it is viewed as an artistic movement or an attitude of mind. Nevertheless, it's generally agreed that the decisive and constitutive phase of Fluxus took place in Europe around the time of the festivals organized from Wiesbaden by George Maciunas in 1962 and 1963. Over and over, the stimulating internationality of the encounters is emphasized: "one of the sparks for European f.-activities was the meeting of American tackiness and European stodginess, American ticklishness and European fantasy, American uninhibitedness and European logic...and when the whole deal went back to America...the friction was missing and the thing went flat."<sup>1</sup> To Tomas Schmit's quote you could add that European (especially German) expressivity and symbolism encountered the Zen-inspired directness of American students of John Cage. So during this early phase, buoyed by an optimistic mood of breakthrough, Fluxus was a melting pot of very different artists who later would go their own separate ways. The European Fluxus era owes its wealth of facets to the fact that self-appointed "Chairman" Maciunas began to set up the aesthetic, political and "marketing rights" maxims that ever fewer artists wanted to or could subscribe to only during the two years he spent in Germany. "The best of Maciunas is Lithuanian,"<sup>2</sup> Joseph Beuys opined in 1965, and he regretted how American artists especially had distanced themselves from Fluxus, whose sole advocate in Germany he now considered himself to be. The statement probably reflects Beuys' evaluation of the decidedly political position of the Lithuanian. American Fluxus artists, who took off from Cage's "indeterminacy", had never been comfortable with that position. In contrast to them – here in harmony with Maciunas – Beuys wanted to go beyond the mediating artistic sphere. He regarded this as the specifically European contribution to Fluxus.<sup>3</sup> Actually, even during Maciunas' stay in Germany, his political dogmatism and efforts to establish a monopoly exposed the movement to its first stress tests and splits. Seen in this way, Fluxus' birth in Germany, midwived by Maciunas, embodied perhaps both the sparks of life and the sickness unto death for that heterogeneous, thus unstable, creation...

When Maciunas came to Germany, where he worked as a designer for the U. S. Army in Wiesbaden, in autumn 1961, the 30-year-old's curriculum vitae had, until then, been that of a searcher who had not yet found his life's mission. Maciunas had already been in Germany once, from 1944 to 1947. Fleeing from the Soviet Army, his family had reached Bad Nauheim, where he went to a Lithuanian secondary school. After emigrating to the USA, he studied architecture, graphic design and music theory from 1949 to 1954, worked temporarily as an architectural draftsman, then studied art history again for five years, then worked again as a draftsman, then was a dealer in reproductions of old musical instruments. Only after participating in Richard Maxfield's courses in electronic music and the private performance evenings at Yoko Ono's loft, only after getting to know composers from the Cage circle at events and happenings and giving them a forum at his small New York AG Gallery, did a kind of calling crystallize. At first only generally "interested in every kind of avant-garde art,"<sup>4</sup> he wanted to help artists to bring their work to the public and also to give them a theoretical home under the roof of "concretism". "Our biggest problem was that we had no possibility of performing regularly. What we lacked was some kind of institution that we could use as a center for information and as a place for regular performances"<sup>5</sup>, Dick Higgins describes the search of young artists for an organizational meeting place. Maciunas now made himself that place. Characteristically, Maciunas at first saw his idea of concretism realized not only in new works by La Monte Young, Jackson Mac Low, Dick Higgins, Robert Morris, Philip Corner, George Brecht, etc. that were situated between conventional artistic categories. He also showed non-representational art of his own and by Yoko Ono. Medieval and Renaissance music, Mussorgsky, Schönberg, Berg, Webern, Varèse, Cage, Stockhausen and, interestingly enough, tape music from the electronic studio of WDR (West German Radio) in Cologne, fit into his concept for the performance series "Musica Antiqua et Nova". Tape music embodied for him "concretism in its most recent stage of development."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, he understands concretism to be a trail of "realistic" art extending through the centuries in which form and content correspond. Similarly, he sees "biomorphic illusionism" in works with baroque, expressive styles, which seem to him dishonest and reeking of cultural imperialism from the start.

Maciunas learned to subdivide art into pairs of concepts from his art history studies. With Heinrich Wölfflin he would have encountered comparisons between linear and painterly, closed and open form, clarity and unclarity, as well as unity and multiplicity. In keeping with this dualistic view of art history, he now sees the newest avant-garde – which is involved with musical and literary experiments, and which he now supports – as the antithesis of Abstract Expressionism, which reigned at the time.

Maciunas' plan to produce a magazine called "Fluxus", using money from performance ticket sales, and his assistance on La Monte Young's epochal anthology of new experimental art ("An Anthology", published 1963), may also be viewed in connection with the way he was coming to see himself as the manager of the newest avant-garde. La Monte Young had spoken and written to artists who "in his opinion were making new art"<sup>7</sup> – American acquaintances and people that he had met when participating in the 1959 "Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik" in Darmstadt.

So, when Maciunas fled to Germany to escape his gallery debts, he already had a certain base from which he could disseminate his plans for Fluxus in truly global dimensions. In rapid succession, he sent out "pamphlets" and "News-Policy-Letters", which no longer announced only a Fluxus magazine, but also festival tours and "Fluxus Yearboxes". These were anthologies organized by country with works of up to forty artists from all areas of newer artistic practice.<sup>8</sup> Maciunas would publish such suitcases and boxes in the Duchampian manner in New York only in 1964, and then only in significantly reduced and more concise form; the artists' collected editions that had been projected for the near future never appeared. During his time in Germany, only six less elaborate publications were realized with the help of young Tomas Schmit.<sup>9</sup> It can be inferred from Maciunas' correspondence that he now began to collect artistic acquaintances like stamps. Nam June Paik, with whom he had already corresponded from New York, was initially his most important intermediary;<sup>10</sup> later came Wolf Vostell, Emmett Williams, Addi Köpcke, and others. "We are joined now by some good people like Daniel Spoerri, Robert Filliou, Vostell, Ben Patterson – all happenings people"<sup>11</sup> he wrote Dick Higgins in the spring of 1962, emphasizing his search for an actionistic expansion of his European troupe, which at the beginning had been more influenced by the experimental music of the Bauermeister circle. Here again it is clear how Maciunas' concepts successively emerged. Later, when Fluxus had established itself as the category for simple, unpretentious pieces, so-called Happening artists with their often complex and theatrically-produced performances were supposedly an "illusionary" antithesis to Fluxus.

On the basis of his recent activities in the USA and on Paik's advice, Maciunas first sought access to the musical avant-garde scene that already existed in Germany. Its existence, remarkably international in orientation, may explain why Maciunas dared at all to create and coordinate an international artistic forum here with such confidence. He already knew the Studio for Electronic Music led by Herbert Eimert at WDR in Cologne. The newest sound experiments by John Cage, Morton Feldman, Christian Wolff and Earle Brown had early on been presented here. Karlheinz Stockhausen and his serially-organized pieces shaped the so-called "Cologne School". With the premiere in Cologne in autumn, 1961 of his "musical theater" titled "Originale", Stockhausen also showed himself receptive to Cage.

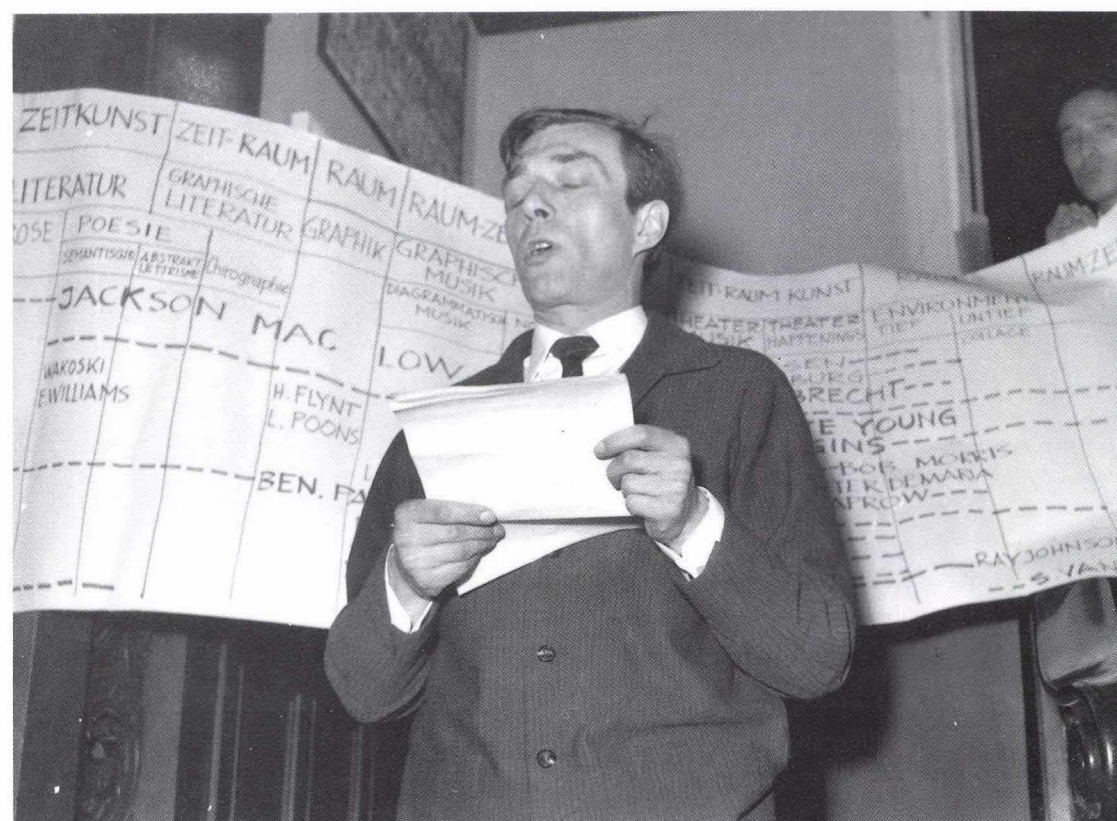
Conveying Cage-propagated uncertainty, non-intentionality and use of everyday sounds for composition was otherwise largely the responsibility of Mary Bauermeister's studio in Cologne between 1960 and 1962. There one could hear pieces by Cage (who himself was often a guest), Christian Wolff, Morton Feldman, Earle Brown, Toshi Ichiyanagi and Sylvano Bussotti, mostly played by pianist David Tudor as "messenger between the States and Europe"<sup>12</sup>. But most importantly, for the first time pieces were performed that went beyond Cage, such as George Brecht's "Events" ("Card-Piece" and "Candle-Piece"), the so-called "Short form" pieces by La Monte Young ("Poem for chairs, tables, benches, etc. (or other sound sources)") and action music by Nam June Paik ("Homage to John Cage", "Etude for pianoforte"). Since Bauermeister also (in the broadest sense) showed concrete visual art and literature, Maciunas probably recognized a certain affinity with his New York AG program, so that in spring, 1962 he even offered to launch the Fluxus festivals at her studio.<sup>13</sup>

In 1960 the studio also organized a lecture by Adorno, and Heinz-Klaus Metzger there affirmatively denounced the so-called "autonomy" of the work of art as a cultural outrage in a manifesto that received a lot of attention. The aesthetic of the Cage circle, that accepted all everyday occurrences as worthy of art without differentiation, therefore became interpreted as being critical of society – because Metzger found nothing more "infamous" than "to link an attack on the prevailing forces with positive proposals."<sup>14</sup> Cage, on the other hand, explained his "Compass" as follows: "To carry out consensual actions and not ones that could be described as negative, as critical or polemical – even if it has to do with something I am against, with something obviously evil. In other words, I am not trying to fight evil, but to affirm what appears to me to be positive."<sup>15</sup> A misunderstanding in the German reception of Cage's world-view, indebted to Zen-Buddhism, becomes evident here. Later it would also characterize the reception of Fluxus.

In the prehistory of Fluxus in Germany, activities in Cologne at the short-lived Galerie Haro Lauhus were also important. Here the newest music was presented; Rotella, Christo, Vostell showed in 1961; American contrabass player Benjamin Patterson played his first action pieces and Daniel Spoerri presented his "suit-cases" with art works by the New Realists. The latter, along with Duchamp's "Boîte en Valise" and Spoerri's Edition MAT, may well have prompted Maciunas to market artists' editions in briefcases later on. In Vostell's Cologne studio, a group of like-minded artists also met to make actions – Patterson's classic Fluxus piece "Lemons" was performed here.

Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, primarily dealing in Informal Painting, was also about to become a site for unconventional action pieces.<sup>16</sup> And at Galerie 22 in Düsseldorf run by Jean-Pierre Wilhelm, John Cage and Nam June Paik made guest appearances as early as 1958 or 1959.

Carlheinz Caspari reads the text "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art", by George Maciunas at the concert "Après John Cage", Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal 1962 (Photo Courtesy The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit)



As of 1946, Darmstadt, located not far from Wiesbaden, had become a biennial center for contemporary music. The "Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik", founded by music journalist Wolfgang Steinecke, drew protagonists of the musical avant-garde of that period as well as students from all over the world. At the courses, created expressly as a statement against German chauvinism, Nono, Boulez, Stockhausen and others were lecturers. Here, in 1958, young Paik had his formative experience in an encounter with Cage; here La Monte Young made the first German contacts that later were to be important for Maciunas. At the Darmstadt Landestheater, Gustav-Rudolf Sellner was creating attention-getting productions. Working under him were Daniel Spoerri and the concrete poet Claus Bremer, who anticipated ideas from Happening and Fluxus in his theory of the "Dynamic Theater" developed in 1959.<sup>17</sup> Its most important element is the postulate of chance interaction between audience and actor so that, without a set order of events, the goings-on can assume varying shapes. Though there is more audience participation in Happenings than in Fluxus actions, the recipient is also actively included and involved in the "usable" Fluxus objects. Both the "root attitude" envisaged for the "Dynamic Theater", where an actor would develop various "constellations" within a certain framework, and a proposed pre-semantic, "supra-personal proto-language" bring to mind Fluxus pieces by Filliou, Mac Low or Maciunas. Coming more from the realm of concrete poetry than from music or painting – Spoerri had already in 1958 published an anthology of concrete poetry in the first issue of his magazine, "material" – Spoerri and Bremer propagated their process theater: action that also came under the banner of treating means and contents as equivalents. Darmstadt also became a center for new literary experiments with American poet Emmett Williams, who had been living in Germany since 1949 and earned his living at the U.S. Army newspaper "Stars and Stripes". Williams himself describes the exciting atmosphere in the Darmstadt "Cellar Club" – where he gave the first informal performance of his "Opera" – as follows: "Sitting at the long wooden tables in the 'catacombes' (it was more bohemian than the Parisian caves it sought to emulate) you might find Eugène Ionesco, Theodor Adorno, John Cage, Ernst Krenek, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pierre Boulez, Jacques Audiberti, Kasimir Edschmid, Bruno Maderna, Luigi Nono, Earle Brown, and so many others, clinking glasses and exchanging words – and sometimes ideas – with the locals."<sup>18</sup>

That the cultural avant-garde in Darmstadt was strongly critical of society is shown, among other things, by the fact that Paik thought he could increase the chances for a performance of his "Homage to John Cage" at the Ferienkurse by writing to Steinecke about it in 1959: "the second movement is a warning to the German economic miracle, where industriousness and stupidity are bound up into one." He further characterized his work as an extension of "Dadaism through music".<sup>19</sup>

At Maciunas' first public appearance, arranged by Paik, at the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal on June 9, 1962, a manifesto was read that presented the newest "concrete" tendencies in the USA and described them as a Dada revival. "Neo-Dada in the United States" is the title of this text by Maciunas<sup>20</sup> which was read by C. Caspari. Here, arguing more from the immanence of art, he speaks about an asymbolic art in which everyday actions, objects and sounds that occur accidentally and spontaneously are to be accepted unchanged. Instead of setting down a composition, it is incumbent upon the artist to create the "framework" alone, "in which nature is left to develop its form in its own way". Obviously, in so doing, the separation of art into genres such as literature, painting, sculpture and music is given up in favor of an all-encompassing "space-time continuum". For Maciunas, the "art nihilists" are even more "concrete" than the so-called "concrete artists". The banality of their actions approaches the banality of life. As examples of such "anti-art", he cites actions by George Brecht and La Monte Young.

Maciunas did not break new ground with his definition of concrete art, especially in Europe. Emphases on analogues to nature and non-interpretive production are reminiscent, for example, of aphorisms by Hans Arp. And the means that represent themselves, the negation of individual gestures, the freedom of interpretations, the crossing of borders between genres as well as the demarcation from Abstract Expressionism are all topics of concrete art that were propagated in the fifties, first with concrete poetry, then in the visual arts and music.<sup>21</sup> Because Cage's influence in the area of music was especially important and people were beginning to experiment with transferring his principles of composition to actions with all kinds of labels, Maciunas was in the trend with his idea of the newest American Concretism. His Zen-Buddhist influenced aesthetic of the concise event form transposed Duchampian ready-made thinking to the action, so that whether it was art or non-art depended upon context and awareness (or finally wanting to do away with the distinction). This added a facet to European Action Art that opened up many possibilities.

Maciunas explicitly understands his approach as going beyond Cage, who transferred the ready-made concept primarily to everyday found sounds and favored long, complex situations. And so the title of his performance at the Galerie Parnass was "Après John Cage". To supplement and illustrate the lecture, a diagram is unfurled behind the speaker with the names of, among others, E. Williams, H. Flynt, Ben Patterson, La Monte Young, George Brecht, D. Higgins, and also with names of those who later weren't supposed to belong to Fluxus such as Bob Morris, Walter de Maria, Kaprow, Ray Johnson or Larry Poons.

In the "fluxus" pamphlet with the announcement of the Yearboxes that was distributed, the name "fluxus", which until then had only been used for publications and festivals, was first publicly proposed as a synonym for interdisciplinary art tendencies. The definition of the concept "flux... (...L.fluxus)" that – like the word "Dada" – was "found" in the dictionary and reproduced in a ready-made way in the brochure, generally concerns a change in form/substance in medical, physical, chemical etc. areas.<sup>22</sup> For Maciunas, the connotations of continual change, the process quality, were central to its application to "concrete" art forms.

After this theoretical introduction, six "concrete" actions in Maciunas' sense followed. In his pieces "Duo" and "Variations for Double Bass", Ben Patterson, with William Pearson, did justice to the material as outlined in the manifesto. The "usual fiddlings around with catgut, wood, metal and felt" were realized by mistreating a contrabass in unconventional ways. Maciunas' "Homage to Adriano Olivetti" demonstrated the "typical use of the voice, lips, tongue and mouth": chance numbers on the tape of an Olivetti calculator serve as a score that is "interpreted" using non-language lip sounds by several performers (including Caspari, Paik, Jed Curtis, Terry Riley, Tomas Schmit).

Maciunas' second appearance in Germany took place one week later, on June 16, 1962 at the Düsseldorf Kammerspiele within the framework of a Paik concert and at Paik's invitation. The program, played by approximately twenty interpreters, was put together by Paik and Maciunas under the title "NEO-DADA in Music". It consisted of a sequence of actions with or without musical instruments, so that the character of the event was indicative of later Fluxus festivals. Concise commands without any drama, such as George Brecht's "Word Event", which consists of the instruction "Exit", or Maciunas' "Piano Piece No. 2", whose score reads: "let piano movers carry piano out of stage", contrasted with complex or dramatic pieces. Paik, for example, performed "One for violin solo" that consists of suddenly shattering a violin; also his "Sonata quasi una fantasia" in which the pianist, playing the "Moonlight Sonata", undresses step by step. He interpreted La Monte Young's completely open "566 for Henry Flynt" by striking an army helmet 566 times with a drum stick. Paik here parallels an analysis of conventional musical norms with the analysis of conventional societal norms. The same goes for Vostell's "kleenex-décoll/age" whose score calls for smudging out political news reports, smashing soldier toys, throwing light bulbs and whipped cream pies at a pane of Plexiglass set up between participants and public, and so on. The cream pies must be wiped up with the Kleenex tissues at the end, so that the performer disappears behind the pane. All of the sounds were amplified by contact microphones. The action, as always with Vostell, is a comment about the disintegrative and destructive mechanisms running through our lives; it is "artistic protest".

In his introductory talk, Jean-Pierre Wilhelm emphasized the internationality of the new movement and – typically enough – its location between music and anti-music. The misleading categorization of "Neo-Dada", vehemently refuted by many of the participating artists as well as by "old Dadaists" is defined by Wilhelm: Neo-Dada in painting would be a wrong track, but in music there is something original and new to be understood by this term. Quoting from Paik, he touches on the concept of time, seeking to go beyond linearity in this new music: "Must I prove that absolute is relative? Time art is a justifiable deception. The



George Maciunas, Dick Higgins, Wolf Vostell, Benjamin Patterson and Emmett Williams in Philip Corner's "Piano Activities", Fluxus Festival at Städtisches Museum Wiesbaden 1962



cult of eternity is the longest, perhaps the greatest sickness of mankind. But if you tried to do without eternity, then the present would immediately be transformed into eternity. I love laziness. You shouldn't be concerned about the relativity of space and time, but rather about the relativity of life."<sup>23</sup> Corresponding to this postulate of an all-embracing present, most of the pieces in Düsseldorf were offered simultaneously. As with Merce Cunningham's choreography – and as in life – things of equal value took place at the same time at several points in the space.

The concert concept tried out in Wuppertal and then in Düsseldorf with Paik, consisting of "Action Music" with variable, unpredictable events encountering the audience like moments of life, was continued by Maciunas in September 1962 at the Städtisches Museum in Wiesbaden.<sup>24</sup> This, his first independently organized event in Germany, entitled "Fluxus \* International Festival of the Newest Music", today is generally equated with the birth of Fluxus, although many of the pieces presented had already been performed elsewhere in Germany and the USA. In fact, without the "preliminaries" in the USA and Germany that have been outlined here, the Fluxus concert in Wiesbaden would have been unthinkable.

Two weekends with "Concrete Music and Happenings" were framed by one weekend each of "piano compositions" and "taped music and films". The first weekend, with piano-related compositions by Sylvano Bussotti, Terry Riley, Terry Jennings, John Cage, György Ligeti, George Brecht, La Monte Young, Philip Corner, Dick Higgins and the last one, with tapes by Maxfield, Cage and Higgins, still clearly evoked recollections of Maciunas' New York AG series and Bauermeister's studio events. Like the Yearboxes, all performances were to be strictly divided according to countries of origin such as the USA, Europe and Japan. Maciunas then, however, sacrificed this in favor of a fusion "across the borders".

As a concession to the current German music scene and at Paik's express wish, Stockhausen's "Piano Piece IV", and works by Gottfried Koenig and Konrad Boehmer were included in the original program.<sup>25</sup> A significant clarification of Maciunas' theoretical position can be found in the discussion he carried on by letter with Paik about Stockhausen's participation. Maciunas finds Stockhausen's work, which he had presented a year ago in his New York gallery, now actually too complex and determined to fit into an increasingly narrowly-conceived Fluxus concept.<sup>26</sup> Formerly, all somehow progressive artists were amenable to him as potential Fluxus collaborators. Now he looked specifically for personnel who had thrown any vestiges of institutionalization and "professionalism" overboard. It was no longer enough to broadly document avant-garde activities from all countries; instead, following the "concrete" approach "according to John Cage", it was necessary to stimulate a new mode of making "music" visible ever more uncompromisingly. This consisted of actions directly adapted from the Zen concept in the two-line haiku, whose meaning lay primarily in the praxis, less in the so-called result. That's why he wrote to Paik, after he had pleaded for the exclusion of Stockhausen, Koenig and Boehmer from the next festival, in summer 1962: "Festival will have to be 'new music' – more post-Cage. less pre-Cage or Cage. more neo-dada, no-reactionaries, imitators, etc. etc."<sup>27</sup> and in a second letter: "But I think eventually Fluxus festivals & book must lean more towards neo-dada – action music – concrete music at least. Otherwise we will slide backwards to Darmstadt. No? Therefore, in future, I think we should eliminate all non-action, non neo-dada, non-concrete pieces even if they are very beautiful. I do not say Stockhausen is not beautiful. No! His pieces may be very beautiful, but so are pieces of Webern, Schönberg, Stravinsky, J.C. Bach, Monteverdi, Machault, Perotin –. We cannot include them all – so we must draw the borderline somewhere. If we include Stockhausen we should include 100 others like him, but you will agree that fluxus is not interested in all that is produced today. Stockhausen may be as famous as Cage, but Cage has originality while St. has not. Fluxus is interested in originality, fresh thinking, not imitations or overworked forms."<sup>28</sup> On the occasion of a performance of "Originale" in 1964 in New York, Maciunas then protested along with Flynt, Ay-O and others against Stockhausen the "reactionary", finally alienating many of the Fluxus artists participating in the concert for years...

Back to the Wiesbaden Festival. The main performers – Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Benjamin Patterson, Emmett Williams, Nam June Paik, Wolf Vostell (on September 15th) and George Maciunas – developed, often spontaneously and at short notice despite the latter's preplanning, a program that depended on the presence/absence of players and materials. This satisfied Maciunas' desideratum of originality, freshness, and action, especially during the two middle weekends. Seemingly illogically and absurdly assembled, scene followed scene, and simultaneous overlaying happened again. True to the Zen maxim Cage passed on that reminds us to forget everything we have ever learned, the actions, especially the dominating American pieces, often seemed simple, sparse, banal, unprofessional, often comical. Just as the Zen master teaches, that for each purpose no more time, energy and material should be used than necessary to achieve the desired effect, for the best pieces, the least material was necessary (some shaving cream, a chamber pot with ink, paper, a water kettle, balloons, eggs, a ladder, a watering can...). To achieve the "effect" it took sometimes a few minutes, sometimes an hour. For example, Paik's "One for violin solo", Bob

Watts' "Two Inches" (score: "stretch a 2 inch ribbon across the stage and cut it"), George Brecht's "Three lamp events" (score: "on. off. lamp. off. on.") were short. Emmett Williams' "An Opera" (the search for a lost dot of an i is here "portrayed" by tapping on a pan more and more times and lasted 45 minutes) or La Monte Young's "Composition 1960 #7" (hold a tone "for a long time") were long. A real Fluxus piece allows interpreters the freedom of interpretation. According to Dick Higgins, La Monte Young's piece was performed in Wiesbaden in the following manner: "We did a one-hour version of La Monte Young's B-F sharp, held, unvarying, sung and accompanied by Benjamin Patterson's bass viol."<sup>29</sup> Vostell's "Kleenex-décoll/age", which aggressively shut out the audience at the end of the concert series, was certainly the least minimalist piece in Wiesbaden.

In the media, Paik's interpretation of La Monte Young's "Draw a straight line and follow it" (Paik dipped his tie and head in a chamber pot filled with ink and drew a line on some paper lying on the floor, he called the piece "Zen for Head") received special attention. So did Philip Corner's "Piano Piece", which stretched out over several weekends, in which an old piano was "taken apart". The press saw the whole thing mostly as a "joke" and "madness at work" and called for some really "serious" critique of the existing culture. This reflects how incomprehensible for (German) recipients this art was – art that simply wanted to present life before their eyes without expressing direct and obvious acceptance or rejection. And beyond this, it demonstrates that the birth of Fluxus in a museum, of all places, further exacerbated this misunderstanding.

During the course of this and later festivals in Amsterdam, London, Copenhagen and Paris, Maciunas' tireless recruiting efforts formed an artistic community buoyed by an optimistic "feeling of togetherness" and having artistic ideas vaguely recognized as being in common. Artists who had not been personally present at the European festivals and whose works were performed (like George Brecht, Yoko Ono, La Monte Young, Bob Watts, etc.) naturally belonged, too. In fact, the conviction that inner connections exist between events that take place at the same time in different places, and people who think in similar ways, has remained one of the cornerstones of Fluxus until today.<sup>30</sup> When Maciunas early in 1963 began to try to decree and push revolutionary collective thinking on Fluxus and, using practices of the Communist Party, tried to "expel" "saboteurs and deviants", belonging to Fluxus lost much of its original uninhibitedness. "Authors are to assign exclusive publication rights to Fluxus" Maciunas demanded in a circular from January 1, 1963. He based this monopolization on the greater striking power to be achieved by a "united front". Maciunas even regarded the "Events" of (decidedly unpolitical) George Brecht as politically relevant – as indeed they were "non-art reality" – and so eliminated the elite class character of art. It didn't disconcert him that Brecht's response was that for him, "anti-art" was also an aspect of art.<sup>31</sup>

On the one hand, these desires for change going beyond ideas inherent in art reflected Maciunas' debate with the approach of Henry Flynt, mathematician and philosopher of the Left. His essay "A New Concept of General Acognitive Culture" had just been published, typically enough, in Vostell's magazine "décoll/age".<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, Maciunas must have gotten the impression that, especially in Germany, sociopolitical relevance was expected of Fluxus. The actions of Paik and Vostell had already moved in this direction, and now, in January 1963, Joseph Beuys also offered to distribute a manifesto at the Fluxus concert they were planning together for the 2nd and 3rd of February at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf.<sup>33</sup>

After the introductory text, read once again by Jean-Pierre Wilhelm, the "Manifesto" was thrown to the public as part of Patterson's "Paper Piece". The American artists, especially, immediately distanced themselves from its content.<sup>34</sup> Expanding on the dictionary excerpt on "fluxus" that he had printed in the "pamphlet" of 1962, Maciunas here demands the "purging" of the world of bourgeois sickness and "Europanism" as well as the flooding of art – for the benefit of a living anti-art accessible to all. "Fuse the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front and action" it says in closing. This critique of so-called "Eurocentrism", shared also by other members of Fluxus – Paik, for example – was directed primarily against the immanence of systems in the European avant-garde. Fluxus sees itself as outside this system of movement and countermovement – Maciunas therefore speaks later of a "rear guard"<sup>35</sup>. It marches in many directions and not only ahead in one.<sup>36</sup>

The pieces performed by Maciunas, Tomas Schmit, Nam June Paik, Wolf Vostell, Addi Köpcke, Joseph Beuys, Bengt af Klintberg, Daniel Spoerri, Staffan Olzon, Frank Trowbridge, Emmett Williams, Benjamin Patterson, Dick Higgins and Alison Knowles belonged for the most part to the "classical" Fluxus repertoire. Playfully-shocking (cf. Paik's peeing competition with the title "fluxus contest", Tomas Schmit's "Piano Piece for George Maciunas No. 1": a piano is packed with objects and then opened up...), symbolic-referential (cf. Vostell's "Kleenex", Beuys' "Siberian Symphony, first movement") and short, succinct "events" (after the performance of "Kleenex" the first day's concert closed with Brecht's "Word Event" "Exit") once again lent the Düsseldorf concerts an exciting complexity. Maciunas' signature definitely could be seen in the con-

centration on an action music "composed" of activities close to life. But the artists torpedoed his Marxist vision of a unified front. All of them had "sworn off the establishment"<sup>37</sup>, but none wanted to have the consequences of this prescribed for them. Nor did they share Maciunas' meanwhile aggressive aversion to "serious culture".

Again there were single and simultaneous performances, and many of the familiar pieces were freely varied in the Fluxus manner. Maciunas, for example, invented a variant on Brecht's "Drip Music". Initially it was performed as usual, with water being poured from a ladder down into a tub. In a second version, a kind of choir of performers was formed, with Maciunas aptly as "conductor". When he raised his arms, the "musicians" dripped nose and eye drops onto the floor. In Dieter Schnebel's "Visible Music II", performed in Düsseldorf and Wiesbaden, the solitary conductor had turned to the audience with (meaningless) conducting gestures. In Maciunas' more comic version of Brecht's "Drip Music", the traditional orchestra or choir situation is similarly lampooned. Later on, Brecht, Ay-O, Kosugi, Ben Vautier, Joe Jones, etc. also created orchestra parodies that affronted the audience's expectations. But all of these ideas go beyond mere parody. In giving equal weight to the see-able and hear-able, they call for an expansion of musical tradition. Maciunas' subject for the coming year, that sees Fluxus as "art-amusement" and "game or gag" that refuses any "competition"<sup>38</sup> while seeking to demolish "serious art" at the same level, announces itself clearly in this piece.

At the end of the second concert on Sunday, there was a brilliant simultaneous performance with accompanying tape music. The latter consisted of Maxfield's "Cough Music", "Steam", "Radio Music", "Pastoral Symphony", and "Night Music", of Cage's "Fontana Mix", Higgins' "Requiem for Wagner the Criminal Mayor" and a tape of Raoul Hausmann. Trowbridge's visual ready-made-actions ("Exposing Cigarette Case"), Knowles ("Child Art Piece"), Young ("566 for Henry Flynt"), Williams ("Counting Song"), Schmit ("Zyklus") and Brecht ("3 Yellow Events"), were unified within a sound environment consisting mostly of everyday sounds into a concert that appealed equally to several sense organs at once.

Claim to "authorship" was subverted, since everyone collaborated on each other's works. With one exception: Joseph Beuys. He blinded the participants with a spotlight from the auditorium<sup>39</sup> and his "Siberian Symphony" snubbed other players. It was generally felt that Beuys was taking too prominent a role and was acting too expressionistically-symbolically. Only in "Composition for 2 Musicians", performed on the second evening, – "a typical Fluxus piece" according to Beuys<sup>40</sup> – did he align himself with an aesthetic of conciseness. In it, two wind-up tin drummers played their preprogrammed composition, uninfluenced by the "author" of the piece – a musical ready-made.

The action "Siberian Symphony, 1st Movement" has been extensively analyzed elsewhere.<sup>41</sup> In this context, it should be mentioned that this was the first public action that Beuys announced, in the spirit of Fluxus, as a musical event. The everyday materials also came from the basic props of Fluxus, yet they become symbols of a certain world view and so are not "concrete": "As far as materials go, I actually didn't use anything new, but just developed ideas set out in Fluxus and tried to treat them materially."<sup>42</sup> A Fluxus action perpetuated the present either through the lightning of a brief event or the boredom of a monotonous extended action. With Beuys, the action always points to the future. A sweeping change is supposed to result from the action. This presupposes a kind of "thinking" completely different from the Zen-spirit of Fluxus.

Probably Maciunas' "Manifesto", too, was not enough for Beuys in this sense, since the encompassing existential aspect is missing. Yet perhaps the "Siberian Symphony" was still, in its content, a tribute to Fluxus and its founder Maciunas, who concerned himself with international artists' connections. One subject of the action is also connection: a cord ties the "landscape" on the grand piano to the hare on the table as if over an abyss – similar to the high tension wires that transmit impulses over the vast expanses of the Siberian steppes. Siberia was the point of contact between Asia and Europe for Beuys (he called a 1966 action "EURASIA SIBERIAN SYMPHONY 1963 32nd MOVEMENT"). And Maciunas had always dreamed of a Fluxus tour through Siberia. According to his biography, during his studies he had investigated Siberian nomadic art. Both artists therefore had "a great admiration for Siberia as the great powerhouse of culture."<sup>43</sup>

For Beuys and the other artists, Fluxus had become what Higgins had longed for at the beginning: an "institution" that facilitated information exchange and performances, now and then even activating them and providing them with a handy label. But after Maciunas, in his "News-Policy-Letter No. 6" of April 6, 1963, called on his Fluxus colleagues to perform sabotage actions more silly than subversive at New York cultural institutions and traffic junctions, not a few of them wanted to remove this label as quickly as possible. Despite Maciunas' increasingly "conflict-inducing behavior"<sup>44</sup>, that after his departure from Europe in autumn, 1963 led to a transfer of the "membership" and to a temporary end to the international festivals, in retrospect, all of the artists still granted great significance to the impetus-giving role of the "Fluxus conductor".

"The idea that everything can be music is the proudest and most distinctive feature of Fluxus, and it's also the thing that gives Fluxus its unity"<sup>45</sup>, Wolf Vostell later wrote. Under this broad premise, the Düsseldorf concert was the last great event that unified all of the contradictions under Fluxus without being doctrinaire – even though by this time Maciunas had denounced Vostell as an egocentric Fluxus saboteur, who aesthetically no longer lived up to the Fluxus ideals, since the "Kleenex" piece that he always performed never varied.<sup>46</sup> (It should of course be noted here that since "Kleenex" was produced on stage and played out without the participation of the audience, it also was not a typical Vostell happening.) Nevertheless the most diverse actions were performed in Düsseldorf alongside each other and given equal weight. Maciunas' ideas, which had become more rigid, were not followed to their final consequences, nor was individual self-presentation given too much space, as at the 1964 Aachen "Festival of New Art" or in the 1965 Wuppertal "24 hour" Festival. In Düsseldorf, the Cage principle of unhierarchical and accepting placement side by side was realized.

Maciunas would not organize another festival in Germany until 1976, with the help of René Block on the occasion of the Berliner Festspiele. Maciunas had pushed the development of Fluxus in New York further towards the production of objects that a recipient could playfully handle. Accordingly, the so-called "Fluxlabyrinth" was at the center of the event. Divided into several compartments, designed with ideas from various artists and practically by Maciunas himself, the visitor could move in the "Fluxlabyrinth" as if in an enlarged game. Marbles on the floor, doors with tricky opening mechanisms, passageways narrowed with foam, etc. revealed Fluxus as an unpretentious game for everyman – with subversive potential.

A first modest exhibition of Fluxus objects had already taken place in Germany in 1963 at the Galerie Parnass. Along with Paik's "Exposition of Music. Electronic Television", Rolf Jährling had offered Maciunas the chance to present Fluxus with objects in the kitchen of his gallery, a stimulus that had serious consequences. "...I set up some things of Geo. Brecht, R. Watts, Ben Vautier and Tomas...I used many printed pointed hand symbols which I set in a row so they went like this [hand symbols in the author's text] until they hit some 'exhibit' like Brecht's light switch 'on-off-on' or something else, in which case the finger pointed to it. This gave us the idea that we should in future always combine festivals with such 'exhibits'." In the same letter Maciunas asks Dick Higgins to send him objects – or better still, "something which every place has, which is even better, since we would not have to carry it about."<sup>47</sup> In Berlin, too, the "Labyrinth", in keeping with Fluxus ideology, did not consist of "originals" – most of the materials were found on the spot, the plan was supplied.

In addition, at the "Flux-Cembalo-Evening" at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, a program of international caliber with pieces by Brecht, Maciunas, Vautier, Paik, Young, Higgins, Filliou, Watts, Joe Jones, T. Schmit, Larry Miller, Yasunao Tone and Robert Bozzi was presented. "George Maciunas Fluxus Airlines"<sup>48</sup> had landed one last time in Germany to bring together works by artists from all over the world. And is it a coincidence that the idea for Paik's multicontinental satellite concert "Good Morning Mr. Orwell" (1984) arose just after the concert "In Memoriam George Maciunas" that Beuys and Paik performed in 1978 to honor the recently deceased founder of Fluxus?<sup>49</sup> At the memorial concert at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf, site of the high points and turning points of Fluxus, Beuys played on the same concert grand that had stood center stage during the 1963 Fluxus concert. As "Stag Memorial for George Maciunas", even today that piano reminds us of the Lithuanian's work and influence in Germany.<sup>50</sup>



Joseph Beuys and Nam June Paik in  
"In Memoriam George Maciunas",  
concert at Staatliche Kunstakademie  
Düsseldorf 1978



- 1  
Tomas Schmit: on f..  
In: 1962 Wiesbaden FLUXUS 1982.  
Exhibition catalog Wiesbaden/  
Kassel/Berlin 1982/83, p. 98.
- 2  
Joseph Beuys to George Maciunas,  
n.D. (postmark: 8.10.1965),  
copy in Archiv Sohm. In a similar  
sense, Paik also holds Maciunas'  
Lithuanianness responsible for his  
Marxist background and the  
resulting international organization:  
"His Marxist background originating  
from a small country, I bet, helped  
him to conceive the Fluxus as a truly  
international movement stretching  
from Asia to Eastern Europe"  
(Nam June Paik:  
Beuys Vox 1961–1986. Exhibition  
catalog Seoul 1990, p. 49).
- 3  
Cf. the corresponding statement by  
Joseph Beuys in: *Happening 1968*.  
Art. Protest. Video by Friedrich  
Heubach and Helmut Herbst.  
44 min., 1968 (unpublished version).
- 4  
Ay-O: How we met or a  
microdemystification.  
In *AQ 16. Fluxus (1977)*, p. 19.
- 5  
Dick Higgins: Excerpt from "Postface"  
(Original text – varying in parts,  
especially in the passages  
concerning Vostell – from 1964).  
In: *Happenings. Fluxus. Pop Art.*  
*New Realism. A Documentation.*  
Ed.: Jürgen Becker, Wolf Vostell.  
Reinbek bei Hamburg 1965, p. 179.
- 6  
George Maciunas on the invitation  
to "Musica Antiqua et Nova"  
March 25 to May 14, 1961.
- 7  
Jackson Mac Low: How Maciunas  
got to know the New York  
Avant-garde. In: exhibition catalog  
Wiesbaden 1982 (Note 1), p. 114.
- 8  
The so-called "West European  
Yearbook", still in a very open plan-  
ning stage early in 1962,  
was to contain contributions from art  
theory, music, painting, literature  
and film from the following list of  
artists and theoreticians that reflected  
Maciunas' "state of knowledge"  
at the time: T.W. Adorno,  
H.K. Metzger, J.P. Wilhelm, Emmett  
Williams, Dr. Eimert, M. Kagel,  
G.M. Koenig, N.J. Paik,  
K. Stockhausen, Karl-Erik Welin,  
K. Wigger, M. Bauermeister, Öyvind  
Fahlström, W. Gaul, K.O. Goetz,  
Kirchgässer, Mantovani, J. Mekas,  
M. de la Motte, Franz Mon,  
Maciunas, Günter Bock, C. Caspari,  
Jörn Janssen, Fehn, Heussner.  
Cf. George Maciunas:  
*Fluxus. Tentative Plan for Contents*  
of the first 7 Issues.
- 9  
These were: George Brecht, "Water  
Yam" (a small box with "event"  
scores); Daniel Spoerri, "l'Optique  
Moderne"; La Monte Young,  
"Compositions 1961"; Nam June  
Paik, "Monthly Review of the  
University for Avantgarde Hinduism";  
the two newspaper-like publications  
about Fluxus performances and  
publications "Fluxus Preview Review"  
and "Ekstra Bladet".
- 10  
Through Paik he met Karlheinz  
Stockhausen, Emmett Williams, Mary  
Bauermeister, Sylvano Bussotti,  
Heinz-Klaus Metzger, Wolf Vostell,  
Ben Patterson, Jean-Pierre Wilhelm,  
Maurizio Kagel, Konrad Boehmer,  
Hans G. Helms. According to Paik,  
Maciunas also contacted Bussotti  
and Helms from New York  
(Beuys Vox, Note 2, p. 49).
- 11  
George Maciunas to Dick Higgins,  
n.D. (probably spring 1962), Archiv  
Sohm. During Maciunas' stay in  
Germany, Dick Higgins was his most  
important adviser in the USA.  
Early in 1962 he sent him a list with  
66 names (i.e. Dan Flavin, Richard  
Chamberlain, Jim Dine, Robert  
Indiana) of whom none would later  
belong to Fluxus, and asked:  
"Are any of these good? (for Fluxus)  
& Fluxus diagram?" Here it's  
clear once again that at the time,  
Maciunas thought of neither a  
specific artistic approach nor specific  
people under Fluxus (list and  
Higgins' answer in Archiv Sohm).
- 12  
Cited in: Robert von Zahn:  
"Refüsierte Gesänge". Musik im  
Atelier Bauermeister. In: *intermedial.*  
*kontrovers. experimentell.*  
Das Atelier Mary Bauermeister in  
Köln 1960–62. Ed.: Historisches  
Archiv der Stadt Köln. Köln 1993,  
p. 108.
- 13  
Letter printed in *ibid.*, p. 74.
- 14  
Heinz-Klaus Metzger: *Kölner Mani-  
fest*, Blatt 1 (printed in *ibid.* p. 115).  
On Cage's reception being colored by  
"German critical consciousness"  
cf. more detail in the essay by  
Robert von Zahn cited in note 12.
- 15  
John Cage: Interview with Roger  
Reynolds and Robert Ashley.  
In: *Happenings (note 5)* p. 158.
- 16  
Hundertwasser proclaimed his  
famous "Verschimmelungsmanifest"  
(Moldy Manifesto) here in 1958.
- 17  
Set out in the theater journal  
edited by Sellner: *das neue forum 7*,  
Vol. 8 (1958/1959), p. 109–112.  
Claus Bremer and Dieter Roth were  
the only Germans represented  
in La Monte Young's "An Anthology".
- 18  
Emmett Williams:  
My Life in Flux – and Vice Versa.  
Stuttgart/London 1991, p. 102.
- 19  
Nam June Paik to Dr. Steinecke,  
2.5.1959. In: Nam June Paik:  
*Notes of a Cultural Nomad.*  
Ed.: Edith Decker. Cologne 1992,  
p. 52.
- 20  
German translation in:  
*Happenings (note 5)*, p. 192–195.  
Title of the English original version:  
"Neo Dada in Music, Theater,  
Poetry, Art".
- 21  
On the different and contradictory  
uses of the concept "concrete"  
or "concretism" cf. Bob Cobbing &  
Peter Mayer: concerning concrete  
poetry. London (writers forum) 1978,  
especially p. 9–14.

- 22  
Printed in: happening & fluxus. materialien. Compiled by Hanns Sohm, exhibition catalog Kölnischer Kunstverein 1970, unpagged.
- 23  
Typescript of the talk in Archiv Sohm.
- 24  
Maciunas had already written to museum director Clemens Weiler on December 14, 1961. The contact was made through Jean-Pierre Wilhelm, whom Maciunas had gotten to know through Paik.
- 25  
As often with Fluxus events, it is no longer possible to be sure which works on the program actually were performed. Although recordings by Ludwig Gosewitz exist for the second and third weekends, the first evening's events in particular can no longer be reconstructed exactly.
- 26  
Also in connection with Stockhausen, Cage had already indicated that the works of the European musical avant-garde contained too much harmony, drama and poetics – "referring more to their composers than to their hearers" in 1958 in Darmstadt. As so often in his statements, Cage here too emphasizes the supposedly more open attitude, less concerned with their own egos, of American artists.  
Cf. John Cage: *Silence*. Middletown, CT 1961, p. 53.
- 27  
Maciunas to Paik, n.d. (postmark 19.7.1962), copy in Archiv Sohm.
- 28  
Maciunas to Paik, n.d. (probably early August 1962), copy in Archiv Sohm.
- 29  
Dick Higgins: *Postface*. Cited in *Happenings* (note 5), p. 179–180.
- 30  
Jackson Mac Low: *How Maciunas got to know the New York Avant-garde* (note 7), p. 121. Used to beautiful effect as the central theme in Mieko Shiomi's "Spatial Poems" (1965), where addressees from all over the world carry out certain instructions, which then are marked with tiny fans on a world map.
- 31  
Brecht to Maciunas, n.d., Archiv Sohm.
- 32  
décoll/age 3, Dec. 1962. Especially because of this publication of the Flynt text, as well as other works by Fluxus artists that Maciunas actually had planned to use in his Fluxus magazine (which appeared much later), Maciunas developed the idea that Vostell was a "saboteur" of Fluxus.
- 33  
Taken from the answer Maciunas wrote to Beuys. All three letters to Beuys about the planning of the Düsseldorf Festival are published in: Williams: *My Life in Flux* (note 18), p. 72–74. Vostell, Hülsmans, Trowbridge and Beuys himself took part only at his express wish.
- 34  
Cf. among others Williams: *My Life in Flux* (note 18), p. 39.
- 35  
George Maciunas: *Art/Fluxus Art-Amusement*, published in: *happening & fluxus. materialien* (note 22)
- 36  
Beuys "manifested" his view of the issue once again in 1970, by pasting over the word "EUROPANISM" with "AMERICANISM" in Maciunas' *Manifesto*. In: *Edition Hundertmark*, 1. Karton, 1970.
- 37  
Williams: *My Life in Flux* (note 18), p. 39.
- 38  
Maciunas: *Art/Fluxus Art-Amusement* (Cf. note 35)
- 39  
Schneede interprets this Beuysian action not as a disruption, but as the creation of a connection between the bright stage and the dark auditorium, as well as a clue to his later action (Cf. Uwe Schneede: *Joseph Beuys. Die Aktionen*. Stuttgart 1994, p. 22).
- 40  
Cited in *ibid.*, p. 34.
- 41  
*Ibid.*, p. 20 ff.
- 42  
Cited in *ibid.* p. 26.
- 43  
Paik: *Beuys Vox* (note 2), p. 95. The "Biography" written by Maciunas is in the Archiv Sohm in photocopy form.
- 44  
Rainer Wick: *Zur Soziologie intermediärer Kunstpraxis. Happening. Fluxus. Aktionen*. Köln 1975, p. 88 ff.
- 45  
Cited in Williams: *My Life in Flux* (note 18), p. 35.
- 46  
Maciunas to Paik, n.d. (probably January 1963), Archiv Sohm.
- 47  
Maciunas to Higgins and Knowles, n.d. (probably March 1963), Archiv Sohm.
- 48  
Beuys in an otherwise quite enigmatic text written in Sütterlinschrift, an old-fashioned form of German writing, that he sent in for the commemorative publication assembled after the heavy attack on Maciunas in spring 1976 by Brecht and Geoffrey Hendricks (Title: "Laudatio Scripta pro George Maciunas Hominibus Fluxi"). Many artists who long had an ambivalent relationship to Maciunas (and to Fluxus) cooperated again on this occasion (Vostell was among the German artists along with Beuys). The box with the original contributions is in the Archiv Sohm; much of it was published in a special number of the Fluxus magazine cc V TRE, May 1976.
- 49  
According to René Block, in: *Art for 25 Million People. Bon Jour, Monsieur Orwell*. Exhibition catalog (anthology) Berlin 1984, unpagged (introduction).
- 50  
Wilhelm-Lehmbruck-Museum Duisburg, private loan.

**Fluxus Music:  
an everyday event**

**a lecture\***

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am here putting forward the assertion that Fluxus, like no other direction in modern art, has transformed the understanding and the meaning of music and has visualized musical forms.

Just the catalog alone for the "Broken Music" exhibition (which dealt comprehensively with the subject of artists' records and was shown 1988 in Berlin and subsequently in Grenoble, Sydney and Montreal) contains a list of 53 titles by artists who can be grouped with Fluxus and the Fluxus circle. One of those records is the recording of the July 7, 1978 concert "In Memoriam George Maciunas". The occasion for this duet between Joseph Beuys and Nam June Paik on two concert grand pianos was the death of George Maciunas, founder and spiritual leader of Fluxus. The site of that memorable and moving concert was the auditorium of the Staatliche Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf, a place where fifteen years earlier the same George Maciunas had organized one of the first Fluxus concerts together with Beuys, who had just assumed a chair in sculpture at the Akademie. Participating in this "FESTUM FLUXORUM FLUXUS" of February 2nd and 3rd, 1963 were Emmett Williams, Dick Higgins, Daniel Spoerri, Tomas Schmit, George Maciunas, Joseph Beuys, Arthur Köpcke, Wolf Vostell, Nam June Paik, Frank Trowbridge and Alison Knowles, among others. It was preceded by a "FESTUM FLUXORUM" from December 3rd-8th, 1962 in Paris, "FLUXUS – Music and Antimusic" from November 22nd-28th, 1962 in Copenhagen, and "FLUXUS \* International Festival of the Newest Music" that went on from September 1st-23rd, 1962 in Wiesbaden.

Dick Higgins, who performed his pieces in Wiesbaden with Emmett Williams, Benjamin Patterson, Nam June Paik, Alison Knowles, George Maciunas and Wolf Vostell, recalls in his book "Postface" published 1964 by the Something Else Press:

"The Wiesbaden Fluxus was the most ambitious of all. It lasted a month, with three, four, or five performances each week-end. The other festivals were smaller. The beauty of the Wiesbaden festival was that we had no worry for time – we could do many terrific long pieces that could not be fitted into other festivals. We did Emmett Williams' German opera, 'Ja, es war noch da' in English: it was the longest three-quarters of an hour I have ever spent, since it is mostly tapping on a pan in regular rhythms a prescribed number of times. We did a one-hour version of La Monte Young's B-F sharp held, unvarying, sung and accompanied by Benjamin Patterson's bass viol. We invented a piece by a mythical Japanese and improvised it for an hour (on the same program as the Young) – it became very beautiful. Vostell came down from Köln – a gigantic blond potato, three hundred pounds, with the tiniest feet in the world, so that he glided lightly. He said, 'Arghh,' hammered some toys to pieces, and heaved cake at the glass. Finis Sahnetortis, and he went right back to Köln. It was a beautiful mess. We did lots of old things of mine – I avoided the new ones mostly, for no particular reason – and we did Brecht, Watts, Patterson, Young, Williams, Corner, all galore. We did 'Danger Music No. 3' by shaving my head and heaving political pamphlets into the audience and 'Danger Music No. 16' by 'working with butter and eggs for a while' so as to make an inedible waste instead of an omelette. I felt that was what Wiesbaden needed. For a while eggs were flying through the air every couple of minutes. During Emmett Williams' opera some college boys came up out of the audience and stood, holding pine bows, singing college songs. We did Maciunas' metronome-rhythmic 'In Memoriam Adriano Olivetti' by raising hats, popping fingers, gasping, sitting up and down, waving heads, and so on. For three weeks this went on. We did Corner's 'Piano Activities' by taking apart a grand piano and auctioning off the parts. Most of my 'Requiem for Wagner the Criminal Mayor' was done, to the delight of the house superintendent, who left in the middle and came back with his whole family, they liked what was going on so much. Paik did 'Simple' and Patterson did his 'Variations for Contrabass'."



Today it's generally known and recognized that what has been described as "Fluxus" since the 1962 Wiesbaden concerts had already emerged before 1962 at various spots around the globe simultaneously but independently. In Japan (Ay-O, Takehisa Kosugi, Shigeko Kubota, Yoko Ono, Takako Saito, Mieko Shiomi), in the United States of America (George Brecht, John Cage, Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, La Monte Young, George Maciunas, Jackson Mac Low, Terry Riley, Robert Watts), in France (Robert Filliou, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Daniel Spoerri, Ben Vautier, Emmett Williams), in Holland and Denmark (Eric Andersen, Henning Christiansen, Arthur Köpcke, Willem de Ridder), in Prague (Milan Knizak) and in Germany around Cologne/Düsseldorf (Joseph Beuys, Nam June Paik, Benjamin Patterson, Tomas Schmit, Wolf Vostell).

Early meeting places were, if one lived in New York, John Cage's courses at the New School for Social Research and the performance events at Yoko Ono's loft or, if one lived in the Rhineland, the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal and the concerts at Mary Bauermeister's studio in Cologne.

Looking back, it is astonishing how short a time it took for such a dense information network to develop among these artists and composers who lived in different cities, countries and continents. One heard about the other mostly through the few who traveled. Cage and La Monte Young had visited the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt, Dieter Roth traveled around the USA and Europe, Vostell went back and forth between Paris and Cologne, Emmett Williams between Paris and Darmstadt, address lists were exchanged. They had never met each other, or only in passing, but they wrote. The mails were the vehicle for a worldwide exchange of ideas, manifestos and utopias: what was later called MAIL ART and CONCEPT ART was developed and tested in this pre-Fluxus period. This art of ideas was first published in Vostell's "décoll/age" magazines in Cologne and in "An Anthology" published by Mac Low and Young together with Maciunas in New York.

Even today, thirty-two years after its first manifestations, there are still no definitive answers to the questions: "What was Fluxus? Who was Fluxus?" Piloted by George Maciunas, Fluxus reached its highpoint from 1962 to 1965/1966 in concerts that were often surrounded by scandal. An impression remains from the time of these concerts, which were often performed by the same artists traveling around, that there was something like a Fluxus group. But there never was one, despite all of Maciunas' efforts at organization and publication. Probably because his intentions ran too much along the lines of an anonymous and collective, both entertaining (gag) and useful (design), "art" production. The unsigned, undated large printings of the sixties Fluxus editions in boxes and suitcases are products of this anti-attitude with regard to the establishment and the art market.

The designation "Fluxus" (= flowing, a stream, a continuous moving on) was chosen by George Maciunas around 1960 as the title for a magazine that would present the ideas of artists whose works eluded conventional art forms and styles. The magazine never appeared. But for the concert series "Newest Music" that he organized in Wiesbaden – he was here for a time working as a designer with the U.S. Army – Maciunas used this word.

"The most important thing about Fluxus is that no one knows what it is. There should at least be something that experts don't understand. I see Fluxus wherever I go" said Robert Watts, and George Brecht explains: "In Fluxus there has never been any attempt to agree on aims or methods; individuals with something unnameable in common have simply naturally coalesced to publish and perform their work. Perhaps this common something is a feeling that the bounds of art are much wider than they have conventionally seemed, or that art and certain long-established bounds are no longer very useful."

Jackson Mac Low wrote in the catalog that appeared in 1982 on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the first Fluxus concerts in Wiesbaden: "There were relatively few of us whose works were performed at Fluxus concerts and 'festivals' who agreed with Maciunas' anti-art and 'realistic art' ideas. Many of us had first met each other in John Cage's experimental music class at the New School for Social Research on 12th St. in Greenwich Village, which he taught from about 1958 till May 1960...Maciunas very much wanted to make a FLUXUS movement and firmly to guide its destinies. For a long time he laid claim in the name of FLUXUS to every work of ours that was ever played at a Fluxus concert or printed in a Fluxus publication. He issued edicts that such works be listed on printed programs as 'Fluxus pieces' and that programs including a certain number of them be designated 'Fluxus concerts'. Though most of us ignored these decrees, still they irritated us."

All of these remarks – there are similar ones by Dick Higgins, Emmett Williams and Tomas Schmit – have in common the tendency not to want to fixate Fluxus on certain social or anti-art-establishment goals – as Maciunas wanted to do – but to leave open the instructions for the Fluxus compositions, pieces and events. "My Events are very private, like little enlightenments I wanted to communicate to my friends who would know what to do with them", said George Brecht about his Events from 1959 to 1963 that were brought together and published on small cards in the "Water Yam" Box (Edition Fluxus 1963). And Addi Köpcke thinks and says the same about his 123 "Reading-Work-Pieces" from 1958 to 1964, which first were

published in 1972 under the title "Continue" and whose first reads "Music while you work". For this piece, every performer decides on a certain action that he performs only when there is music playing. A break in the music = a break in the activity. The piece is over when one of the performers finishes his action. The performance that took place in Berlin in 1970 with Arthur Köpcke, Emmett Williams, Charlotte Moorman, Carolee Schneeman, Marianne Filliou, Robert Filliou, Valerie, Al Hansen, Eric Andersen and Tomas Schmit lasted about two hours.

Really – Fluxus was something by friends for friends, and at the often sparsely-attended concerts friends and sympathizers sat in the audience. Tomas Schmit sums it up: "money – there was none to earn, fame – there was none to reap, the rest of the art scene ignored us, the press at most ran something nasty on the color page between the calf with five legs and the prince's wedding."

"And yet", Emmett Williams appraises in his wonderfully amusing memoirs, published in 1992, "My Life in Flux – and Vice Versa", "for better or worse, Fluxus, against its own intentions, entered the arena of art history. The big question is, which came first, the FLUX or the US? The leading exponent of the US school is Dick Higgins. 'Fluxus existed before it had its name,' he maintains, 'and it continues to exist today, many years later, as a form and a principle of work...Its participants never thought of themselves as a group until they were described as such in connection with the "Festum Fluxorum" at Wiesbaden in 1962, by which time the participants had been doing Fluxus works for four or five years.' George Brecht is the spokesman for the FLUX school. In his view, 'If it hadn't been for Maciunas nobody might have called it anything...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 work, and each other, more or less, was Maciunas. So Fluxus, so far as I'm concerned, is Maciunas.' Whatever the case may be, it was Maciunas who opened that dictionary way back in 1961 and put his finger on the word flux, Latin fluxus. He liked the word because of the 'many meanings, sort of funny meanings' that he found in the dictionary entry. He had discovered what he was looking for: the title of a publication."

In 1982 at the first major Fluxus retrospective in Wiesbaden, I dedicated an evening's discussion – George Brecht gave it the title "Round and round it goes and where it stops nobody knows" – to finding an answer to the question: "What is Fluxus?". We failed gloriously at this undertaking.

There are as many answers and justifiable explanations as there are artists, and as many drawers that do not fit into any wardrobe. Fluxus is really not an art movement, but an attitude of mind, not a conspiratorial group of artists, but an extremely loose association of loners and outsiders, who, far from the art market, thought up forms of behavior and creations that today we may perfectly well describe as art.

The audience's confusion, the observer's irritation, was intentional and resulted from their being included in the production process. The "every person is an artist" thesis of Joseph Beuys and also of Robert Filliou related precisely to this, to the creative and open attitude of the observer with regard to an artistic product that – whether as performance or written concept – often had first to arise with the observer.

Tomas Schmit once concluded: "what i learned, among many other things, from f.: if you can manage it with a sculpture, you don't need to erect a building; if you can convey it with a picture, you don't need to make a sculpture; if you can take care of it with a drawing, you don't need to paint a picture; if you can jot it down on a piece of paper, you don't need to do a drawing; and if you can deal with it in your head, you don't even need a piece of paper! – how nice, that there were so many small, simple, brief pieces in f.."

### **Liberating Sounds from the Chains of Music**

Satie – Russolo – Duchamp – Cage

In one of his many and frequently cited statements, Ben Vautier describes John Cage as his "father", Marcel Duchamp as his "grandfather" and Erik Satie as his "great-grandfather".

The French composer Erik Satie, who was born 1866 in Honfleur and died 1925 in Arcueil, is known in his own words "as one of the strangest musicians of his time". That has a lot to do with the fact that he never identified with the institution of music and the profession of musician – that is, with the professional or academic music business. He reacted to all these forms of enterprise anti-classically and anti-academically, with clowning and the "cold bite of irony". In this attitude, he may be compared with other loners such as American composer Charles Ives or Marcel Duchamp. Nevertheless, Satie was a musician. And as a musician, one of the most important renewers of French music – and certainly not only this. While he was earning his salary as a postal employee near Paris – Charles Ives worked for an insurance company –, he wrote down many of his musical ideas and other texts on hundreds of little pieces of paper – something that was later taken up by Cage and would be cultivated by artists of the Fluxus movement.

*Le Bain de mer.*

*Andante* La mer est large, madame. En tout cas,

Voici de bonnes vieilles

*diminuer* Vous êtes toute maillée

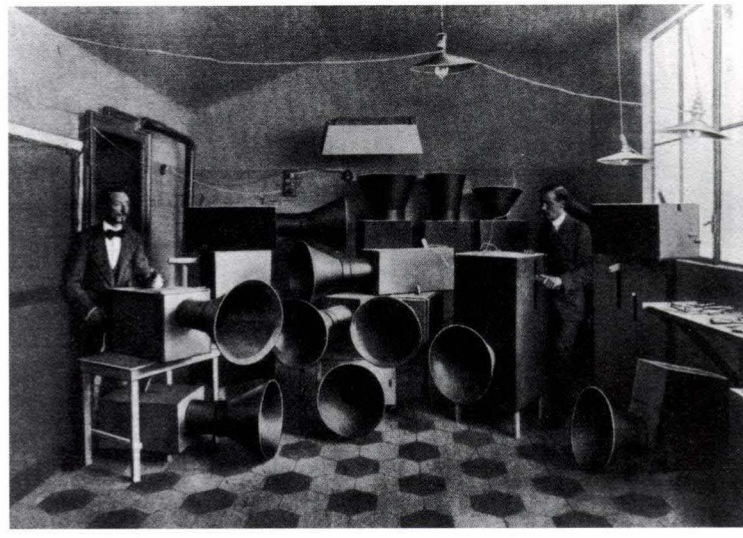
*ritard.* Elle est assez profonde. Ne vous assommez pas dans le fond. C'est très humide.

Elles ont pleines d'eau.

*Adieu, monsieur.*

Erik SATIE  
11 Avril 1914

Eric Satie, score "Le Bain de Mer", 1914  
 From: Eric Satie, Schriften  
 Ed.: Ornella Volta, Hofheim 1988



Luigi Russolo, Intonarumori  
 From: Luigi Russolo,  
 L'Arte dei Rumori, Milan 1916

*Erratum Musical*

*Yvonne*

Faire une em-prein-te mar-quer des traits

ne fi-gure sur une sur-face im-pri-mer

sur un ci-re.

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*Marguerite*

Faire une em-prein-te mar-quer des traits

ne fi-gure sur une sur-face im-pri-mer

sur un ci-re

Marcel Duchamp,  
 score "Erratum Musical", 1913 (First page).  
 From: The "Green Box", 1934

With Satie, something begins that we could describe as “conceptual music”. And the beginnings of “visual music” lie here too, as shown by his famous “Composition in the Shape of a Pear” or the music in the form of waves in the composition “Le Bain de mer” from 1914. In 1921, Satie composed what is probably the longest composition in piano literature, “Vexations”. Played at a medium tempo, it requires 18 or 19 hours to be performed. As a rule, it is performed by several musicians who take turns at the piano as in a relay race – who pass on the tone, so to speak. The piece of music Satie notated is relatively short. But he provided the piece with the instruction to repeat it 840 times. And so right away, there is a reference to Fluxus, to the composition “X for Henry Flynt” by La Monte Young, which after its first performance by David Tudor became known by the title “566 for Henry Flynt”.

As with “Vexations”, in the composition “Musique d’ameublement”, composed in 1917 and realized in 1920, the music’s temporal length is a crucial factor: the music should be like furniture in the room, permanent and natural. The space itself becomes an important part of the composition. Space and time, sound and environment are discovered as important material for further musical development.

Along with Satie, two visual artists open up pivotal possibilities for the further development of musical forms at the start of the century: the Italian Futurist Luigi Russolo, born 1885, and the French Dadaist Marcel Duchamp, born 1887.

The Italian Futurists, around their intellectual head Filippo Tomaso Marinetti, may have represented the most radical artistic conceptions at the start of the century. In their manifestos, they called for the destruction of the opera houses and museums and glorified war as a gigantic aesthetic spectacle – whereby war was to be understood in the abstract, and is not to be compared with the live war reporting that is delivered to us today by CNN-TV as living room entertainment.

On March 11, 1913, Russolo wrote his musical manifesto “L’arte dei rumori”, which accompanied the presentation of his “noise-intoning” instruments, the “Intonarumori”. Russolo traveled throughout Europe with his instruments, for which some pieces had been composed. In Paris, he demonstrated them hopefully before Varèse, Ravel, Milhaud and Stravinsky. None of the composers was interested in the “noisemakers”. Lack of money for return transport forced Russolo to simply leave his instruments where they stood after concerts in Prague and London. Of more than thirty “Intonarumori” that were built, not one was preserved. Even if the “Intonarumori” did not directly live up to their claims in terms of musical yield, they still revolutionized the conventional idea of what music had to be. The inconsistency of the Italian Futurists may lie in the fact that they imitated the sounds surrounding us, this ready-made music, and did not directly use them as, for example, Russian Futurist Arsenij Avraamov did in the sirens concert he performed on November 7, 1922 in Baku. Russolo had never denied his amateur status as a musician. His manifesto ends with the paragraph: “Dear Pratella, I propose my suggestions to your futuristic genius and invite you to a debate. I am no composer, therefore I have neither acoustic preferences nor works to defend. I am a futuristic painter who would like to transpose his wish to renew everything to an art that is very dear to him. Therefore I am bolder than a professional composer could be, and my apparent incompetence doesn’t bother me at all. Since I am convinced that to boldness belong all rights and all possibilities, I have been able to intuitively comprehend the great renovation of music through the art of noise.” This statement of Russolo’s is interesting in his self-evaluation as a musical amateur, a dilettante. History has shown that it is often just such so-called dilettantes who, in their naive lack of concern, can effect great transformations. “Knowing through sympathy – the pure gateway” so the outsider Parsifal is characterized by Richard Wagner, a quality that could also apply to the creative artist. Even when irony, rather than sympathy, is the source of the understanding. Irony that creates at once both distance and closeness to the artist’s surroundings, to life as such. This we experience in an exemplary way in the work of Erik Satie and find also in the work and life of Marcel Duchamp.

In the “Boîte verte”, a collection of sketches and reflections from the years 1911 to 1920, there is the following concept for a musical sculpture:

“Sculpture musicale  
Sons durant et partant de différents points  
et formant une sculpture sonore qui dure.”

Especially interesting in connection with the ideas of the Fluxus artists – when we read this note as a score – is the remark’s vagueness, which allows a range of possible realizations. (Not for nothing does George Brecht cite this score in his text “EVENTS: scores and other occurrences” from 1961.)

Two music pieces of Duchamp’s from 1913, the same year that Russolo published his manifesto, are particularly significant both for John Cage as well as for Fluxus: “Erratum musical” and “La mariée mise à nu

par ses célibataires même. Erratum musical." The composition "Erratum musical" developed according to a relatively simple principle. Duchamp tore cardboard into small cards and wrote a note on each. Then he mixed all the cards in a hat and one by one pulled them out. The notes were written down in order as they were pulled. The score was arranged for three voices (his two sisters and himself). Its text was based on a description of the word "print" in a French dictionary.

Duchamp's second composition is somewhat more complicated, but can be newly realized again and again. The choice of instrument(s) is up to the performer(s). When the instrument is chosen, the composition process begins. This requires: a large funnel, five little open wagons connected to each other, and several balls – how many depends on the range of tones of the chosen instrument(s). The balls have numbers that correspond to the individual notes. They are dropped into the funnel, and fall into the wagon that is moving along under the funnel. Each wagon represents a "bar". The duration of the individual notes relative to each other is determined by the number of balls in the wagon. They are taken in random order from the wagon and notated in this sequence.

These two compositions following rules of chance are forerunners of aleatory composition technique, in which the process of composing, the thinking-out of the score, is equally as important as the chance-determined result. Duchamp also cleared the way for something of special significance to Fluxus artists: the path leading to making sound visible, audible and able to be experienced – to visualizing music.

Fluxus artists behave more theatrically on this point than Cage, who as a composer incorporates the technique of chance into the compositional process, but doesn't make this evident for the listener – the listener experiences only the musical result, the work of music itself.

Nevertheless, for George Maciunas, John Cage is the culmination that Fluxus builds on: "We have the idea of indeterminacy and simultaneity and concretism and noise coming from Futurism, like the Futurist music of Russolo. Then we have the idea of Ready-made and concept art coming from Marcel Duchamp. Okay, we have the idea of collage and concretism coming from Dadaists...They all end up with John Cage with his prepared piano, which is really a collage of sounds", he said shortly before his death in a video interview with Larry Miller.

By 1937, Cage had written his manifesto (revised in 1958), his credo, that begins with the words: "I believe that the use of noise to make music will continue and increase until we reach a music produced through the aid of electrical instruments which will make available for music purposes any and all sounds that can be heard. Photoelectric, film and mechanical mediums for the synthetic production of music will be explored. Whereas, in the past, the point of disagreement has been between dissonance and consonance, it will be, in the immediate future, between noise and so called musical sounds."

Cage's concern is a music that does not try to withdraw from sounds of the environment but to consciously include them. In his music there is nothing but sounds, be these notated or not. All sounds and noises audible at the same time exist alongside each other as acoustic material of equal value. Technical development allowed the use of pre-produced materials as well. Through Cage, Duchamp's conception of the ready-made finds an entryway into the world of music, although only as source material to be changed. Since the early fifties, Cage had produced this change using chance operations based on the Chinese book of oracles, the "I Ching".

Cage's "chance operations" are the attempt to extend the freedom won for sounds to compositional freedom. This differentiates him from his predecessors. The freedom of sounds, that accepts noise, leads into the freedom of composition, that lets in chance. New noises, new instruments, new compositional techniques logically lead also to the wish to give up traditional control over the compositional material, over the sound itself. "One may give up the desire to control sound, clear his mind of music and set about discovering means to let sounds be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expressions of human sentiments", Cage writes in 1957. "Sounds, allowed to be themselves": that would be the last stage of emancipated sound, if it could follow its own laws and we simply paid attention to the sound activities.

In connection with Fluxus, Cage's composition "4'33'" is particularly significant. This piece, also known as "Silence", is exemplary in making it possible to regard every noise or tone that happens during the length of the composition as music. Music is not silenced here; rather, noise is made musical.

Just months after John Cage's death on August 12, 1992, one of his last works, "Mozartmix", an homage to the composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, was completed. The work consists of 5 cassette recorders and 25 endless cassettes of different length that contain excerpts from 25 works of Mozart. The edition of 35 copies corresponds to the years in Mozart's life. "Mozartmix" was publicly performed for the first time during the Seoul Fluxus Festival in 1993. In this work, Cage again emphasizes the objective and spatial character of his musical conception and leaves it to the recipient to determine, by changing the cassettes, the art and manner of realization as well as the length of the performance.

## One Tone Once

Just as Fluxus is not a style but an attitude of mind, so Fluxus music also represents no unified musical form or conception, but becomes interesting just because of the different, often completely contradictory approaches. Worlds seem to separate the early, strongly conceptual pieces by George Brecht, Robert Watts, La Monte Young or Eric Andersen from the more expressive contributions of Nam June Paik, Milan Knizak, Joseph Beuys or Ben Vautier. But worlds also lie between the pieces of George Maciunas, Benjamin Patterson or Larry Miller, often based on musical entertainment, and the compositions that derive from musical tradition by Philip Corner, Dick Higgins, Henning Christiansen, Takehisa Kosugi or Giuseppe Chiari. And then there still are the others: Alison Knowles, Emmett Williams, Joe Jones, Addi Köpcke, Tomas Schmit, Jackson Mac Low, Geoffrey Hendricks...

But perhaps there is indeed an aspect of "classical Fluxus composition" that is valued by them all: a search for sound and the sound experience outside of the usual musical norms. Everyday events – small, as untheatrical as possible, rather inconspicuous, are often the starting points of a "composition". "The best Fluxus composition is the most non-personal, ready-made-like. Brecht's 'Exit', for instance, doesn't require one of us to perform it since it happens daily, without special presentations. So our festivals will eliminate themselves (or the necessity of our participation) when they become total ready-mades (like Brecht's 'Exit'). The same is true for publications and other temporary activities..." George Maciunas wrote to Tomas Schmit. The musical form of the performance is based on the formula: Time = Music and is oriented toward the musical theories of Satie and Cage. Since 1956, Cage taught at the New School for Social Research in New York. Among his students were Allan Kaprow, Jackson Mac Low, George Brecht, Al Hansen and Dick Higgins. In his book "A Primer of Happenings", Al Hansen reports in detail about this time, which also had influences on Cage's work: visual (scenic) features were multiplying. In "Theatre Piece" from 1960, for example, the notation allows for any number of between one and eight players, from any artistic disciplines, who each work out their own programs. A system of cards and numbers gives each player the time and length of his performance. Cage was well aware of the danger "that the performers could try to perform so-called interesting (for the public) activities...but this too is a part of the chance of the composition."

While Cage did not appear to be qualitatively interested in the whole unpredictable interaction, it was precisely the small event, its expression and meaning, that interested George Brecht. In his box "Water Yam" from 1963, one of the principle works of Fluxus, he put together an anthology of these small everyday occurrences that, released from their surroundings and performed, could become major events. In his "Piano Piece (a vase of flower on(to) a piano)" from 1962, the composition consists of the situation of putting flowers in a vase onto a piano. In Brecht's composition "String Quartet", four musicians come onstage with their instruments, sit down to play, get up again, shake hands and leave the stage. In the catalog for the 30th anniversary Fluxus Retrospective in Wiesbaden in 1992, Gabriele Knapstein writes about George Brecht's way of working:

"In his scores from the early sixties, George Brecht increasingly investigates the musical (in the sense of process) nature of objects and simple actions. In the exhibition 'Environments – Situations – Spaces' at the Martha Jackson Gallery in New York in 1961, for example, he participated with a realization of 'Three Chair Events'. He set up a black, a yellow and a white chair in the gallery space: to sit down, to perceive a yellow chair, to see something lying on a white chair can become an event. To perceive objects and simple actions as events and, vice versa, events as something of limited duration, quasi object-like – that is what Brecht's 'Musical Research' is about:

'Suppose that music isn't just sound. Then what could it be? Thinking this, I made a series of propositions. For example, a string quartet where the players simply shake hands... If the essential part of music is time, then all things that take place in time could be music... I don't think we know now whether or not music has to have sound – whether or not music *necessarily* involves sound. And if it doesn't, a possible direction of research is to see what it can be. What we have here is a research in music, turned into a research in objects.'

As in the case of 'String Quartet', George Brecht very often limits himself in his scores to very few words, thereby drawing attention to a single event taking place, such as the handshaking of four musicians... Like Cage, Brecht's point of departure in his 'musical research' is a continuum of sounds and events, and all incidental acoustic and visual moments of the performance situation belong to the realization of the score. To Henry Martin's question: 'In that case, even the chairs are musical?' he answers: 'Yes. In fact, there is perhaps nothing that is not musical. Perhaps there's no moment in life that's not musical.' Henry Martin: 'By virtue of the fact that life exists in time?' George Brecht: 'Yes. And it's also that we're always hearing something.'"

John Cage, score "4'33'", 1952  
 C.F. Peters Corporation  
 New York, London, Frankfurt 1960

NOTE: THE TITLE OF THIS WORK IS THE TOTAL LENGTH IN MINUTES AND SECONDS OF ITS PERFORMANCE. AT WOODSTOCK, NY, AUGUST 29, 1952, THE TITLE WAS 4'33" AND THE THREE PARTS WERE 35", 2'40", AND 1'20". IT WAS PERFORMED BY DAVID TUDOR, PIANIST, WHO INDICATED THE BEGINNINGS OF PARTS BY CLOSING THE GUSSES BY OPENING THE KEYBOARD LID. AFTER THE WOODSTOCK PERFORMANCE, A COPY IN CONVENTIONAL NOTATION WAS MADE FOR IRWIN KRAMER. IN IT THE DUREMENTS OF THE MOVEMENTS WERE 30", 1'23", AND 1'40". HOWEVER, THE WORK MAY BE PERFORMED BY ANY INSTRUMENTALIST AND THE MOVEMENTS MAY LAST ANY LENGTH OF TIME.

FOR IRWIN KRAMER

I  
 TACET  
 II  
 TACET  
 III  
 TACET

WORD EVENT

● EXIT

G. Brecht  
 Spring, 1961

DISAPPEARING MUSIC FOR FACE

smile → stop to smile

C. Shiomi Feb. 1964

THREE CHAIR EVENTS

- Sitting on a black chair  
Occurrence.
- Yellow chair.  
(Occurrence.)
- On (or near) a white chair.  
Occurrence.

Spring, 1961  
 G. Brecht

STRING QUARTET

● shaking hands

G. Brecht  
 1962

Two Inches

stretch 2 in. ribbon across stage  
 cut ribbon

ORGANIC MUSIC

Breath by oneself or have something breathed for the number of times which you have decided at the performance.  
 Each number must contain breath-in-hold-out. Instruments may be used incidentally.

T. Kosugi

Scores by George Brecht,  
 Chieko Shiomi, Robert Watts and  
 Takehisa Kosugi

Robert Filliou underlines this view in a statement about his sculpture "Musique Télépatique No. 21" from 1984, explaining "A feature that marks the artists associated with Fluxus is that they agree to interpret all of life as music. As a musical process in which the acoustic and visual parts are in balance. A butterfly flying is as much a musical event as the dripping of a water faucet. The music stands are visual symbols for music. In this arrangement, there is no place for a conductor. The objects attached to them communicate directly with each other. Like a chamber music ensemble."

In this statement, Filliou refers to one of La Monte Young's early radical compositions. The piece "Composition 1960 #5 (1960)", known as the "butterfly piece" has the following wording:

"Turn a butterfly (or any number of butterflies)  
loose in the performance area.  
When the composition is over, be sure to allow the butterfly to fly away outside.  
The composition may be any length but if an unlimited amount of time  
is available, the doors and windows may be opened before the butterfly  
is turned loose and the composition may be considered finished when  
the butterfly flies away."

With the "butterfly piece", La Monte Young takes what for Fluxus is a decisive step beyond Cage's "silent piece" "4'33"". If Cage still tried to regard the sounds that happen as music, this itself now becomes irrelevant. Young leaves the world of "audible" music and enters that of "visual music" and of action. In his compositions No. 3 and No. 4 from the same year, he leaves it entirely up to the audience to decide whether they consider what is happening to be music or not.

"La Monte Young, Composition 1960 #3  
Announce to the audience when the piece will begin and end if there is  
a limit on duration. It may be of any duration.  
Then announce that everyone may do whatever he wishes for the duration  
of the composition."

"La Monte Young, Composition 1960 #4  
Announce to the audience that the lights will be turned off for the duration  
of the composition (it may be of any length) and tell them when the  
composition will begin and end. Turn off all the lights for the announced duration.  
When the lights are turned back on, the announcer may tell the audience  
that their activities have been the composition, although this is not at all necessary."

In "Piano Piece No. 1 for David Tudor" the score says to "bring a bale of hay and a pail of water onstage, so that the piano has something to eat and drink. The performer may then feed the piano or leave the stage to eat. In deciding for the former, the piece is over when the piano has been fed; with the latter, the piece is over when the piano eats or decides not to eat."

For Beuys, too, silence is an important, perhaps the most significant, acoustic moment. The relationship between Beuys and Fluxus theories was close, between him and the Fluxus group, loose. Although he organized the Düsseldorf Fluxus concert and took part in various performances, he soon – from more general sociocultural contexts and from Fluxus experiences – evolved his own concept. His actions became more strict and left no room for the accidents that were occasioned by the free form of Fluxus. The course of actions is completely fixed on his person and stands in contrast to the anti-individuality that Maciunas had promoted.

Beuys saw an expansion of his sculptural ideas in the musical mode of presentation. He worked out the concept of plasticity using noise and sound as artistic materials. "I am a transmitter, I am broadcasting," Beuys said in 1964 after the eight-hour-long Fluxus song "Der Chef/The Chief" in Berlin. In his actions of pacing off space, as for example in "Eurasia. Siberian Symphony, 32nd Movement" (performed 1966 in Berlin), Beuys used music as an possibility for a parallel way of capturing time.

Often objects were created during concerts and actions. During "I am trying to set you (make you) free" (1969 in Berlin) the "Concert piano/jomgulo borealis" was created: a legless piano (as expression of helplessness in the face of the raw violence used by students to break up the concert) with nailed-on pieces of the green violin by Henning Christiansen, who spoke about "green music". The grand piano, symbol for music and tones, was transformed into a symbol for silence.



For Beuys, music moved between the extremes of silence and noise, and so the felt piano is a "sound sculpture". For him, the "acoustic" objects are often the "silent objects": "Mute Gramophone" (1963), "Homogeneous Infiltration for Concert Grand" (1966), "Ja Ja Ja Ja Ja, Nee Nee Nee Nee Nee" (tape in a pile of felt, 1969), "Felt suit" (1970), "Silence" (1973) or "Noiseless Blackboard Eraser" (1974).

"Beuys' musical thinking always enters into his work when it involves including acoustic processes in complex three-dimensional (plastic) perception. That is why, with many of his objects, there is a flowing transition between the possibilities of visual and auditory interpretations", writes Beuys collector Dr. Reiner Speck in a 1975 study on "Beuys and Music".

Besides performances, that is, musical expressions for a limited time period, permanent musical presence is significant for many artists of the Fluxus movement. Sound objects, sound sculptures, sound installations have been created. In "Mechanical Music No. 1" from 1959, Dick Higgins uses normal electrically-run household appliances that, by means of bimetal plugs, generate sounds in irregular, unprogrammed intervals.

In 1962, Joe Jones began to build his musical instruments in the attic of a building on Canal Street where Dick Higgins and Alison Knowles lived. Jones, who had studied with Earle Brown and made contact via his teacher with composers in the Fluxus field, sees in the mechanics not so much a precise technique for reproduction but rather a playful, self-composing element. The mechanics of his music machines independently determine pitch, dynamics and rhythm. They also determine the moments of silence. In his compositions for string instruments such as piano, guitar, cembalo or for percussion instruments such as drums, scales, bells and so on, small electrical motors are hung near the instruments. Two elastic wires are fastened to the motor shafts, so that when they rotate a propeller effect results. When the motors are turned on, the ends of the wires hit the strings of the instruments and generate tones and sounds. Through the recoil, the motors go into oscillating movements so that the number of strings being hit increases and also the impact becomes inexact: the wires can rotate between the strings or slide along them. A completely free, polyphonic meditative music develops that follows only its own musical impulses, its flow undisturbed by the human hand.

One of Joe Jones' most important works was the 1969 "music store", an ordinary storefront in a New York street where many of his prepared musical instruments were displayed in the window. Passers-by could play these instruments by pressing a button outside. Joe Jones died in February, 1993.

A long chapter could be dedicated to the many stimulating ideas and discoveries of Nam June Paik. But so many essays, catalogs and books have been written about Paik during the last few years. Here a few sentences about the composer and artist, who was born 1932 in Seoul, and who occupies one of the most extreme musical positions, should suffice.

Three months before the first "official" Fluxus concert in Wiesbaden, Paik had already arranged a concert evening at the Kammerspiele in Düsseldorf. Under the heading "NEO-DADA in Music", pieces by and with Nam June Paik, Dick Higgins, Toshi Ichiyangi, George Maciunas, Benjamin Patterson, Dieter Schnebel, Tomas Schmit and Wolf Vostell could be heard on June 16, 1962.

A few days earlier, George Maciunas had given a lecture only a few kilometers away in Wuppertal at the Galerie Parnass about "Neo-Dada in the United States" and Benjamin Patterson played his "Variations for Contrabass". One year later, Paik extended an invitation to his memorable and pioneering "Exposition of Music. Electronic Television" at that same gallery. In the catalog for Paik's exhibition at the Cologne Kunstverein in 1976, Tomas Schmit, who assisted with the set up, reminisced about the record shish-kebabs, the prepared televisions and prepared pianos:

›what is going on with the first piano (for addi köpcke, after his ›shut books‹  
is not visible, but graspable:  
the keyboard is fixed by a board laid underneath; none of the keys  
can be pressed or meet the strings.  
the second lies on its back, and its insides  
(as well as the strings above and the bottom of the keys) lie exposed:  
it is to be played by the feet, walking over it...  
›for all senses‹ the two other pianos; our old piece of cultural furniture  
the piano as a vehicle for a seemingly total spectacle; the source material:  
two simple pianos (from one, the bottom part of the  
front covering has been removed, from the other also the top part);  
principle: ›everything possible‹  
the parts of the piano, which otherwise only shine blackly, are  
filled/hanged/stuck/nailed/decorated/equipped with the most different  
things/gadgets/pieces (optical, acoustic, and other sorts).

likewise the keyboard; and all kinds of tactile things await the fingertips:  
a tub of lard, pointy thumbtacks, softness, roughness, etc.

the quirky piano mechanism is used in three ways:

\_\_\_\_\_ i press a key, the key moves the hammer, and that hits  
the string/s; some of the hammers and many of the strings are prepared  
with all kinds of things stuck -on -over -under or in-between,  
\_\_\_\_\_ others are in their original condition, some are missing.

\_\_\_\_\_ i press a key, the key moves the hammer, and that moves what is  
sticking or hanging on to it; for example: it makes an old shoe dangling  
from the lid bob up and down.

\_\_\_\_\_ i press a key, and it presses down on a squeaky toy put under it;  
or on an electric switch:

there are also three kinds of switches, pressure-, on/off- and  
double switches; examples:

\_\_\_\_\_ when i press c sharp, a transistor radio plays;  
it falls silent when i release the c sharp.

\_\_\_\_\_ when i press the f, an electric motor (!...) screwed onto the resonating  
board starts to churn; it settles down again

when i press the f a second time.

when i press the c, a heater starts to blow warm air on my legs;  
the button that turns it off again is hidden under the a.

beyond the above, several transistor radios, one or more film  
projectors, a siren (and other things?) are activated this way.

a key turns off all of the lights in the space (and back on,  
if you can find the thing again in the dark)."

In 1964, having participated in all of the important Fluxus festivals in Europe, Paik moved to New York. There cellist Charlotte Moorman, who organized the yearly "New York Avant-Garde Festival", contacted Paik at Karlheinz Stockhausen's recommendation. A close collaboration resulted which brought a new element into music: sex. Early compositions by Paik had already contained strong sexual moments, such as his "Danger Music for Dick Higgins (Creep into the Vagina of a Live Female Whale)" or his "Symphony No. 5", in which a certain part is "to be played on the piano with a hard penis (very loudly)". With Charlotte Moorman as interpreter, he realized many of his "Sex Musics". During a performance of the "Opera Sextronique" in 1967 at Carnegie Hall in New York, Paik and Moorman were arrested by the police.

Fluxus became famous and feared shortly after it first appeared in 1962 in Wiesbaden. To destroy a piano at a concert was scandalous. The attack on a piano seemed to be an attack on bourgeois society and morals as such. But the destruction of the grand piano – by the way an old one, not usable for concerts – rested on a misunderstanding, because Philip Corner's composition "Piano Activities" implied only that tones other than melodies could be coaxed from the piano.

Unlike Italian Futurism, Fluxus had never called for destruction, but certainly for transformation of habits of hearing and seeing. As this lecture attempts once again to underline, Fluxus means happiness in little every-day things.

Let them sing *Madame Butterfly* night after night at the opera houses, but also let's have butterflies flying. As John Cage said in 1957:

"Any sound may occur in any combination and in any continuity."

Philip Corner added later on:

"One tone once."

\* Lecture delivered December 12, 1994

at the Fundació Tàpies, Barcelona,

on the occasion of the exhibition "In the Spirit of Fluxus".

music  
Never stops it is we who turn away  
again the world around  
silence  
sounds are only bubbles on its  
surface  
they burst to disappear (thoreau)  
when we make  
music  
we merely make something  
that  
can  
more naturally be heard than seen or touched

that makes it possible  
to pay attention  
to daily work or play  
as being  
not  
what we think it is  
but our goal  
all that's needed is a frame  
a change of mental attitude  
amplification  
waiting for a bus  
we're present at a concert  
suddenly we stand on a work of art the pavement

From: John Cage, Composition  
in Retrospect, 1981  
John Cage, X. Writings '79-'82  
London 1987

**Fluxus Radio Art  
in the WDR Studio for Acoustic Art**

**John Cage**

**Roaratorio**

**An Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake**

Voice	John Cage
Song	Joe Heaney
Violin	Paddy Glackin
Bodhran	Peadar and Mel Mercier
Flute	Matt Malloy
Uilleann Pipe	Seamus Ennis
Realization	John Cage and John David Fullemann
Editing	Klaus Schöning
Production	WDR Cologne, Studio for Acoustic Art SDR Stuttgart/KRO Hilversum 1979
Technical collaboration	IRCAM, Paris
Length	60'13"
Karl Sczuka Prize 1979	

With "Roaratorio. An Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake", a commissioned work for WDR, John Cage realized a composition that would become an international sensation and a key work in the acoustic art of this century.

In "Roaratorio", John Cage brings his experiences with music and poetry, sound poetry and tape montage, and his involvement with Zen Buddhism, to an all-encompassing cosmogony of the human voice, sounds of nature and the environment, noise, song and music. The basis for Cage's work on "Roaratorio" was his intensive study over the years of James Joyce's epochal novel "Finnegans Wake", Cage's sound poetry text consists of citations from the novel. The letters of the name of Irish poet "James Joyce", continually recurring, form the central axis of this mesostic text. John Cage recited this meditative sound poem himself. Joyce's text was also used as the basis for the musical composition, a complex ambience of noise and sound. With the help of the ancient Chinese book of oracles, the "I Ching", John Cage used chance operations to determine the sounds of 2,293 places and noises mentioned in "Finnegans Wake". These he composed into a polyphonic collage. The montage was supplemented by Irish ballads, jigs and instrumental music that he had recorded in Ireland. John Cage saw this piece as an opportunity to transpose works of world literature into acoustic form, and so into a language accessible to everyone. "More and more, I think that we need a language that gets along without translation."

Numerous European, American and Australian radio stations have broadcast this work of acoustic art that has become a classic. It has been presented by WDR at international festivals as a live performance with John Cage and Irish musicians. Using the composition, Merce Cunningham choreographed a ballet for his New York company that was performed with great success at international festivals.

Heinrich Vormweg in his laudation: "'Roaratorio' is a huge tablet of contemporary cuneiform. Full of hints and information and indecipherable, it will lure interpreters. And as a medium of immersion or of flights of fancy, as an understanding with the world, and as a comprehensive utopia, it is at the same time a radical challenge to live differently in the world. A utopia of equality and the peace it achieves."

Just a whisk	J
of	O
pity	Y
a cloud	C
in peace and silence	E

## John Cage

### James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Erik Satie: An Alphabet

Translation from English	Klaus Reichert
Cast:	
Storyteller	Klaus Reichert
James Joyce	John Cage
Erik Satie	Mauricio Kagel
Marcel Duchamp	George Brecht
Rose Selavy	Wiltrud Fischer
Teeny Duchamp	Sieglinde Kistner
Buckminster Fuller	Peter Behrendsen
Henry David Thoreau	Hans Otte
Robert Rauschenberg	Dick Higgins
Mao as a four-year-old child	Nadja Annabelle
Brigham Young	Gerhard Rühm
Jonathan Albert and Ibsen	Wulf Herzogenrath
Isou and Oppian	Alvin Curran
Direction	John Cage and Klaus Schöning
Editing	Klaus Schöning
Production	WDR Cologne 1987 Studio for Acoustic Art
Length	71'20"

Recording of a live performance  
on February 14, 1987  
at the WDR Festival "NachtCageTag" (NightCageDay)  
on the occasion of John Cage's 75th birthday

This work, praised by an international jury as a "towering work of radio art", was first produced and broadcast by John Cage for the Studio for Acoustic Art in 1982 as a radio piece in German. In 1987 it was performed live in Cologne by John Cage's friends during the WDR 24-hour non-stop broadcast "NachtCageTag". It received its American premiere in 1990 in New York at the "WDR Sound Art Festival 2nd Acustica International".

"An Alphabet" is a work full of allusions and references, mostly to fictional events and encounters, a great poetical-philosophical meditation by John Cage commemorating his decades-long involvement with the works of Joyce, Duchamp and Satie.

"I had a strange experience during the four to six weeks that I was writing the text. More intensively than ever before in my life, I developed a feeling for the equivalence of night and day. When I was sleeping, I didn't have the feeling of being in a different state than when I was awake, and vice versa. The mingling of life and death is the actual subject of the piece, as at the end, which refers to Suzuki, it shows so nicely that for Zen there is no difference between life and death."

In a letter to the editors at WDR, John Cage described his radio piece: "Three spirits appear and they meet up with many other spirits and come into contact with things that have been determined by chance operations on the alphabet. This is sometimes very amusing. Every time one of the spirits is alone, he reads from his writings. Satie seven times, Duchamp three times and poor joist only twice."

John Cage leads the listener into a Zen-inspired Dada-world where, as at a big family gathering on a stage he imagines, various still-living and dead spirits meet: James Joyce – whose role Cage himself slips into –, Erik Satie, Marcel Duchamp and his wife Teeny, as well as his feminine alter ego Rose Sélavy, the futurologist Buckminster Fuller, Robert Rauschenberg and Joseph Beuys, the social philosopher Henry David Thoreau, dancer Merce Cunningham and many others. A storyteller guides us like Orpheus through this imaginary theater of the lively and stimulating ghosts who have substantially influenced the art of this century – as has John Cage himself.

**Alison Knowles**  
**Bean Sequences**

Voices	Alison Knowles Hanna Higgins Jessica Higgins George Brecht
Realization	Alison Knowles and Klaus Schöning
Editing	Klaus Schöning
Production	WDR Cologne 1982 Studio for Acoustic Art
Length	29'05"
Karl Sczuka Prize 1982	

Alison Knowles is one of the most important female Fluxus artists. She worked together with John Cage on the typography for his books "Notations" and "Writing Through Finnegans Wake". Her own publications include, among others, "The Bean Rolls" (1963), "The house of dust" (1968), "Journal of the identical lunch" (1970), "Women's Work" (1975), "More" (1976), "Gem Duck" (1977), "Natural Assemblages and the true Crow" (1980), "The Bean Kid" (1981), "The Bean Concordance" (1983). She received the Karl Sczuka Prize in 1982 for "Bean Sequences".

"Bean Sequences" is the first radio piece by Alison Knowles. It is based on poems, texts, fragments and proverbs that she found during the course of her research on the subject of beans.

"My intention with the bean works has been to find something simple that touches everyone's experience and to present it in the form of art. But I would like for it to go back – less to the field of art than to the life experience of each individual. I called the radio play 'Bean Sequences' because it seems to me like a series of 'events'. As I was preparing the presentation, I thought it would be good to bring together materials from as many areas of life as possible, from science, mythology, and the world of fairy tales, from botany, from ancient Mayan culture or the simple bean soup whose recipe comes from China. It seems to me that the roles of the girls, my two daughters Hanna and Jessica, the voice of Fluxus artist George Brecht, and my own voice bring something very personal from each of us into the piece. Something poetic comes especially from the children's voices. It has developed into a radio play and, at the same time, also into an acoustic environment. There's an interesting Fluxus piece by Al Hansen where he plays musical instruments, but not as they are generally played; or think about George Brecht, how he polishes a violin. Many Fluxus elements came together in the production of this piece and everything was put together in the simplest form with great trust of the participants". (From a studio conversation between Klaus Schöning and Alison Knowles.)

**Alison Knowles and Joshua Selman**  
**Bread and Water**

German translation from English	Klaus Reichert
Voices	Alison Knowles Claudia Matschulla
Realization	Alison Knowles, Joshua Selman and Klaus Schöning
Editing	Klaus Schöning
Production	WDR Cologne 1994 Studio for Acoustic Art
Length	59'40"

The radio works of New York Fluxus artist Alison Knowles are intimately involved with the presentation and poetic reflection of objects and phenomena related to the everyday life and survival of human beings. In her first radio piece realized for WDR, "Bean Sequences", she took the bean, one of the oldest human foods, as the theme of her composition. Her radio piece "North Water Song" consists of a montage of quotations from texts that are connected with the element of water. In "Setsubun", she recalls a Japanese festival that welcomes spring. "Paperweather" is a text/sound performance about elements, such as sun and rain, thunder and wind, that determine weather.

In her radio piece "Bread and Water", she makes a connection between impressions left by the lines on the undersides of loaves of bread and their correspondences with the courses of 17 of the world's great rivers. Text quotations in two languages about the myths of rivers and a sound composition weave a web of associations.

Some of the river sequences in "Bread and Water" were premiered in a live performance by Alison Knowles at the WDR event "Sound Travel in the Acoustic Arts" during the Cologne "MusicTriennale" in 1994.

Alison Knowles: "In looking at the cracks in homemade bread I noticed their similarity to rivers. On the basis of photocopies of the bottoms of the bread loaves, so-called Palladium prints were produced. Palladium printing is a very involved process that was developed in the United States in the 19th century and is now obsolete. I opened an atlas, and on every continent of the world I found rivers that resembled the cracks in the bread. I connected each river image with the literature of exactly the stretch of land where the river flows. For example, the acoustic sequence 'Stour from Pegwell to Canterbury' has a text by Geoffrey Chaucer. 'Belfast to the Irish Sea' has a text from 'Finnegans Wake' by James Joyce. The headwaters of the rivers and the river courses are also sources for the texts. 'L'Isère Où Elle Rejoint La Rhone' is from the personal letter from a friend in France, who grew up on the river and, looking at a photocopy of the bottom of the bread, pointed to a curve in the river and shouted: 'This is exactly where I was born!'. Other text sources are the eleventh edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, books on ecology, newspaper texts, street signs and tables of lunar eclipses. My engagement and my research in the area of the functioning of natural phenomena relies on sound as an intermedia."

**Three Homages for Erik Satie**  
**by Philip Corner**  
**Dick Higgins**  
**Gerhard Rühm**

**Philip Corner**

**Satie's Rose Cross as a Revelation**

Composition and Realization	Philip Corner
Editing	Klaus Schöning
Production	WDR Cologne 1990 Studio for Acoustic Art
Length	16'03"

Philip Corner: "The compositional elements: a piano piece that consists of two chords that I found in Satie. In continual repetition, in slow arpeggios. Individual sostenuti, slowly transforming sound colors. Also words spoken over each other in three languages – French, German, English. Humorous-mystical sayings by Satie. They surface in the 'silence' of the music. Sometimes."

**Dick Higgins**

**Three Double Helixes that Aren't for Sale**

Voice	Keith Teller
Realization	Dick Higgins
Editing	Klaus Schöning
Production	WDR Cologne 1990 Studio for Acoustic Art
Length	14'02"

Dick Higgins, poet, visual artist and publisher of the already legendary Something Else Press, is one of the promoters of the Fluxus movement. He began as a composer and still occasionally composes pieces of music. His enthusiasm for Satie goes back to his student days in the fifties, before he had ever studied the works of Satie.

In his audio work "Three Double Helixes", with musical quotations from Satie, an actor appears who, in three different registers, embodies three different stages of Satie's life.

"What would you say to yourself, if you ran into yourself on the street twenty years younger? Or the person who you'll be twenty years from now? 'Three Double Helixes that Aren't for Sale' is a mini-radio play, a set of three imaginary conversations between young, middle-aged and old Erik Satie. Performed by one actor, the piece uses some quotes from Satie and some that Satie could have said. Middle-aged Satie observes young Satie, who is just finding his identity. Middle-aged Satie speaks with old Satie, the man he will become, on the telephone, while old Satie and young Satie are delighted with themselves. Most of Satie's musical works consist of three brief, parallel pieces, as with 'Three Double Helixes that Aren't for Sale'".



## Gerhard Rühm

### Japanese Salad

#### Acoustic Metamorphoses on a Text by Satie from "La Lanterne Japonaise"

Composition, Realization and Speaker	Gerhard Rühm
Editing	Klaus Schönig
Production	WDR Cologne 1990 Studio for Acoustic Art
Length	25'25"

Gerhard Rühm: "Erik Satie has been one of my favorite composers since I first encountered his works after the Second World War. And as I learned more about his works and his person, this predilection has only been strengthened. He has become one of the most endearing characters in the history of European music to me. I have often performed many of his amazingly original piano pieces publicly, especially during the period when they were as good as unknown here. So this homage fulfills a secretly long-smoldering need to pay homage to this unique artist-personality with a work of my own.

The point of departure for my audio piece is the German translation of a short text by Satie himself: one of several anecdotes he published under the title 'Japanese Salad' in a French magazine in 1889. My piece involves five acoustic transformations of the text cited at the beginning – transformations in such a way that the single sounds are classified and then, according to the classification table, transposed first into various technically-generated variations of the 'm' sound, then organic noises, especially animal sounds, then noises from objects and finally a corresponding number of piano keys. The finale is an 'apothecosis', all the transformations play simultaneously. According to their material, they are of various lengths, and so end at different times.

Roughly speaking, Satie's music displays two virtually opposite fundamental characters: the so-called 'gothic' style of the first composition period, which has a strong meditative character, and the more surreal-playful form of expression that, on one hand, is related to his work in the Variété, and on the other, already points to Dadaism. These two different characters of Erik Satie's musical works correspond somewhat to the formal structure of my homage".

**George Brecht****The "Hsin Hsin Ming" by Seng Ts'an  
A Multilingual Presentation  
of the text of the third Chinese  
Patriarch of Zen Buddhism**

Translation from Chinese:	
into English	George Brecht
into German	Albrecht Fabri
into French	Robert Filliou
Voices:	
Chinese text	Chang Chung-Jen
English text	George Brecht
German text	Albrecht Fabri
French text	Robert Filliou
Realization:	George Brecht together with Klaus Schöning
Editing	Klaus Schöning
Production	WDR Cologne 1983 Studio for Acoustic Art
Length	30'50"

George Brecht has lived in Cologne since 1972. The American artist is one of the exponents of the international Fluxus movement. He first was a chemist and an engineer and was in John Cage's courses at the New School for Social Research in New York in the late fifties. His relationship to Zen Buddhism expresses itself in many of his minimal art-objects as well as in the radio piece "The 'Hsin Hsin Ming' by Seng Ts'an". This is based on one of the great poetical-philosophical works of Zen Buddhism by the third Chinese patriarch who died in the year 606. The original Chinese text and its translation in three languages constitute the material for this language play.

"Sung by a four part 'choir' in different languages, the 73 wise sayings of this 'book' become a multilingual world song whose acoustic sense-image is reminiscent of a New Testament metaphor. Yet the radio piece is much more than a reading of a book in four languages. It is a meditation piece, a text for silent immersion, transposed into a form of presentation that, for its part, demonstrates what the Buddhist sayings literally call for. So the passages, spoken by the translators themselves in German, English, French and Chinese, evolve in places and always by chance into a fifth, non-verbal level, whose mode of communication resembles dripping water. Seemingly intentionally, the voices mesh and make possible an 'understanding' beyond semantics. What seems constructed is nevertheless the product of chance. Each of the four speakers first read his text onto tape by himself. Four separate tapes of various lengths resulted. George Brecht randomly extended the pauses between single sentences up to thirty seconds, so that more or less lengthy empty periods resulted. The extended tapes were also played with randomly determined delay after each other and then mixed. The spoken texts interwove, layering and supplementing each other in the empty spots. A fifth tape was finally added with sounds of water dripping that were recorded live, not multiplied using tape loops.

And the results of chance: an interplay of voices and sounds, of sound value and language value – and also a number of unintended meanings. The various translations of the Chinese original text arrange themselves into an ambiguous weave of words that acoustically becomes a polyphonic sound picture."  
(Karl H. Karst)

## Jackson Mac Low

### Dialogues among Poets

Voice and realization	Jackson Mac Low
Editing	Klaus Schönig
Production	WDR Cologne
	Studio for Acoustic Art 1982
Length	31'15"

Jackson Mac Low, grand old man of American sound poetry, has worked simultaneously with language, music and noises in live performance since 1937. Later he combined these experiences with theater, ballet and other visual arts. Several of the sound pieces he calls "Simultaneities" were performed in the sixties at Fluxus festivals in Europe. In his audio piece "Dialogues among Poets", he composed an acoustic collage from texts of American and German poets as well as a Tibetan mantra, arranging them using chance operations. The aesthetic principle of the work of Jackson Mac Low, like that of John Cage, George Brecht and Alison Knowles, is integrated with a philosophical one. It is close to Zen Buddhism.

The following quotations form the basis for the language composition "Dialogues among Poets":

"First Milarepa Gatha": a chance arrangement on the basis of a grid of transcriptions of mantras that are used to call on the Tibetan Bodhisattva (holy one) Milarepa.

"Words and Ends from Ez – Part I": I read all verses, with the exception of the last stanza, of the first three pages of a long poem whose material is taken from the "Cantos" by American poet Ezra Pound.

"Quatrosains from & for Emily Dickinson": I used random numbers to find a page and a line in the newest edition of Emily Dickinson's works, and from this place continued to search until I found the letter of her name I was looking for at a corresponding place in a line.

"Let it go (Homage to William Empson)": the point of departure is a six-line poem by contemporary English poet and critic William Empson. At the end of each stanza I make a noise with a cylindrical hardwood stick.

"The Wish from and for Abraham Cowley": this poem takes words from the poem of the same name by the 17th century English poet Abraham Cowley. At the end of every stanza I play a long tone from the F-major scale on a recorder.

"Translating Shade": I wrote this three-part poem in May, 1981 after various parts of a volume of poetry entitled "Shade" by my friend, the young American poet Charles Bernstein.

"57th Light Poem: For John Taggart": this poem continues my series of "light poems" begun in June, 1962. I combined the light descriptions with free form written material and with sentences that I took from Taggart's magnificent poem "Peace on Earth".

"the animal after and for Gerhard Rühm": the word chains were obtained from the poem of the same name by Gerhard Rühm. I made long pauses between the stanzas and afterwards read the lines of each verse in reverse order, from the end to the beginning.

"Ernst Jandl The Artificial Tree": this poem spells the word of the title in successive stanzas.

"Four Quartz Crystal Clocks from and for Marianne Moore": this poem takes its words from the poem of the same name by the late great American poet Marianne Moore. While speaking each stanza, I beat a regular rhythm with the wood sticks. I allowed long pauses between the verses and, after I had come to the end of the poem, read each stanza backwards from the end to the beginning.

**Jackson Mac Low/Anne Tardos**  
**Phoneme Dance**  
**Sound present for John Cage**

Voice and realization	Jackson Mac Low and Anne Tardos
Editing	Klaus Schöning
Production	WDR Cologne 1987 Studio for Acoustic Art
Length	4'42"

"Phoneme Dance" was composed as a spontaneous improvisation during the studio recording process by Jackson Mac Low and composer and performer Anne Tardos. "Phoneme Dance" is composed of the five phonemes of John Cage's name. The listener also experiences how the piece is composed by both artists.

**Nam June Paik**  
**Empty Telephone**  
**Sound Present for John Cage**

Realization	Nam June Paik and John Mc Evers
Editing	Klaus Schöning
Production	WDR Cologne 1987 Studio for Acoustic Art
Length	5'50"

For this piece, multimedia artist Nam June Paik, never at a loss for original ideas, turned on the automatic answering machine on his telephone for a few hours. John Cage remembers something that happened at Mary Bauermeister's in Cologne during the fifties: "Nam June Paik suddenly came up to me, cut off my tie and tore at my clothes as if he wanted to tear them off me. Behind him there was an open window, we were on the sixth floor and each of us suddenly thought that he would jump out of the window. Fortunately he was satisfied with leaving the room. But we remained as if numbed for a few minutes, unable to move and frightened. Finally the telephone rang – it was Paik, letting us know that the performance was over."

## Gerhard Rühm

### Ophelia and the Words

Realization	Klaus Schöning
Voice	Giselheid Hönsch
Editing	Klaus Schöning
Production	WDR Cologne 1969 Studio for Acoustic Art
Length	18'45"

### Ophelia and the Words

English version and Realization	Klaus Schöning
Voice	Sigrid Wurschmidt
Editing	Klaus Schöning
Production	WDR Cologne 1969 Studio for Acoustic Art/BARD Berkeley 1987
Length	22'45"

Gerhard Rühm, versatile artist in the areas of music, experimental literature, visual and acoustic art, wrote about his conception of "Ophelia and the Words" (1969): "the piece is based on ophelia's complete text in shakespeare's 'hamlet'. all nouns and verbs are taken out of the text and strung together in their root forms. this word chain is introduced into ophelia's original text in reverse order, in the places where the text of the respective partners is omitted. there is also a level of sound whose acoustic material comes from terms in the original text having to do with the audible. ophelia's role thus appears to be self-contained – her environment is composed of the elements of her language inventory; to a certain extent it's the mirror of her own words, a hermetic idea of 'world' in which she becomes ever more embroiled, until she herself ends up in 'non'-sense, madness; her talk becomes confused."

Klaus Schöning, Director of the WDR Studio for Acoustic Art on his realizations and adaptations of "Ophelia": "Since 1969, I have produced three versions of the piece, in German, English and Spanish. My English and Spanish language text transpositions were based on the previously described dramaturgical structure of the piece by Gerhard Rühm. The words and sounds derived from the 'Ophelia' text in these two languages were, however, not always identical to the German original version, so that three independent acoustic works were created. The phases between the individual words were cut to the same length and transposed into a circular stereophonic form. Sounds and words that appeared several times were electroacoustically further distorted with each repetition. Their original meaning evolved into another, or was musicalized, so to speak.

I tried to create the process of literally going crazy and the disintegration that the 'Ophelia' figure of speech undergoes with the three actresses using unusual verbal behaviors. So rhythmic principles underlie the repetition of individual sentences or words, as well as a manner of speaking against syntax that gets stronger and stronger towards the end of the text, and finally dissolves into syllables.

To date, I have presented the 'Ophelia' project as an audio-visual performance in New York, London, Montreal, Cologne and Warsaw."

## Exhibition Artists

### **Joseph Beuys**

Born 1921 Krefeld; Professor at the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf 1961–1972. Died 1986.

### **George Brecht**

Born 1926 New York. 1970 Düsseldorf. Since 1972 lives in Cologne.

### **John Cage**

Born 1912 Los Angeles. Died 1992.

### **Henning Christiansen**

Born 1932 Copenhagen. Instructor at the Hochschule für bildende Künste, Hamburg since 1985. Lives in Askeby, Denmark.

### **Robert Filliou**

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### **Ludwig Gosewitz**

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### **Al Hansen**

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### **Geoffrey Hendricks**

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### **Dick Higgins**

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### **Joe Jones**

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### **Ute Klophaus**

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### **Milan Knizak**

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### **Alison Knowles**

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### **Arthur Köpcke**

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### **Manfred Leve**

Born 1936 Trier. Lives in Nürnberg.

### **George Maciunas**

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### **Nam June Paik**

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### **Benjamin Patterson**

Born 1934 Pittsburgh. 1960–1962 Cologne. Lives in New York and Wiesbaden.

### **Robert Rehfeldt**

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### **Dieter Roth**

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### **Tomas Schmit**

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### **Daniel Spoerri**

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### **Endre Tót**

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### **Ben Vautier**

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### **Wolf Vostell**

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### **Emmett Williams**

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