

# ANTOLOGIA

## SCRITTI, PROPOSTE E PARTITURE DI

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### Composizione come processo

*John Cage*

Le tre conferenze che seguono vennero tenute a Darmstadt (Germania) nel settembre 1958. La terza di esse, che è stata riveduta, è una conferenza tenuta precedentemente in quello stesso anno presso la Rutgers University nel New Jersey, un estratto della quale è stato pubblicato nel "Village Voice" (New York City), nell'aprile 1958.

### Mutamenti

Quando il Dott. Wolfgang Steinecke, direttore degli Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik di Darmstadt, mi chiese di parlare in particolare della mia *Music of Changes*, decisi di tenere una conferenza che rispettasse la durata di *Music of Changes* (l'esecuzione di ciascuna riga del testo – indipendentemente dal fatto che sia costituita da parlato oppure da silenzio – richiede un secondo), in modo tale che ogni qual volta io avessi smesso di parlare, sarebbe stata eseguita la parte corrispondente della *Music of Changes*. La musica non viene sovrapposta al discorso ma viene udita soltanto durante le interruzioni di quest'ultimo – interruzioni che, analogamente alle durate degli stessi paragrafi, costituiscono il risultato di operazioni casuali.

Questa è una conferenza sui mutamenti che hanno avuto luogo nei miei mezzi compositivi, con particolare riferimento a ciò che, una decade or sono, io ho definito "struttura" e "metodo". Con "struttura" mi riferivo alla divisione in parti di un intero; con "metodo" alla procedura nota-per-nota. Sia la struttura che il metodo (e anche il "materiale" –

i suoni ed i silenzi di una composizione)

erano, come mi sembrava allora, il vero oggetto della mente (in opposizione al cuore) (le nostre idee di ordine contrapposte alle nostre azioni spontanee); dove queste ultime due, ovvero il metodo e il materiale, assieme alla forma (la morfologia

di una continuità) erano egualmente il vero oggetto del cuore. Allora, dieci anni fa, concepivo la composizione come un'attività che integrava gli opposti, il razionale e l'irrazionale, introducendo, idealmente, una continuità che fluisce liberamente all'interno di una rigida divisione delle parti, dove i suoni, la loro combinazione e successione, possono essere sia logicamen-

te correlati che scelti arbitrariamente. La rigida divisione delle parti, la struttura, era una funzione della dimensione delle durate dei suoni, poiché, di tutti i diversi aspetti del suono compresi la frequenza, la dinamica e il timbro, la sola durata era anche una caratteristica del silenzio. La struttura, quindi, era una divisione del tempo reale attraverso mezzi metrici convenzionali, e il metro era assunto semplicemente come la misurazione della quantità. Nel caso delle *Sonatas and Interludes* (che ho finito nel millenovecentoquarantotto), soltanto la struttura era organizzata, piuttosto sommariamente per il lavoro nel complesso, ma esattamente all'interno di ogni singolo pezzo. Usai come metodo l'improvvisazione, se pure piuttosto

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meditata, soprattutto al pianoforte, sebbene le idee mi giungessero anche in momenti nei quali ero lontano dallo strumento.

I materiali, le preparazioni del pianoforte, furono scelti così come si scelgono delle conchiglie mentre si passeggia

lungo una spiaggia.

La naturalezza della forma dipendeva strettamente dal mio gusto: così che dove, come in tutte le *Sonatas* e in due degli *Interludes*, delle parti dovevano essere ripetute, sembrava inevitabile che la preoccupazione formale fosse quella di far sì che la progressione avvenisse dalla fine di una sezione al suo inizio. La struttura di una delle *Sonatas*, la quarta, era di cento misure di tempo in due mezzi, suddivise in dieci unità di dieci misure ciascuna. Queste unità erano combinate nelle proporzioni tre, tre, due, due, per dare al pezzo parti ampie, ed esse erano suddivise nella stessa proporzione per dare piccole parti a ciascuna unità. In contrasto con una struttura basata sugli aspetti relativi all'altezza del suono, alla tonalità, questa struttura ritmica era altrettanto ospitale nei confronti di suoni

non-musicali, rumori, quanto lo era per le scale e gli strumenti convenzionali. Perché non v'era nulla della struttura che fosse determinato dai materiali che potessero comparirvi: essa era infatti concepita in modo tale da poter essere espressa sia dalla assenza di questi materiali quanto dalla loro presenza. [...]

La struttura, quindi, si rivelava, sotto questi aspetti, utile. Inoltre, essa determinava l'inizio e la fine del processo compositivo. Ma questo processo, che alla fine aveva portato a una divisione delle durate in parti proporzionali alla serie ori-

ginale di numeri, era straordinario. E la presenza della mente come fattore normativo, anche in una eventualità così straordinaria, non aveva alcun ruolo. Perché ciò che avveniva era originato soltanto dal lancio delle monetine. Divenne chiaro, quindi, lo ripeto, che la struttura non era necessaria. E, nella *Music for Piano* e nei pezzi successivi, effettivamente, la struttura non fa più parte dei mezzi compositivi. Il punto di vista che viene assunto non è quello di un'attività il cui scopo è l'integrazione degli opposti, ma piuttosto quello di un'attività caratterizzata dal processo ed essenzialmente

priva di scopo. La mente, sebbene privata del suo ruolo di controllo, è tuttavia presente. Cosa farà, non avendo nulla da fare? E cosa accade a un pezzo musicale quando viene creato senza alcuno scopo? Cosa accade, ad esempio, al silenzio? Vale a dire, come cambia la sua percezione da parte della mente? Prima, il silenzio era solo l'intervallo di tempo tra i suoni, utile per tutta una varietà di scopi (arrangiamenti raffinati ecc.), dove separando due suoni o due gruppi di suoni le loro differenze

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o affinità vengono enfatizzate; o quello invece dell'esspressività, dove i silenzi in un discorso musicale possono fornire pause o punteggiatura; o, di nuovo, quello dell'architettura, dove l'introduzione o l'interruzione del silenzio definisce sia una struttura predeterminata oppure una che si sviluppa in modo organico. Dove nessuno di questi o altri scopi è presente, il silenzio diventa qualcos'altro, che non è più silenzio ma suoni, i suoni dell'ambiente. La natura di questi attimi è imprevedibile e mutevole. L'esistenza di

questi suoni (che sono chiamati silenzio solo perché non riconducibili a una intenzione musicale) non è autonoma, ma dipende da qualcosa. Il mondo pullula di essi, e infatti non ve n'è un solo punto che ne sia assente. Chiunque sia mai entrato in una camera anecoica, una stanza resa silenziosa per quanto tecnologicamente possibile, ha potuto udire due suoni, uno alto e uno basso – quello alto è il sistema nervoso dell'ascoltatore in funzione, quello basso il suo sangue in circolazione. È possibile dimostrare come vi siano sempre suoni da ascoltare e orecchie per udire. Quando queste orecchie sono in connessione con una mente che non ha nulla da fare, quella mente è libera di entrare nell'atto dell'ascolto, di udire ciascun suono come esso è, non come un fe-

nomeno che si approssimi più o meno a qualcosa di preconcepito. [...]

Sebbene nella *Music for Piano* io abbia affermato l'assenza della mente come agente normativo dalla struttura e dal metodo dei mezzi compositivi, tuttavia la sua presenza in relazione al materiale risulta evidente esaminando i suoni in se stessi: essi sono soltanto le singole note del pianoforte a coda convenzionale, suonate alla tastiera, pizzicate o smorzate direttamente sulle corde, assieme a rumori generati sia all'interno che all'esterno della struttura dello strumento. La natura limitata di questo

universo di possibilità rende gli eventi stessi paragonabili ai primi tentativi di parlare da parte di un bambino oppure all'andare a tentoni di un cieco. La mente riappare come l'agente che traccia i confini entro i quali questo piccolo pezzo è situato. È necessario qualcosa che vada oltre: una composizione di suoni all'interno di un universo che si riferisca ai soli suoni in sé e per sé piuttosto che a come possa concepirli la mente. I suoni, così come li conosciamo, hanno una frequenza, una dinamica, un timbro, e in una composizione, un ordine di successione. Cinque linee che rappresentino queste cinque caratteristiche possono essere disegnate

con inchiostro d'India su dei riquadri di plastica traspa-

rente. Su di un altro riquadro simile può essere inscritto un punto. Posizionando il riquadro con le linee sopra il riquadro con il punto, è possibile determinare sia la natura fisica di un suono che la sua collocazione all'interno di un determinato programma semplicemente tracciando una perpendicolare dal punto alla linea e misurando in conformità a qualsiasi metodo di misurazione. A seconda delle loro dimensioni i punti potranno assumere il significato di intervalli oppure quello di aggregati. Allo scopo di poter effettuare le diverse misurazioni necessarie per gli intervalli e gli aggregati, sono disponibili altri riquadri con cinque linee e il significato di ogni linea è lasciato indeterminato, così da poterla riferire a ognuna delle cinque caratteristiche. Ho scelto

il formato quadrato in modo tale da poterli usare in qualsiasi rispettiva posizione. [...]

Nei grafici delle durate di *Music of Changes* sono presenti sessantaquattro elementi, ciascuno dei quali corrisponde a una durata dal momento che essi

sono applicabili

sia ai suoni che ai silenzi (a ciascuno di essi corrispondono trentadue elementi). Questi erano segmentati (ad esempio un mezzo più un terzo di un ottavo più sei settimi di un quarto) ed erano esprimibili sia interamente che in parte. Questa segmentazione era un mezzo pratico per evita-

re di dover scrivere una situazione impossibile nell'ambito di un'area di elevata densità strutturale generata dalle operazioni casuali. Questa stessa segmentazione delle durate aveva luogo in *Williams Mix*, dal momento che avevo prestabilito un massimo di otto registratori e altoparlanti. Quando la densità crebbe da uno a sedici, si rese necessario esprimere le durate attraverso le loro parti più piccole, non essendovi alcuno spazio libero sul nastro per segmenti più grandi. La misurazione esatta e la notazione

delle durate sono in realtà qualcosa di assolutamente mentale:

un'esattezza immaginaria. Nel caso del nastro subentrano molte circostanze che alterano, quasi impercettibilmente ma tuttavia in profondità, l'intenzione (anche se ciò rappresenta il compimento di una azione indicata dalle operazioni casuali). Alcune di queste circostanze sono l'effetto del tempo atmosferico sul materiale; altre scaturiscono dai limiti umani – l'incapacità di leggere un righello oppure di effettuare un taglio in un certo punto del nastro – altre ancora sono dovute a cause meccaniche, otto registratori non possono girare esattamente alla stessa velocità. Date queste circostanze, potremmo essere comunque orientati verso obiettivi di maggior controllo delle durate

o potremmo

anche rinunciare del tutto al bisogno di controllarle. Questa è stata la mia scelta in *Music for Piano*. Non essendo più presente la struttura, quel pezzo può svolgersi in qualsiasi lunghezza di tempo, secondo le esigenze di una particolare occasione. Anche la durata dei singoli suoni è stata, di conseguenza, lasciata indeterminata. La notazione ha assunto la forma di note intere nello spazio, dove lo spazio suggerisce ma non misura il tempo. I rumori erano semiminime prive dell'asta. Quando un'esecuzione di *Music for Piano* coinvolge più di un pianista (ne prevede da due a venti), la successione dei suoni diviene completamente indeterminata. Sebbene ciascuna pagina venga letta convenzionalmente da sinistra a destra, la combinazione è imprescindibile in termini di successione. [...]

Utilizzando il nastro e i sintetizzatori musicali, la possibilità di agire sulla struttura degli armonici dei suoni esce dall'ambito del gusto per divenire completamente un'azione nel campo delle possibilità. La notazione che ho descritto per *Variations* ha esattamente a che fare con questo. I miei primi lavori hanno inizi, parti intermedie e finali. Quelli più recenti no. Essi possono iniziare ovunque, durare per qualsiasi estensione di tempo e prevedere un numero variabile di strumenti ed esecutori. Non sono quindi oggetti precostituiti, e l'avvicinarsi loro come a oggetti

significa perdere completamente

l'essenziale. Sono altrettante occasioni di esperienza e questa esperienza non si riceve solo con le orecchie ma anche con gli occhi. Un orecchio da solo non è una creatura. Mi sono accorto che, ascoltando un disco,

la mia attenzione si dirige verso un oggetto in movimento o un gioco di luce, e durante le prove di *Williams Mix*, lo scorso maggio quando tutti gli

otto registratori erano in funzione, l'attenzione dei presenti era attirata da un accordatore di sessanta anni impegnato ad accordare lo strumento per il concerto della sera. Risultò evidente che la musica stessa rappresentava una situazione ideale, non una situazione reale. La mente può essere usata sia per ignorare i suoni d'ambiente, le altezze diverse dalle ottantotto canoniche, le durate che non sono contate, i timbri non musicali o non gradevoli, e in generale per controllare e comprendere un'esperienza in atto. Oppure la mente può cedere al proprio desiderio di migliorarsi nella creazione, funzionando come un ricevitore preciso e accurato di esperienza. Non ho ancora raccontato nessuna storia, cosa che generalmente accade quando

tengo una conferenza. Il soggetto suggerirebbe certamente che io raccontassi qualcosa di irrelevante

ma mi sento più incline a raccontare qualcosa di appropriato. Questo mi ricorda: Diversi anni fa mi trovavo a una conferenza del Dott. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. Quando parlava lo faceva con molta calma. Talvolta, come raccontavo proprio ieri sera a un amico, si udiva passare

un aeroplano. La conferenza si teneva presso la Columbia University e il campus si trovava esattamente sulla traiettoria degli aerei in partenza, in direzione ovest, dall'aeroporto La Guardia. Quando il tempo era buono, le finestre erano aperte: il passaggio di un aereo copri la voce del Dott. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. Tuttavia egli non alzò il tono della voce, non si interruppe e non comunicò ai suoi ascoltatori le frasi che erano andate perse, e neppure nessuno gli chiese cosa avesse detto mentre l'aeroplano stava passando. Oppure, un giorno egli stava spiegando il significato di un carattere cinese – mi pare si trattasse dello *Yu* – dedicandovi tutto il tempo mentre il suo significato rimaneva, per quanto lo si potesse avvicinare in

inglese, "inspiegabile". Alla fine egli rise e poi disse: "Non è strano che io sia venuto apposta dal Giappone per dedicare il mio tempo a spiegare ciò che non può essere spiegato?". Questa però non era la storia che pensavo di raccontarvi quando mi era venuto in mente di raccontarvene una, ma me ne ricorda un'altra.

Anni or sono, quando studiavo con Arnold Schönberg qualcuno gli chiese di spiegare la sua tecnica di composizione dodecafonica. La sua risposta fu immediata: "Questo non vi riguarda". Ma adesso ricordo la storia che stavo per raccontarvi quando mi era venuto in mente, all'inizio, di raccontarvene una. Spero di riuscirci bene. C'erano alcuni uomini, erano in tre a dire il vero, che erano usciti un giorno per camminare. Mentre stavano passeggiando e parlando uno di loro notò un altro uomo in piedi

in cima a una collina di fronte. Si voltò verso i suoi amici e disse: "Perché pensate che quell'uomo se ne stia in piedi sulla collina?". Uno disse: "Forse perché li è più fresco e si sta godendo il venticello". Poi si voltò verso l'altro ripetendogli la domanda: "Perché pensi che quell'uomo se ne stia in piedi sulla collina?". Il secondo disse: "Poiché quella collina si eleva su tutti i dintorni, deve trovarsi allo scopo di poter vedere qualcosa in lontananza". E il terzo disse: "Deve aver perso il suo amico, per questo se ne sta in piedi sulla collina". Dopo un po' di tempo che passeggiavano, i tre salirono sulla collina e quell'uomo si trovava ancora lì, sempre in piedi.

Gli chiesero di dire chi di loro avesse indovinato il motivo per cui lui se ne stesse in piedi in quel luogo. "E per quale motivo allora pensate che io me ne stia qui in piedi?", egli chiese. "Ne abbiamo tre", risposero. "Il primo è che tu sia qui perché è più fresco e ti godi il venticello. Il secondo è che, poiché la collina è più elevata rispetto al terreno attorno, tu sia qui per poter vedere qualcosa di distante.

Il terzo è che tu te ne stia qui da solo sulla collina perché hai perso il tuo amico. Noi camminavamo su questa strada e e non pensavamo proprio di arrampicarci su questa collina; e ora desideriamo sapere una risposta: chi di noi ha ragione?" L'uomo rispose: "Io sto semplicemente qui". Quando studiavo con Schönberg un giorno egli stava

scrivendo qualche  
contrappunto come  
esempio, e usava  
una gomma.  
E mentre  
faceva questo

disse: " Questa  
parte finale della  
matita ha la  
stessa importanza  
di qualsiasi altro  
finale" . Nel corso  
di questa conferenza  
ho menzionato  
diverse volte  
l'inchiostro. Il com-  
porre, se consiste  
nello scrivere note,  
non è altro che  
scrivere, e quanto  
meno uno ritiene  
si tratti di pensare,  
quanto più diventa  
ciò che è, ovvero  
scrivere. La musica  
potrebbe essere  
com-  
posta (non dico  
improvvisata) senza  
scriverla con  
l'inchios-  
tro o la matita?

La risposta è  
senza dubbio Sì  
e i cambiamenti  
nello scrivere sono  
profetici. Le *Sonatas  
and Interludes*  
furono  
composte al piano-  
forte, ascoltando  
le differenze, ef-  
fettuando una scelta  
e  
scrivendola som-  
mariamente con la  
matita;  
successivamente  
questo abbozzo

veniva ricopiato,  
ma nuovamente a  
matita. Solo alla  
fine veniva realiz-  
zato accuratamente  
un manoscritto a  
penna. La *Music of  
Changes* venne com-  
posta praticamente  
allo stesso modo.  
Con una differenza:  
l'abbozzo originale  
a matita era realiz-  
zato con  
accuratezza,  
usando, quando  
era necessario,  
una gomma  
ed eliminando così  
il bisogno di una  
buona copia a  
matita. Nel caso di  
*Imaginary Landscape  
Number IV*, il primo  
passo, consistente  
nel  
suonare lo stru-  
mento, venne  
eliminato.  
Tutti gli altri,  
invece, mantenuti.  
*Music for  
Piano* è stato scritto  
direttamente  
con l'inchiostro.

## Concept Art

Henry Flynt

Concept art is first of all an art of which the material is concepts, as the material of e.g. music is sound. Since concepts are closely bound up with language, concept art is a kind of art of which the material is language. That is, unlike e.g. a work of music, in which the music proper (as opposed to notation, analysis, etc.) is just sound, concept art proper will involve language. From the philosophy of language, we learn that a concept may as well be thought of as the intension of a name; this is the relation between concepts and language.\* The notion of a concept is a vestige of the notion of a platonian form (the thing which e.g. all tables have in common: tableness), which notion is replaced by the notion of a name objectively, metaphysically related to its intension (so that all tables now have in common their objective relation to table). Now the claim that there can be an objective relation between a name and its intension is wrong, and (the word) concept, as commonly used now, can be discredited (see my book, *Philosophy Proper*). If, however, it is enough for one that there be a subjective relation between a name and its intension, namely the unhesitant decision as to the way one wants to use the name, the unhesitant decisions to affirm the names of some things but not others, then concept is valid language, and concept art has a philosophically valid basis.

Now what is artistic, aesthetic, about a work which is a body of concepts? This question can best be answered by telling where concept art came from; I developed it in an attempt to straighten out certain traditional activities generally regarded as aesthetic. The first of these is structure art, music, visual art, etc., in which the important thing is "structure". My definitive discussion of structure art is in my unpublished essay *Structure Art and Pure Mathematics*; here I will just summarize that discussion. Much structure art is a vestige of the time when e.g. music was believed to be knowledge, a science, which had important things to say in astronomy etc. Contemporary structure artists, on the other hand, tend to claim the kind of cognitive value for their art that conventional contemporary mathematicians claim for mathematics. Modern examples of structure art are the fugue and total serial music. These examples illustrate the important division of structure art into two kinds according to how the structure is appreciated. In the case of a fugue, one is aware of its structure in listening to it: one imposes relationships, a categorization (hopefully that intended by the composer) on the sounds while listening to them, that is, has an (associated) artistic structure experience. In the case of total serial music, the structure is such that this cannot be done: one just has to read an analysis of the music, definition of the relationships. Now there are two things wrong with structure art. First, its cognitive pretensions are utterly wrong. Secondly, by trying to be music or whatever (which has nothing to do with knowledge), and knowledge represented by structure, structure art both fails, is completely boring, as music, and doesn't begin to explore the aesthetic possibilities structure can have when freed from trying to be music or whatever. The first step in straightening out e.g. structure music is to stop calling it music, and start saying that the sound is used only to carry the structure and that the real point is the structure —and then you will see how limited, impoverished, the structure is. Incidentally, anyone who says that works of structure music do occasionally have musical value just doesn't know how good real music (the Goli Dance of the Baoule: Cans on Windows by La Monte Young; the contemporary American hit song *Sweets for My Sweets*, by the Drifters) can get. When you make the change, then since structures are concepts, you have concept art. Incidentally, there is another, less important kind of art which when straightened out becomes concept art: art involving play with the concepts of the art such as, in music, the score, performer vs. listener, playing a work. The second criticism of structure art applies, with the necessary changes, to this art.

The second main antecedent of structure art is mathematics. This is the result of my revolution in mathematics, presented in my 1966 *Mathematical Studies*; here I will only summarize. The

revolution occurred first because for reasons of taste I wanted to deemphasize discovery in mathematics, mathematics as discovering theorems and proofs. I wasn't good at such discovery, and it bored me. The first way I thought of to de-emphasize discovery came not later than Summer, 1960; it was that since the value of pure mathematics is now regarded as aesthetic rather than cognitive, why not try to make up aesthetic theorems, without considering whether they are true. The second way, which came at about the same time, was to find, as a philosopher, that the conventional claim that theorems and proofs are discovered is wrong, for the same reason I have already given that "concept" can be discredited. The third way, which came in the fall-winter of 1960, was to work in unexplored regions of formalist mathematics. The resulting mathematics still had statements, theorems, proofs, but the latter weren't discovered in the way they traditionally were. Now exploration of the wider possibilities of mathematics as revolutionized by me tends to lead beyond what it makes sense to call mathematics: the category of mathematics, a vestige of Platonism, is an unnatural, bad one. My work in mathematics leads to the new category of concept art, of which straightened out traditional mathematics (mathematics as discovery) is an untypical, small but intensively developed part.

I can now return to the question of why concept art is art. Why isn't it an absolutely new, or at least a non-artistic, non-aesthetic activity? The answer is that the antecedents of concept art are commonly regarded as artistic, aesthetic activities; on a deeper level, interesting concepts, concepts enjoyable in themselves, especially as they occur in mathematics, are commonly said to have beauty. By calling my activity art, therefore, I am simply recognizing this common usage, and the origin of the activity in structure art and mathematics. However: it is confusing to call things as irrelevant as the emotional enjoyment of (real) music, and the intellectual enjoyment of concepts, the same kind of enjoyment. Since concept art includes almost everything ever said to be music, at least, which is not music for the emotions, perhaps it would be better to restrict art to apply to art for the emotions, and recognize my activity as an independent, new activity, irrelevant to art (and knowledge).

*Concept Art Version of Mathematics System 3/26/61 (6/19/61)*

An element is the adjacent area (with the figure in it) so long as the apparent, perceived, ratio of the length of the vertical line to that of the horizontal line (the element's associated ratio) does not change.

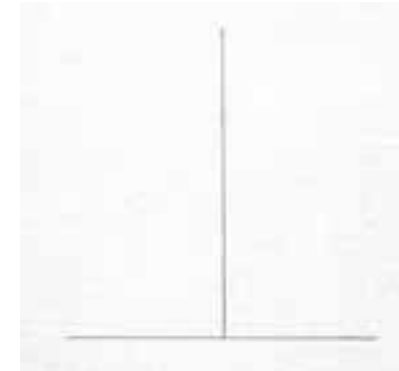
A selection sequence is a sequence of elements of which the first is the one having the greatest associated ratio, and each of the others has the associated ratio next smaller than that of the preceding one. (To decrease the ratio, come to see the vertical line as shorter, relative to the horizontal line, one might try measuring the lines with a ruler to convince oneself that the vertical one is not longer than the other, and then trying to see the lines as equal in length; constructing similar figures with a variety of real (measured) ratios and practicing judging these ratios; and so forth.) [Observe that the order of elements in a selection sequence may not be the order in which one sees them.]

*Implications — Concept Art Version of Colored Sheet Music No.1 3/14/61 (10/11/61)*

[This is a mathematical system without general concepts of statement, implication, axiom, and proof. Instead, you make the object, and stipulate by ostension that it is an axiom, theorem, or whatever. My thesis is that since there is no objective relation between name and intension, all mathematics is this arbitrary. Originally, the successive statements, or sheets, were to be played on an optical audiorecorder.]

The axiom: a sheet of cheap, thin white typewriter paper

The axiom implies statement 2: soak the axiom in inflammable liquid which does not leave solid residue when burned; then burn it on horizontal rectangular white fireproof surface — statement 2 is ashes (on surface)



Statement 2 implies s.3: make black and white photograph of s.2 in white light (image of ashes' rectangle with respect to white surface (that is, of the region (of surface, with the ashes on it) with bounding edges parallel to the edges of the surface and intersecting the four points in the ashes nearest the four edges of the surface) must exactly cover the film); develop film — s.3 is the negative

S.2 and s.3 imply s.4: melt s.3 and cool in mold to form plastic doubly convex lens with small curvature; take color photograph ashes' rectangle in yellow light using this lens; develop film — s.4 is color negative

S.2 and s.4 imply s.5: repeat last step with s.4 (instead of 3), using red light — s.5 is second color negative

S.2 and s.5 imply s.6: repeat last step with s.5, using blue light — s.6 is third color negative

S.2 and s.6 imply s.7: make lens from s.6 mixed with the ashes which have been being photographed; make black and white photograph, in white light, of that part of the white surface where the ashes' rectangle was; develop film — s.7 is second black and white negative

S.2, s.6, and s.7 imply the theorem: melt, mold, and cool lens used in last step to form negative, and make lens from s.7; using negative and lens in an enlarger, make two prints, an enlargement and a reduction — enlargement and reduction together constitute the theorem.

*Concept Art: Innperseqs (May-July 1961)*

A "halpoint" iff whatever is at any point in space, in the fading rainbow halo which appears to surround a small bright light when one looks at it through glasses fogged by having been breathed on, for as long as the point is in the halo.

An "init'point" iff a halpoint in the initial vague outer ring of its halo.

An "inn'perseq" iff a sequence of sequences of halpoints such that all the halpoints are on one (initial) radius of a halo; the members of the first sequence are initpoints; for each of the other sequences, the first member (a consequent) is got from the non-first members of the preceding sequence (the antecedents) by being the inner endpoint of the radial segment in the vague outer ring when they are on the segment, and the other members (if any) are initpoints or first members of preceding sequences; all first members of sequences other than the last [two] appear as non-first members, and halpoints appear only once as non-first members; and the last sequence has one member.



*Indeterminacy*

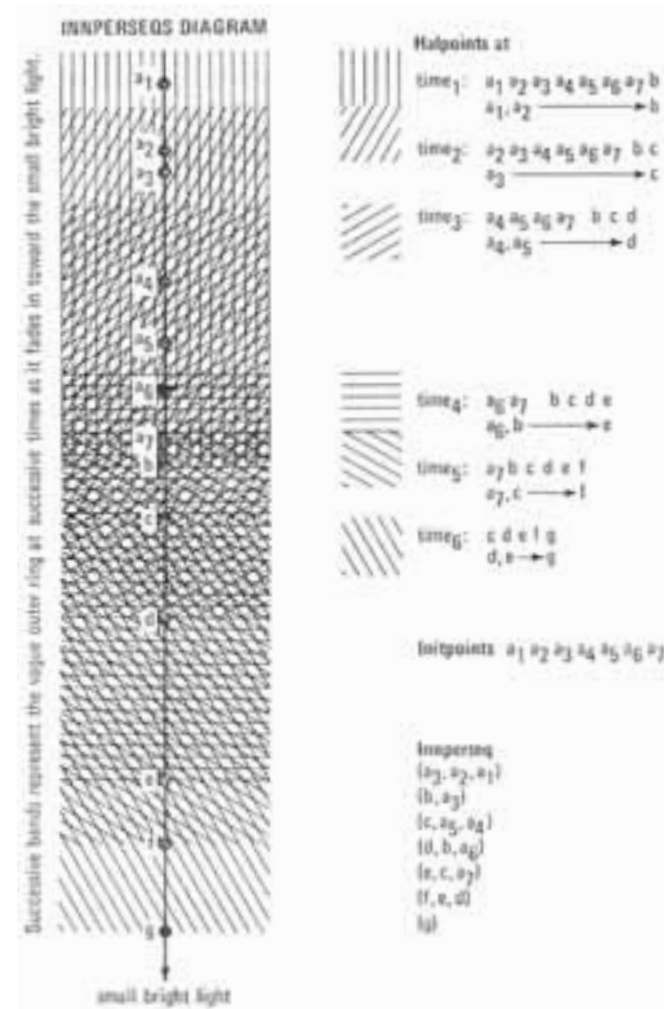
A totally determinate innperseq' iff an innperseq in which one is aware of (specifies) all halpoints.  
 An antecedently indeterminate innperseq' iff an innperseq in which one is aware of (specifies) only each consequent and the radial segment beyond it.  
 A halpointally indeterminate innperseq' iff an 'innperseq' in which one is aware of (specifies) only the radial segment in the vague outer ring, and its inner endpoint, as it progresses inward.

*Innperseqs Diagram*

In the diagram, different positions of the vague outer ring at different times are suggested by different shadings. The radial segment in the vague outer ring moves down the page. The figure is by no means an innperseq, but is supposed to help explain the definition.

\* The extension of the word "table" is all existing tables; the intension of "table" is all possible instances of a table.

[H. Flynt, *Concept Art*, 1961, in AA.VV., *An Anthology*, a cura di L.M. Young, J. Mac Low, New York 1963; © 1961 by Henry A. Flynt, Jr.]



**Project in Multiple Dimensions, 1957-58***George Brecht*

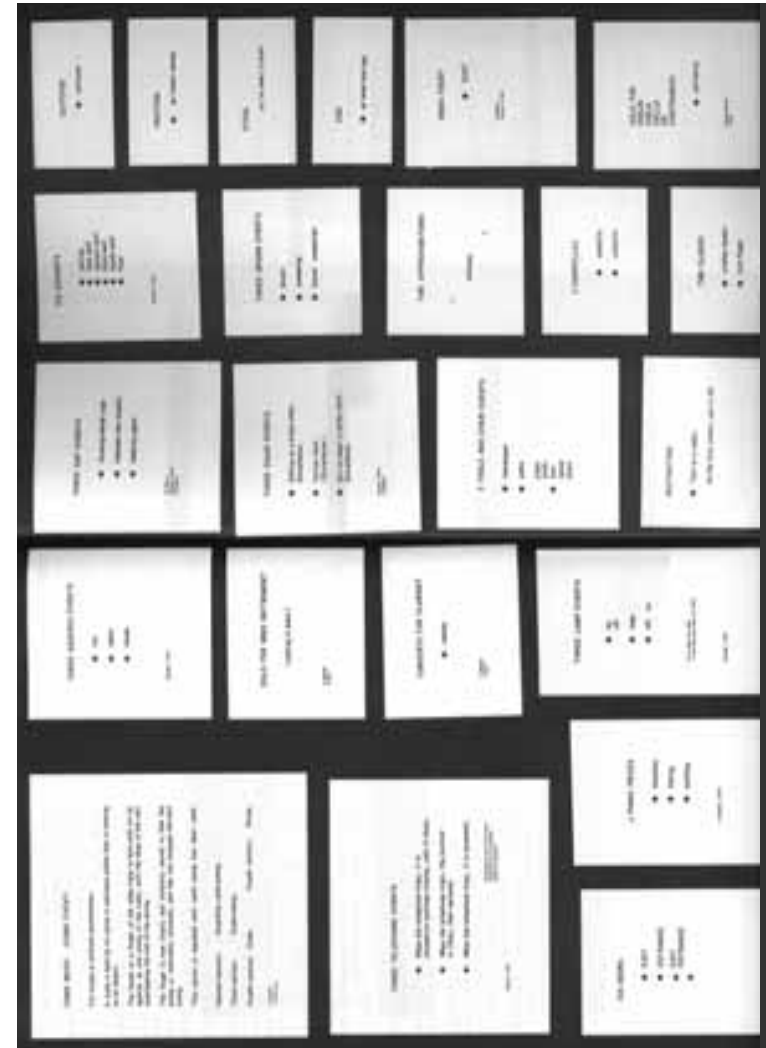
The primary function of my art seems to be an expression of maximum meaning with a minimal image, that is, the achievement of an art of multiple implications, through simple, even austere, means. This is accomplished, it seems to me, by making use of all available conceptual and material resources. I conceive of the individual as part of an infinite space and time: in constant interaction with that continuum (nature), and giving order (physically or conceptually) to a part of the continuum with which he interacts.

Such interaction can be described in terms of two obvious aspects, matter-energy and structure, or, practically, material and method. The choice of materials, natural and fabricated, metals, foils, glass, plastics, cloth, etc., and electronic systems for creating light and sound structures which change in time, follows inherently from certain intuitively chosen organizational methods. These organizational methods stem largely from other parts of my experience: randomness and chance from statistics, multi-dimensionality from scientific method, continuity of nature from oriental thought, etc. This might be emphasized: the basic structure of my art comes primarily from aspects of experience unrelated to the history of art; only secondarily, and through subsequent study, do I trace artistic precursors of some aspects of my present approach.

It seems reasonable to expect this expression, if it comes from a unitary personal experience, not to be inconsistent with other aspects of that experience, and this is the case. When this art, without conscious roots, is examined on a conscious level, in terms of basic concepts such as space-time, causality, etc., it is found to be consistent with the corresponding concepts in physical science, and this is true in general of the work of certain exploratory artists whose work seems to stem, individual as it is, from common conceptual roots (e.g. John Cage, Allan Kaprow, Paul Taylor). In this sense, it seems to me, it would be possible to show how this art reflects fundamental aspects of contemporary vision, by examining it in terms of space-time, inseparability of observer-observed, indeterminacy, physical and conceptual multi-dimensionality, relativity, and field theory, etc. This study may be left to critics and theorists.

To summarize, my work is a complex product of a personality continuous with all of nature, and one making progressively better-integrated efforts to structure experience on all levels. Thus, what can be made of nature through rational effort (such as scientific understanding), though it is never a conscious part of my work, being a part of the personality, becomes part of the work. In this way, all approaches to experience become consistent with each other, and my most exploratory and dimly-felt artistic awareness, insights based on the most recent findings of modern science, and the personally meaningful ancient insights of oriental thought, just now being found appropriate to our modern outlook, form a unified whole. The consistency of such an overall approach to experience serves to reinforce the validity of each of its component parts, much as scientific constructs gain validity through their mutual function in explaining experience. This consistency becomes apparent only after each aspect gains independent maturity, however, and is in no case a pre-condition, or requirement, for satisfaction with any aspect. My art is the result of a deeply personal, infinitely complex, and still essentially mysterious, exploration of experience. No words will ever touch it.

[George Brecht, excerpt from "Project in Multiple Dimensions" (1957-58), in Henry Martin, ed., *An Introduction to George Brecht's Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, with interviews by Ben Vautier and Marcel Alocico, Henry Martin, Irmeline Lebeer, Gisliind Nabakowski, Robin Page, and Michael Nyman, and with an anthology of texts by George Brecht (Milan: Multhipla Edizioni, 1978), 126-27. By permission of the artist.]

**Events Cards, 1961***George Brecht*

**Estate 1961**

Yoko Ono

A inizio estate ricevetti una telefonata da uno degli artisti che aveva fatto una performance nel mio loft in Chambers Street. Disse che c'era questo tipo che aveva aperto una galleria in centro, a Madison Avenue, e stava progettando di fare esattamente lo stesso cosa che avevo fatto io nel mio loft. Mi disse che tutti gli artisti delle "Chambers Street Series" stavano in coda davanti alla sua galleria. "Gli è venuta l'idea dopo essere stato a una delle serate al tuo loft. Si chiama George Maciunas. Probabilmente siete stati anche presentati. Te lo ricordi?" No, non me lo ricordavo. C'erano più o meno 200 persone a ognuna di quelle serate, molte delle quali mi volevano incontrare. Quindi è probabile che fossi stata presentata a quel ragazzo. Mi sentii un po' triste. "Sei finita, Yoko. Lui ora ha tutti i tuoi artisti." Quindi sarebbe stata la fine delle Chambers Street Loft Series. Finito!

Ciò non mi faceva stare poi così male. Ora cosa sarebbe successo? Poi ho ricevuto una telefonata da George Maciunas. Voleva organizzare una mia mostra nella sua galleria. Nessuno, allora, aveva mai pensato di farmi fare una mostra. Quindi la persona che mi avrebbe dovuto "disturbare" mi stava offrendo una mostra? Le cose accadono in modi misteriosi. Ero felice.

Era sera quando visitai la AG Gallery per la prima volta. La scala nell'ingresso era già per metà in ombra. Salii, e la porta era completamente aperta. Entrai in una stanza buia. Sentii delle persone bisbigliare tra loro e ridere in un'altra stanza, da cui proveniva la luce. Entrando notai un uomo affascinante, sicuramente europeo, seduto con una donna bellissima a un tavolo, a lume di candela. Mi guardarono. Ricordo di aver pensato che i due rappresentavano un bel quadretto romantico. C'era una macchina da scrivere IBM sul tavolo che luccicava nell'oscurità. Uno degli artisti una volta commentò: "La macchina da scrivere IBM, quella da sola rappresenta qualcosa. Significa che lui è ricco!". Ma alla fine nulla era come sembrava.

La donna giovane e bella seduta con George era in realtà sua madre. Usavano la candela perché gli avevano tagliato la luce. E quella stupenda macchina da scrivere IBM? Era un prestito. George aveva telefoni dappertutto. C'era una storia anche per questo. Mi aveva raccontato che il suo contratto telefonico veniva registrato sotto un nominativo diverso ogni mese. Se gli tagliavano il telefono, registrava un nuovo contratto con un nuovo nome. In effetti quella notte anch'io, come ogni altro artista, semplicemente pensai "wow!".

George mi disse che voleva fare una mostra del mio lavoro artistico. Doveva essere l'ultima mostra nella sua galleria. L'elettricità era già stata tagliata, così potevamo lavorare solo di giorno. Il che non mi turbava particolarmente. Iniziai ad assemblare i lavori che volevo esporre. L'assenza di elettricità in effetti giocò a mio vantaggio – la luce solare che fluiva attraverso le finestre gettava ombre sulle tele, realizzando nell'arco della giornata mutazioni bellissime e naturali. Ciascun lavoro esposto aveva una precisa funzione. Stavo in piedi in galleria, e appena qualcuno entrava lo conducevo ai quadri, spiegandone la funzione. Avevo chiesto a Toshi Ichianagi di scrivere didascalie descrittive, appese a fianco di ciascuna opera. Bene, lui decise di scrivere due cartellini: uno era *Quadri da calpestare* e l'altro *Quadri in tre strofe*. Toshi si fermò qui. Non realizzò altri cartellini. Perché? Perché no? Si possono ancora vedere quei due cartelli brillare nelle foto della mostra che sono riuscite a sopravvivere tutti questi anni. Sono molto grata a quelle due didascalie – senza di loro nessuno avrebbe mai saputo che quella era la mia prima mostra di *Instruction Paintings*.

Quando finalmente io e George finimmo di appendere ogni quadro, e lui sistemò un cartellino che diceva "400 dollari" a fianco di ciascuno, ci guardammo. E se qualcuno avesse acquistato un dipinto? Cosa avremmo fatto? "Se qualcuno compra un dipinto, ce ne andiamo in Europa!" disse. Ci sentimmo come se qualcuno ne avesse già comprato uno. Eravamo così felici che ci prendemmo per mano e iniziammo a ballare intorno alla stanza.

George disse che bisognava trovare un nome per questo movimento, per ciò che stava accadendo. "Pensa a un nome", mi disse. "Non credo che sia un movimento. Credo sia sbagliato farlo diventare tale." Per me la parola "movimento" aveva un suono sporco – come se stessimo per diventare parte dell'establishment. Non mi piaceva. Quindi non pensai a nessun nome.

Il giorno dopo George mi disse: "Yoko, guarda". Mi mostrò la parola "Fluxus" in un enorme dizionario. Aveva molti significati, ma lui mi indicò "flushing". "Come tirare lo sciacquone in bagno!", disse ridendo, pensando che fosse un buon nome per il movimento. "Questo è il nome", disse. Mentalmente scrollai le spalle.

L'estate del 1961 fu molto calda e pochissime persone visitarono la mostra. Ricordo che vennero dei cari amici. Ricordo anche che mentre spiegavo *Smoke Painting* a John Cage feci in modo che dalle tele venisse fuori davvero un fumo sottile... come il fumo dell'incenso. Ricordo che Beate Gordon e sua figlia Nicky mi incoraggiarono nel mio lavoro. Fu una bella sorpresa. Beate poi mi chiamò e disse: "Yoko, a Nicky è piaciuta. Ero così terrorizzata che non le sarebbe piaciuta, che le avevo detto di non dire nulla. Ho scoperto dopo che in effetti le era piaciuta e avrebbe voluto dire qualcosa, ma io le avevo detto di non dire nulla!". Ridemmo entrambe. Ricordo Isamu Noguchi, calpestare il *Quadro da calpestare* con delle eleganti ciabatte Zohri. Tutto ciò mi sembra ieri.

George aveva un armadio pieno di ogni sorta di costosissimi cibi in scatola. Erano scatolette da intenditori che nessuno voleva comprare perché erano troppo costose. Un suo amico aveva avuto l'idea geniale che ciò gli avrebbe reso una fortuna, cosa che non avvenne mai. Così George aveva le scatolette. Quello fu il nostro pasto ogni giorno: scatolette di foie gras. Non era male. Ma pensavo che ci sarebbe voluto qualcosa insieme. Solo qualcosa.

Eravamo soliti andare in giro per la città a piedi. Era calda e abbastanza tranquilla. Molti abitanti dell'Upper East Side probabilmente erano andati agli Hamptons. Ci sentivamo bene, come se fossimo i padroni della città. Entrambi eravamo persone arroganti. Quindi, sì, eravamo i padroni di qualcosa. Magari non della città, ma di qualcosa sì... magari di non così tangibile... Come si diceva, quelli erano i giorni!

Aprile 2008

\* In italiano nel testo.

[Y. Ono, *Fluxus*, in C. Gualco, *Fluxus in Italia*, Edizioni Il Canneto, Genova 2012]**To the Wesleyan People / Alla gente della Wesleyan, 1966**

Yoko Ono

[...]

xxxxxxxxxxxx

I miei dipinti, che sono tutti istruzioni di pittura (pensati per essere realizzati da altri), sono nati dopo che il collage e l'assemblaggio (1915) e l'happening (1905) hanno debuttato nel mondo dell'arte. Considerando la natura della mia pittura, una qualunque di queste tre parole può essere usata al posto della parola pittura. Ma a me piace la vecchia parola pittura perché richiama immediatamente la "pittura murale", ed è graziosa e buffa.

Tra le mie istruzioni di pittura, mi interessano soprattutto i "dipinti da costruire nella tua testa". Nella tua testa, per esempio, è possibile che una linea retta esista non come segmento di una curva ma come linea retta. Una linea, inoltre, può essere retta, curva e qualcos'altro nel-

lo stesso momento. Un punto può esistere come oggetto a 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 dimensioni nello stesso momento o in vari momenti in combinazioni diverse, come preferire percepirlo. Il movimento della molecola può essere continuo e discontinuo nello stesso momento. Può avere e/o non avere colore. Non c'è oggetto visivo che non esista in relazione o contemporaneamente ad altri oggetti, ma queste caratteristiche si possono eliminare se voi lo volete. Un tramonto può continuare per giorni. Potete mangiarvi tutte le nuvole del cielo. Potete assemblare un dipinto al telefono con una persona al Polo Nord, come una partita a scacchi. Il metodo pittorico risale al periodo della Seconda guerra mondiale quando non avevamo da mangiare, e mio fratello e io ci scambiamo menu nell'aria.

Può esserci un sogno che due sognano insieme, ma non c'è sedia che due vedono insieme.

[...]

[estratto da Yoko Ono, *To the Wesleyan People* (1966), in Y. Ono, *Grapefruit* (edizione originale Wunternaum Press, Tokyo 1964: ristampa accresciuta, con un'introduzione di John Lennon, Simon and Schuster, New York 1970), n.p. © Yoko Ono. Used by Permission/All Rights Reserved. Traduzione in italiano di Michele Piumini, Mondadori, Milano 2005.]

### The Feminization of Society, 1971

Yoko Ono

The aim of the feminist movement should not just end with getting more jobs in the existing society, though we should definitely work on that as well. We have to keep on going until the whole of the female race is freed.

How are we going to go about this? This society is the very society that killed female freedom: the society that was built on female slavery. If we try to achieve our freedom within the framework of the existing social set-up, men, who run the society, will continue to make a token gesture of giving us a place in their world. Some of us will succeed in moving into elitist jobs, kicking our sisters on the way up. Others will resort to producing babies, or being conned into thinking that joining male perversions and madness is what equality is about: "join the army", "join the sexist trip", etc.

The major change in the contemporary woman's revolution is the issue of lesbianism. Lesbianism, to many, is a means of expressing rebellion toward the existing society through sexual freedom. It helps women realize that they don't necessarily have to rely on men for relationships. They have an alternative to spending 90% of their lives waiting for, finding and living for men. But if the alternative to that is finding a woman to replace the man in her life, and then build her life around another female or females, it isn't very liberating. Some sisters have learned to love women more deeply through lesbianism, but others have simply gone after their sisters in the same manner that the male chauvinists have.

The ultimate goal of female liberation is not just to escape from male oppression. How about liberating ourselves from our various mind trip such as ignorance, greed, masochism, fear of God, and social conventions? It's hard to so easily dismiss the importance of paternal influence in this society, at this time. Since we face to reality that, in this global village, there is very little choice but to coexist with men, we might as well find a way to do it and do it well.

We definitely need more positive participation by men in the care of our children. But how are we going to do this? We have to demand it. James Baldwin has said of this problem, "I can't give a performance all day in the office and come back and give a performance at home".

He's right. How can we expect men to share the responsibility of childcare in the present social conditions where his job in the office is, to him, a mere "performance" and where he cannot relate to the role of childcare except as yet another "performance"? Contemporary men must go through major changes in their thinking before they volunteer to look after children, and before they even start to want to care.

Childcare is the most important issue for the future of our generation. It is no longer a pleasure for the majority of men and women in our society, because the whole society is geared towards living up to a Hollywood-cum-Madison Avenue image of men and women, and a way of life that has nothing to do with childcare. We are in a serious identity crisis. This society is driven by neurotic speed and force accelerated by greed, and frustration of not being able to live up to the image of men and women we have created for ourselves; the image has nothing to do with the reality of people. How could we be an eternal James Bond or Twiggy (false eyelashes, the never-had-a-baby-or-a-full-meal look) and raise three kids on the side? In such an image driven culture, a piece of reality, such a child, becomes a direct threat to our false existence.

The only game we play together with our children is star-chasing; sadly, not the stars in the sky, but the "STARS" who we think have achieved the standard of the dream image we have imposed on the human race. We cannot trust ourselves anymore, because we know that we are, well... too real. We are forever apologetic for being real. Excuse me for farting, excuse me for making love and smelling like a human being, instead of that odorless celluloid prince and princess image up there on the screen.

Most of us, women, hope that we can achieve our freedom within the existing social set-up, thinking that, somewhere, there must be a happy medium for men and women to share freedom and responsibility. But if we just took the time to observe the very function of our society, the greed-power-frustration syndrome, we would soon see that there is no happy medium to be achieved. We can, of course, aim to play the same game that men have played for centuries, and inch by inch, take over all the best jobs and eventually conquer the whole world, leaving an extremely bitter male stud-cum-slave class moaning and groaning underneath us. This is alright for an afternoon dream, but in reality, it would obviously be a drag.

Just as the blacks have in the past, women are going through an initial stage of revolution now. We are now a stage where we are eager to compete with men on all levels. But women will inevitably arrive at the next stage, and realize the futility of trying to be like men. Women will realize themselves as they are, and not as beings comparative to or in response to men. As a result, the feminist revolution will take a more positive step in the society by offering a feminine direction.

In their past two thousand years of effort, men have shown us their failure in their method of running the world. Instead of falling into the same trap that men fell into, women can offer something that the society never had before because of male dominance. That is the feminine direction. What we can do is to take the current society, which contains both masculine and feminine characteristics, and bring out its feminine nature rather than its masculine force which is now at work. We must make more positive use of the feminine tendencies of the society which, up to now, have been either suppressed or dismissed as something harmful, impractical, irrelevant, and ultimately shameful.

I am proposing the feminization of society; the use of feminine nature as a positive force to change the world. We can change ourselves with feminine intelligence and awareness, into a basically organic, non competitive society that is based on love rather than reasoning. The result will be a society of balance, peace, and contentment. We can evolve rather than think. These are characteristics that are considered feminine; characteristics that men despise in women. But have men really done so well by avoiding the development of these characteristics within themselves?

Already, as I catch a glimpse of the new world, I see feminine wisdom working as a positive force. I refer to the feminine wisdom and awareness which is based on reality, intuition, and empirical thinking, rather than logistics and ideologies. The entire youth generation, their idiom and their dreams, are headed in a feminine direction. A more advanced field of communication, such as telepathy, is also a phenomenon which can only be developed in a highly feminine climate. The problem is that feminine tendency in the society has never been given a chance of blossom, whereas masculine tendency overwhelms it.

What we need now is the patience and natural wisdom of a pregnant woman, an awareness and acceptance of our natural resources, or what is left of them. Let's not kid ourselves and think of ourselves as on old and matured civilization. We are by no means mature. But that is alright. That is beautiful. Let's slow down and try to grow as organically, and healthfully, as a newborn infant. The aim of the female revolution will have to be a total one, eventually making it a revolution for the whole world. As mothers of the tribe, we share the guilt of the male chauvinists, and our faces are their mirrors as well. It's good to start now, since it's never too late to start from the star.

[*New York Times*, February 23, 1972]

#### Instruction Pieces, 1961-1962

*Yoko Ono*

##### DIPINTO PER IL VENTO

Fai un buco in un sacco pieno di semi di qualunque tipo e metti il sacco dove soffi il vento.

1961 estate

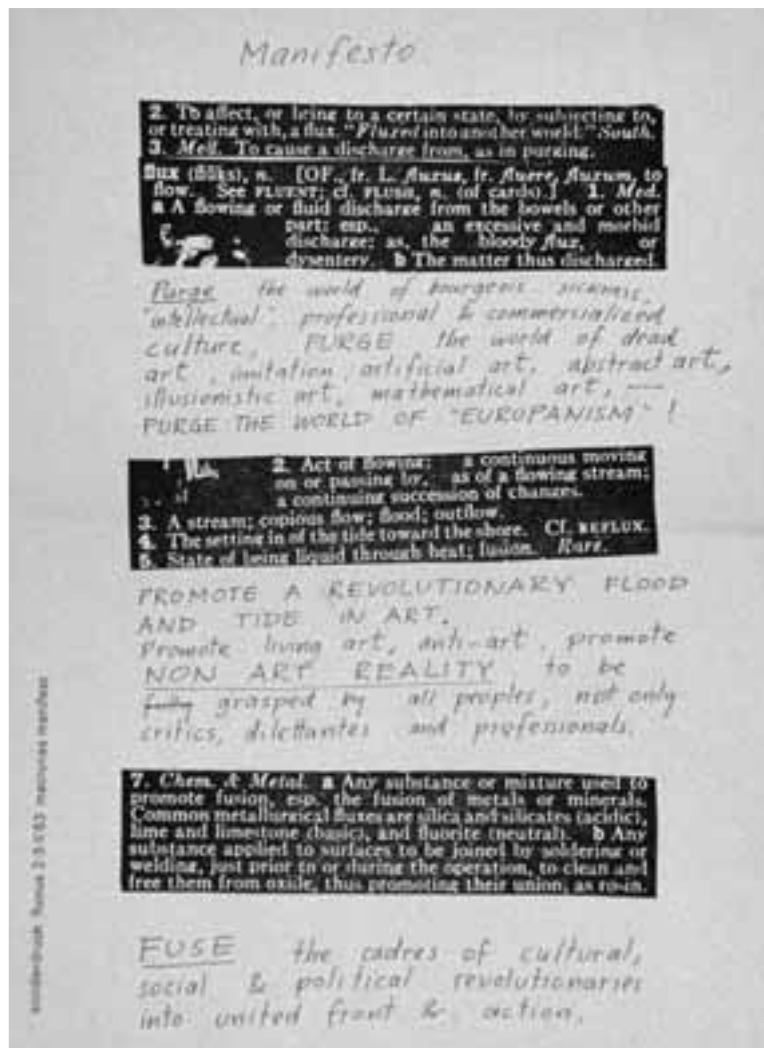
##### DIPINTO PER I CIELI

Pratica un foro nel cielo.  
Ritaglia un pezzo di carta grande come il buco.  
Brucia la carta.  
Il cielo dovrebbe essere azzurro puro.

1962 estate

**Fluxus Manifestos, 1962**

George Maciunas

**Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art**

George Maciunas

Neo-dada, its equivalent, or what appears to be neo-dada manifests itself in very wide fields of creativity. It ranges from "time" arts to "space" arts; or more specifically from literary arts (time-art), through graphic-literature (time-space-art) to graphics (space-arts) through graphic-music (space-time-arts) to graphless or scoreless music (time-art), through theatrical music (space-time-art) to environments (space-arts). There exist no borderlines between one and the other extreme. Many works belong to several categories and also many artists create separate works in each category. Almost each category and each artist, however, is bound with the concept of Concretism ranging in intensity from pseudo concretism, surface concretism, structural concretism, method concretism (indeterminacy systems); to the extreme of concretism, which is beyond the limits of art, and therefore sometimes referred to as anti-art, or art-nihilism. The new activities of the artists therefore could be charted by reference to two coordinates: the horizontal coordinate defining transition from "time" arts to "space" arts and back to "time" and "space" etc., and the vertical coordinate defining transition from extremely artificial art, illusionistic art, then abstract art (not within the subject of this essay), to mild concretism, which becomes more and more concrete, or rather nonartificial till it becomes non-art, anti-art, nature, reality.

Concretists in contrast to illusionists prefer unity of form and content, rather than their separation. They prefer the world of concrete reality rather than the artificial abstraction of illusionism. Thus in plastic arts for instance, a concretist perceives and expresses a rotten tomato without changing its reality or form. In the end, the form and expression remain [the] same as the content and perception — the reality of rotten tomato, rather than an illusionistic image or symbol of it. In music a concretist perceives and expresses the material sound with all its inherent polychromy and pitchlessness and "incidentalness", rather than the immaterial abstracted and artificial sound of pure pitch or rather controlled tones denuded of its pitch obliterating overtones. A material or concrete sound is considered one that has close affinity to the sound-producing material — thus a sound whose overtone pattern and the resultant polychromy clearly indicates the nature of material or concrete reality producing it. Thus a note sounded on a piano keyboard or a bel-canto voice is largely immaterial, abstract and artificial since the sound does not clearly indicate its true source or material reality — common action of string, wood, metal, felt, voice, lips, tongue, mouth etc. A sound, for instance, produced by striking the same piano itself with a hammer or kicking its underside is more material and concrete since it indicates in a much clearer manner the hardness of hammer, hollowness of piano sound box and resonance of string. Human speech or eating sounds are likewise more concrete for the same reason of source recognisability. These concrete sounds are commonly, although inaccurately, referred to as noises. They may be pitchless to a large extent, but their pitchlessness makes them polychromatic, since the intensity of acoustic color depends directly on pitch-obliterating inharmonic overtones.

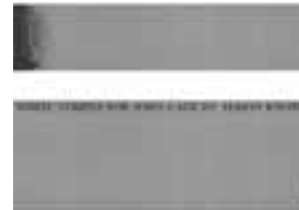
Further departure from [the] artificial world of abstraction is affected by the concept of indeterminacy and improvisation. Since artificiality implies human pre-determination, contrivance, a truer concretist rejects pre-determination of final form in order to perceive the reality of nature, the course of which, like that of man himself is largely indeterminate and unpredictable. Thus an indeterminate composition approaches greater concretism by allowing nature [to] complete its form in its own course. This requires the composition to provide a kind of framework, an "automatic machine" within which or by which, nature (either in the form of an independent performer or indeterminate-chance compositional methods) can complete the art-form, effectively and independently of the artist-composer. Thus the primary contribution of a truly concrete artist consists in creating a *concept* or a *method* by which form can be created independently of him, rather than the form or structure. Like a mathematical solution such a composition contains a beauty in the method alone.

The furthest step towards concretism is of course a kind of art-nihilism. This concept opposes and rejects art itself, since the very meaning of it implies artificiality whether in creation of form or method. To approach closer affinity with concrete reality and its closer understanding, the art-nihilist or anti-artists (they usually deny those definitions) either creates "anti-art" or exercises nothingness. The "anti-art" forms are directed primarily against art as a profession, against the artificial separation of a performer from [the] audience, or creator and spectator, or life and art; it is against the artificial forms or patterns or methods of art itself; it is against the purposefulness, formfulness and meaningfulness of art; anti-art is life, is nature, is true reality – it is one and all. Rainfall is anti-art, a babble of a crowd is anti-art, a sneeze is anti-art, a flight of a butterfly, or movements of microbes are anti-art. They are as beautiful and as worth to be aware of as art itself. If man could experience the world, the concrete world surrounding him (from mathematical ideas to physical matter) in the same way he experiences art, there would be no need for art, artists and similar "non-productive" elements.

[This is a draft of an essay/manifesto by George Maciunas (1931–1978), read by Arthus C. Caspari, in German, at the Fluxus concert *Après John Cage*, Wuppertal, West Germany, June 9, 1962. A version in German was published in Jürgen Becker and Wolf Vostell, *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme* (Hamburg, 1965), pp. 192–95.]

### White Stripes for John Cage, 1967

Alison Knowles



### Propositions, 1962–63

Alison Knowles <<http://www.knowles.com/eventscore.html>>

#### #2 Proposition, 1962

Make a salad.

[Premiere: October 21st, 1962 at Institute for Contemporary Arts in London.]

#### #3 Nivea Cream Piece, 1962 - for Oscar Williams

First performer comes on stage with a jar of Nivea cream. The performer massages hands in front of the microphone. Other performers enter one at a time. They make a mass of massaging hands and leave one at a time following the first performer.

[Premiere: Nov 25, 62 at Alle Season Theater, Copenhagen at Fluxus Festival.]

#### #5 Street Piece, 1962

Make something in the street and give it away.

[Premiere: Aug, 63. #9 and #11 are really variations on this piece.]

#### #6 Shoes of your choice, 1963

A member of the audience is invited to come forward to a microphone if one is available and describe a pair of shoes, the one he is wearing or another pair. He is encouraged to tell where he got them, the size, color, why he likes them, etc.

[Premired Apr 6th, 63 at the Old Gymnasium of Douglass College, New Brunswick, NJ.]

**Charlotte Moorman: il caso e la necessità***Nam June Paik*

Retrospectivamente, il XX secolo sarà stato il testimone di molti errori grossolani al limite della farsa. Uno di essi fu la Linea Maginot, che non si estendeva fino alla frontiera belga. Innanzitutto, se essi facevano tanto affidamento sui nazisti, perché costruire queste costose fortificazioni? In un'epoca in cui gli intellettuali francesi festeggiavano il Fronte Popolare e discutevano sulla sottile differenza tra la social-democrazia e il socialismo democratico, il colonnello De Gaulle sembrava essere l'unico spirito lucido.

La seconda stupidaggine fu compiuta dagli inglesi a Singapore. Essi spesero miliardi di sterline per fortificare Singapore, ma tutti i cannoni erano puntati verso il mare. L'armata giapponese penetrò nell'isola dalla porta posteriore, quasi bighellonando senza incontrare alcuna opposizione. Nemmeno Churchill segnalò questa sciocchezza.

La terza è il marxismo e il fatto che gli intellettuali del mondo intero si sforzarono a difendere Karl Marx il più a lungo possibile (un gran numero ancora dopo la rivoluzione ungherese, alcuni anche dopo la Primavera di Praga e molti universitari anche dopo il 1975 e fino al 1989)... Come è possibile che il fior fiore degli intellettuali, non solo i più intelligenti, ma anche i più coscienti, abbiano potuto commettere una tal idiozia così a lungo? Perché non ha potuto dire: "Sì, voi avete ragione" ai reazionari poco istruiti e ai lettori dei giornali scandalistici che condannavano Marx da tanto tempo? E perché non si è trovata, a oggi, la minima autocritica o autoanalisi nella stampa liberale? Se non possiamo fare affidamento sui nostri intellettuali universitari, di chi fidarsi allora?

Per ciò che riguarda le violazioni dei diritti dell'uomo, si sono applicati due pesi, due misure. Io non difenderò il regime crudele del generale Pinochet, ma nel corso degli anni settanta, gli stessi criteri sono forse stati utilizzati per condannare il terrorismo di Stato della Cina e di Mao Tse-tung?

Un giorno ho detto a John Cage che il 95% della gente è stupida e che questa è la ragione per cui un povero coreano ha potuto guadagnarsi da vivere così facilmente a New York. Lui ha riso e si è dichiarato d'accordo.

Per Charlotte Moorman e l'associazione di musica classica e nudità è stata la stessa storia. L'idea era così logica e infallibile che mi chiedo ancora perché nessuno ci abbia pensato prima di noi. Dopo tutto, nel 1965, migliaia di artisti e di "performers" si sentivano frustrati e cercavano nuove voci. Io scommetto che, nel 1992, tante possibilità siano ancora trascurate nella storia dell'arte da milioni di giovani che si lamentano che tutto è già stato fatto e che a loro non resta più niente da esplorare. Tuttavia, la storia del mondo ci insegna che, se non vinciamo mai a un gioco, possiamo per contro cambiarne le regole.

Noi siamo come quel grande uccello mitico greco che camminava sul sole e non apriva le ali per volare se non quando incontrava una buca.

In effetti, Charlotte Moorman superò una simile buca a Parigi durante il Festival de la Libre Expression organizzato nel 1965 da Jean-Jaques Lebel presso il Centro culturale americano, a Montparnasse.

La prima sera era stata assegnata a Ferlinghetti che lesse i suoi poemi in piedi su una macchina riempita da una montagna di spaghetti, un happening orchestrato da J.J. Lebel.

La seconda sera era riservata a noi, a Charlotte e a me. La terza era dedicata all'esposizione personale di Ben Vautier. Durante una di queste serate avevamo assistito a un meraviglioso trio di Earl Brown, Emmett Williams e Robert Filliou. Il Centro americano si trovava sulla *rive gauche* e il nostro hotel a Pigalle, sulla *rive droite*. Abbiamo terminato la prova alle 18,30 e il nostro spettacolo sarebbe cominciato alle 19. Charlotte gridò improvvisamente: "Oh, devo tornare all'hotel! Devo andare a prendere il mio abito da sera nero". Ero concertato. All'ora di punta occor-

no due ore per oltrepassare la Senna e tornare; e poi, dove trovare un taxi a quell'ora? Ma Charlotte, donna esigente, insisteva... Avevo il presentimento che il nostro primo concerto a Parigi sarebbe stato un disastro. Che avremmo iniziato alle 21, con due ore di ritardo. Il pubblico impaziente e viziato dell'*intelligentsia* parigina se ne sarebbe andato. Tutt'a un tratto, con la coda dell'occhio, ho notato qualcosa in un angolo del foyer degli artisti. C'era l'enorme rotolo d'un telo di proiezione in plastica trasparente: Ben Vautier l'aveva portato come attrezzatura per la sera seguente.

Io lo indicai col dito. "E questo?" "Come?" Non capiva. Allora ho ribadito: "Questo sarà il tuo abito da sera". "Oh, no!" esclamò, imbarazzata. Poi notai un cambiamento rapido della sua espressione: un quarto di secondo, e sentii che un'idea le germogliava in testa, la mistica femminile. Timidezza, pudore, successo, successo dello scandalo, la sua educazione sudista. Sua madre in Arkansas, daccapo, apertura e chiusura... questo vacillare interiore l'ha percorsa dall'alto in basso nello spazio di qualche secondo. Molti anni dopo ho analizzato il viso di Greta Garbo per scoprire che essa poteva essere una vergine, poi una puttana, poi una santa e, di nuovo, una vergine in pochissimo tempo. Sentii questo genere di tensione attraversare la mente di Charlotte in quell'istante fatidico: dopotutto eravamo nel 1965. Perfino il seno nudo era vietato in tutto il mondo, compresi i locali di strip-tease parigini, per non parlare del nudo integrale. Non fu semplice, ma Charlotte varcò il Rubicone. Per nascondere la sua timidezza, buttò giù uno scotch secco. Quando fece il suo ingresso, ci fu uno scroscio di applausi, ella bevve un po' di più, suonò ancora, bevve ancora e fu ancora più applaudita. Poi cadde all'indietro sulla scena improvvisata. Quello fu un giorno di rivelazione per lei. Fino ad allora era stata un'interprete un po' sofisticata, timida e molto soggetta al panico. Ma questo battesimo nella nudità, il tumulto e lo scotch svegliarono un nuovo centro nervoso, che fece di lei un'interprete sensibile e stimolante.

I cinesi dicono che, quando un uccello muore, il suo ultimo canto è il più bello. Quando un ministro muore, il suo ultimo consiglio è utile e disinteressato. Così fu l'ultima performance di Charlotte.

Fu nella primavera 1990 al Centro di Studi visivi approfonditi del Massachusetts Institute of Technology, presieduto da Otto Piene che era anche un mecenate da lunga data e un fedele sostenitore. Per tutti noi 25 anni trascorsero alla velocità del lampo. Per Charlotte sono stati una vera trappola che a poco a poco si è chiusa su di lei, una doppia elica di sofferenza e di piacere, la spirale estatica ascendente della sua carriera e della sofferenza sempre più atroce causata da un tumore in evoluzione crescente. Subì un intervento all'utero nel 1962 o '63, quando aveva appena 29 anni, ma il tumore sfuggì a questo primo intervento. All'epoca del nostro secondo incontro, nell'estate 1964, parlava già della sua malattia mortale. Come nel caso dell'asma di George Maciunas e della ferita di guerra di Beuys, la malattia fu il motore di uno sforzo sovrumano. Verso il 1969 il tumore aveva danneggiato lo stomaco e continuava a svilupparsi. Charlotte sembrava incinta di cinque mesi. Ma non c'erano soldi né per un intervento né per l'assicurazione. Frank Pileggi, prima del suo matrimonio, mi mostrò il suo portafoglio – e la sua assicurazione Blue Shield – che avrebbe potuto salvarla. La loro bella storia d'amore nacque quando Frank Pileggi, portiere di notte all'Hotel Paris dove Charlotte soggiornava spesso, le aprì la camera nonostante fosse stata messa alla porta per ritardo nei pagamenti. La scena si è ripetuta abbastanza spesso. Frank allora scivolava furtivamente nel corridoio, apriva rapidamente utilizzando il suo passe-partout e spariva. Dopo aver discusso con Frank, il mio compito fu di salire a farle visita e di persuaderla a sposarlo immediatamente, per amore e per la vita. Grazie all'assicurazione di Frank e all'aiuto (complementare) di Howard Wise, la sua vita poté essere prolungata di circa vent'anni, per quanto gli ultimi dieci furono assai penosi. Tuttavia, è grazie alla dedizione sovrumana di Frank che Charlotte ha potuto restare in vita e partecipare a diversi festivals, prodursi in numerose performances e recarsi alle Isole Salomone e in Israele. Gli ultimissimi anni furono particolarmente pesanti: Charlotte aveva spesso bisogno di iniezioni di morfina. Frank doveva svegliarsi a ogni ora, al momento giusto per farle un'iniezione, poi si riaddormentava per risvegliarsi sessanta minuti



dopo. Il suo più grande desiderio era di poter dormire otto ore filate. Ma essere malati ha un prezzo orribilmente caro. I miei sforzi non furono sufficienti. Per tutta la durata di questo lungo martirio, Howard Wise e Otto Piene furono alcune tra le persone che le portarono non solo parole e prove della loro buona volontà, ma anche denaro e lavoro. Del resto, Charlotte gioiva del prestigio del grande M.I.T. Una delle sue foto preferite la mostra con Jerome Wiesner, presidente del M.I.T. e consigliere personale di Kennedy e di Johnson.

La sua ultima performance nella primavera del 1991 fu particolarmente brillante. Il movimento del suo archetto era rapido come il fioretto di un campione di scherma. Io vidi quasi delle scintille blu scaturire dal corpo del suo violoncello. Due cose mi son venute in mente. Un proverbio cinese a proposito del canto del cigno, della bellezza dell'ultimo grido di un uccello morente, e dell'onestà dell'ultimo consiglio dato sul suo letto di morte da un uomo cavalleresco che non ha più niente da temere... E se mi è permesso aggiungerlo, un pensiero mi ha attraversato la mente... Prima della sua performance (alle 21 circa), Charlotte aveva dovuto farsi fare l'iniezione per evitare dolori improvvisi nel bel mezzo dell'esibizione. Questa dose di morfina deve aver fatto volare il suo spirito come quello di una dea o di uno sciamano. In ogni caso, il suo corpo deformato e la sua performance carismatica furono come un flash-back della prima performance anch'essa carismatica a Parigi nel 1965 ("molto tutto!") scatenata dall'amalgama della sua nudità, del suo abito da sera in cellophane, dell'alcool e degli applausi del pubblico. Il suo corpo era bello, un po' come un Rubens – molto sensuale – l'esatto contrario di quello di Twiggy, che sarebbe diventato famoso due anni più tardi.

Nel 1977, su una montagna del Colorado, ho chiesto ad Allen Ginsberg quanto tempo gli sarebbe piaciuto vivere (aveva allora circa 50 anni). Mi ha risposto: "Voglio vedere il prossimo secolo". In un certo qual modo, la linea di demarcazione dei cento o dieci definisce o modifica lo stato dell'intelletto delle persone come un nodo in una canna di bambù.

Circa sette mesi fa, ho dato a Frank Pileggi 100 fogli di carta molto costosa dicendogli: "Chiedi a Charlotte di firmare a piè di pagina quando si sentirà meglio. Io non ne ho bisogno. Ma tu potresti farci stampare un disegno o una foto di Charlotte. Ciò ti porterà danaro". So che Henry Miller ha lasciato molti fogli di carta bianchi (firmati) e che la sua famiglia li ha venduti come tali. Dei collezionisti vi facevano stampare il disegno di Henry Miller e li vendevano a 1000 dollari il foglio. Ieri Barbara Moore mi ha chiamato e mi ha detto che Frank voleva restituirmi questi fogli (non firmati)... sì, la dedizione di Frank era il frutto inalterato del suo amore. Quest'uomo tenero non ha avuto il coraggio di far firmare il conto da Charlotte, proprio come madame Eva Beuys fece con suo marito.

Non posso dimenticare la scena commovente di cui fui testimone sette ore prima della sua morte. Sapendosi vicina alla fine, Charlotte ripeteva senza sosta a Frank: "Grazie, grazie".

Nel 1961, volevo abbandonare la carriera d'artista di performance. Lasciavo il periodo dell'intensità (l'improvvisa illuminazione sulla scena, l'Aufhebung di diversi dualismi nel corpo e nel mondo) per dirigermi verso il genere nuovo della libertà, della diversità, del piacere visivo e dell'interesse cognitivo, che implica oggetti sonori, l'Einsatz dell'elettronica e il mondo della TV elettronica.

La mia decisione, quanto a questa conversione, era ferma. Fu controvolgia che misi in scena l'evento neo-dada al Kammerspiele e partecipai al lavoro di Fluxus a Wiesbaden. Nondimeno, dopo il mio arrivo negli Stati Uniti, incontrai Charlotte Moorman. È lei che ha riacceso in me l'interesse per la performance. (In effetti, avevo cercato delle ragazze che avrebbero accettato di suonare della musica classica mezze nude di fronte a un pubblico: l'avevo chiesto a Mieko Shiomi, ma lei rifiutò. Alison Knowles aveva fatto una performance ad Amsterdam – il vernissage della mostra di Vostell alla galleria Rokin –, ma non suonava nessuno strumento classico. Charlotte era la prima donna che riuniva le due esigenze: possedeva la tecnica musicale, il coraggio, la bellezza e la sensibilità artistica.)

Questo non è stato forse facile. Era molto difficile per lei e io ho avuto molta fortuna nell'averla incontrata, forse la sola e unica candidata al mondo.

Avrà un'erede?

Chi vorrà suonare il pezzo scritto per lei?

Dopotutto, da che J.S. Bach scrisse dodici partiture per violoncello, nessun altro compositore ha scritto altrettanti pezzi per questo strumento. Ecco il mio contributo alla storia della musica. Il dizionario Riemann, che noi veneravamo quando ero studente di musicologia all'Università di Monaco, mi ha pregato di fornirgli la mia biografia e contiene molti dei miei pezzi scritti per Charlotte... è la mia rivale sui due assistenti che ignorarono i miei lavori memorabili sulla preistoria e l'Entstehung della sonata nel Diciassettesimo secolo.

Tutto questo grazie a Charlotte.

Dopo l'omaggio che le è stato reso al Museo Whitney (febbraio 1992), David Ross fu il suo coraggioso avvocato. John Hanhardt propose una storica valutazione della sua opera. Yoko Ono, Simone Forti, Richard Teitelbaum ed Earl Howard le dedicarono una bella performance. Ma nessuno poté superare Norman Seaman e i suoi aneddoti carichi di humour su questa donna unica, il cui charme era una chiave che apriva le porte di tante città. Fu Sid Fagan, attaccato dalla stampa di governatori e sindaci, che raccontò come Moorman infranse le porte di diverse roccaforti maschili inespugnabili: per esempio, lo stadio di baseball, la Grand Central Station, il World Trade Center e l'aeroporto abbandonato dove Ingrid Bergman e Humphrey Bogart girarono l'ultima scena di *Casablanca*. Domani il mondo sarà bello.

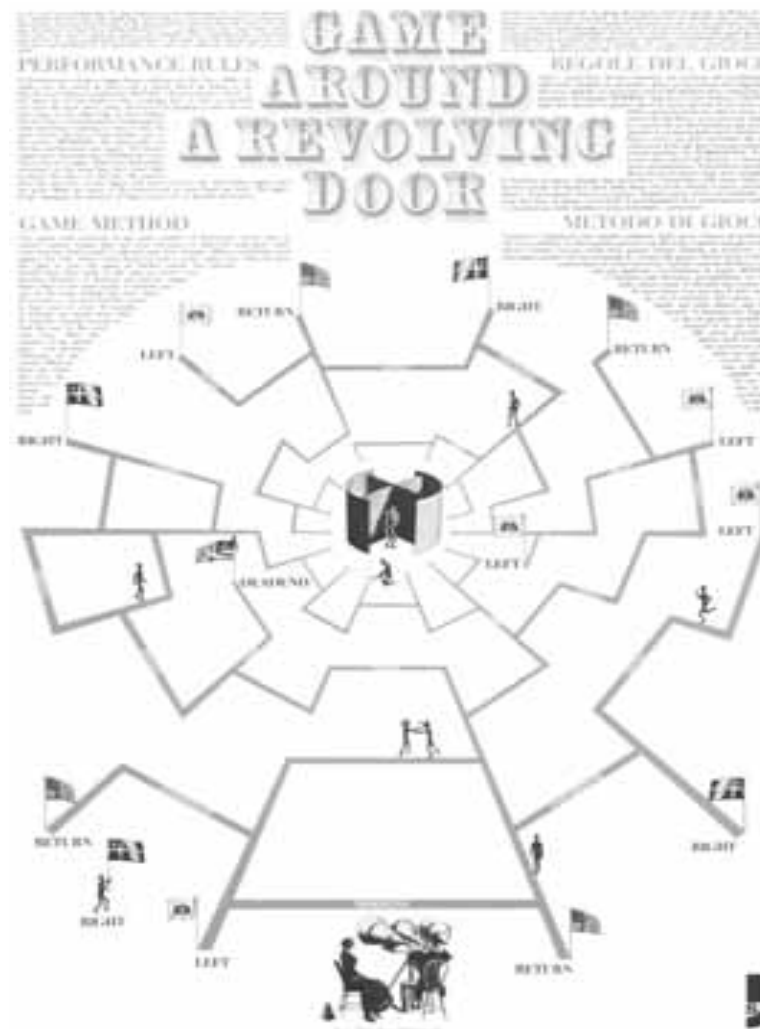
Charlotte aprì anche la porta al "running fence" in California negli anni settanta. Ma è così modesta che nessuno lo sa.

[traduzione italiana di N.J. Paik, *C. Moorman: le hasard et la nécessité*, in N.J. Paik, I. Lebeer, E. Decker-Philipps, *Du cheval à Christo et autres écrits*, Editions Lebeer Hossmann, Bruxelles 1933, pp. 29-33.]

Spatial Poem no. 5, 1972  
Mieko Shiomi

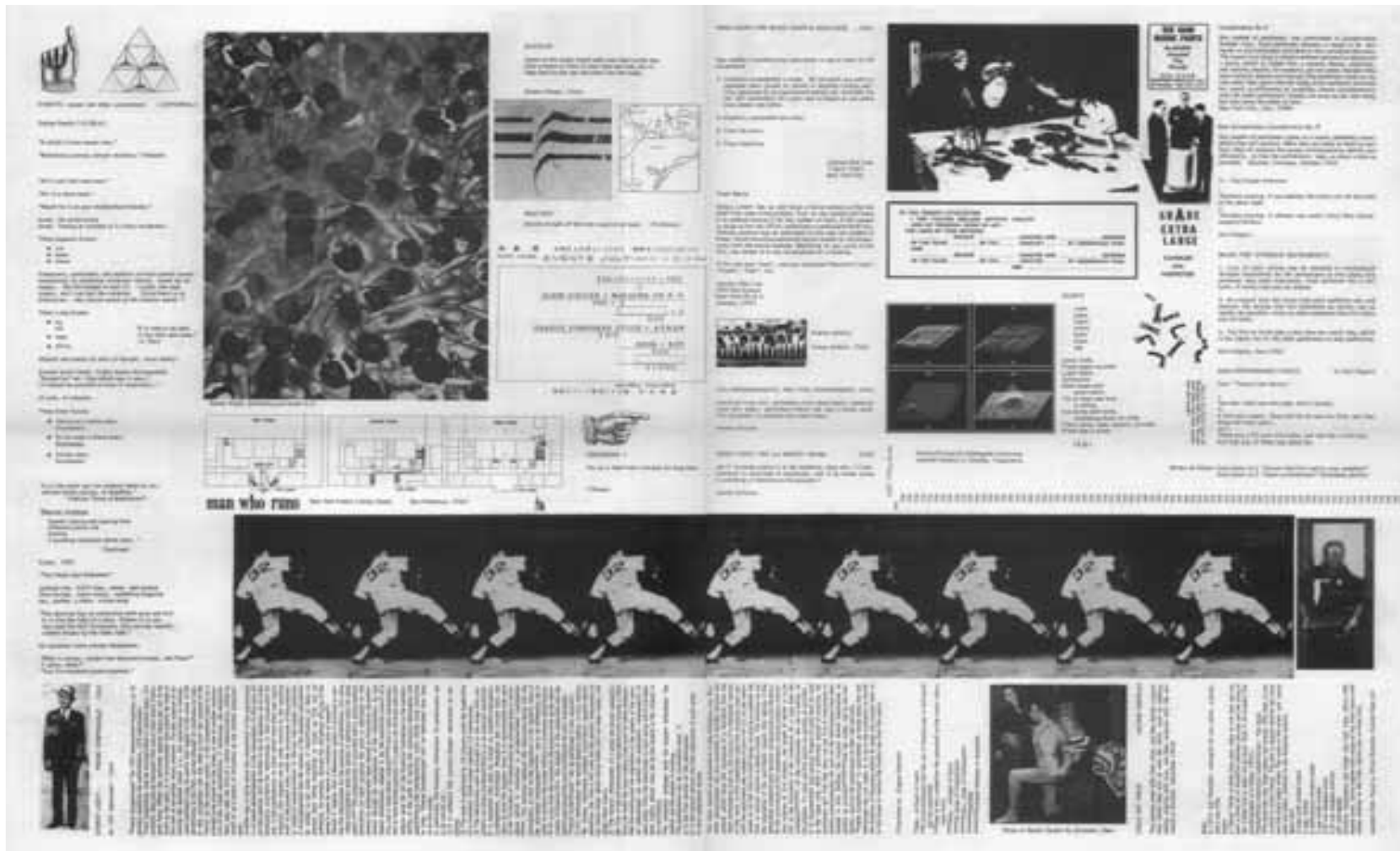


Game Around a Revolving Door, 1967  
Mieko Shiomi



**Score Mirror, 1963**  
*Mieko Shiomi*

[in "cc V TRE", gennaio 1964]



**Statement on Intermedia, 1966***Dick Higgins*

Art is one of the ways that people communicate. It is difficult for me to imagine a serious person attacking any means of communication per se. Our real enemies are the ones who send us to die in pointless wars or to live lives which are reduced to drudgery, not the people who use other means of communication from those which we find most appropriate to the present situation. When these are attacked, a diversion has been established which only serves the interests of our real enemies.

However, due to the spread of mass literacy, to television and the transistor radio, our sensitivities have changed. The very complexity of this impact gives us a taste for simplicity, for an art which is based on the underlying images that an artist has always used to make his point. As with the cubists, we are asking for a new way of looking at things, but more totally, since we are more impatient and more anxious to go to the basic images. This explains the impact of Happenings, event pieces, mixed media films. We do not ask any more to speak magnificently of taking arms against a sea of troubles, we want to see it done. The art which most directly does this is the one which allows this immediacy, with a minimum of distractions.

Goodness only knows how the spread of psychedelic means, tastes, and insights will speed up this process. My own conjecture is that it will not change anything, only intensify a trend which is already there.

For the last ten years or so, artists have changed their media to suit this situation, to the point where the media have broken down in their traditional forms, and have become merely puristic points of reference. The idea has arisen, as if by spontaneous combustion throughout the entire world, that these points are arbitrary and only useful as critical tools, in saying that such-and-such a work is basically musical, but also poetry. This is the intermedial approach, to emphasize the dialectic between the media. A composer is a dead man unless he composes for all the media and for his world.

Does it not stand to reason, therefore, that having discovered the intermedia (which was, perhaps, only possible through approaching them by formal, even abstract means), the central problem is now not only the new formal one of learning to use them, but the new and more social one of what to use them for? Having discovered tools with an immediate impact, for what are we going to use them? If we assume, unlike McLuhan and others who have shed some light on the problem up until now, that there are dangerous forces at work in our world isn't it appropriate to ally ourselves against these, and to use what we really care about and love or hate as the new subject matter in our work? Could it be that the central problem of the next ten years or so, for all artists in all possible forms, is going to be less the still further discovery of new media and intermedia, but of the new discovery of ways to use what we care about both appropriately and explicitly? The old adage was never so true as now, that saying a thing is so don't make it so. Simply talking about Viet Nam or the crisis in our Labor movements is no guarantee against sterility. We must find the ways to say what has to be said in the light of our new means of communicating. For this we will need new rostrums, organizations, criteria, sources of information. There is a great deal for us to do, perhaps more than ever. But we must now take the first steps.

New York August 3, 1966

[Dick Higgins, "Statement on Intermedia" (3 August 1966), *Dé-collage* (Cologne) 6 (July 1967): n.p. By permission of the author. See also "Intermedia" (1966), in Higgins, *foew&ombwhnw: A Grammar of the Mind and a Phenomenology of Love and a Science of the Arts as Seen by a Stalker of the Wild Mushroom* (New York: Something Else Press, 1969).]

**Woman in the Year 2000, 1975***Carolee Schneemann*

By the year 2000 no young woman artist will meet the determined resistance and constant undermining which I endured as a student. Her Studio and History courses will usually be taught by women; she will never feel like a provisional guest at the banquet of life; or a monster defying her "God-given" role; or a belligerent whose devotion to creativity could only exist at the expense of a man, or men and their needs. Nor will she go into the "art world", gracing or disgracing a pervading stud club of artists, historians, teachers, museum directors, magazine editors, gallery dealers — all male, or committed to masculine preserves. All that is marvelously, already falling around our feet.

She will study Art History courses enriched by the inclusion, discovery, and re-evaluation of works by women artists: works (and lives) until recently buried away, willfully destroyed, ignored, or re-accredited (to male artists with whom they were associated). Our future student will be in touch with a continuous feminine creative history — often produced against impossible odds — from her present, to the Renaissance and beyond. In the year 2000 books and courses will only be called "Man and His Image", "Man and His Symbols", "Art History of Man", to probe the source of dis-ease and man-ia which compelled patriarchal man to attribute to himself and his masculine fore-bearers every invention and artifact by which civilization was formed for over four millennia! Our woman will have courses and books on "The Invention of Art by Woman", "Woman - The Source of Creation", "The Gynocratic Origins of Art", "Woman and Her Materials". Her studies of ancient Greece and Egypt will reconcile patriarchal manipulations in translation, interpretation, and actual content of language and symbolic imagery with the protracted and agonizing struggle between the integral, cosmic principles of Gynocracy and the aggressive man-centered cultures gathered as the foundations of Judeo-Christian religion in the Western world.

Fifteen years ago I told my Art History professor I thought the bare breasted women bull jumpers, carved in ivory, painted in frescos about 1600 B.C. in Crete, could have been made by women depicting women. And I considered that the preponderant neolithic fertility figurines might have been crafted by women for themselves — to accompany them through pregnancy and birth-giving.

And I wondered if the frescos of the Mysteries, Pompeii — almost exclusively concerned with feminine gestures and actions — could have been painted by women. He was shocked and annoyed, saying that there was absolutely no authority to support such ideas. Since then I have given myself the authority to support and pursue these insights. By the year 2000 feminist archeologists, etymologists, egyptologists, biologists, sociologists, will have established beyond question my contention that women determined the forms of the sacred and the functional — the divine properties of material, its religious and practical formations; that she evolved pottery, sculpture, fresco, architecture, astronomy and the laws of agriculture — all of which belonged implicitly to the female realms of transformation and production.

The shadowy notions of a harmonious core of civilization under the aegis of the Great Mother Goddess, where the divine unity of female biological *and* imaginative creation was normal and pervasive, where the female was the source of all living and created images, will once again move to clarify our own conscious desires. The sacred rituals of forming materials to embody life energies will return to the female source.

One further change will be the assembling of pioneer historians — themselves discredited or forgotten by traditional masculist authority. In the year 2000 they will be on the required reading lists! What a joy to welcome: Helen Diner, J.J. Bachofen, Michelet, Rilke, Gould-Davis, Jane Ellen Harrison, Robert Graves, Jacquetta Hawkes, Ruth Benedict, Robert Briffault, Erich Neumann,

H.D., Marie de LeCourt, Ruth Herschberger, Bryher, H. R. Hays, Minna Mosdherosch Schmidt, Clara E. C. Waters, Elizabeth F. Ellet!

The negative aspect is simply that the young woman coming to these vital studies will never really believe that we in our desperate ground work were so crippled and isolated; that a belief and dedication to a feminine history of art was designed by those who might have taught it, and considered heretical and false by those who should have taught it. That our deepest energies were nurtured in secret, with precedents we kept secret-our lost women. Now found and to be found again.

[Carolee Schneemann, excerpt from "Woman in the Year 2000" (1975), in Schneemann, *More than Meat Joy: Complete Performance Works and Selected Writings*, ed. Bruce McPherson (New Paltz, NY: Documentext, 1979), 198-99. By permission of the author and Documentext (McPherson & Company).]

#### Video Poem, 1968-76

*Shigeko Kubota*

##### Behind the Video Door

I travel alone with my portapak on my back, as Vietnamese women do with their baby.  
I like Video, because it's heavy.  
Portapak and I traveled all over Europe, Navajo land and Japan without male accompanny.  
Portapak tears down my shoulder, backbone and waist. I felt like a Soviet woman, working at the Siberian Railway. I made a videotape called, "Europe on a half-inch a Day," instead of a popular travel book, "Europe on 5 dollars a Day." I had one summer with Navajo family in Chinle, Arizona, I made a videotape called, "An American Family."

##### Behind the Video Life

Man thinks, "I think, therefore I am."  
I, a woman, feel, "I Bleed, therefore I am."  
Recently I bled in half-inch... 3M or SONY... ten thousand feet every month. Man shoots me every night... I can't resist. I shoot him back at broad daylight with vidicon or tivicon flaming in overexposure.  
Video is Vengeance of Vagina.  
Video is Victory of Vagina.  
Video is Venereal Disease of Intellectuals.  
Video is Vacant Apartment.  
Video is Vacation of Art.  
Viva Video...

**Fluxus. HOW WE MET or a microdemistification***George Maciunas*

Conosciuto George Brecht mentre era bloccato in una porta ruotante senza entrata e uscita. Mentre ruotavamo assieme abbiamo presto capito che non era una porta ma un cilindro orizzontale azionante un mulino per produrre elettricità per un edificio con un cartello indicante "cilindro orizzontale azionante un mulino". George Brecht cercò di rimuovere il cartello ma riuscì a togliere solamente 4 lettere V TRE. Sfuggito il cilindro e dopo aver scoperto che girava all'incontrario sottraendo energia all'edificio e trasformando il vetro in marmellata di fragole, ci ha lasciato mangiare la nostra via d'uscita.

Mentre attraversavamo l'Atlantico, la nave in cui stava navigando Dick Higgings fu catturata da una forte corrente e spinta verso IHAS MARTIN VAZ, nel frattempo mi stavo arenando perché la nave in cui ero usava lo zucchero per calafatare. Per non perdere l'occasione ho iniziato a raccogliere ciottoli dei quali l'isola è piena. Nel frattempo Dick Higgins cercò di convincere il suo capitano a seguire la corrente verso sud e ritornare verso l'Europa dal Madagascar, Seychelles e Canale di Suez. Il capitano fu d'accordo e proseguì seguendo la via suggerita con dispiacere di tutti, poiché entrando nel canale di Suez, entrambe le estremità erano chiuse e abbiamo dovuto continuare il viaggio per via terra. Prima di entrare nel canale di Suez, ad ogni modo, ci fermammo all'isola Silhouette (Seychelles) dove abbiamo conosciuto Chiecko Shiomì che stava facendo rilevamenti topografici di varie parti del mondo per i suoi POEMI SPAZIALI e reclutando partecipanti.

Dopo aver sbarcato la nostra nave abbiamo cercato di fare l'autostop, ma trovare un passaggio con una tonnellata di ciottoli che avevamo raccolto non era facile. Li abbiamo passati per minerale prezioso contenente oro. Un camion che ci ha raccolto ha deciso di tenersi tutte le pietre e ci ha scaricato. Dick Higgins continuò separatamente la via Turchia e continuò via il deserto del Taraq al ulab in Siria. Dopo essersi perso, senza acqua, assetato e incapace di camminare o di trascinarsi oltre, improvvisamente scorsi Robert Filliou su un cammello che mi si avvicinava. Non aveva acqua da offrirmi, invece vendeva cravatte a 8 Dollari! Dopo il mio indignato rifiuto lui fu così gentile di indicarmi la strada per l'oasi Tudmur o meglio conosciuta come Palmyra. Lui aveva ragione, dopo essermi trascinato per altre 8 ore ho raggiunto Palmyra e un nuovissimo hotel Hilton con piscina, ristorante e ACQUA! Mi sono seduto a un tavolo e ho ordinato immediatamente un gallone di succo, ma l'acqua si rifiutò di servirmela. Mi ha detto che i clienti devono indossare la cravatta.

Mentre attraversavo la RUMENIA, ho incontrato Spoerri al Cristuru Secuiesc, mentre si stava sfamando a un pranzo di nozze con torte di fango e io stavo curando quelli che li mangiavano con pillole di ciottoli. Abbiamo abbandonato la città di grande fretta.

Entrati nella riviera Francese via Italia e incontrata grande confusione al confine, Ben Vautier chiedeva a tutti i viaggiatori i loro passaporti dove aveva stampato "questo è UN PEZZO D'ARTE di Ben". Quando gli ufficiali in dogana hanno fermato tutto questo, lui ha cominciato a sottoscrivere gli ufficiali come sue sculture viventi. Poi ha iniziato a spostare la linea di confine di alcuni piedi e dichiarata la differenza come "totale terrotorio d'arte". Quando arrivò la polizia, Ben offrì loro la sua opera d'arte (calcio nel centro) ma non fu capito e fu arrestato. Nella corte sottoscrisse il giudice e le intere procedure come sua opera d'arte teatrale, la prigionie la sottoscrisse come totale opera d'arte architettonica. Fuggì di prigionie quando scopri che poteva corrompere una guardia devota con il Dio Inscatolato di Ben.

Ho conosciuto Bob Watts e Joe Jones durante un tentativo di furto nel caveau sotterraneo della sede centrale della CHASE-MANHATTAN BANK. Joe Jones avendo la larghezza delle spalle di 12" era capace di passare attraverso i condotti dell'aria nel caveau che conteneva 6 guardie giorno e notte. Le guardie furono messe a dormire con il gas, Joe entrò nel caveau attraverso i condotti indossando una maschera anti gas, issò i soldi attraverso i condotti fino al 20mo piano, dove c'era a riceverlo Bob Watts. Portò tutti i soldi al bagno e tirò l'acqua, poiché tutte le uscite dell'edificio erano controllate.

Nel frattempo mi sono posto in un tombino nella via accanto con una rete, in attesa di colgere i soldi fluttuanti nella fogna. Ma non arrivarono mai. Evidentemente l'edificio aveva un suo proprio impianto di fognatura e tutto incluso i soldi fu fatto a pezzatti e liquefatto prima della sua fuoriuscita. Dopo questo fallimento, Bob decise di stampare dei soldi propri, questo è come apparve la fattura in dollari di Bob Watts.

Questo fallimento alla CHASE-MANAHHTAN BANK mi portò in galere per un breve periodo, finché non scappai da un tunnel attraverso le varie celle fino al soffitto dell'edificio in CANAL STREET. Ho tagliato attraverso il soffitto fino a finire dentro la scatola a mano di Ayo. Non l'avevo capito fino a quando non vidi entrare una mano in un buco in alto della scatola e un dito mi finì in bocca. Poi sentii Ayo che nella scatola c'era un topo e che non capiva come potesse essere cresciuto così tanto.

10 dicembre 1975

Nel 1949 mentre spalavo merda di balena congelata dalle spiagge delle isole Baffin, ho incontrato Geoff Hendricks che succhiava via nuvole con un aspirapolvere gigante. Aveva scelto le isole Baffin perché il clima era freddo e l'assenza di vegetazione faceva diventare le nuvole viscoso e comprimibili. Il suo aspirapolvere cominciò a singiozzare andò fuori controllo e aspirò tutta la merda di balena che avevo raccolto. Con nostra sorpresa il miscuglio fra nuvole e merda di balena creò gomma espansa. Prontamente la brevettammo e iniziammo a produrla, facendo tanti soldi.

Poi scoprimmo dormendoci sopra che la nostra gomma espansa si trasformò in pane! Ma la nostra euforia durò poco visto che i produttori di pane arrivarono con la stessa formula, rimpiazzando il precedente usato cotone. Perdemmo tutti i soldi fatti in lunghe brevettate litigate.

Come consolazione, i produttori di pane ci diedero 5000 tonnellate di materassi che non si trasformarono in pane perché erano bagnati (da pipì di bimbi).

4 ottobre 1973

[traduzione in italiano da G. Maciunas, *AQ 16 - Fluxus. HOW WE MET or a microdemistification*, Dudweiler, Saarbrücken 1977, pp. 58-59.]

## CONTRIBUTI CRITICI DI

CHARLES DREYFUS  
HANNAH HIGGINS  
ANNETTE KUBITZA  
KATHY O'DELL  
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### Fluxus

Charles Dreyfus

All'inizio del mese di dicembre 1961 John Cage spiega un passaggio del suo libro *Silenzio* partendo dalle preoccupazioni di La Monte Young (ripetizione o esecuzione costante di un solo suono); conclude l'intervista sperando che gli europei diventino più americani. "Il mio parere non è che faccia qualcosa su di me, ma che io diventi capace di sentire in modo diverso – come non avevo mai sentito prima"<sup>1</sup>.

La Monte Young scopre Cage nell'estate del 1959 al seminario di Stockhausen a Darmstadt (*La composizione come processo*) in cui Cage sviluppa le sue idee sulla musica indeterminata rispetto alla sua esecuzione; Young in quell'epoca lavora nella West Coast degli Stati Uniti, dove Cage è praticamente sconosciuto. L'estate successiva, di ritorno in California, partecipa con Terry Riley, Warner Jepson e Bill Spencer al laboratorio di creazione della coreografa Ann Halprin, a Kentfield; nell'intervista ad Ann Halprin di Yvonne Rainer possiamo meglio delineare il senso dell'utilizzo delle porte, delle finestre e della messa in risonanza di muri e pavimenti del locale in cui lavora. "Utilizzavamo oggetti e accessori, ci servivamo dello spazio in modo determinante. Volevo isolare questi elementi. Cominciavo a lavorare con l'aiuto di un sistema grazie al quale tutte quelle cose diventavano indipendenti dal fenomeno di causa ed effetto: per costringere la musica a fare questo non bisognava fare QUELLO [...]"<sup>2</sup>

A partire dalla metà degli anni cinquanta George Brecht e Jackson Mac Low avevano pure esplorato le diverse possibilità dell'indeterminato; John Cage li invita allora a presentare i loro lavori durante i suoi corsi, che iniziano, l'estate 1958, nella 12th Street West di New York; questo seminario della New School for Social Research era frequentato da Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, Allan Kaprow, i compositori Maxfield e Toshi Ichihyanagi (primo marito di Yoko Ono) ecc., e da visitatori saltuari: Jim Dine, Larry Poons, George Segal; uno studio deve essere ancora fatto sulle molte performance originate dai corsi di Cage (New York Audiovisual Group, ecc.); dai dintorni di San Francisco giungono delle personalità che fanno conoscere a New York i loro lavori a quell'epoca: Simone Forti, Robert Morris, Walter De Maria, Terry Jennings, Terry Riley, Dennis Johnson, Joseph Byrd [...] George Maciunas frequenta i corsi di Maxfield, dove incontra Young; grazie a lui Maciunas, laureato in storia dell'arte e in musicologia, si tufferà nell'avanguardia. Questo oriundo lituano, tuttavia, non è certo inattivo: passa tutta la sua infanzia nei campi per rifugiati a giocare, a essere operato d'appendicite senza anestesia o a trovarsi sotto le bombe di Berlino nel 1945. Finanzia un'orchestra di musica rinascimentale, suonando su copie di strumenti antichi che importa dall'Europa orientale insieme a stock di conserve alimentari; più un impiego a tempo pieno come designer da Knoll e alla galleria A/G, al primo piano di 925 Madison Avenue; secondo Higgins, "terrible modern art"<sup>3</sup>. Due serie di performance devono in modo particolare attirare la nostra attenzione: la serie dello studio di Yoko Ono al 112 Chamber Street, con La Monte Young come responsabile, che si svolge in modo episodico dal 18 dicembre 1960 al 30 giugno 1961; e la serie di George Maciunas nella sua galleria, dal 14 marzo al 30 giugno 1961.

La denominazione Fluxus compare per la prima volta su un invito a tre conferenze di Maciunas, *Musica Antica et Nova*, dal 25 aprile al 16 maggio ("Il contributo di tre dollari aiuterà a pubblicare la rivista 'Fluxus'"); simili progetti editoriali avranno un posto importante nella storia di Fluxus tanto quanto le performance.

Quando il poeta Chester Anderson abbandona New York per la California (nel 1959), la sua rivista "Beatitude" si scinde in due; chiede a Young di occuparsi di un numero di "Beatitude East". Il periodico sparisce e con Anderson anche i documenti; la loro ricomparsa, gli sforzi congiunti di Young e Mac Low permettono a Maciunas di comporre il menabò del libro *An Anthology* prima della sua partenza per Wiesbaden nel novembre 1961. Pronto per la stampa nell'ottobre 1961,

*An Anthology* – del quale alcuni documenti erano già stati pubblicati nel 1959 – sarà finalmente pubblicato da Young e Mac Low nel 1963. Tra i collaboratori di *An Anthology* residenti in Europa si trovano i nomi di Claus Bremer, Nam June Paik, Dieter Roth ed Emmett Williams. Una disgraziata dimenticanza: Daniel Spoerri, che non seppe spiegarmela, se non attraverso il riconoscimento di questa dimenticanza; era soprattutto Dick Higgins che corrispondeva con l'Europa grazie agli indirizzi che gli aveva comunicato il compositore Earle Brown; di Spoerri non conosceva che la sua rivista, "Material", che aveva come collaboratori Bremer, Rot, Williams (i quattro numeri escono tra il 1959 e il 1960). Spoerri incontra Bremer e tra il 1957 e il 1959 diventa assistente del drammaturgo Gustav-Rudolf Sellner, direttore del Landestheater di Darmstadt in cui Bremer è regista; in collaborazione con Bremer redige *Beispiele für das dynamische Theater*<sup>4</sup> e da solo *Über das Autotheater*<sup>5</sup>; inizia Emmett Williams alla poesia concreta: quest'ultimo scriveva (in modo surrealista, secondo Spoerri) sul giornale "Stars and Stripes" dell'esercito americano di stanza in Europa; Roth, che passa da Parigi, si unisce alla selezione di Spoerri *Art et Mouvement* del Festival d'Avant-Garde alle porte di Versailles (18 novembre – 15 dicembre 1960). Nel novembre 1961 George Maciunas arriva dunque in Germania; entra subito in contatto con Nam June Paik, l'"europeo di Corea". A partire dal 1958 l'insegnante di Paik a Friburgo, il dodecafonico Wolfgang Fortner, decide che non ha più niente da insegnargli e gli trova un posto nello Studio di Musica Elettronica (Radio Colonia) fondato da Eimert e quindi affidato a Stockhausen. Ma prima di arrivare a Colonia Paik vede *Music Walk* di Cage (14 ottobre 1958) alla Galleria 22 di Jean Pierre Wilhelm a Düsseldorf e si appassiona per l'indeterminato: decide d'incontrare Cage nella sua camera d'albergo a Darmstadt; [...] entra nello studio e di Cage tiene nella memoria "il collage sonoro" e "il suo senso delle cose che non sono in ordine". Vede inoltre *Dada – Dokumente einer Bewegung* alla Kunsthalle di Düsseldorf (1958), e si presume che quello sia stato lo shock determinante – e non soltanto per Paik – che lo fece cominciare con qualche nastro prima di provare un bisogno d'azione la cui violenza è "l'effetto più che la causa"; è aggressivo ma solo verso se stesso, come il 13 novembre 1959 sempre alla Galleria 22, dove il suo concerto dura sei minuti: musica elettronica per tre registratori e un vetro da spaccare; rovescia un pianoforte davanti a un pubblico di "conoscitori", tra cui molti artisti di Düsseldorf, come Joseph Beuys, Winfried Gaul, Richard Goetz, Hoem. Il concerto si intitola *Omaggio a John Cage*, poiché in quel tempo erano pochi ad apprezzarlo. In seguito, lo studio di Mary Bauermeister (che era la moglie di Stockhausen) a Colonia diventa il luogo "anti Radio-Colonia", e a partire dal 1960 presenta opere di George Brecht e La Monte Young; qui comincia la fama di Paik negli Stati Uniti grazie al taglio della cravatta di Cage davanti a Merce Cunningham, Carol ed Earle Brown, Christian Wolf, ecc. (6 ottobre 1960). Da parte sua Wolf Vostell frequenta raramente lo studio di Mary Bauermeister, perché la musica d'azione non lo soddisfa del tutto; dichiara che l'azione di per sé è un'opera d'arte. [...] A partire dal 1958 davanti all'indifferenza per la sua idea di "visione elettronica", comincia i *TV décollages*, la cui prima partitura, *TV décollages per milioni di spettatori*, è datata 1959. [...]

George Maciunas visita per la prima volta Vostell nel suo studio di Colonia nell'aprile 1962: sul tavolo il progetto del primo *Décollage*, che uscì per il concerto *Neo-Dada in der Musik* (16 giugno 1962) e poté vedere la luce grazie a Wilhelm, ma fu organizzato da Paik. Se questo concerto fosse stato organizzato da Maciunas e se Vostell avesse accettato di aspettare il primo concerto Fluxus-Maciunas di Wiesbaden (settembre 1982) e fare del suo *Décollage* una parte del periodico "Fluxus"...

"Era una specie di pazzo e naturalmente capi che questa nuova arte sarebbe stata conosciuta prima che lui facesse Fluxus; prima di tutto per il concerto organizzato da Paik e poi la stessa serata per il primo numero di *Dé-collages*" (intervista di C. D. a Vostell).

"Vostell cercava sempre di entrare in competizione; non si riesce certo a combinar nulla se ci facciamo concorrenza con la stessa cosa; ma aveva bisogno di competizione e qualche vol-

ta di collaborazione... [nastro magnetico incomprensibile] così Vostell non ha mai fatto parte veramente di Fluxus" (intervista di C. D. a Maciunas).

Ma allora perché Vostell ha seguito questo orribile despota che si permette di licenziare dei violinisti virtuosi di Vienna perché non erano andati a letto alle 22? È Maciunas che esclude Vostell? Qual era questo potere magico che permetteva a Maciunas di rifiutare il concerto personale di Paik in nome del collettivo? Per complicare la situazione, prima del concerto *Neo-Dada in der Musik*, il 9 giugno ha luogo nella galleria Parnass di Wuppertal, presentato da Rolf Jährling, il concerto *Neo-Dada a New York*, che è pure il titolo dell'esposizione di Maciunas; Vostell e Paik sono assenti. È il caso di parlare di sabotaggio? Ben Patterson e Maciunas, i due americani, presentano i lavori di Higgins, Riley, Jed Curtis, senza dimenticare i propri. E lo stesso giorno del rapido passaggio di Maciunas, sempre con Patterson e Robert Filliou, per le strade e alla galleria Girardon, Vostell fa il suo happening *Petite Ceinture, Cityrama II* nella stessa città, a Parigi (3 luglio 1962). *Festa Fluxorum* prende allora il suo avvio attraverso tutta l'Europa: quattordici concerti a Wiesbaden nel settembre 1962 interpretati da Alison Knowles e Higgins (giunti da New York), Paik, Patterson, Maciunas, Williams, Mercure, Welin, Vostell. [...]

Maciunas, Paik, Williams, Koepke, Filliou, Vostell, Higgins, Knowles eseguono i sei concerti di Copenaghen in novembre, mentre a Parigi, il mese successivo, Tomas Schmit e Daniel Spoerri entrano nella compagnia con *Domaine Poétique*, messo in scena da Jean-Loup Philippe (Filliou, Gherasim Luca, Jean-Claurence Lambert, François Dufrene, Brion Gysin). Nel febbraio 1963 ebbe luogo l'esperimento di Düsseldorf con Joseph Beuys; Alison Knowles e Higgins diffusero la buona novella da soli a Stoccolma e a Oslo in marzo, seguiti in seguito da Copenaghen e Amsterdam in giugno; infine a Nizza, dove Maciunas è accolto da Ben Vautier (dal 25 luglio al 3 agosto, prima di ritornare a New York in settembre).

Gli artisti viaggiano con i propri mezzi, verso locali gratuiti che hanno scovato essi stessi; niente onorari e, per i compositori, niente diritti (oltre alle proprie opere eseguirono composizioni di Cage, George Brecht, Bob Watts, La Monte Young, Jackson Mac Low ecc.); il coordinatore Maciunas, malgrado la sua precaria salute, passò tutte le notti a confezionare manifesti-programma il cui contenuto era spesso lontano dalle possibilità finali delle esecuzioni; in una valigia, fabbricata appositamente, trasportava i piccoli accessori; per il resto, dopo una breve discussione, si affiggeva tra le quinte il programma che poteva essere eseguito. Nel settembre 1963 Maciunas torna a New York, dove in primavera lo *Yam Festival* di George Brecht e Robert Watts aveva, in qualche modo, occupato la piazza americana. Un gruppo, tutto teorico, può allora formarsi intorno alle pubblicazioni, rappresentazioni, oggetti e film Fluxus-Maciunas. Dei progetti il 10% viene portato a termine e realizzato; di questo 10%, il 70% è distribuito gratuitamente agli ideatori; Maciunas ha praticamente prodotto tutti i progetti (tranne, in questi ultimi anni, quelli prodotti da Giancarlo Politi, Gino Di Maggio ecc.); li annuncia a seconda della richiesta e li fabbrica a mano uno per uno; nessuna contabilità e nessun problema di distribuzione (tre collezionisti nel 1975) che viene fatta dagli stessi artisti. [...] Certi lavori come quelli di Ann Halprin (rimanenze non inserite in *An Anthology*) riappaiono quindici anni più tardi. Dick Higgins fonda le edizioni Something Else Press (1963) recuperando il suo manoscritto *Jefferson's Birthday/Postface* (1964) dal dimenticatoio di Maciunas.

Nel 1964, sotto la spinta di Henry Flynt, Maciunas diventa il direttore esecutivo di un ufficio per l'azione contro la cultura imperialista (A.A.C.I.); la loro seconda azione consiste in un picchetto, l'8 settembre 1964, davanti al Judson Hall di New York in cui doveva aver luogo *Originale* di Karlheinz Stockhausen. Henry Flynt (che introdusse il concetto di "Concept Art" già nel 1961) rimprovera a Stockhausen e alla sua rivista "Die Riehe" di essere un elemento decorativo del padronato tedesco occidentale; ma soprattutto gli rimprovera una conferenza tenuta a Harvard nel 1958 in cui Stockhausen aveva denigrato il jazz; Flynt si erge difensore di tutte le musiche *autres*;



egli stesso, ex violinista di La Monte Young, compone e difende la musica hillbilly del North Carolina dove è nato (l'anno successivo impara a suonare la chitarra con Lou Reed e suona il violino con i Velvet Underground).

Flux-scisma: Paik e Higgins partecipano a *Originale* mentre Flynt, Maciunas, AY-O, Takako Saito, Tony Conrad e Ben rimangono fuori. Pioniere di SoHo, Maciunas mette in piedi sette cooperative immobiliari tra il 1967 e il 1968; a seguito del suo impegno in questo progetto sfiora la morte e infatti perde un occhio; furono battaglie incessanti con i poteri occulti e le autorità locali. Maciunas restaura questi depositi di ghisa, alcuni alcuni dei quali sono dei capolavori architettonici: vi installa riscaldamento, ascensori, pavimenti ecc., il che rende impossibile la speculazione, mentre le sistemazioni in comune assicurano per il futuro minime spese d'utilizzo che sono gestite democraticamente. Dal 1967 Jonas Mekas può così far funzionare la sua cineteca al pianterreno di 80 Wooster Street (la *Filmmaker's Film Library*): in effetti questo fu il primo luogo pubblico di SoHo, a eccezione della Flux-Hall, uno spazio minuscolo al 359 Canal Street che accoglie le performance e la bottega Fluxus al ritorno di Maciunas (1963). 80 Wooster Street presentò per la prima volta negli Stati Uniti *Origien Mysterien Theater* di Hermann Nitsch (marzo 1968) e i primi spettacoli di *Ontological-Hysterical Theater* di Richard Foreman (per non parlare dei film e – sotto l'impulso di Shigeo Kubota – dei video, soprattutto dal 1974, quando lo spazio cambia nome e diventa Anthology Film Archives). Poi nel 1969-1970 Maciunas tenta una cooperativa di sessanta membri sulla piccola Ginger Island, nelle Isole Vergini britanniche: dei 230 acri, 11 erano riservati a una colonia Fluxus: il giorno prima della firma del contratto di vendita il proprietario morì.

Negli ultimi due anni, un villaggio di 17 edifici dà ancora una volta a Maciunas l'occasione di esprimersi: un "nuovo Bauhaus" nelle campagne del Massachusetts; ma le ultime notizie dal mio amico sono tristi e deve tornare a New York minato dalla malattia, dove il 9 maggio di quest'anno 1978 muore.

<sup>1</sup> Intervista di Roger Reynolds ad Ann Arbor, dicembre 1961, in *John Cage*, C.F. Peters Editions, Francoforte 1962, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> "Tulane Drama Review", 10, n° 2, New Orleans, Winter 1965, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> D. Higgins, *Jefferson's Birthday/Postface*, Something Else Press, New York 1964, p. 66.

<sup>4</sup> In *Movens*, Wiesbaden 1960.

<sup>5</sup> In "Zero", 3, Düsseldorf 1960.

[\*Flash Art\* n° 5, 1967; ristampa 1978, n° 84-85.]

## Fluxus o del principio d'indeterminazione

Sandro Ricaldone

"Fluxus, il movimento artistico più radicale e sperimentale degli anni '60": così Harry Ruhé intitolava, una decina di anni orsono, la sua fondamentale ricognizione intorno alla vicenda di questo gruppo, di cui lo Studio Leonardi e l'Unimedia di Caterina Gualco, in collaborazione con il Centre Culturel Franco-Italien Galliera, il Goethe Institut Genua e l'Istituto di Storia dell'Arte dell'Università di Genova hanno proposto un'ampia rassegna, la prima in Italia da molti anni, imperniata su mostre, performances ed incontri di studio.

L'antecedente più definito di Fluxus è rintracciabile nella ricerca musicale "aleatoria" di John Cage, dalle esperienze musicali condotte nel 1938 sul piano, "preparato" con l'inserimento di piccoli oggetti tra le corde, a "4'33", il brano silenzioso eseguito per la prima volta da David Tudor a Woodstock nel luglio 1952, all'evento multimediale realizzato nello stesso anno al Black Mountain College. Altro precedente significativo va considerato il "combine-painting" praticato da Robert Rauschenberg. Ma la storia "ufficiale" di Fluxus inizia nel 1961, quando il termine viene utilizzato per la prima volta da George Maciunas nell'invito per il ciclo di letture "Musica Antiqua et Nova" tenuto all'AG Gallery di New York, i cui proventi dovevano finanziare una rivista così denominata.

È sempre Maciunas ad organizzare – in quello stesso anno, ancora nel suo spazio newyorkese – una serie di performances di Maxfield, Ichyanagi, Vanderbeek, Higgins, La Monte Young, Yoko Ono, Walter De Maria, tutti (o quasi tutti) frequentatori dei corsi che Cage aveva tenuto nei tardi anni '50 presso la New School of Social Research.

Altro evento importante, in questa prima fase, risulta la preparazione del volume "An Anthology", curato da La Monte Young e Jackson Mac Low e disegnato da Maciunas ("un'antologia di operazioni casuali, concept-art, anti-arte, indeterminazione, improvvisazione, lavoro non significativo, disastri naturali, piani d'azione...") da cui risulta una sorta di "manifesto" frammentato della disposizione artistica del collettivo ed un'esemplificazione concreta delle sperimentazioni dei singoli, tra i quali figurano – oltre alla maggior parte di quanti già menzionati, personaggi come George Brecht, Henry Flynt, Ray Johnson, Nam June Paik, Emmett Williams.

La pubblicazione di "An Anthology" fu ritardata sino al 1963 dal viaggio frattanto intrapreso da Maciunas in Europa dove, nel 1962, inizia l'attività vera e propria del gruppo Fluxus con i festivals di Copenhagen, Parigi (seguiti l'anno successivo da altri a Düsseldorf, Amsterdam, L'Aja, Nizza) e gli incontri di artisti europei come Vostell, Beuys, Spoerri e Ben Vautier.

Riferire dell'operatività esplicita sotto la sigla Fluxus a partire da quegli anni (attraverso concerti, eventi di vario genere – fra cui "paper events", "food events", "sport events" – films, riviste come la celebre "ccV TRE" di George Brecht, contestazioni – di cui fu oggetto, su iniziativa di Henry Flynt, Karlheinz Stockhausen, considerato esponente di una forma di imperialismo culturale – edizioni di oggetti note come "Fluxyearboxes" e "Fluxkits") sarebbe certamente troppo complesso. Vale la pena di soffermarsi, piuttosto, su alcuni caratteri intrinseci alle sue pratiche:

– il principio d'indeterminazione, anzitutto, da cui trae il titolo la manifestazione in argomento, da intendersi non tanto nella versione heisenberghiana, legata alla meccanica quantistica e comportante una visione probabilistica della causalità, quanto nell'accostamento proposto da Bachelard alla "psicologia del molteplice", in grado di cogliere il valore dell'accidentale, della varietà e del disordine che si presentano nella vita;

– l'elementarità come evento, che porta all'estremo (e qui di nuovo emerge l'influenza di Cage, profondamente segnato dal Buddismo Zen) il concetto di "wabi", valorizzazione estetica della povertà di mezzi, ponendo in essere azioni quali, ad esempio, l'accensione e lo spegnimento di una lampadina;

– la spersonalizzazione dell'arte, che nel decretare l'esaurimento della sua configurazione mitico-individualistica, spogliandola di ogni aura, la reintroduce nel quotidiano e le conferisce un'agibilità di massa;

– l'intermedialità propensione all'impiego ed alla commistione di tecniche espressive diverse, derivata dalla dissoluzione degli schemi della parcellizzazione paleo-industriale nella continuità e nella globalità introdotte dall'avvento dei media elettronici, anch'essi precocemente assunti nell'operare degli esponenti di Fluxus (in specie da Nam June Paik).

In questa modalità a-sistematica, che rigenera l'arte non attraverso una negazione eroica (come nel caso di Dada) ma avvalendosi delle pratiche "deboli" del gioco, dello humour, dell'azzardo: che non riscatta l'oggetto d'uso immettendolo nell'ambito artistico ma traspone piuttosto quest'ultimo al livello del banale e della produzione di serie, si coglie – insieme alla "sparizione dell'avanguardia" come progetto forte, totalizzante – il primo manifestarsi del paradigma del postmoderno (che, a sua volta, è tutt'altra cosa del pot-pourri iperdecorativo propinatoci in anni recenti).

Non a caso, asserzioni Fluxus come "l'arte è facile" e "tutto è arte" corrispondono alla tesi lyotardiana secondo cui l'opera d'arte "può essere letta in qualsiasi modo" né è mera coincidenza che Ihab Hassan abbia definito l'epoca postmoderna come età dell'indeterminanza (indeterminazione + immanenza), riassumendone le componenti in un elenco che fra l'altro contempla gioco/caso/ anarchia/silenzio/processo/decostruzione/paratassi/combinazione/ironia.

[S. Ricaldone, *Fluxus o del principio di indeterminazione*, Studio Leonardi, Unimedia, Goethe Institut Genua, Centre Culturel Galliera, Università di Genova, Genova 1988.]

### Fluxus, Flirt, Feminist?

#### Carolee Schneemann, Sexual Liberation and the Avant-garde of the 1960s

Anette Kubitzka

In 1963, Carolee Schneemann embarked on the expansion of one of her wooden "painting constructions" that filled her Manhattan loft. She included her nude body. In a series of transformations entitled *Eye Body*, the artist established her body as visual territory, interacting with various materials such as paint, chalk, ropes, plastic sheeting, mirror glass, animal fur, a bull's horn, and two live snakes. Despite its affinity to works by Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg, and Yves Klein, *Eye Body* remained largely unnoticed by the avant-garde at that time and was, at best, met with sexist comments.<sup>1</sup> However, in the 1970s, *Eye Body* was re-contextualized within the new feminist movement. This piece and others from the 1960s were firmly placed into the canon of feminist art. In the 1970s, *Eye Body* was identified with the great goddess movement (remember the snakes), as well as with feminist explorations of the female body. Later, in the 1980s, the artist was criticized for catering in her work to essentialist ideas and male fantasies. And lastly, in the 1990s, Schneemann was catapulted into the ranks of so-called bad girl artists such as Karen Finley and Annie Sprinkle, since her work shared the transgressive sexual boldness prevalent in this more recent turn in feminist art.

[...]

In the early 1960s, Schneemann's art was deeply embedded in the formal and philosophical considerations of the New York avant-garde. Trained as a landscape painter, she realized as a master's student in Illinois in the early 1960s that, as she put it, "painting was dead".<sup>2</sup> Like artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Claes Oldenburg, Allan Kaprow, Robert Morris, and the Fluxus group, Schneemann struggled with the hegemonic legacy of Abstract Expressionism. She introduced everyday objects and images into her "painting-constructions" and was concerned with the expansion of the two-dimensional canvas into space and time. Whatever has been attached to *Eye Body* in later years, its driving force at that time was the artist's interest in exploring the properties of materials, including flesh and the moving body.<sup>3</sup> Schneemann became the first visual artist to collaborate with the Judson Dance Theater in Greenwich Village, a group of dancers concerned with introducing commonplace gestures and minimalist movement. Alongside well-known avant-garde dancers such as Yvonne Rainer, Judith Dunn, and Trisha Brown, she staged several of her early performance pieces. The artist also participated in performances by her male colleagues, such as in Claes Oldenburg's Ray Gun Theater productions, Bob Morris' *Site* and danced a nude solo with a parachute in Oldenburg's *Waves and Washes*.

However, Schneemann later characterized her role in those years as an outsider. She did not feel treated by her male colleagues as a serious collaborator but rather as a "body beautiful". The artist once wrote that she felt like the "Cunt Mascot on the men's art team" [...], a questionable element since I could never play your games your ways [...].<sup>4</sup> Her assessment might be surprising. After all, some other female artists such as Yoko Ono, Alison Knowles, and Shigeko Kubota seemed more accepted in that avant-garde. Further, with its emphasis on the body and open eroticism, Schneemann's work ought to have melded perfectly with the increasing sexual explicitness in the art of that period. How did Schneemann's representations differ from that of her contemporaries, male and female?

Depictions of body and sexuality at that time were depersonalized, ironic, sterile, theatricalized, and curiously void of passion. Examples include Tom Wesselmann's coolly painted paper dolls beaming with the seductiveness of consumer goods; Yvonne Rainer's and Steve Paxton's minimalist dance *Word Words* in which the two dancers, nude except for G-strings, carried out the exact same sequence of simple movements, which distracted attention not only from their sexual dif-

ference but from sexuality itself; Yoko Ono's mocking series of buttocks filling the screen in her *Film No. 4 (Bottoms)*, a humorous contribution to mainstream culture's obsession with certain body parts and an homage to the liberalization of cinema; Andy Warhol's camp pornographic movies which depicted a subculture of fluid sexual orientation and identity; Kenneth Anger's underground classic *Scorpio Rising*, in which he portrayed the fetishistic, leather-bound homoeroticism of a biker gang, and the highly theatrical orgies of Jack Smith's film *Flaming Creatures*, in which actors of questionable gender, in different states of dress and undress, dominate the screen.

These examples have in common that they deny the idea of an "unmediated", "organic", or "natural" sexuality. They do not just reflect a concern for more liberated sexual values. Rather, the emotionally detached quality in these representations marks an emerging awareness of the social constructedness of gender and sexuality and its political implications. Avant-garde artists in the 1960s anticipated and prepared the gay rights movement, feminism with its critique of phallocentrism, and poststructuralist analyses. Schneemann's approach to inject her art with joyful, heterosexual passion seems, at first glance, retrograde and naive. I propose, however, that the artist developed an independent aesthetic and sexual politics that do not only undermine patriarchal values, but also constitute themselves beyond narrowly defined feminist and gay politics.

While minimalism, conceptualism, finish fetish, and leather culture became fashionable in the art around her, Schneemann did not shy away from raw edges, messy materials, and passion. In her Kinetic Theatre piece *Meat Joy* (1964), Schneemann abandoned the confinements of the canvas for a multi-sensual space, in which visual pleasures were combined with tactile joys, smells and sounds. The approximately one-hour long performance was shown first at the Paris Festival de la Libre Expression, in a modified version in London, and lastly at the Judson Church in Manhattan. The cast consisted of four men and four women, including Schneemann. Clad in trunks and elaborately decorated bikinis, the performers interacted with mounds of paper, flashlights, transparent plastic sheeting, raw chicken, sausages, smelly fish, wet paint, and each other's bodies. The performance was accompanied by a sound-collage of Paris street noises and latest hits.

[...]

In an effort to bring all senses into the arena of performance, Schneemann welcomed the bodily smells and secretions that were created in the process, which are considered taboo especially in regard to women's bodies. In 1963 she wrote into her notebook about women's sexuality: "These women are fastidious: the living beast of their flesh embarrasses them; they are trained to shame... blood, mucus, juices, odors of their flesh fill them with fear. They have some abstracted wish for pristine, immaculate sex... cardboard soaked in perfume."<sup>5</sup> The smell of cheap perfume, which the artist had giddily sprayed into the audience at the beginning, was soon replaced by the odor of sweating bodies, oozing chicken, smoked sausages, and dead fish.

While Schneemann worked on *Meat Joy*, she began her first film *Fuses*.<sup>6</sup> In *Fuses*, the artist interspersed graphic shots of her companion James Tenney and herself making love, with views of her ever-watching cat Kitch, the surrounding landscape, and images of the domestic environment which anchor the couple's sexuality in their everyday life. Schneemann attempted to communicate the sexual experience through an elaborate, highly innovative post-cinematic editing process that was influenced by the experimental films of Stan Brakhage. As David James has shown in his excellent analysis of this film, Schneemann took Brakhage's approach a step further. She transported the intense emotions between the lovers directly onto the celluloid. She manipulated the original footage by fragmenting and superimposing the images, and by scratching and painting on it, as well as by exposing it to weather, acids, and, last but not least, to heat in an oven.<sup>7</sup> The explicit sexual images were considerably distorted in the process, and a rather abstract image evolved that at times unrecognizably fused male and female body parts into a flow of colors and movements as in the process of lovemaking itself.

Instead of rendering a sexual narrative that follows a climactic structure typical in conventional (porn) movies, Schneemann organized her images rhythmically. She constantly interrupted, fragmented, dissolved, collaged and repeated the images.

While conventional films rely on the notorious cum-shot to signify the climax, and rather ineptly render the feelings involved, Schneemann was concerned with the complexity of the sexual experience, for both, men and women. In *Fuses* the highpoints of sexual passion are conveyed by a convulsive densification of imagery.

As one male contemporary critic, unsure of Schneemann's sex, wrote: "The cultural history of male America has passed down too much shit for a man to have made *Fuses*, which views love-making subjectively, from within. The interior view [in *Fuses*] is both more erotic and less pornographic, more like doing it than watching it. An American male would have to uncloud his eyes of several thousand playmates to see things that way."<sup>8</sup> With her treatment of imagery in *Fuses*, Schneemann undermined the objectifying mechanisms of fetishism and voyeurism heavily at work in conventional cinema.

The artist has noted repeatedly that her study of Reich's writings was influential in her work.<sup>9</sup> Schneemann had become acquainted with his books in 1960, at a time when their distribution was illegal in the United States.<sup>10</sup> To summarize, Reich contended that total mental and physical health was impossible in the absence of complete sexual satisfaction. In his psychoanalytic practice he found that dammed-up libidinal energy results in neurosis. Total discharge of this energy, he claimed, would only happen if the individual possessed "orgastic potency" which he described as "the capacity to surrender to the flow of biological energy, free of any inhibitions, [...] to discharge completely the dammed-up sexual excitation through involuntary, pleasurable convulsions of the body."

[...]

Reich, who had fled from the Nazis-regime, eventually found refuge in the United States in 1939. Ironically, however, his persecution did not end there. In the late 1940s, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) began to investigate him and declared his orgone accumulator "fraud of the first magnitude."<sup>11</sup> The agency sought legal action against Reich, which led to a court order in 1956 demanding the destruction of the accumulators, the withdrawal of several of Reich's books from the market, and even the burning of literature concerning the device and Reich's orgone theory.<sup>12</sup> Reich himself was imprisoned in 1957, technically not for fraud, but because he had not complied with a court injunction. Reich died in prison only months later. Interest in Reich's ideas diminished after the FDA intervention. It was only in the mid-1960s that the Reich's writings were rediscovered by the counterculture, and several of his books were reissued, illegally at first.<sup>13</sup>

[...]

It is not surprising that *Meat Joy* and *Fuses* were subject to government censorship in the 1960s, when obscenity laws regarding nudity were strictly enforced. Originally, Schneemann had planned to have the performers of *Meat Joy* be nude. However, the moral decency laws in Europe and the US at that time did not allow naked performers in motion. At the performances in Paris and New York, police informants and members of various moral decency groups were present. As Schneemann recounted, the performance in London was interrupted by the police, and the actors had to flee via the back exit.<sup>14</sup>

*Fuses* was considered one of the most outrageous underground films in the 1960s and censored in several instances by government authorities. It was one of two films seized by the Los Angeles police for obscenity and for not complying with the laws concerning sexual activity on the screen, when it was shown in a special program of underground films.<sup>15</sup> In a more recent case of censorship, *Fuses* was taken out of a program of sexuality in American film shown at a Moscow film festival in 1989. It was scheduled to be screened among Russ Meyer's *Beyond the Valley of the*

*Dolls*, Spike Lee's *She's Gotta Have It*, and Steven Soderbergh's *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* but after an unscheduled opening night showing was not rescheduled.<sup>16</sup>

Schneemann was, by no means, the only avant-garde artist whose work was subject to government censorship in the 1960s. Other banned works include Smith's film *Flaming Creatures*, a transvestite orgy of sexual pleasure, several of Kenneth Anger's films, Ono's *Bottoms*, and Charlotte Moorman's topless cello-solo in Nam June Paik's composition *Opera Sextronique*, which landed her in prison. These works questioned traditional ideas about sexuality and breached the accepted moral codes and, sometimes, laws, as well.

However, in Schneemann's case, some extreme reactions by her audiences, as well as her marginalization within the avant-garde, surprise. During a performance of *Meat Joy* in Paris, a man from the audience came on to the stage and tried to strangle Schneemann. Recalling this incident, the artist wrote: "Steeped in the writings of Wilhelm Reich I understood what had affected him but not how to break his hold on my neck!"<sup>17</sup> Eventually, three women threw themselves on the man and dragged him off the stage. By the time *Fuses* was released in 1967, the Hippie movement was celebrating its Free Love ethic in the Haight Ashbury Summer of Love, and communes were blossoming in Europe. Still, when the film was shown in Cannes in 1968, where it received a special jury award, a group of about forty men slashed the theater seats with razors, threw the shredded padding around and shouted, apparently airing their distress about unfulfilled expectations....

Schneemann's ambivalent role within the avant-garde manifested itself most pointedly in her official excommunication from the Fluxus group in the mid-1960s, a group with which Schneemann was associated through common interests and friends. Several of her performances in the early 1960s, such as her *Glass Environment for Sound and Motion*, were staged with well-known Fluxus artists such as Dick Higgins and Philip Corner. She later also collaborated with Yoko Ono and Shigeko Kubota, both highly accepted members of the Fluxus group. While Schneemann cannot be considered a Fluxus artist per se, the severe judgement against her work by the ideological leader of this group, George Maciunas, who gave other female artists a fairly comfortable dwelling,<sup>18</sup> sheds light on some of the problems that her art posed to the New York avant-garde. He characterized her work as "operatic", "political", "sexual", "metaphoric" and "messy". In a later statement, Schneemann expressed her ambivalent standing:

"fluxus can be lots of fun when the boys let you on their boat  
sometimes they throw you off the boat  
you have to be NEAT all your words games philosophy  
and things you make have to be NEAT (except for wolf and claes  
they can smear their pages it's o.k.)  
if you don't wear underpants or show your pussy you get pushed over the side [...]"<sup>19</sup>

The sexual explicitness of Schneemann's work may well have been used as a pretext to censor it in the 1960s. I want to suggest, however, that some extreme audience reactions to her work and its marginalization within the avant-garde and later in feminism are due to the fact that she injected her art with sexual passion.<sup>20</sup>

Schneemann's particular representations of body and sexuality posed an open threat to patriarchy (and I include a good portion of the 1960s avant-garde here) by challenging a phallogocentric, controlled sexuality and its visual representations. By using the naked female body permissively and by presenting sexuality, including heterosexuality, as a joyful experience, Schneemann's work also ran counter to later feminist ideas about this subject. While accepted as an initiator of feminist body and performance art and appropriated as role model by various feminist artists, her

work has been continuously criticized for not complying with a narrowly defined feminist correctness in the field of vision.<sup>21</sup>

Schneemann, one could argue, is a naïve child of the sexual revolution. Though keenly aware of women's discrimination in the art world and of the misrepresentation of women's sexuality in dominant culture, it is likely that Schneemann was one of the women who objected to early feminist analysis of the male-female power relations in the bedroom.<sup>22</sup> Kate Millet was right, of course, when she stated that sexual intercourse does not take place in a cultural vacuum. It would be short sighted, however, to interpret Schneemann's early representations of the women's body as sheer ignorance in feminist terms. A closer look at *Meat Joy* shows, that by defiling the bodies of the female performers, Schneemann consciously disrupted dominant notions of the female body as beautiful spectacle and of female sexuality as pristine. And, my analysis of *Fuses* shows that Schneemann quite systematically undermined the very premises on which gender specific visual pleasure in the cinema is based, assumptions feminist film critics began to expose only in the mid-1970s.<sup>23</sup>

Further, while there is no doubt that *Meat Joy* and *Fuses* are built on heterosexual love-making, a closer look reveals that they are not merely about heterosexuality. Amidst the tangle of bodies and materials in *Meat Joy*, or the grid of spots, scratches, and colors over(p)laying the sexual imagery in *Fuses*, it becomes impossible to define exactly what we are looking at. In those sequences, a coherent body image defined as male or female is dissolved. For Schneemann it becomes irrelevant whether we can decipher female or male body parts, plucked chicken legs or hot dogs, menstrual blood or red paint, white dots or ejaculate, as it is the complex sensual experience involved in the action that she tried to capture. The artist made bodily sensations and pleasures themselves her subject.

Schneemann's crusade for the acceptance and validity of unmediated bodily sensations continued to permeate her work into the 1980s, as the correspondence with a fellow artist testifies. After watching Schneemann, then in her early forties, performing nude in her *Fresh Blood: A Dream Morphology*, artist colleague Dick Higgins suggested that she should find a beautiful, young feminist artist who should operate as a surrogate, a stand-in for Schneemann in her performances.<sup>24</sup> Apart from Higgins' blatant bias against the erotic portrayal of a middle-aged woman, such a suggestion misses the core of Schneemann's work, which is exactly to criticize substitute experiences. The artist responded thus that it would be "a shame to forgo the opportunity to perform as an ambivalent-erotic. I have only one chance to be middle aged, right? So why not see what that tells? I can be the wrinkled knees I once wished off 'the stage' [...], the double chin, rounded belly, etc..."<sup>25</sup> Schneemann's answer to Higgins' insulting suggestions emphasizes that her work centers on her body and her (sensual) experiences in an immediate way, and in that also does not make a claim to represent "everywoman".

[...]

I do not mean to suggest that Schneemann's work in the 1960s and thereafter was exclusively influenced by Reich. However, I find an acknowledgement of his influence, in view of the artist's intense study of the psychologist's writings, crucial in understanding Schneemann's individual brand of sexual aesthetics and politics, as well as her continued marginalization.<sup>26</sup> Both, Reich and Schneemann, have mined a sensitive spot in this society in their work. By making a claim for the validity and necessity of physical sensations in a sexual as well as in a cultural-political context, they are rebelling against a society preoccupied with the visual, the make-believe, the surrogate, and, last but not least, the construct.

<sup>1</sup> For sexist comments about *Eye Body* see Carolee Schneemann, interview with Rebecca Schneider in Schneider: *The Explicit Body in Performance* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 37. *Eye Body* can be interpreted as combining and transcending Pollock's Action Painting, in which the painter's body became a moving agent, Klein's *Anthropométries*, in which

the artist used women as live paintbrushes, and Rauschenberg's *Combine Paintings*, in which he used everyday objects and images in order to bridge the gap between life and art. In *EyeBody* Schneemann was an active agent using herself as an additional material and ground.

<sup>2</sup> See Carolee Schneemann's *Labyrinth* (University of Illinois, 1960), Carolee Schneemann Papers, #95000, box 1/1960-67, file: *Labyrjnth*, 1960, Getty Research Institute.

<sup>3</sup> In an interview with art historian Moira Roth in 1979 Schneemann stated that when she did *Eye Body*, her traditions were still so painterly that she would have objected very strenuously to the literary implications of autobiography. She rather, at that time, saw the body as a primary material that she wanted to explore, as she explored other materials such as metal, glass, and plastic. See the unpublished interview in the Carolee Schneemann Papers, #950001, box 14, file: Censorship, 1990, Getty Research Institute.

<sup>4</sup> Carolee Schneemann *More than Meat Joy: Complete Performance Works and Selected Writings* (New Paltz, NY: Documentext, 1997 (1979) p. 196.

<sup>5</sup> Schneemann, *More than Meat Joy* p. 58.

<sup>6</sup> Schneemann's film *Fuses* was shot with a 16mm camera. It is silent, ca. 22 minutes long at 24 frames per second (sometimes screened at 16 frames per second), and was first shown around 1967-68. The video version of 1992 is about 18 minutes long.

<sup>7</sup> For my analysis of *Fuses I* am indebted to Scott MacDonald's insightful essay "Carolee Schneemann's Autobiographical Trilogy", *Film Quarterly* 34:1 (Fall 1980), 27-32 and his interview with the artist in his *A Critical Cinema: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988) pp.134-151, as well as to David James' excellent structural analysis of this film in his *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989) pp. 317-321.

<sup>8</sup> Dave Mc Cullough, "Eat Movies", *San Francisco Express Times* (February 25, 1968[?]).

<sup>9</sup> Schneemann mentioned the influence of Wilhelm Reich's theories on her work repeatedly in her *More than Meat Joy*, beginning with the preface, p. 7. She also discussed the importance of Reich's ideas in her work in an interview with the author, New York, August 7, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> Schneemann, interview with the author, New York, August 7, 1997.

<sup>11</sup> Jerome Greenfield, *Wilhelm Reich vs. the U.S.A.*, New York, NY: Norton and Company, 1974, p. 66.

<sup>12</sup> It is not yet clear, whether some of Reich's Books unrelated to his orgone research were burned, as well. While the FDA denied these charges, co-workers of Reich, who witnessed the burning, called this denial a cover-up. See Greenfield, *Wilhelm Reich vs. the U.S.A.*, p. 253.

<sup>13</sup> While ideas on biopsychiatric orgone therapy found widespread application in an allied system of therapy called bioenergetics, the New Left became interested in Reich's early politically inclined writings, such as in Paul A. Robinson *The Freudian Left* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1969). For the reception of Reich in the 1960s, see Greenfield, *Wilhelm Reich vs. the U.S.A.*, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> See Carolee Schneemann, "The Obscene Body/Politic", *Art Journal* 50:4 (Winter 1991), p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> See "Police Seize two Underground films" (July 19, 1969), Carolee Schneemann Papers #950001, box 64, file: Film and Performance Clippings, 1969, Getty Research Institute.

<sup>16</sup> See Carolee Schneemann, "Notes from the Underground: A Feminist Pornographer in Moscow", *The Independent* (March 1992), pp. 23-25.

<sup>17</sup> Schneemann, *More than Meat Joy*, p. 194.

<sup>18</sup> Among the female artist George Maciunas accepted into the Fluxus group were Shigeko Kubota, Yoko Ono, and Mieko Shiomi. He, in fact, was close friends with Kubota and named her vice president of the movement, and he was deeply impressed by democratic nature of Ono's early conceptual works, which he help up as an example of Fluxus ideals.

<sup>19</sup> Carolee Schneemann quoted in: *Ubi Fluxus ibi motus, 1990-1962* (Milano, Italy: Mazzotta, 1990), p. 89. Schneemann's exclusion from the American Fluxus-movement continues today. Her affiliation with that group still remains unacknowledged in major US-American compilations of Fluxus art. Editor's note: For a discussion of the relation to "mess" see Joanna Frueh "Making a Mess, Women's Bane, Women's Pleasure", in K. Deepwell (ed.), *Women Artists and Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 142-158.

<sup>20</sup> One can argue, that with her hedonist approach Schneemann fit more readily into the European Happenings movement which tended to be openly political, sexual, and, in particular the work of the Viennese Actionists, utterly messy. In spite of these similarities, the aggressive sexuality of these actions was quite contrary to Schneemann's positive approach.

<sup>21</sup> At a showing of *Fuses* at the Art Institute in Chicago in the early 1970s, a group of lesbians became extremely angry

because the film did not provide a role model for them. *Fuses* has further been criticized for offering the naked female body, and therefore inviting appropriation by male culture as pornography.

<sup>22</sup> Judith Hole and Ellen Levine noted about this objection that "[W]omen who believed that they were defining their own sexuality, by virtue of their freedom to have sexual relations whenever they chose, resisted the notion that their sexuality was still defined by men." In Hole and Levine, *Rebirth of Feminism* (New York, NY: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 221. The authors also state that Anne Koedt's essay "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm", first distributed in 1968, prior to its publication in 1970, met with resistance within the new women's movement. The authors expected that women would have felt a sense of psychological liberation at Koedt's "discovery", which countered the notion that full maturity into womanhood depended on moving from clitoral to vaginal orgasms, maintained by Freud and his followers. See page 220.

<sup>23</sup> See Laura Mulvey's influential essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", *Screen* 16 (Fall 1975), pp. 6-18.

<sup>24</sup> Dick Higgins in a letter to Schneemann, March 10, 1981. Carolee Schneemann Papers, # 950001, box 37, file: Higgins, Dick, Getty Research Institute.

<sup>25</sup> Carolee Schneemann in an undated answer to Dick Higgins. Carolee Schneemann Papers, JI 950001, box 37, file: Higgins, Dick, Getty Research Institute. See the entire correspondence regarding Higgins' criticism in this file.

<sup>26</sup> It is interesting to note that Schneemann has openly rejected the interpretation of her work in Freudian terms. Schneemann, for example, does not consider the umbrella, which frequently appears in her work, as a phallic object but a manifestation of vulvic space, which unfolds when you open it. See Henry M. Sayre, *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde Since 1970* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 171f. At a performance of her *Up to and Including Her Limits* in the mid 1970s, in which Schneemann was swinging naked in a harness, a man in the audience, well-known sociologist Erving Goffman, maintained that the artist's use of a rope evoked ideas of sado-masochistic pleasure. Schneemann objected that his interpretation disregarded the actual feelings involved, and that the motion of swinging for her triggered pleasurable childhood memories. Dick Higgins came to her aid claiming that "the rope is innocent". Schneemann related this incidence in a public lecture at the University of California in Santa Barbara, January 25, 1994.

[In Anette Kubitz's dissertation *Fluxus, Flirt, Feminismus? Carolee Schneemanns Körperkunst und die Avantgarde*, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2002.]

### Fluxus Feminus

Kathy O'Dell

There's no denying it: Fluxus was an inclusive operation. The 1993 retrospective exhibition *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, brilliantly organized by Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss of the Walker Art Center, confirmed that there were probably more women and artists of color associated with Fluxus than with any other previous grouping of artists in Western art history. This is no insignificant fact, given the origins of Fluxus in the early 1960s in the wake of the seemingly monolithic, white, male-dominated phenomenon of Abstract Expressionism. Charlotte Moorman, Nam June Paik, Alison Knowles, Benjamin Patterson, Carolee Schneemann, Kate Millett, Shigeko Kubota, and Yoko Ono are only a few of the artists who at one time or another were associated with Fluxus and were represented in the exhibition.

Inclusivity is a relative term, however, and when it comes to figuring Fluxus into the discourse on, say, gender issues, the title of this exhibition should be taken very seriously. For it was, indeed, "in the *spirit* of Fluxus" that its practices be inclusive. But the historical reality was somewhat different — a history impossible to document in exhibition format due to the amorphous nature of its underpinnings. It is this history I wish to explore here, in an effort to expose those underpinnings and the affect they had on work by women associated with the artistic activities that came to be known as "Fluxus".

As is well-documented in numerous texts, one of the most recent being the substantive catalog that accompanied the exhibition (see Armstrong and Rothfuss 1993), it was Lithuanian architect and graphic designer George Maciunas who in 1962 bestowed the name "Fluxus" on an array of international artists who shared a particular sensibility from which they would work for many years, up to and including the present moment. For the same amount of time, this shared sensibility has defied firm definition — a predictable and no doubt intentional outcome of Maciunas's neologizing a name for the group from a root word signifying constant change and transition.

The Fluxus retrospective, which in January of 1996 finished a three-year tour through the United States and Europe, revealed certain characteristics common in much of the artists' work — wit, love of language games, a purposeful childlikeness. But, very accurately, the exhibition revealed no unifying sense of style, form, or content that might ever allow Fluxus to be pigeonholed. It was precisely this lack of stable identity — a condition stunningly prescient of postmodern art practices — that opened Fluxus up to wide participation but also, it would appear from a close look at Fluxus history, closed off that possibility. Between 1962 and his death in 1978, Maciunas carried out frequent acts of excommunication which were paradoxically motivated, I believe, by unconscious factors — the "amorphous underpinnings" of Fluxus history — that are part and parcel of acts of destabilization.

Fluxus archivist Harry Ruhé has documented one of Maciunas's more consummate dismissals in his flamboyantly entitled book *Fluxus, the most radical and experimental art movement of the sixties*. He quotes a letter he received from George Maciunas in November 1975: "[Charlotte] Moorman is on a Flux-blacklist which means that I boycott and do not cooperate with any exhibit, gallery, concert hall or individual that ever included her in any program or show, past and future" (in Ruhé 1979: n.p.). It was not only work by Fluxus women, however, that suffered from exclusionary practices. Ruhé quotes another section of the above letter in which Maciunas categorically brushes aside Joseph Beuys, Philip Corner, Toshi Ichihyanagi, Takehisa Kosugi, Jackson Mac Low, Robin Page, Terry Riley, Tomas Schmit, Wim T. Schippers, and Wolf Vostell, claiming they had "nothing to do with Fluxus — ever" (1979: n.p.). Despite the absoluteness of this last proclamation, excommunications were not necessarily final. Alison Knowles, for example, has reported that she and

Dick Higgins were once excommunicated by Maciunas for presenting a concert in Sweden that was not in keeping with a preferred list of events he had sent them — sent too late, that is, for them to change their plans (Knowles 1993). The excommunication was fleeting, however, as it was with many of the individuals on the above list, a fact that can be witnessed from the volume of these two artists' works considered by Maciunas to have qualified as Fluxus, several of which were included in the *In the Spirit of Fluxus* exhibition.

Such stories of excommunication — often temporary — of female *and* male Fluxus artists abound. Nonetheless, even when excommunications were not official, final, or even clearly stated, it was more often than not the female artists who took such responses seriously.

It is the latter stories that are of interest to me, but not in terms of searching out gossip details of who was officially excommunicated from Fluxus when. Rather, I wish to stay focused on the phenomenon of exclusion, its practice, and its possible root causes. Given the fact that exclusionary practices have plagued artists throughout history-up to and including, especially, the last several years in the United States (Karen Finley, Tim Miller, John Fleck, Holly Hughes, the late David Wojnarowicz, and Ron Athey are only a few of the more high-profile names that can be cited) — speculating on causes is not only warranted, but imperative.

It is my contention that the root cause of these practices, at least in part, has to do with the relationship in the work between *body* and *text*. And I mean these terms to be taken in the most down-to-earth way: *body*, as the actual physical entity of the artist; *text*, as the words the artist uses or produces. More to the point, it is, perhaps, the threat this relationship poses to dominant forms of power, when exploited — especially by women — that prompted dismissal of certain artists and/or certain of their works from the canon of Fluxus production. (In the case of Fluxus, that power was initially embodied by Maciunas, and then by those who followed his lead.) I say "especially by women" since it has been thought within Western and some Eastern traditions that concerns related to the body rest more in the domain of women, and textual concerns in the domain of men. Put the two on a collision course and there is bound to be a volatile outcome.

"Volatility" is the key word here and one that readily comes to mind when one thinks of the infamous combination of Karen Finley's chocolate-and-tinsel covered body in *We Keep Our Victims Ready* (1990) and her earsplitting text about the perception of women as nothing but shit (symbolized by the chocolate) and decorative objects (symbolized by the tinsel). In order to get at the sticky issue of exclusionary practices within Fluxus, it is necessary now to step back and ask some basic questions: What precisely was the relationship between body and text in Fluxus? What did it look like? What did it suggest?

I am going to concentrate on only a few examples of work, many of them performance pieces, by women who at one time or another were associated with Fluxus. Body-text relationships are most obviously explored in the arena of performance, where the activities of both the artist's body and her text (whether the text be taped, read aloud, or printed) are often experienced simultaneously. However, as Kristine Stiles has pointed out in her essay in the catalog for *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, all Fluxus production is "performative" in nature (1993:65). Indeed, whether it be an object like Kate Millett's 1967 *Stool*, a simple event score like George Brecht's 1962 *3 Piano Pieces* which simply reads "standing/sitting/walking", or an entire evening of live events-a "concert", as Fluxus artists would call such an evening — the activation of the body is implicit, if not totally explicit.

Many works by Kate Millett and Carolee Schneemann serve as examples of, respectively, implicitly and explicitly performative pieces. Both these artists were at one time "officially" associated with Fluxus. An examination of the relationship between body and text in a selection of pieces they produced both during and after their official Fluxus tenure, along with a brief look at a more subtle form of prohibition experienced by consistently official Fluxus artists Yoko Ono and Shigeko Kubota, will elucidate some of the motivating factors in exclusionary practices within Fluxus.

In 1975 Schneemann presented a performance entitled *Interior Scroll* for "Women Here & Now", a program of events held in a church in East Hampton, Long Island. *Interior Scroll* brought together elements operative in Schneemann's work at least since her 1962 contribution to an evening of performances organized by Dick Higgins and Philip Corner at the Living Theatre in New York. There, in *Glass Environment for Sound and Motion*, she "collaged" the stage with broken mirrors and safety glass, then encouraged performers to move through the environment in an effort to "find and develop personal motivations by immediate contact with materials and each other" (Schneemann 1979:21). As Philip Corner and Malcolm Goldstein played music, Schneemann shone high-powered flashlights on the performers, producing an effect of "drawing with light". From this performance through subsequent performances at the Judson Church and elsewhere, Schneemann continued to demonstrate a devotion to processes of drawing and painting.

Schneemann also remained committed to a combinatory use of body and text. That is, the body, according to her foundational theory, was to function as responsively as the human eye: text was to be incorporated in the form of audiotaped voice-overs, text recited aloud, or written documentation that could serve as inspiration for subsequent performances, akin to the use of scores in Fluxus. *Interior Scroll* brought these features together with Schneemann's feelings toward how she had been received in the art world to date.

Schneemann entered the performance space wrapped in a sheet, under which she wore a small, decorative apron tied at the waist. She disrobed, climbed onto a table, and proceeded to outline the contours of her body with brushstrokes of dark paint, intermittently taking up what she calls "action poses", like those implemented in life-drawing classes. Throughout, she read from her 1975 book *Cézanne, She Was a Great Painter* (Schneemann 1975). At the end of this segment, she dropped the book, stood up on the table, and performed the most frequently reproduced portion of this piece. Legs apart, knees slightly bent, Schneemann slowly extracted from her vaginal "interior" a long "scroll" of paper from which she read a text that began:

I met a happy man  
a structuralist filmmaker  
— but don't call me that  
it's something else I do —  
he said we are fond of you  
you are charming  
but don't ask us  
to look at your films  
we cannot  
there are certain films  
we cannot look at  
the personal clutter  
the persistence of feelings  
the hand-touch sensibility  
the diaristic indulgence  
the painterly mess  
the dense gestalt  
the primitive techniques [...] (1979:238)

The complaints of the filmmaker in this quasi-narrative are reminiscent of those of Maciunas, who, in his excommunication of Schneemann a decade earlier, pronounced her, she recalls, "guilty of Baroque tendencies, overt sexuality, and theatrical excess." Why this alleged inability "to look" on the part

of the male filmmaker in the narrative, or the inability "to include" on the part of Maciunas? Performance theorist Jeanie Forte suggests an answer that builds on French feminist thought, namely the theories of Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray who claim that an inextricable bond exists between female sexuality and writing or, said more plainly, between woman's body and text (see Forte 1990:259ff).

These theories have been hotly debated for over a decade, but Forte maintains that any dissent concerning this bond

becomes pointedly rhetorical with women's performance art [...]. The very placement of the female body in the context of performance art positions a woman and her sexuality as speaking subject, an action that cuts across numerous sign-systems [...]. The semiotic havoc created by such a strategy combines physical presence, real time, and real women in dissonance with their representations, threatening the patriarchal structure with the revolutionary text of their actual bodies. (1990:260)

Forte goes on to address Schneemann's *Interior Scroll* specifically, claiming that "it seems as though [Schneemann's] vagina itself is reporting [...] sexism" (260). "Semiotic havoc" is not only the province of performance art, however, as Schneemann proved in her contribution to the book *Fantastic Architecture*, edited in 1969 by Fluxus artists Dick Higgins and Wolf Vostell — a book that included works by Fluxus and non-Fluxus artists. As part of her essay on "Parts of a Body House", in which enlarged organs of the body serve as sculptural environments for human activity, Schneemann displayed a nude self-portrait (Schneemann 1969). The image of her body appears across the middle of the book, with semitransparent pages of text separating the two parts of the picture. The superimposition of Schneemann's body and text constitutes a send-up of the *Playboy* centerfold tradition. Unlike *Playboy* centerfolds, however, which typically feature women in poses configured by men, Schneemann's self-portrait is in a position of her own construction, poised as if ready to pounce, eyes assertively, if not warily, trained on the viewer. With the semitransparent pages of text cutting across the picture, her body, no matter how you look at it, cannot be seen as a totalized and thus more easily controlled entity. Only Schneemann's body *and* text, superimposed and inter-related, can be seen as a totality — one whose agency rests with the artist herself. But something's wrong with this picture: that which has been left out.

Besides the written text for "Parts of a Body House", Schneemann had expected that the editors would include the detailed drawings of the various "body rooms", such as "Guerilla Gut Room" and "Genitals Play Room". While the ostensible reason for the work not to be included was financial — understandable on a conscious level — is it too speculative to imagine that on an *unconscious* level, the editors may have felt that to include yet another form of "Fluxus Feminus" representation would only have increased the excessiveness of the body-text relationship already inherent in the "centerfold"?

It would appear that it was a similar exercise of agency and excessiveness, launched from a provocative relationship between body and text, that prompted Kate Millett's disappearance from the Fluxus camp. In Millett's case, however, there was no formal exclusion carried out, simply the end of her inclusion.

Millett met Maciunas in the mid-1960s and, as the documents compiled by archivist Jon Hendricks in *Fluxus Codex* show (1988:403-05), between 1967 and 1969 Maciunas considered mass-producing some of Millett's objects, including *Stool*, which is pictured in the *Codex*. A plain wooden stool with a cushioned seat and each leg stuck into an everyday shoe, *Stool* displays typical Fluxus principles of wit and surreal juxtaposition — here, the juxtaposition of movability and stasis. According

to Millett, it was the dada fun and surreal transformation inherent in Fluxus that kept her involved in the movement. She explored this quality in her installation work of the period as well—for example, in *Trap* (1967).

*Trap* is represented in the *Codex* via a photograph, taken by Maciunas, of a segment of the installation entitled “City of Saigon”. Consisting of high-heeled papier-mâché legs protruding from a string of wall urinals, the segment was meant as a commentary on America’s perpetuation of prostitution in South Vietnam during the war. The female body, trapped by an emblem of male bodily needs, is reduced to and framed (entrapped) as fetishistic fragment.

Another segment, not pictured in the *Codex*, featured the haunting torso of a female figure. This figure makes the most direct reference to the background narrative from which Millett’s work from mid-1967 onward grew. The year before, Millett read a newspaper story about a young girl named Sylvia Likens, who had been brutally tortured over the course of weeks by several teenagers and a woman with whom she had been boarded in Indianapolis by her parents. The girl was eventually found in a back bedroom of this woman’s house — found dead, with an inscription carved into her body. The inscription read: “I am a prostitute and proud of it.”

This utterly shattering relationship between body and text, and the myriad meanings issuing from that relationship, became the touchstone for almost all of Millett’s subsequent artistic and written production. In *Sexual Politics*, published in 1970, Millett analyzed patterns of sexual domination in history and literature to show the ideological hold those patterns have on Western culture. This book, Millett’s other writings, and her artwork contributed immensely to American radical and cultural feminist thought and artistic practice in subsequent decades. Her work also connects, as does Schneemann’s, to French feminist theory, especially to the concept that “to write from the body is to re-create the world” (see Jones 1985:366). Clearly, the fact that Sylvia Likens’ body had been so tragically “written for her”, her sexuality fictionalized and inscribed upon her, motivated Millett to write in an effort to “re-create the world.” And she has done so, in both her art and her writing up through her 1994 book, *The Politics of Cruelty: An Essay on the Literature of Political Imprisonment*.

The *Codex*, as already mentioned, does not include a photograph of this segment of *Trap*, nor does it indicate in any other way that the Sylvia Likens story is a reference point for Millett’s work. This absence, as I see it, produces a disturbing decontextualization of the *Trap* installation, a troubling separation of body and text that disallows full cross-referencing between this story of entrapment, the story of entrapment of South Vietnamese women in the 1960s, and millions of other stories of oppression.

In all fairness, the *Codex* does not profess to provide a wide-ranging documentation of Fluxus. Given that, one can be grateful to Hendricks for having included *Trap* at all. For to qualify as an entry in the *Codex*, as Hendricks writes in his “Foreword”, an artwork has to have been “listed or described in a Fluxus publication or [...] mentioned in correspondence by George Maciunas as being planned as a Fluxus work” (1988:25). *Trap* did not qualify.

What interests me historically about this system in the case of Kate Millett is the fact that the last recorded “listing [...] description [...] or mention” of her work “in Fluxus publications or by Maciunas in correspondence” (hence, her last mention in the *Codex*) is cited as “ca. December 1969” (403-05) — precisely the time frame in which *Sexual Politics* was being published. Millett has claimed that virtually all her sculpture qualifies as Fluxus (and there are many more examples beyond those already mentioned, ranging from *Roller Skate Table*, (1965), to “Window in Clare” from the installation *Madhouse, Madhouse* (1987), to *Psychiatry* (1995), which was featured in an entire exhibition she entitled *Flux Sculpture*, held at the Noho Gallery in New York, March–April 1995). She has also clarified that she did not feel excluded by Maciunas personally. Nonetheless, documentation of Millett’s official inclusion in Fluxus stopped just as her writing started spilling out

into the world, taking the body — “sexualized” and “politicized”, to borrow from the title of her groundbreaking book — with it.

Is it too speculative, once again, to suggest that what could be construed as an excessive body-text relationship — that is, energetic literary and artistic production regarding this relationship — might have had something to do with the cessation of Millett’s official involvement in Fluxus, in the same way that excess seems to have prompted Schneemann’s excommunication? If so, the motivations were no doubt, as in Schneemann’s experience with the *Fantastic Architecture* project, unconscious. But should unconscious motivations not be taken into account when considering the ramifications of exclusion?

The concept of women’s texts exceeding the body but never leaving it and all its “sexual politics” behind is, I believe, fundamental to the work of many women who at one time or another were associated with Fluxus. Other examples, which attracted an arguably less serious form of exclusion — harsh critique — can be found in certain works by Shigeko Kubota and Yoko Ono.

Kubota enjoyed unbroken participation in Fluxus. But as Stiles reports in her catalog essay, the artist felt that fellow Fluxus members loathed her 1965 performance entitled *Vagina Painting*, in which, crouching over white paper, she executed a painting with a brush attached to her underwear (1993:77). Kubota “redefined Action Painting according to the codes of female anatomy”, Stiles argues (1993:82). To be sure, when situated in the art historical context of Abstract Expressionism, Kubota’s piece can be seen as wreaking “semiotic havoc” with this mode of production’s masculinist concerns of mastery over ever-increasing amounts of visual space.

Stiles also quotes Yoko Ono, who felt her work was often rejected by Fluxus participants, because it was “too animalistic” (1993:77). Perhaps Ono was speaking of works like *Cut Piece*, in which she takes on the look of a creature in the process of being skinned. In this performance, first presented in 1964 in Kyoto, Japan, then at Carnegie Recital Hall in New York in 1965, and at the Destruction in Art Symposium in London in 1966, Ono knelt, placed a pair of scissors in front of her, and invited audience members to come up on stage and cut the clothing from her body. Throughout most of the piece she sat completely still, training an icy stare on the audience, past those who took her up on her offer. By ironically replicating stereotypically male practices of voyeurism, as well as stereotypically female states of passivity, she competed with traditions of voyeurism and demonstrated another form of mastery over visual space.

It would appear from all the examples discussed that it is the relationship between body and text — especially in the hands of women — that can trigger exclusion or, at the very least, harsh critique from those involved with a canonized art practice such as Fluxus. One aspect of the strategy used by the artists in the works I have been discussing is that of playing ball, so to speak, in the boy’s gym. As such, the strategy was situated time-wise in the early days of the second wave of 20th-century feminist thought and action, where vying with patriarchal concerns in an effort to claim a more feminized space was plenty to deal with. But there was far more going on in these works than a pro-con debate.

I believe that it was not only the implementation of a feisty, oppositional type of strategy that triggered practices of exclusion within Fluxus. There was yet another form of “semiotic havoc” in operation—a complex, ambiguous form that incorporates aspects of a more psychoanalytically based feminism that grew in prominence from the 1970s onward. This view disallows an exclusively resistance/ counter-resistance reading of Fluxus works. Such a reading — driven by a notion of woman’s difference from man wherein “difference” can be too easily construed as a sim-



ple, biological concept — is inadequate to these works and to be avoided.

In part, my caveat appends that of Ann Rosalind Jones, who is wary of feminist views that merge body and text in a manner that assumes the body to be a wholly natural entity — a “given” represented in or by women’s texts as a source of essentialized self-knowledge. Jones, whose focus is feminist literature but whose argument applies to any form of representation, feels that to idealize women’s writing in this manner — as “an overflow of [...] woman’s unmediated communication with her body”: (1985:374) — is to forget the impact of social realities that intrude in the very space that certain body-text conflationists (as one might call those who deduce the power of representation directly from corporeality) would like to shrink.

Theories challenging conflationists (or “essentialists”, to use more common terminology) have come from feminists sometimes known as “constructionists” because they believe, according to Diana Fuss’s concise summary of essentialism and constructionism, that gender has more to do with “the *production and organization* of differences [...rather than...] any essential or natural givens [that] precede the processes of social determination” (Fuss 1989:2-3). Constructionism has been informed by a wide range of theory-political, social, and psychoanalytic. In the psychoanalytic realm, the research of Jacques Lacan has been particularly useful. Lacan’s findings also have resonance in the artworks under discussion.

Building on Freud’s theories concerning the phallus, Lacan went on to emphasize its importance less as a biological entity than as a symbol of social power and, further, to question the context of the phallus in the patriarchal world of symbolism itself (see esp. Lacan 1985:61ff; Lacan 1977; Grosz 1990). Lacan’s theories are based on clinical observations that led him to conclude that the male *and* female unconscious is encoded in the very first year of life and is shaped by language that issues from the phallogocentric social patterns into which individuals are born. Differing from the theories of the conflationists/essentialists who believe woman can “write the body”, Lacan believes the body is “already written.” That is, the body, of which one becomes conscious by increments throughout child development, is already written by the unconscious mind. By locating precise shifts in this development when verbal language skills come into being to represent the unconscious, Lacan opens the door for individuals to seize control of what these moments entail, to take command of the powers of representation through which the body is already and always will be mediated, to marshal such effort toward doing one’s mediating oneself.

What is so compelling, I believe, about the artworks I have been addressing, is that there was an oppositional strategy at work (at least partially reminiscent of essentialist views) “as well as” a strategy inculcated with psychoanalytic principles (prescient of later developments in constructionism). One strategy was never privileged over the other. *Both* were in operation. For example, for all of Millett’s “writing from the body”, it should not be forgotten that her motivating story was that of the worst possible case scenario of the “body already written.” Indeed, Millett has continually demarcated woman’s difference from man in her work, but it is always in terms of a highly politicized and socialized difference. And while works like Ono’s *Cut Piece*, Schneemann’s *Interior Scroll*, and Kubota’s *Vagina Painting* may all focus on the body as a seemingly pure, wholly natural entity, they simultaneously literalize the activities, respectively, of shaping, writing, and painting. In so doing, the works represent the phenomenon of symbolic representation itself.

It is precisely this commingling — this adamant, though never trumpeted, desire to occupy some middle ground between what would only later be labeled essentialism and constructionism — that I feel may just have been the last push needed to trigger exclusion of the artists and/or aspects of their work just examined. For to occupy a middle ground was to defy the very kind of binary thinking on which the whole problem of sexism historically hinges — the very kind of binary thinking that is, ironically, at the heart of an exclusively biology-based essentialist strategy or, even more ironically, the debate between essentialism and constructionism itself.

While these Fluxus examples may only make subtle connections to then-inchoate psychoanalytic theories of representation like those I have sketched, the connections were crucial. For it was those connections, I believe, that helped facilitate — along with a strong element of social and political concern emanating from what to some might look like nature-bound essentialist works — the possibility of a middle ground. This conclusion may sound strange. Isn’t psychoanalytic theory generally seen as one of the bolstering agents of constructionism pure and simple? The answer is, no. In fact, as Fuss so convincingly argues, neither constructionism nor essentialism is so pure, so simple, so monolithic in its definition. As much as Lacan has served as a touch-stone for constructionists, he, too, as Fuss points out, veers toward essentialism-specifically, in his “aim to return the institution of psychoanalysis to its authentic Freudian roots. Lacan’s mission is to restore psychoanalysis to its essential truths, to what is most radical and irreducible about it” (1989: 10). Conversely, in regard to essentialism, Fuss shows how the social construction of the very language in which one has to think through or talk about natural essence makes it impossible to frame essentialism as purely natural.

In more recent years, Lacanian theory has been put to use by many feminists and artists who grapple with, among other things, the ambiguities of gender: gender slippage, issues of masquerade, bisexuality, and other complex areas of representation that cannot be contained by a simple, male-versus-female, oppositional debate. Questions of identity — What is the meaning of “she”? *Is she a she?* Does it matter? — are buried like land mines in the middle ground between essentialism and constructionism. “Woman” then becomes an unstable category, a matter of nature as well as representation, a force that can be manipulated (made explosive, even) through the critical agency of feminists and artists.

Even though in today’s art world, as in the earlier days of Fluxus, exclusion is not gender-specific — to wit, the list of artists cited earlier (Finley and Hughes as well as Wojnarowicz, Fleck, Miller, and Athey have been plagued by censors) — nonetheless, it is, by and large, the work of women or gay men that has been under fire during the past several years. Thus, the speculative question with which I wish to conclude is this: Might not the impulse to excommunicate on the part of those with the power to do so, then and now, have something to do with their perception of what could be called the “femme’...in...us” — the “us”, of course, including men and women, gay and straight, alike?

Those who represent and benefit most from the dominant power structure — generally white, heterosexual males — tend to stereotype the complex, ambiguous qualities of the “feminine” and, through the phenomenon of stereotyping, reduce, circumscribe, and contain those qualities, thereby making it easier to exclude the activities of so-called “feminized” artists, be they female or male. Thus, those in positions of power, presumably, can reduce the risk of discovering that complex, ambiguous gender-related qualities reside within themselves. What this would mean, of course, is that a middle ground exists — a middle ground of shared power. Very scary for those who think in absolute, either/or, black-or-white terms. Maciunas, long past the height of his excommunication practices and just a few months before his death, carried out a cross-dressing ritual at his own 1978 Flux wedding.

He exchanged with his soon-to-be-wife, Billie Hutching, his white tuxedo shirt and bow tie for her short, black, strapless slip and long-haired wig. One wonders, when imagining this scenario, if thoughts of the “Fluxus ‘femme’-in-us” could have been an unconscious motivating factor, along with all the other more conscious factors Maciunas proclaimed (his aversion to artists not sticking to his preferred lineup of performances, as cited by Knowles, or his dislike for “overt sexuality” and “theatrical excess”, cited by Schneemann) in at least some of his earlier excommunications? The ability of all the artists discussed to both write from their bodies and acknowledge that they have already been written, though once (perhaps) threatening, toward the end of Maciunas’s life was (perhaps) a reminder that the “feminine” is not entirely about nature nor entirely about so-

ciety and, therefore, not a threat to one's own biological or social status. That Maciunas titled his performance *Black & White* is telling. I would like to think that Maciunas discovered what some of the work he and others had dismissed had been demonstrating all along — that natural and social conceptions of the “feminine”, and the connotations of power that attend, are not black-or-white, either/or issues. They can be constantly mixed — exchanged, as Maciunas so provocatively demonstrates by involving another person, a biological female, in this symbolic trade of gender-coded props. The “feminine”, then, is shown to be both natural (the biological body does, after all, remain after all is said and done) and something wonderfully artificial, something that can be changed (at least in appearance, like any “text”) at will. Akin to the very field of language in which Maciunas loved to play, the idea of “woman” was shown to be something that could be constructed and reconstructed, neologized, put on and taken off.

Maciunas's cross-dressing, then, his fake femininity through which the threat of woman was possibly dispelled, stands as an unconsciously motivated testimony to the successful contributions of the many women artists who have been, at one time or another, a part of Fluxus.

[Kathy O'Dell, “Fluxus Feminus”, 1997, in *The Drama Review*, vol. 41, no. 1, (Spring), pp. 43-60.]

### Race, Gender and Sex in Fluxus Events

*Kristine Stiles*

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

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

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

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

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

Prior to this action, Maciunas had issued a Fluxus *News-Policy Newsletter No. 6* (April 6, 1963) that

proposed "propaganda actions" — disruptive performances to take place in New York City from May through November that would clog transportation systems with "break downs" on bridge and tunnel entries, that would confuse communication systems, disrupt public concerts, interfere with museums, theaters, galleries and, in general, cause social and institutional disruptions. Together with Flynt's activities, these proposals caused the most serious breach in Fluxus interpersonal relations. Mac Low and Brecht especially, and later Higgins, rejected such activities as socially irresponsible. This confrontation strongly helped to determine the subsequent ideological and political orientation of Fluxus performance, which seldom thereafter would be aimed at direct intervention.

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

#### FIRST SYMPHONY

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

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

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

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

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

While issues of race found both overt and covert expression, issues of feminism figured prominently in much of the work produced by women associated with Fluxus. Kate Millett, for example, who

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bandage any part of your body.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Paik's legendary collaborations with the avant-garde musician Charlotte Moorman (pre-figured by scores Paik had written in the early 1960s to be performed by a woman) are the most aggressive assertions of the eroticism of bodies — an eroticism that often included the willing objectification of both Moorman and Paik's bodies. These performances presented the body as the interstice negotiating shifting states of subjectivity and objectivity, as the body became both a performing set of behaviors and an object with presence. The collaborations with Moorman realized Paik's aim to move "Towards a New Ontology of Music", the title of his 1962 manifesto that called for music to be invested with the existential value of bodies. In *26' 1.1499" for a String Player*, performed in 1965 at the Cafe Au GoGo in New York City, the pair interpreted a score by Cage. Moorman held Paik's body as though it were a cello while playing a string stretched over his nude back. In Paik's *Opera Sextronique* (1966), performed at the New York Film-Makers' Cinematheque on February 9, 1967, Moorman progressively stripped during her performance and was arrested for exposing her breasts. She was subsequently tried and found guilty of "indecent exposure", although her sentence was suspended. Paik, however, was found not guilty when the judge reasoned it to be impossible to create "pornographic music"! Paik and Moorman's actions are extraordinary demonstrations of the role the body plays in structuring not only the meaning and presence of objects, but the juridical and institutional practices that control, manage, and litigate that body.

Paik was not the only Fluxus artist to create works that featured the woman as object. Patterson's *Whipped Cream Piece* (*Lick Piece*), first performed during the Fluxus Concerts held at the Fluxhall/Fluxshop, New York City, in 1964, calls for covering a body with whipped cream (the artist Lette Eisenhauer volunteered) and for any number of people, male or female, to lick it off. In the context of artists' powerful assault on conventional sexual mores in the 1960s, the score suggests the pleasures of mutual erotic consent and emphasizes the tactile, oral, and erogenous conditions of all bodies. However, from a contemporary perspective, Patterson's performance suggests sexist overtones, as does Robert Watts' *Branded Woman's Thigh*, mentioned in a 1962 letter to Maciunas. While Watts' idea for cow brands on a woman's thigh was never realized — to my knowl-

edge — his image of the potential mark functions as the indexical signifier of woman's subjugation and was the most potentially violent and abusive of all Fluxus body-actions.

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

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

[Kristine Stiles, "Race, Gender, and Sex in Fluxus Events", in *The Spirit of Fluxus*, Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993, pp. 62-99.]

### Food: The Raw and the Fluxed

Hannah Higgins

A list of Fluxed food reads like a menu: a bed of fresh carrots, abundant salad, bean porridge, frozen strawberries and orange juice, tuna fish on whole wheat toast (butter, no mayo), fresh apples, savory cheese, chilled wine, and deep, dark chocolate. We seem to be seated at a banquet that takes us from hors d'oeuvres through dessert. There are other Fluxed food banquets in nearby rooms: a rainbow banquet, all white, all black, all boxed, all clear. Whatever form determines each meal's contents, it is all delicious. Well, not quite—these meals are tasty, but not entirely edible. Fluxed food serves up good taste, whether in culture or food, for chewing over.

From within the greater history of art, it can be argued that Fluxed food combines the still life and the readymade in equal measure. The readymade enables artists to use things selected from the world as the material of art. The still life expresses the passage of time, the world's impermanence, by way of overripe or rotting fruit, delicate flowers, and the occasional hungry ant or flitting fly. Fluxus was not the first to combine these traditions by using real food as art material. Thirty years earlier, beginning in 1931, the Futurists also used real food to launch their attack on cultural decadence, habituated ritual, and institutionalized culture.

In Futurism, like Fluxus, food became a tool for reinventing life—most spectacularly through subverting norms of taste and domesticity. Filippo Marinetti's *Manifesto of Futurist Cooking* (1931), for example, inveighed against pasta as lethargy-producing, domesticated, and fattening. The manifesto was distributed at the Futurists' "Holy Palate" restaurant, where the familiar comforts of pasta and hearth were replaced, on one characteristic menu, with "blazing Jew's harp, drawbridge, railway disaster, keel of infernal vessel, wines from Trentino, hot chocolate and coffee, and liquor."<sup>1</sup> Cecilia Novero describes the phenomenon handily in terms that apply equally to Fluxed Food:

These actions (eating, cooking, and their metaphoric counterparts) bear more or less directly, more or less politically, on the avant-garde's immersion in and decomposition of this world that they ingest, bite into, and thereby construct anew in their works.<sup>2</sup>

Beginning around 1960, a generation of neoavant-garde artists loosely associated with Fluxus would use food in similarly inventive ways. Daniel Spoerri's experiments with real food date to a 1963 show at Galerie J in Paris and have continued through his Spoerri Restaurant and Eat Art Gallery in Dusseldorf in 1968 and 1970 to the present. Spoerri's historic food-works ranged from preserving meals as "snare" pictures, to naming a series of homonymous meals, to carefully rendering one food to look like another, to the delectable preparation of culturally taboo foods. Ants, horse meat, elephant meat, and snake all made appearances on the Restaurant Spoerri menu. Spoerri hung his famous trap-paintings on the walls: meals were displayed post-consumption, with all the leftover elements glued down — cigarette butt, wineglass, dirty plate, napkin, and scraps of food, preserved by air drying in the restaurant or studio. In Spoerri's careful constructions, the still life — in French, *nature morte* — was rendered real as a meal, consumed, and then "snared", to use Spoerri's term.<sup>3</sup>

Spoerri's friend Dieter Roth (or Diter Rot) displayed chocolate and bread sculptures, among other things, at Spoerri's Eat Art Gallery next door. Over the ensuing decades, Roth's chocolate busts acquired a patina of cocoa powder that slowly gave way to dust, and the bread sculptures hardened, chipped, and crumbled in response to the air, light, moisture, and movement of the surrounding environment. In other works, Roth sandwiched meat between glass plates; as the meat putrefied and decomposed, delicate rainbows of iridescent fat and mold gradually liquefied to a wafer thin, translucent fleshiness. A slice of life, Roth's food-works change in time.

While Futurism, as well as the food-works of Dieter Roth and Daniel Spoerri, demon-

strates both historic and contemporary affinities with Fluxus banquets. Fluxed food differs in that it generally involves food's everyday aspect. If Marinetti's Jew's harps and railways are anti-food, and Spoerri's food a spectacle to be seen or enjoyed as outside the norm, Fluxed food tends toward the ubiquitous. To use a much-maligned term, it matters that Fluxed food is real food, in the everyday sense. It is real as it grows. Real as it is prepared. Real as it is eaten. And real as it rots.

Fluxus food events constitute a spectrum. At one end are works where the material qualities of everyday food are paramount. At the other are works where actual consumption forms the basis of the "narrative." Most Fluxed food falls somewhere in the middle. The earliest event to emphasize the everydayness of food was probably George Brecht's *Incidental Music* (1961): "Three dried beans are attached to the keys [of a piano] with adhesive tape."<sup>4</sup> Brecht then elaborated, "So, any sound is incidental. The important thing is that you're attaching the beans to the keys with the tape."<sup>5</sup> The ubiquity of beans and tape, their nearly universal availability, locates this work within an everyday context. The roundness and hardness of the beans means they will likely roll, on or off the piano, requiring a gentle fingertip to stabilize them, or perhaps some advance preparation, sticking them first to the tape before introducing them to the surface of the piano keys. A key may be inadvertently sounded or a bean dropped. It's all music.

Moving slightly toward the consumable, the score for Dick Higgins's *Danger Music Number Fifteen* (1962) reads simply "Work with butter and eggs for a time."<sup>6</sup> As the butter and eggs are mashed, cracked, whipped, and otherwise "worked", the squeezing and slopping of the materials dominates the piece. Even if the yellow results momentarily resemble a cooking action, the hollow tap of the eggs, the smooch, squish, and clack between the spoon and the bowl, make up the work. *Danger Music Number Fifteen* is not particularly about being edible: butter and eggs are worked (not slurped!) as the score is performed.

At the other end of the spectrum is Alison Knowles's *Proposition* (October 1962): "Make a salad." *Proposition* describes a dish that is not only made but also served and consumed. Care is taken in the quality of the ingredients, their preparation — washing, dicing, shredding, and so on — and in the exacting bite of the vinaigrette with which they are dressed. As in Brecht's *Incidental Music*, the sound is not planned but incidental.

Wherever they fall on the spectrum, one question remains of these very simple gestures: Why do they hold our attention? Many scholars have rightly noted in this regard Daisetsu Suzuki's transmission of Zen Buddhism's attention to the everyday to a receptive American audience. In the 1940s and 1950s, this audience included the American composer John Cage, and many of his students found their way in turn to Fluxus. However, this account habitually neglects the fact that Cage's receptivity to Zen was very much a byproduct of the experience-based, progressive education that had shaped him. The best-known proponent of progressive education, John Dewey, was much admired by Suzuki, widely read at the time, and active on the board of Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where Cage taught in the summers of 1948 and 1952. One explanation for how relatively insignificant events hold our attention, then, is offered by Dewey in *Art as Experience*:

A piece of work is finished in such a way that it is satisfactory; a problem receives a solution; a game is played through; a situation, whether that of eating a meal, playing a game of chess, carrying on a conversation, writing a book, or taking part in a political campaign, is so rounded out that its close is a consummation and not a cessation.<sup>7</sup>

Beans are taped. Butter and eggs are worked. Salad is tossed. Dewey's "experience" is based on the homology of real things being worked or played or rounded out in real time and reaching some form of "satisfactory" finish, whatever that may be.

The instructional Fluxus event proposes just such an experience, something bracketed

off and yet continuous with life lived. Insofar as Fluxus events move rhythmically back and forth between the unremarkable occurrence and the attentive "other" attitude or focus brought to it, event creators derive from music their interest in how time shapes experience. Even so, the specific duration of most events is not predetermined, since solution, satisfaction, and consummation are hard to predict. Dewey again:

Experience occurs continuously, because the interaction of the live creature and environment conditions is involved in the very process of living... In contrast with such experience, we have an experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, experience occurs in real time but is an experience by virtue of our attentive attitude toward it.

A onetime chemist, George Brecht invented the event type of performance that is associated with Fluxus in a 1958–59 class on experimental composition offered by John Cage at the New School for Social Research in New York. In a clear reference to music, the event instruction is called a score ("make a salad", "work with butter and eggs", "three dried beans are attached to the keys [of a piano] with adhesive tape"). Additionally, "event" is a scientific term that originated in physics. By ex-scientist Brecht's account, events are temporal objects, meaning that there is a material change involved in each of them.<sup>9</sup> If the essence of music is temporal, in other words, event scores express the musicality (or temporality) of their everyday materials.

In Fluxus works, as in the world generally, real time takes many forms. Already we have seen real time in the form of the production and consumption of food events. Other Fluxed food-works exploit the distinctions between biological and mechanical or industrial time more explicitly. Larry Miller's *Slab* (1970) consists of carrots roughly equal to the artist's weight and size, sewn together and placed on the earth — a "morgue cadaver on a slab", by Miller's account.<sup>10</sup> Over the course of thirty-three days, the carrots withered, shrank, were nibbled away by forest fauna, or dissolved while the grass frame that contained them softened at the sides, rounded at the edges, and eventually grew through the framed material. Miller describes the evolution beautifully:

The depression which seems to appear was created by the organic processes of the piece itself over time, decaying slowly — the moisture within the fresh carrots creating a wetting and softening of the specific area below it, and the "fertilizer" it provided for the nurturing of emerging grass beneath, which sprouted much more brilliant green and grew longer than the regular new grass growing up around it... it sank lower back into the earth, being absorbed and recycled.<sup>11</sup>

*Slab* clearly demonstrates the process of ecological reclamation of natural material (the carrots? a body?), suggesting a symbiotic balance between artistic and ecological processes that, by definition, do not function like clockwork.

In contrast, George Maciunas's *One Year* consists of a grid made of the food containers Maciunas had used over the course of a year; he covered his wall with an irregular arrangement of areas dominated by the same frozen strawberry containers, frozen orange juice containers, sugar packets, and so on. This grid explicitly expresses the standardization of time and space into the quantified units of industrial life: a minute, an hour, a week, a month, and a year as rendered by the rhythmic repetition of carefully calculated ounces, pounds, and cubic inches in stackable form.<sup>12</sup> Digestive processes notwithstanding, the grid form of *One Year* illustrates the extent to which temporal and spatial regulation typify the widespread industrialization of society at large.

Likewise, Ben Vautier remarked poignantly on the abstract nature of food production and consumption with a street performance in Nice in 1963 and a subsequent edition of *Flux-Mystery Food* in 1966–67. These cans respond to Maciunas's practice of purchasing cans whose labels had fallen off from the grocery store for very little and consuming the contents, which would create essentially randomized meals of, say, peaches and beans or Spam and tomato sauce. Without the label, there is no visible relationship between the form of the container and its contents. Unlike the functionally specific household jars and bowls of pre-industrial food preservation, the manufactured can holds all variety of edible material in sealed, cylindrical, standardized volumes.

French philosopher Henri Bergson describes the distinction between biological and mechanical time in ethical terms that are useful in understanding these Fluxed food works. For Bergson, real life is expressed in ecological "evolution", where the historic record is embedded in the current state of a natural material as pure duration. In contrast, intellect (the rational mind) has created a world characterized by an exploitative standard expressed in measure and attention only to peak performance:

We do not think real time. But we live it, because life transcends intellect. The feeling we have of our evolution and of the evolution of all things in pure duration is there, forming around the intellectual concept... Mechanism and finalism agree in taking account only of the bright nucleus shining in the center. They forget that this nucleus has been formed out of the rest by condensation and that the whole must be used, the fluid as well as and more than the condensed, in order to grasp the inner movement of life.<sup>13</sup>

Larry Miller's *Slab* (1970) and George Maciunas's *One Year* (1973) express exactly this opposition. *Slab* rots and regenerates. *One Year* expresses a mechanized world where food fails to decay and exists in carefully measured, prepared, preserved units. *Slab* expresses a confluence of creative and organic rhythms that seems a direct expression of Bergson's admonishment that "the whole [of temporality] must be used, the fluid as well as and more than the condensed, in order to grasp the inner movement of life."

These works demonstrate the extent to which the 1960s bore witness to a fundamental shift in how and what we eat. That decade saw the growth of the science of "flavormatics", when, according to food historians Constance Classen, David Howes, and Anthony Synnott, "flavorists set out to recreate virtually the whole spectrum of food flavors, from fruits and vegetables to meats... the majority of food on the supermarket shelves today has at least some artificial flavoring."<sup>14</sup> In other words, as these Fluxus food-works were being made, food was becoming ever more abstracted from nature in terms of its distribution — which is evident in the packaging — as well as the flavors and textures of food itself. "Some artificial flavors have no counterpart in nature", they continue.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, with artificial enhancements, food now consists of "a virtual reality of smell and taste."<sup>16</sup>

Traditional concerns with the freshness of meat and vegetables, as indicated by their skin, color, or smell, were exchanged for the clean sheen of plastic, an aluminum can, or a photographic label. Likewise, customs for preparing food that might no longer be of optimal freshness, such as boiling and seasoning slightly rotten meat, virtually disappear with regard to the canned product. Another way to put this is that through the process of industrialization represented by preserved-food packaging, a shift occurred that resulted in the suppression of Bergsonian "duration." Instead, scientists and businesspeople married predictable or mechanical duration to the organic material historically used as food, resulting in its being essentially unchanged by time. This shift was not without its consequences, as it signifies a form of alienation from this most basic human need.

At some point, after all, food originates in the earth, not in a can.

It could be said, then, that whereas Vautier's *Flux-Mystery Food* and Maciunas's *One Year* replicate the abstract nature of food science in the industrial age and thereby offer it up for experiential (and/ or critical) consideration, Larry Miller's *Slab* articulates organic time as both productive of and effective on food products. It might even be said that *Slab* expresses precisely those values put forth by adherents of sustainable agri culture in the years since the 1960s. Albeit with certain faddish associations, the underlying logic necessitating sustainability confronts the abstraction of farming practices as based solely on production maximization. According to some critics,

[Our] food is becoming little more than a low quality medium to which food manufacturers add coloring and flavoring to give the stuff minimal consumer appeal, a dozen or so basic vitamins to give it "nutrition", several chemicals to hold it together, preservatives to give it shelf-life probably greater than your own allotted years, sugar to cover up any mistakes and a package to make it "convenient."<sup>17</sup>

Together, industrialized production techniques and modern consumer habits generate a lethal combination: food that is both bad for the environment and bad for the consumer.

Beginning with her *Propositions*, Alison Knowles has made food-works for forty years.<sup>18</sup> One particularly well-known work, *Identical Lunch* (1969), resulted in a book, *The Journal of the Identical Lunch* (1971).<sup>19</sup> Fluxus artist-composer Philip Corner shared a studio with Knowles in 1969 and noted her habit of eating exactly the same lunch each day at a diner in Chelsea called Riss Foods. The original work that arose from Corner's observation simply describes a lunch: "A tuna fish sandwich on wheat toast with butter and lettuce, no mayo, and a cup of soup or glass of buttermilk."<sup>20</sup> The book-length journal of the work, however, assembles accounts of this lunch from Knowles, Corner, and myriad other artists that indicate that the *Identical Lunch* was in fact never that: prices, bread type, consistency and flavor of the tuna, dishware, sounds, conversations all change.

Art historian Kristine Stiles has written eloquently and repeatedly about this work and describes the biological framework of the Lunch:

*Identical Lunch* is about the body that eats... Now the body that eats and drinks is alive. It is nourished, gains sustenance, and survives. The profundity of the *Identical Lunch* is sustained by the simplicity with which edible organic matter ("a tuna fish sandwich on wheat toast. ...") signifies the primary, nurturing action of life.<sup>21</sup>

As Stiles notes, this "life" is distinctly social (or "communal"):

*Identical Lunch* negotiates sameness, unity, and homogeneity, all aspects of the individual identity unmitigated by the social, simultaneously with the foil of opposition, counterpoint and heterogeneity characteristic of the communal.<sup>22</sup>

This social dimension of Fluxus food-works predates Knowles's *Lunch*. In Paris, Fluxus poets Emmett Williams and Robert Filliou introduced to the world their co-invention, *The Spaghetti Sandwich*, on June 5, 1963, at the Galerie Raymond Cordier. While it "was hard enough to feed ourselves... these were happy days", Williams recalls with characteristic good humor:

I cooked up an enormous batch of the spaghetti sauce for which I am famous, and put it in the refrigerator as a surprise... Robert and I decided to sample the sauce. It was very good, even cold. We spread it on bread, and ate it in this fashion several times,

and even invited some of our friends to do the same... *The Spaghetti Sandwich* was born... it was indeed "born from necessity and consumed forthwith."<sup>23</sup>

Born from economic necessity and framed by a close friendship between poets, this sandwich would even cause co-inventor Filliou to exult, "You can talk about art, music and poetry all you want, but remember, with *The Spaghetti Sandwich* you can feed an entire army. And the Astronauts. The Cosmonauts as well!"<sup>24</sup> There is some truth in his words, albeit expressed as a joke, in the exaggerated terms of space exploration. Unlike the expensive but lightweight powdered food associated with early space travel, the spaghetti sandwich was low cost, low tech, and reasonably nutritious.

Beginning four years later in 1967 (and continuing until 1978), Fluxus co-founder George Maciunas would host a series of now legendary New Year's *Fluxmeals* at 80 Wooster Street in New York. These New Year's parties offered denominations of food, such as dear foods, rainbow foods, or the single-colored, all black, all white, all red meal. Unlike the other meals thus far discussed, the later *Fluxmeals* included experimental and non-edible "food." George Maciunas's 1969 New Year's banquet included delectable and nutritious "shit porridge" (a misnomer he attached to Knowles's bean soup), as well as marginally consumable distillations of tomato juice, coffee, and prune juice — "all dear but retaining the taste" — and non-edible proposals for filling eggs with paint and shaving cream.<sup>25</sup> The coordinated community experience at each of the later *Fluxmeals* included food, quasi-food, and non-food. Put differently, the experience ranged from meeting the most basic needs of the body to gustatory experimentation and conceptual play. It must have come as a relief when, at the New Year's banquet in 1969, Knowles built a booth, offered identical lunches to her friends, and took the Polaroid photographs that would eventually constitute the illustrations in *The Identical Lunch*.

As demonstrated by the range of foodstuffs, edible and otherwise, at the *Fluxmeals*, the point of it all was not merely to enjoy the food and evening's entertainment as delectation but to subject the consumption process to a form of critique by way of experimentalism. Fluxus artists were, by and large, financially poor, and inventive approaches to ubiquitous and inexpensive food items served both cultural and financial/nutritional interests. There are some noteworthy exceptions to this ascetic dimension of the Fluxus meal, however, especially with regard to the exotic, sexual, and even scatological dimensions of eating. I mentioned shit porridge, but other Fluxed food experiments could be quite lewd indeed, as when Fluxus friend Hala Pietkovich produced a detailed chopped-liver penis for the wedding reception of George Maciunas and Billie Hutchins on February 25, 1978. Similarly, in 1993, the Arts Club of Chicago hosted a Fluxus "Lewd Food" banquet of obscene-looking dishes. For this event, Larry Miller built a Plexiglas box that was lowered over the food and had holes for the arms and mouth of the diner. With this clever contraption, both the meal and the action of eating it were "framed" by a vitrine that embedded the food in an explicitly artistic process. The erotic nature of this meal, of course, removed it explicitly from the ubiquitous nature of food emphasized in much other Fluxus food-work.

We find food's sensuous associations quite literally embodied in the last banquet that I will discuss. In 1980, Danish Fluxus artist Eric Andersen proposed a banquet to Interart in New York that was finally executed in 1985 in the Danish city of Roskilde and at several locations since, including the historic Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich in the winter of 2008. At Roskilde, Andersen closed the doors of an unused courtroom and enticed the audience within to depart using a range of delicacies. The piece is called *Please Leave*, and in it the audience is confronted with a choice. In Roskilde, they were offered good wine, fine sausages, cheeses, rare chocolates, and flowers, and could take any of it if they would agree to leave the room. This forced a dilemma between satisfying their intellectual curiosity about what would happen in the room and satisfying their bodily desire to indulge in the treats heaped high on a table, as if in a Northern Baroque still life. Good taste

(in food) was put in direct competition with the propriety (the other kind of good taste) of the courtroom setting. Since nothing happened except for a slow whittling away at the table contents, the better choice was to take something good and maybe share it somewhere else with a friend.

Western societies have long associated food and temporal cycles quite closely — feasting of all sorts is linked to harvests as well as other seasonal and calendar changes. The New Year's banquets marked time for the Fluxus artists. Fluxus today is characterized an irregular pulse of reunion performances and exhibitions. In much smaller increments, time also has something to do with the Fluxus event format itself. After all, it is time, however loosely marked as a beginning and end of an action, that demarcates the event as an experience and not merely an undifferentiated segment of life's flow.

Food likewise marks time uniquely. It was (and remains) a natural material for Fluxus artists, whose interests stemmed historically from the spatial/temporal dimensions of music that resonate with food. As Fluxus fluxes, the use and significance of food by Fluxus artists has become extraordinarily broad. I suggest that readers experience some of this work for themselves. Make incidental music. Make a salad. Make a soup. Work with butter and eggs for a time. Sew a carrot or carry or study one. Stack your containers. Make a Spaghetti Sandwich or an Identical Lunch. Make a *Fluxmeal* for your friends. Bon appetit!

<sup>1</sup> Cecilia Novero, *Antidiets of the Avant-Garde: From Futurism to Eat Art*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2010, 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xxii.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Spoerri, *An Anecdoted Topography of Chance (Re-Anecdoted Version), with the Help of Robert Filliou and Translated and Further Anecdoted by Emmett Williams*, New York, Something Else Press, 1966, 181-82.

<sup>4</sup> George Brecht, *The Book of the Tumbler on Fire* (Milano: Multipla Edizioni, 1978), 105.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Dick Higgins, "Danger Music Number Fifteen (for the Dance)", May 1962. Many *Danger Music scores* are reprinted in Ken Friedman, ed., *The Fluxus Performance Workbook*, Trondheim, El Djarida, 1990, 23-24. All are reprinted in *A Dick Higgins Sampler: The Last Great Bear Pamphlet*, ed. Jeff Abel, Simon Anderson, and Hannah Higgins, Chicago, The Columbia College Center for the Book and Paper Arts, 2000, 9-11.

<sup>7</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (1934; New York, Penguin Putnam, 1980), 35.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Email exchange with Larry Miller, October 13, 2009, in which Miller recounted a 1989 conversation with George Brecht.

<sup>10</sup> Larry Miller, email to the author, October 13, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> For a brief survey of the history of time as linked to changes in capital development and industrialization, see Richard Biernacki, "Time-Cents: The Monetization of the Workday in Comparative Perspective", in *NowHere: Space, Time and Modernity*, ed. Roger Friedland and Deirdre Boden, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994, 61-94. See also G. J. Whitrow, *Time in History: The Evolution of Our General Awareness of Time and Temporal Perspective*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988.

<sup>13</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution* (1906; Mineola, N.Y., Dover Press, 1998), 318. This quotation demonstrates clearly the extent to which the common criticism of Bergson as a dualistic philosopher separating matter and life is based on an overdetermination of pieces of his argument. For an account of Bergson's science as unified and implicative in this regard, see Pete A. Gunter, "The Heuristic Force of *Creative Evolution*", *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1970), 111-18.

<sup>14</sup> Constance Classen, David Howes and Anthony Synnott, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, London, Routledge, 1994, 197-98.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>17</sup> J. Hightower and S. DeMarco, "Corporate Chefs Cook Consumer's Goose", *National Catholic Reporter*, November 1978, quoted in Michael Schaaf, 283.

<sup>18</sup> From the *Bean Rolls* (1963), which consisted of a can with beans and scrolls of bean lore, to the *Book of Bean* (1982),





to large-scale paper instruments called *Bean Turners* (2001–present), Knowles has dedicated a lifetime to explorations of the physical and cross-cultural values of this homely food. Producing a compendium of these cultural values in 1982 as a book, *A Bean Concordance*, she organizes “bean culture” in the multiple forms of recipes, colloquialisms, associations, scientific records, and myths. In the ubiquity of the bean is its profundity, however sublime: she writes: “One of the delights of traveling is to find new names for beans we are long familiar with, to discover new types altogether, and to find slight variations on what we thought standard.”

<sup>19</sup> Alison Knowles, *Journal or the Identical Lunch*, San Francisco: Nova Broadcast Press, 1971).

<sup>20</sup> Conversation with Alison Knowles, February 21, 2003, New York.

<sup>21</sup> Kristine Stiles, “Tuna and Other Fishy Thoughts on Fluxus Events”, in *FluxAttitudes*, New York, The New Museum, 1992, 25.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>23</sup> Emmett Williams, *My Life in Flux-And Vice Versa*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1992, 128.

<sup>24</sup> Filliou quoted in Williams, *My Life in Flux*, 128.

<sup>25</sup> *Fluxnewsletter*, Jan 31, 1968; Silverman Collection, Detroit.

[Hannah Higgins, “Food: the Raw and the Fluxed”, in *Fluxus and the Essential Questions of Life*, The University of Chicago Press, 2011.]

