

"Dumett argues for Fluxus as a kind of 'thinking' by illustrating ways that Fluxus artists appropriated principles and practices, which hustled internationalism into globalization. She shows how Fluxus simultaneously exploited, expanded, denounced, subverted, used, and abused many of the scientific and data-driven experiments that formed and controlled everyday life after World War II."

SIMON ANDERSON, School of the Art Institute of Chicago

"The idea that Fluxus—the most chaotic, incoherent, and ambiguous of the twentieth-century avant-gardes—was also driven by the principles and procedures derived from corporate culture seems as counterintuitive as everything else about this crazy quasi-movement. Dumett makes a strong and original case for such a reading."

TERRY SMITH, University of Pittsburgh

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Dumett

CORPORATE IMAGINATIONS

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Fluxus Strategies for Living

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Mari Dumett

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The first extended study of the renowned artists' collective Fluxus, *Corporate Imaginations* examines the group as it emerged on three continents from 1962 to 1978 in its complexities, contradictions, and historical specificity. The collective's founder, George Maciunas, organized Fluxus like a multinational corporation, simulating corporate organization and commodity flows, yet it is equally significant that he *imagined* critical art practice in this way at that time. For all its avant-garde criticality, Fluxus also ambivalently shared aspects of the rising corporate culture of the day. In this book, Mari Dumett addresses the "business" of Fluxus and explores the larger discursive issues of organization, mediatization, routinization, automation, commoditization, and systematization that Fluxus artists both manipulated and exposed. A study of six central figures in the group—George Brecht, Alison Knowles, George Maciunas, Nam June Paik, Mieko Shiomi, and Robert Watts—reveals how they developed historically specific strategies of mimicking the capitalist system. These artists appropriated tools, occupied spaces, revealed operations, and, ultimately, "performed the system" itself via aesthetics of organization, communication, events, branding, routine, and global mapping. Through "corporate imaginations," Fluxus artists proposed "strategies for living" as conscious creative subjects within a totalizing and increasingly global system, demonstrating how these strategies must be repeated in an ongoing negotiation of new relations of power and control between subject and system.

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CORPORATE IMAGINATIONS

Fluxus Strategies for Living

Mari Dumett



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

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Finally, I am most grateful for the love and support of my family. I dedicate this book to them.

A FANTASTIC CONFUSION

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

WILLEM DE RIDDER¹

One of the first Fluxus Festivals (1962–63) is documented in a canonical photograph taken in Wiesbaden, Germany, at the *Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik*: a group of artists, including Lithuanian-born George Maciunas; Americans Alison Knowles, Dick Higgins, Ben Patterson, and Emmett Williams; and the German Wolf Vostell hover over a classical piano and collectively wield a large bow saw, which they use to demolish the instrument (fig. 1).² One imagines the raw sound of saw teeth grinding into the wood of the piano frame or the plangent cry of the strings inside, the sight of bits of the instrument scattering into the air, or, finally, entire sections falling to the floor. The destruction occurred over the course of two days, though, not in a frenzied moment, and the prolonged, methodical pace of the violent actions inflected the scene with deadpan humor (fig. 2). It was all to the mortification of many audience members (and others who heard the damning German news reports later), who felt that their faith in an edifying art experience had been deeply violated.

Yet not long after this attack on high art and rarefied tastes, Fluxus founder Maciunas settled himself in as Fluxus chairman at his Fluxus headquarters with the aim of organizing fellow artists from Europe, the United States, and Asia into an orderly collective for the production and distribution of Fluxus “products.” This apparent contradiction—the collective hacksawing of a piano so that it could no longer reproduce bourgeois music by the likes of Bach and Mozart, and the idea that those who took up the saw with iconoclastic zeal should be incorporated into a business enterprise—was at the heart of Fluxus, proving a source of “fantastic confusion” for the art world at the time and art historians



FIGURE 1

Philip Corner's *Piano Activities*, performed by George Maciunas, Dick Higgins, Wolf Vostell, Benjamin Patterson, and Emmett Williams, at *Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik*, Hörsaal des Städtischen Museums, Wiesbaden, Germany, 1962. Photo: Hartmut Rekort, courtesy bpk, Berlin / Staatsgalerie Stuttgart / Art Resource, NY.

since. While Maciunas's founding Fluxus Manifesto (1963, fig. 3) rhetorically called for a "revolutionary flood and tide in art" that would rid the world of "bourgeois sickness, intellectual, professional, and commercial culture," he organized an art collective that resembled a multinational corporation in precisely the historical moment of the "organizational society" when multinationals emerged as *the* dominant form of organization of big capital.³

Under the direction of Maciunas, from 1962 until his untimely death in 1978, Fluxus not only established headquarters in New York, but also set up regional outposts in Europe, Japan, and California, giving artists august managerial titles. There were Flux-Products from the FluxShop and Mail-Order Catalog, but there was also copyright protection, a collective newsletter, a newspaper, an ever-expanding mailing list, a Fluxhouse real estate cooperative, and a frequently revised roster of Fluxus "workers." *Corporate Imaginations* is about how Maciunas set up the "business" of Fluxus; he is the main protagonist of the narrative. It is also about the diversity of artists in Fluxus and the larger discursive issues of organization, systematization, automation, commoditization,



FIGURE 2
 Philip Corner's *Piano Activities*,
 performed by Emmett Williams,
 George Maciunas, Benjamin
 Patterson, Dick Higgins, and Alison
 Knowles, at *Fluxus Internationale
 Festspiele Neuester Musik*, Hörsaal des
 Städtischen Museums, Wiesbaden,
 Germany, September 1, 1962. Gelatin
 silver print, 8 3/16 × 6 5/16 in. (20.8 ×
 16 cm). Photo: Deutsche Presse
 Agentur. The Gilbert and Lila
 Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift,
 2008. Digital image © The Museum
 of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA /
 Art Resource, NY.

mediatization, routinization, and globalization that they both manipulated and set in relief. Maciunas responded to a post-World War II capitalist system (while remaining interested in and at times even enamored of the centralized state-run system of the Soviet Union) in which advances in these processes enabled the logic of commodity exchange to be extended more efficiently and pervasively than ever before. The advances crystallized most clearly in the multinational corporation, which became a metonym for the system as a whole, as “the system” was understood at the time: an integrated set of economic, production, distribution, and personnel protocols.

CORPORATE IMAGINATIONS

This book differs from other studies of Fluxus in that it takes Fluxus’s contradictions as its starting point. It begins with the “fantastic confusion” created by Fluxus born of what I am calling “corporate imaginations.” Along with the anarchic, vaudevillian aesthetic easily

Manifesto:

2. To affect, or bring to a certain state, by subjecting to, or treating with, a flux. "Fluxed into another world." South.
3. Med. To cause a discharge from, as in purging.

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

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

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

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

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

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

sonderdruck fluxus 2-3-11'63 maciunas manifest

FIGURE 3

George Maciunas, Fluxus Manifesto, 1963. Offset-printed sheet, 8 3/16 x 5 11/16 in. (20.8 x 14.5 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

identified in its performances—by which Fluxus is considered to be a crucial post-World War II manifestation of the avant-garde, known for its contrarian approach—Fluxus’s “confusion” also ambivalently encompassed aspects of the rising corporate culture of the day, simulating its organizational structure, increasingly international commodity flows, research and development practices, channels of communication, routinized behaviors, and increasingly global outlook within the system of advanced capitalism. What at first appears contradictory—a radical incorporated art collective—is shown here to be a coherent, if complicated, set of critical artistic practices devised specifically for the realities of art and everyday life in the increasingly corporatized culture of the 1960s and 1970s.

Initially, my notion of corporate imaginations may be unsettling to some artists and scholars of Fluxus, as it seems antithetical to the more endearing image of a purely iconoclastic group. To a degree, my aim is to unsettle. But what I want to unsettle us *from* is a one-dimensional, idealistic understanding of Fluxus—particularly thinking of Fluxus only in utopian terms—because relying on this does the individual artists, the collective project, and art history a huge disservice. It puts us at a disadvantage for really learning from Fluxus and the art of that period. By analyzing the group’s apparent contradictions this book shows how Fluxus’s critical engagement with the corporatism and rampant “systems think” of its day in fact strategically complemented its more patently audacious qualities. The search was on for alternative, critical modes of creating and living, but the resulting strategies were never clear-cut. Close examination of the individual artists and art itself necessitates discussion of issues of organization, systematization, automation, commoditization, mediatization, routinization, and globalization toward a multifaceted understanding of Fluxus in all its complexity.

Thinking in terms of corporate imaginations enables us to see how the contradictions of Fluxus were themselves historically specific and generative of knowledge about the possibilities for a critical art practice by the early 1960s. This book troubles any easy or monolithic categorization of Fluxus, providing readers with extended, specific, and above all contextualized analysis. Beyond this, I hope the book’s fresh approach to the often surprising yet evident intersections of art and corporatism in the 1960s and 1970s can stimulate a rethinking of contemporary art more broadly, especially with regard to the status of the artwork, the position and role of the artist, and the changing relationships between art and its contexts.

“Corporate imaginations” is also a way to conceptualize the complicated interplay of the real and the metaphorical in Fluxus—another contributing factor in the fantastic confusion. Maciunas actually did organize Fluxus like a business, but it is equally important that this is how he and other Fluxus artists *imagined* Fluxus and critical art practice at the time. Studying both Maciunas’s construction of the collective and the roles of the artist that various Fluxus artists performed, we can see how real details give way to the extended power of metaphor, only to be brought back again to things concrete in a perpetual process of negotiation and meaning making.



FIGURE 4

George Maciunas, Fluxhouse Cooperative, Inc. certificate of incorporation, 1968. Photo: bpk, Berlin / Staatsgalerie Stuttgart / Art Resource, NY.

While Maciunas did not incorporate Fluxus officially, he did, in partnership with Robert Watts and Herman Fine, incorporate the mass-market venture Implosions, Inc. in 1967, proposing that Fluxus be its subsidiary, and several Fluxus real estate ventures, including Fluxhouse Cooperative, Inc. (founded 1968, fig. 4). Fluxus was linked directly to a corporate model of organization. While the scale of production and distribution remained small and erratic, the intention (as documented in collective newsletters, newspapers, advertisements, and personal correspondence) and the infrastructure (in the form of Fluxus artists positioned internationally as regional “managers” receiving directions and products to sell from a New York headquarters while developing their own ideas for new objects and events in return) were present to run Fluxus like a multinational enterprise. Lastly, although the collective never generated a profit to satisfy its capital needs, it did make some sales and was sustained by grants and personal investments, especially by Maciunas (he estimated about \$50,000 over its course), but also by Watts, Jonas Mekas, and other artists, family members, and friends.⁴ In all of this, graphic representation was hugely important—product labels, shop signs, advertise-



FIGURE 5

George Maciunas, graphic for FluxShop and Mail-Order Warehouse, ca. 1964. Gelatin silver print, 7 1/2 x 3 3/4 in. (19 x 9.5 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

ments, official rubber stamps—contributing to the image of Fluxus as “incorporated” (figs. 5, 6, 7).

Maciunas’s self-designated role as Fluxus chairman (connoting at once a corporate board and a political party) was also activated through an interlacing of the real and the metaphorical, as he cut a confusing figure across the landscape of the 1960s New York art world. He liked to pose in the garb of the quintessential late nineteenth-century bourgeois male complete with high, round-collar shirt, dark suit, and a bowler hat while performing various Fluxus duties. He was an executive, writing up directives from the Fluxus headquarters; an advertising and marketing manager, controlling Fluxus’s branded identity through his eye-catching graphic design for publicity and products; and an accountant and clerk, paying bills to printers, getting out the newsletters, and making financial and logistical arrangements for the publications and festivals.

Even outside of Fluxus, Maciunas always had business plans in the works, from entire companies to one-person import and resale operations. His clear aspirations to run a profitable enterprise were complicated by the fact that he identified himself as a Communist, even if precisely what this meant remained vague and his interest in identifying as such ebbed and flowed. What is clear is that he had a fascination, bordering on obsession, with the Soviet Union, particularly what he perceived to be its high levels of

IN	TL	UX	S	HO	P	N	E	W	S
SUBSCRIBE NOW	OR	TO	THE SELECTION	OF THE	MONTH	!!!			
PAY ONLY	\$2 PER MONTH	\$24 PER YEAR	AND RECEIVE AN	ITEM	EVERY	MONTH			
\$1.50 flux clinical record	flux news stick-on paper \$1 no. 5 to 8	snow game \$3.00	flux medicine \$4.50	flux year box no. 1 \$20	flux year box no. 2 \$30	fluxkit 35min. \$1.50			
flux air sculpture \$5	50 opera \$3	boxed fluxbook \$4.50	games & puzzles \$3	namekit \$4.50	deck \$6.00	by wateryami george brecht \$7			
find the end \$3	fire alarm \$3	by farmers' co-op.	events & games \$20	obvious deck \$6	Fluxlust \$3.00	table 36x36 \$1.60			
\$3 piece for flux-orchestra	by albert fine	flux clippings \$3	clean-liness kit \$3	open & shut case \$3	events \$3	just for you \$8			
flux musicbox \$7	4 flux-sweater \$2	flux clock \$8	by hit red center \$1	flux napkins \$3	by shigeo kubota \$5	lovelight by dan lauffer			
stick-on jewelry \$1	stick-on fasteners \$1	flux checkers \$7	\$30 flux chess grinders \$3	by george maciunas \$3	wall poem \$3	open the door \$6			
e.s.p. fluxkit \$3.00	clock cabinet \$1.00	by greg & paul \$20	spatial poem 1 \$1.50	spatial poem 2 \$1	spatial poem 3 \$6	events & games \$4.50			
instruc-tion 2 \$3	flux post-cards 20¢ ea. \$1	missng food \$1.50	flux dirty water \$1.50	total theatre \$3	holes \$3	by suicide fluxkit \$4.50			
table 21x25 \$80	stick-on ribbons \$1	finger print \$3	hide & seek \$4.50	fluxrock volume \$7	events \$7	table 25x25 \$90			


 100
 # 8 1/2 x 11
 100 of each
 George Maciunas
 FLUXUS 349 W. Bway
 Resale no.

FIGURE 6
 George Maciunas, mechanical for FluxShop News, ca. 1967. Ink, transfer lettering, and cut-and-pasted type on board, 9 15/16 x 13 3/4 in. (25.3 x 35 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.



FIGURE 7

Willem de Ridder, stamps from European Mail-Order Warehouse / FluxShop, ca. 1964–65, from a 1984 reconstruction. Metal stamp holder and two rubber stamps, overall (stampholder): $8 \frac{1}{4} \times 4 \frac{13}{16} \times 5 \frac{1}{8}$ in. ($21 \times 12.3 \times 13$ cm); (stamp .b): $2 \frac{1}{16} \times 2 \frac{1}{2} \times 2 \frac{13}{16}$ in. ($5.3 \times 6.3 \times 7.2$ cm); (stamp .c): $2 \frac{1}{16} \times 1 \frac{5}{8} \times 2 \frac{13}{16}$ in. ($5.2 \times 4.1 \times 7.2$ cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

economic efficiency. He hoped to develop Fluxus there. This in itself was a sign of several deeper issues, as I discuss in chapter 2. But regarding the seemingly incongruous merging of profitable business and leftist politics in his complex artistic persona, the Soviet context provides us with the potentially illuminating, if also contentious, figure of the “red executive.” This was the name given to the USSR’s own “organization man”—codified as a social subject through the state-run industries—in midcentury critical discourse.⁵ The purposefully evocative coupling of words (“red” and “executive”) suggests the reality of an inherently hierarchical Soviet Communism and its ever-present tensions between a planned and a market economy, between centralized control and relative autonomy for certain enterprises.

Beyond all this, Maciunas was also known to produce performances aimed at evading the law and humorously exposing the absurdity of its bureaucratic machinations. *Flux Combat with New York State Attorney (and Police)* (1975–76, fig. 8), for example, was Maciunas’s response to the New York state attorney general’s attempts to subpoena him for running “illegal” Fluxhouse co-ops in the South Houston industrial area, today known simply as SoHo. This multifaceted performance included a dramatic retooling of

FIGURE 8
George Maciunas, giant cutting blades door from *Fluxus
Combat with New York State Attorney (and Police)*,
1975–76. Door with metal blades, $77 \frac{3}{4} \times 37 \times 8 \frac{1}{2}$ in.
(197.5 × 94 × 21.6 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman
Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art,
New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art /
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his loft with a metal-blade-covered door and booby traps for government interlopers, and a secret hatch through which he could escape disguised in various masks.⁶ Maciunas's artistic identity encompassed the hierarchy of organizational roles necessary to operate a corporate enterprise, yet it was also a strange and complex amalgam: at once anachronistic and contemporary, American and Lithuanian, corporate and Communist, real and metaphorical, organizational and anarchic.

PERFORMING THE SYSTEM

Maciunas was the founder and central organizer of Fluxus, and he more than any other espoused organization as the glue that would hold the collective together and adhere

individual artists to a (self-)regimented "Fluxus way of life." Yet this in itself is by no means the end of the story. Fluxus is rightly celebrated for the diversity of its members, but thus far there have been no in-depth studies of the contradictions arising from Maciunas's attempt to manage such an array of international artists. The narrative of this book unfolds through a cluster study of six crucial Fluxus artists: Maciunas, George Brecht, Robert Watts, Nam June Paik, Alison Knowles, and Mieko (formerly Chieko) Shiomi. All were instrumental in Fluxus, whether they were introducing Maciunas to potential Fluxus artists, creating the template for Fluxus performances, helping with the logistics of concerts, composing new event scores and performing them, or supplying objects for sale. Taken together, these six artists embody the multiple and multifaceted subject positions and aesthetic inclinations of Fluxus. This book explores Fluxus's unprecedented diversity, while making the central argument that its international-cum-global outlook and the work of its individual artists were constitutive of a general Fluxus strategy of mimesis of the advanced capitalist system. They were, to coin a phrase, "performing the system."

Close examination of their artistic practices reveals how each artist found his or her own mode to "work the system" through its very operations and protocols, meaning that the artist-viewer would become activated primarily through aesthetics of organization (Maciunas), events (Brecht), communication (Paik), commoditization (Watts), routinization (Knowles), or global consciousness (Shiomi). I say "primarily" because there was crossover among their aesthetic approaches. For example, drawing from Marcel Duchamp and John Cage, Fluxus artists generally were interested in a process whereby everyday actions could be perceived as art. More specifically, Brecht's conception of what constituted an "event" in postwar culture had things in common with both Paik's examination of mass media and Knowles's interrogation of routine.

From Maciunas's use of the US military postal system for Fluxus communiqués to Brecht's scoring the action of exiting a room to Watts's fascination with commercial branding to Paik's seizure of vital airwaves in his "art for cybernated life" to Knowles's tampering with the clock of the standard capitalist workday to Shiomi's process of global mapping, the artists were appropriating tools, occupying spaces, and exposing operations of the system. And the collective as a whole mimicked US-based multinational corporate reach into foreign markets after the war. They were performing the system itself in order to (re)produce themselves (and their viewers) as conscious, critical subjects.

This idea of performing the system is central to my understanding of Fluxus and its significance within postwar art. It conceptualizes the method by which these artists could materialize the very immaterial forces that kept the dominant system up and running, and through art reconceive agency in general as a continual process of decoding and displacement vis-à-vis the system's mainstream information flows and mechanisms of control. Performativity allowed them the critical, if fleeting, space-time within the system to propose "strategies for living" and demonstrate art's own productive thinking capacity alongside other fields of endeavor.

FLUXUS AND THE (NEO) AVANT-GARDE

Also at stake in this Fluxus history is the fate of the avant-garde itself by the 1960s. A further reason for Fluxus's "fantastic confusion" is the fact that Maciunas's rhetoric remained peppered with avant-garde tropes. His founding Fluxus Manifesto, reminiscent of Dada or Soviet LEF (the Left Front of Art), prompts diverging interpretations of Fluxus as either revolutionary (an idealistic confirmation of the early twentieth-century avant-garde) or redundant (a kind of unknowing repetition). Neither of these provides an accurate or convincing assessment of the art historical or linguistic operations at play.

The very fact that Maciunas himself interrupted the flow of his handwritten text with photocopied reproductions of a dictionary definition of "flux" creates overt rifts in the rhetoric that other scholars have failed to account for. I respond critically to the confusion in two ways. First, I take seriously Maciunas's rhetoric, particularly his emphasis on "purging" and "fluxing." These organic metaphors are important clues as to how Fluxus distinguished itself historically. Second, I also look beyond the rhetoric to focus close attention on the organization of the collective, the individual artists, and their performances and objects. Linking these two approaches, I explore what it really meant to "flux the system," questioning the whole idea of being *en avant*.

On the face of it, Fluxus's "fantastic confusion" could suggest the simulacrum of a corporation that throws off the observer, since it would be "fake" and secretly chaotic—the aesthetic anarchism of the avant-garde in managerial guise. This is the most obvious reading, but it is not my reading. The question of how Fluxus resembled the system cannot be explained by such straightforward fakery—or by parody, for that matter. These notions of resemblance keep us stuck methodologically and ideologically in an old, idealistic model of an unequivocally subversive avant-garde, offering little insight into how the art itself actually spoke of its own changed position and role within a context of mass consumerism, corporatism, and systems think of the era. I suggest that a particular theory of mimicry can best help us to shift our thinking.

In biology, mimicry is generally understood as a situation of resemblance between two or more organisms, often not closely related taxonomically. Here is one of the most comprehensive and widely accepted explanations of how mimicry works: it is a process by which a message (feature or signal) of the organism called the *mimic* resembles some message of another (implicitly more powerful) organism, a feature of the environment, or a generalization of either of those, called the *model*.⁷ This resemblance has some functionality for the mimic in that its imitation "deceives" a third participant, often called the *signal receiver*, whose recognition and response is relevant for the mimic. The signal receiver may be, for example, a predator, a symbiont, or the model itself. This last point is interesting to keep in mind. When the model is undefined it can be the environment itself, meaning in the case of my argument for Fluxus that the signal receiver could be the viewer and it could also be the system at large—positing an interrelation between Fluxus and the system, which could effectively alter both. The information flow between

the participants most often confers an advantage upon the mimic, such as protection from predation. Ultimately, the factors central to an understanding of mimicry are the effect of key communicative signals upon the appropriate signal receiver and the resultant evolutionary effect upon the signal emitters. It is also these factors that make mimicry a productive model for thinking about Fluxus.

Appropriating a dynamic theory of mimicry for the purpose of cultural analysis, I argue that Fluxus's manner of resemblance was indeed a kind of survival strategy. This is the scenario as I see it: Fluxus mimicked certain formal and behavioral features of a model, the taxonomically disparate organism of the multinational corporation (as metonym for the system)—its expansive international structure, its reliance on organization and managerialism, and its fundamental practice of selling commodities. The signal receiver (in our case the viewer or the system itself) was then deceived (in our words, "fantastically confused") by these signals, thereby conferring (or perceived to confer) certain advantages of power (such as protection to maneuver) upon the mimic (Fluxus). Three aspects of this information flow are essential to my inquiry: the nature of the ostensible advantage, the potential effects on the receiver, and the possible evolutionary effect on Fluxus vis-à-vis the general "species" of the avant-garde. It is my contention that in a postwar climate in which the avant-garde had become the easily targeted prey of capitalism's recuperative commodity logic, mimicry functioned as a survival strategy by which Fluxus could evolve from the avant-garde into a distinct art organism with a historically specific position and role vis-à-vis the system it aimed to interrogate.

As concerns were raised across disciplines in the postwar period about how to adapt to the increasingly rapid rate of change, the faster pace of social life, the extension of spatial interconnectedness through new and more accessible communication and transportation technologies, and in general the greater complexity of problems to be solved, organization and its correlate, systematization, became at once panacea and problem. Some commentators believed that, given the extraordinary transitions being experienced by society, the only way to maintain the status quo of the individual was to increase levels of organization, while others worried that the compulsion to organize all aspects of life posed a serious threat to individual development—fear of a mass-organizational mindset.

This dichotomy could also be found in Fluxus, where organization was seen variously as a necessity and an encumbrance. Through "corporate imaginations," everyday factors of organization, but also systematization, automation, commoditization, mediatization, routinization, and globalization, took on greater import in Fluxus than in any of the earlier twentieth-century avant-gardes. This complicated Fluxus's relationship to the very system it aimed to question. I am interested in how Fluxus both marked and was marked by these processes that permeated the era. Maciunas envisioned Fluxus as the best-organized and most international group of radical artists in history, yet mimicry was a strategy he and his fellow artists could only partially control, and one that made Fluxus's position vis-à-vis the capitalist system highly ambivalent. Although such ambivalence could be seen elsewhere in postwar art, it was uniquely formulated in Fluxus.

Paradoxically, part of what makes Fluxus an evolution from the avant-garde is its very acknowledgment, whether implicit or explicit, of the system's capacity to recuperate critical disruption more efficiently than ever before. Fluxus strategies were designed for life within a system that could quickly reproduce itself and its subjects in recalibrated terms. Yet as the artists tested the system's limits—manifesting possibilities for resistance, disruption, and adaptation—they also raised the more problematic question of propagation. In other words, today the work demands that we address the history of how it might have participated in reproducing the dominant system itself. Fluxus practices critically incorporated aspects of the system, but also ran the risk of their own further incorporation. This mutually constitutive process of (re)production between the individual and the system is at the core of my study.

The question of Fluxus's relationship to the early twentieth-century avant-gardes is complex yet essential to an analytical history of the group, and until now it has not received adequate consideration.⁸ This is due in large part to the fact that since the 1984 English translation of German literary critic Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (originally published in German in 1974), art historians and critics have commonly accepted his handy theoretical division between a prewar "historical avant-garde" and a postwar "neo-avant-garde." Comfortable and seemingly reliable, this basic division has not been fundamentally challenged and has enjoyed remarkable staying power. I believe that for too long we have settled on the prefix "neo" for lack of a better alternative for describing art from roughly the 1950s through the 1970s, and for some critics up to the present day. "Neo," like so many "posts" we have seen, can only define a set of practices and circumstances negatively vis-à-vis what came before. Instead, we need a more appropriate way of thinking through the important historical linkages while conceptualizing the postwar artists' operations in their own right, in their own time. I understand, of course, that prefixes like "neo" serve special purposes for the historian: providing the shorthand that is sometimes necessary, enabling a historical shift to be registered as it is happening before historical perspective allows it to be grasped more fully, and, most importantly, designating a movement as a "retread." But as we gain perspective over time, it is vital that such terminology and its applications are scrutinized. We must be willing to dislodge ourselves from the (ideological) ease and satisfaction such theoretical categories provide when closer examination reveals that the unruly details of art history exceed the categories' descriptive limits.

There have been several instructive readings of Bürger's text, most notably Hal Foster's *The Return of the Real*, which although published in 1996 remains an important reference point. Despite Foster's useful retooling of Bürger's theory, serious blind spots remain in our history of postwar art as understood through the "historical" to "neo" divide. For this reason it is important to go back to the foundational text by Bürger, not to recast it yet again, but rather to make the case for a refusal of the very prefix "neo" itself and its replacement with a more nuanced description. Whether the source of Bürger's blind spots can be identified as historical accident—the argument that Fluxus, for one, was simply not on his radar at the time—or a deeper structural problematic is not my

primary concern. Most likely they are two different levels of explanation, neither ruling out the other.

Bürger uses the term “neo-avant-garde” pejoratively to denote an effective failure of art since Surrealism, the last of the historical avant-gardes. The crux of this grand misadventure of all art since World War II is the inability or unwillingness on the part of recent artists to acknowledge the historical avant-garde’s own earlier failure to achieve what Bürger deems its singular *raison d’être*: the sublation of art in its return to the praxis of life. Referring to the neo-avant-garde, Bürger asserts: “In a changed context, the resumption of avant-gardiste intentions with the means of avant-gardism can no longer even have the limited effectiveness the historical avant-gardes achieved.”⁹ Fluxus troubles Bürger’s claim in several respects. First, as others have also pointed out, Bürger’s theory is flawed in its fundamental premise that the avant-garde can be defined by an exclusive, monolithic theory: namely that all activities can be subsumed under, and judged by, the project to destroy the false autonomy of bourgeois art.¹⁰ Second, although Bürger correctly acknowledges the changed historical context, he fails to follow through on the logic of this by which he would have to allow that, through inevitably complex psychosocial processes, artistic consciousness was also transformed. Jochen Schulte-Sasse, writing in the foreword to a later edition of Bürger’s text, and drawing from Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, posits consciousness as “the historically concrete production of meaning that *approximates* an accurate articulation of sensuous-material experiences.”¹¹ Ideological ruptures enable us to develop such alternatives of thought (and different degrees of conceptual understanding). Bürger’s analysis does not ultimately allow for this on the part of the artists of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. He presumes that theirs was an “avant-gardiste” consciousness, as if generously giving them the benefit of the doubt, before going on to assert that this consciousness is irrelevant because what really matters is the status of their products—this above all defines their social efficacy (measured by his monolithic theory).

In all of this Bürger misses a vital point. Postwar artists operated under different perceptions of what was possible and what was impossible, based above all on their new degree of historical awareness of the totalizing, if flexible, system of advanced capitalism and their own implication within it. This informed their understanding of the role of the artist, collectivism, and the types of objects and performances they created. It altered their very sense of art’s ability to have social effect. They changed their terms, and we in retrospect need to better account for this. Postwar artists may have been discovering Dada, Russian Constructivism, and Surrealism for themselves anew in the mid- to late 1950s, but they were also the first generation with the hindsight to see itself as part of a broad avant-garde tradition. This ability to view the avant-garde historically was a completely postwar phenomenon. That history became grounds for conscious appropriation and reappraisal, not mere repetition.

The avant-garde solidified in an era marked by the apex of Western industrialization and imperialism, incipient mass commercialization of culture, unprecedented mechanized violence in World War I, and the collapse of Western democracies in the face of

Fascism. All of these things forced open a cleavage between the alienated artists and the bourgeoisie, as the agent class of society's malaise. Bürger fails to acknowledge that individuals who came of age as artists from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s were not operating through the psycho-historical structure of a categorically avant-gardist consciousness. They thought Duchamp's urinal on a plinth and moustache on the Mona Lisa were fantastic; they admired Dada's barbed performances at the Cabaret Voltaire; but they could not channel the mental, emotional, or least of all political urgency by which these gestures were born. Their lens was first and foremost aesthetic.

For many European and Asian members of Fluxus in particular—George Maciunas, Jonas Mekas, Wolf Vostell, Milan Knížák, Nam June Paik, et cetera—harsh childhood experiences of war and colonial rule prevented naive or romantic interpretations (repetitions) of the avant-garde. It is a mistake to call these artists utopians. They also emerged as artists in a time when the mass consumerism and mass media of the 1950s and 1960s breathed fresh life into popular culture, invigorating artists with colorful new materials and ideas. As much as we can generalize, theirs was a different perspective, coupling a remnant hope to refuse Dada's collapse into nihilism with a skeptical awareness of the trappings of their own advanced capitalist culture. They articulated a different position and role of the critical artist within the changed historical circumstances.

Fluxus is distinguished not only by its refusal to conceive of its work as anything but situated precisely within the logic of the commodity and its order of exchange value, but also by the underlying forces of organization, systematization, automation, commoditization, mediatization, routinization, and globalization that keep the entire system up and running. This was the crux of Fluxus's historical dilemma: how to proceed in a critical art practice with their greater historical consciousness (than their early twentieth-century counterparts) of systemic limits. The strategies they devised in response to this question did not constitute a rupture with the past, but represented a significant enough shift to invalidate the use of not only the prefix "neo" but also the prefix "avant" for accurately describing their practices today.

My proposal to think through and beyond "avant" may surprise or trouble some readers, but only if we do not know the history of the critical discourse at the time of Fluxus. Already in the early 1960s even sympathetic critics spotted the contradictions of the avant-garde as a term and a program in the postwar context. They warned that radical artists could not, in good conscience, perfunctorily emblazon themselves with this title. Two of the clearest voices in this regard were the German poet and critic Hans Magnus Enzensberger and the American critic William C. Seitz, with essays boldly titled "The Aporias of the Avant-Garde" (1962) and "The Rise and Dissolution of the Avant-Garde" (1963), respectively. Their writing contains crucial insights into the same problems raised by Fluxus's visual production. Recalling their work today can help remove the blinders of Bürger's later theory.

Of particular relevance is Enzensberger's discussion of the complications of the term "avant-garde" as it went from military stratagem to cultural metaphor. He reminds us

that "avant-garde" originally described those troops that went ahead of the main army. This sense of soldiers "being ahead" on the field of battle was translated in the early nineteenth century—via the French socialist movements, particularly those led by Henri de Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier—into an artistic lexicon, where it was used to conceptualize artists as among those exceptional individuals who would be ahead of society, leading the charge for a new social reality. As Saint-Simon famously wrote in 1825, "We, the artists, will serve as avant-garde: for amongst all the arms at our disposal, the power of the Arts is the swiftest and most expeditious."¹² This idea of being "avant-garde" was already a problem for critical thinkers like Enzensberger and Maciunas himself by the early 1960s.

Maciunas struggled obsessively with his desire to fit Fluxus into an avant-garde lineage, as can be seen in his comprehensive chart entitled *Fluxus, Its Historical Development and Relationship to Avant-Garde Movements* (ca. 1966, fig. 9), which was years in the making. At the same time, he criticized his peers who called themselves avant-garde for what he perceived as their individualistic cultural decadence. Maciunas's anxiety was in part a product of a contest—with artists such as Charlotte Moorman (founder of the New York Avant-Garde Festival, 1963–80, minus 1970, 1976, 1979), Allan Kaprow (considered the father of Happenings), and Wolf Vostell (advocate of "dé-collage," the term he coined to distinguish his own practice)—over who could rightfully carry the avant-garde torch. But Maciunas's anxiety also signaled an awareness that, in spite of any artistic infighting, it was too late to keep that particular flame burning. The revolutionary avant-garde moment had in fact passed, and so much squabbling over who was genuinely avant-garde was merely a surface effect of deeper problems—one's actual position and role as a critical artist within the totalizing, if flexible, system of postwar advanced capitalism.

Like Maciunas, Enzensberger questioned the very idea of being *en avant* in the arts, asserting that the "avant" of the avant-garde was in fact its own contradiction. As he explained: "It gives rise to an avant-garde as bluff, as escape forward, with which the main body, for fear of being left behind, falls in. The type of fellow traveler who would like to pass for a forerunner becomes prominent; in the rush for the future, every ram fancies himself the bellwether [*sic*]. The man on the treadmill remains unremittingly the object of a process that he thinks he is, as subject, in control of."¹³ Fluxus artists were becoming alert to the danger of this particular vanguard "treadmill"—that they might be running on it unawares, thinking of themselves as somehow ahead when actually being mobilized by forces they could neither see nor completely control.

I want to make explicit something that both Enzensberger and Maciunas described implicitly. Since Saint-Simon, futurity has been hailed as the main attribute of the avant-garde—its apparent capacity to embody the future in the present, to be "before" in time. What has gone less remarked upon is the avant-garde's position in space—its apparent capacity to be "outside" and "in front of" a larger social formation. We do, however, get a sense of spatial positioning in Enzensberger's "man on a treadmill" (or the ram as bellwether). The metaphor serves to illustrate the inseparability of the temporal and the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Within fluxus group there are 4 categories indicated:

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

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

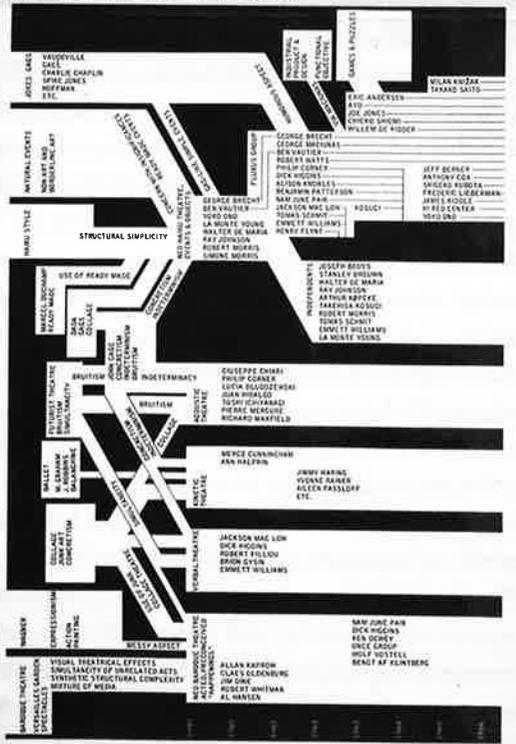


FIGURE 9

George Maciunas, *Fluxus, Its Historical Development and Relationship to Avant-Garde Movements* (detail), ca. 1966.

Offset-printed sheet, 17 x 5 9/16 in. (43.2 x 14.2 cm).

The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image

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spatial. Enzensberger admits that assertions of the artist being “before” as well as being “in front” seemed increasingly contrived. I contend that if we are to judiciously assess art’s relationships to its sociological contexts, an understanding of space is as important as one of time.

Seitz was of a similar mindset. In “The Rise and Dissolution of the Avant-Garde” he focuses on the avant-garde’s lost capacity to shock its bourgeois audiences—or, to put it another way, the historical phenomenon by which artists’ efforts to scorn the establishment were transformed into shock appeal, garnering them large audiences and high price tags. As Seitz wrote:

A few years ago the contest between innovation in art and sophisticated taste was a race in which the artists were always ahead; now, for the first time, leaders and followers are neck and neck. In the past even the most advanced audiences drew back momentarily from certain innovations—of the new, indoctrinated following, this is no longer true. They have learned that any eye-catching image or object that looks tasteless, blatant, banal, annoying, or even disgusting—that subverts or contradicts everything once considered sacred—should be embraced at all costs. Especially at all costs!¹⁴

To Enzensberger’s metaphorical treadmill, then, we can add Seitz’s “race” in which those previously at the rear have caught up and are now “neck and neck” with the once advanced artists. Again, the dynamic is both temporal and spatial, and all runners are forced to adapt their strategies to the shifting conditions of the race.

This essay appears to be a follow-up to an interview Seitz conducted earlier in the year for which he enlisted the help of the living doyen of the early twentieth-century avant-garde, Marcel Duchamp, to answer the question: What’s happened to art? As in the essay, the main thrust of the interview with Duchamp is the contention that the “dissolution of the avant-garde” is a decidedly postwar phenomenon. Since 1946, so it goes, artists increasingly capitulated to the influence of money to the point that their only real commitment is to a perpetual changing of styles that meet the new market demand for novelty. By the early 1960s, the validity of the idea of a singular forward thrust of art (history) was collapsing before artists’ eyes. Art multiplied and diversified to the extent that movements such as Pop or Happenings, or specific groups like the Situationist International, Zero, Nouveau Réalisme, and Fluxus, were all viable candidates for so-called vanguardism. Duchamp responded to Seitz’s question in no uncertain terms: “The investment idea has brought in a great deal of that public, and that public, in turn, has completely accepted the idea of the avant-garde. They don’t even call it avant-garde anymore: ‘You can’t be avant-garde anymore. We accept it before you do it. There is nothing shocking to us. You can’t shock us.’ Shocking is impossible today.”¹⁵

Like Enzensberger, Seitz, and Duchamp, many younger artists were of the belief that the whole concept of the avant-garde was beginning to not make sense. The most attuned of these artists—those realizing that the conditions of the “race” had completely shifted—

started accounting more precisely for “when” and “where” their practices were actually situated. This was especially true for Fluxus, as we shall see, but any history of postwar art written today needs to consider, with appropriate terminology, how both the temporal and the spatial sociological determinants of art shifted as intensified pressures of organization, systematization, automation, commoditization, mediatization, routinization, and globalization brought the all-encompassing system into greater relief.

As much as the art itself necessitates a rethinking of the uses of “neo” and “avant,” it also requires that we hold onto “garde.” This is indispensable to my argument for Fluxus. The artists’ burgeoning awareness of their own implication within the system neither bred despair nor precluded desire for change. Instead, it prompted reimaginations of what might be possible, given what might be impossible. Continuing to employ the cultural metaphor of a “guard” makes clear this critical dimension to the collective project, even though we need to explain how the objectives and methods evolved and became more ambivalent after the early twentieth century.

Maciunas himself offers us a useful way of doing this. In 1964, the central organizer of Fluxus was so disgusted with Moorman’s self-titled New York Avant-Garde Festival and all its participating artists, which included some members of Fluxus, that he went so far as to proclaim that if they were the avant-garde, Fluxus must be the “rear-guard” (fig. 10).¹⁶ This was partly rhetorical one-upmanship (the creeping anxiety that Moorman was stealing artists away from him), but also an incisive commentary on the speciousness of a so-called vanguardism that could be readily adopted by artists without any critical barometer. Interrogating what it meant to call Fluxus “rear-guard” and exploring how this idea helps explain Fluxus’s evolution of critical art practice within the shifting conditions of art’s production and reception at the time exposes the heart of the historical controversy. Maciunas’s “rear-guard” should not be misconstrued with the right-wing reactionism commonly associated with the term. Rather, it conveys a more complex coming to grips with the exhausted state of the avant-garde and the complications and ambivalences arising from attempts to maintain a critical stance in art, particularly as the idealistic temporal and spatial determinants of the avant-garde as somehow “before,” “in advance,” or “outside” of the larger social formation became untenable.

This is where a theory of mimesis becomes most valuable. It was through a process of mimicry that Fluxus might survive as a critical species in an evolved form to work from an acknowledged different place, within the system. Given the multisensory, embodied nature of Fluxus performances, interesting analogies can be made to open up imaginative possibilities for understanding how Fluxus worked, not on a single front, but within, upon, and through the many channels of the individual and social body: for example, Knowles’s performances with food, activating the taste buds in its mouth; Paik’s sexually charged cybernetic performances, stimulating its libido; and Maciunas’s performative organization, flushing it from behind. The new vanguard was a rear-guard because only by dealing with the plumbing, so to speak, could any new model of critical art emerge.

FLUXUS HQ P.O. BOX 180 NEW YORK 10013
 FLUXSHOPS AND FLUXFESTS IN NEW YORK
 AMSTERDAM NICE ROME MONTREAL TOKYO
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 FLUXKITS -FLUXAUTOMOBILES-FLUXPOST
 FLUXMEDICINES-FLUXFILMS-FLUXMENUS
 FLUXRADIOS - FLUXCARDS - FLUXPUZZLES
 FLUXCLOTHES-FLUXORGANS-FLUXSHIRTS
 FLUXBOXES-FLUXORCHESTRA-FLUXJOKES
 FLUXGAMES-FLUXHOLES-FLUXHARDWARE
 FLUXSUITCASES-FLUXCHESS-FLUXFLAGS
 FLUXTOURS-FLUXWATER-FLUXCONCERTS
 FLUXMYSTERIES-FLUXBOOKS-FLUXMAGIC
 FLUXCLOCKS-FLUXCIRCUS-FLUXANIMALS
 FLUXQUIZZES-FLUXWATER-FLUXMEDALS
 FLUXDUST-FLUXCANS-FLUXTABLECLOTH
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 NER-WALTER DE MARIA-WILLEM DE RID-
 DER-ROBERT FILLIOU-DICK HIGGINS-HI
 RED CENTER-JOE JONES-ALISON KNOWLES
 JIRI KOLAR-ARTHUR KOPCKE-TAKENHISA
 KOSUGI-SHIGEO KUBOTA-FREDERIC LIEB-
 ERMAN-GYORGI LIGETI-JACKSON MAC LOW
 GEORGE MACIUNAS-JONAS MEKAS-BARBA-
 RA MOORE-ROBERT MORRIS-LADISLAV NO-
 VAK-YOKO ONO-NAMJUNE PAIK-BENJAMIN
 PATTERSON-JAMES RIDDLE-DITER ROT
 TAKAKO SAITO-WILLEM SCHIPPERS-TOMAS
 SCHMIT-CHIEKO SHIOMI-DANIEL SPOERRI
 BEN VAUTIER-ROBERT M. WATTS-EMMETT
 WILLIAMS-LA MONTE YOUNG AND OTHERS
 FLUXMANIFESTO ON FLUXAMUSEMENT-VAUDEVILLE-ART? TO ESTABLISH
 ARTIST'S NONPROFESSIONAL, NONPARASITIC, NONELITE STATUS IN SOCIETY.
 HE MUST DEMONSTRATE OWN DISPENSABILITY, HE MUST DEMONSTRATE
 SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF THE AUDIENCE, HE MUST DEMONSTRATE THAT ANY-
 THING CAN SUBSTITUTE ART AND ANYONE CAN DO IT. THEREFORE THIS SUB-
 STITUTE ART-AMUSEMENT MUST BE SIMPLE, AMUSING, CONCERNED WITH
 INSIGNIFICANCES, HAVE NO COMMODITY OR INSTITUTIONAL VALUE. IT MUST
 BE UNLIMITED, OBTAINABLE BY ALL AND EVENTUALLY PRODUCED BY ALL.
 THE ARTIST DOING ART MEANWHILE, TO JUSTIFY HIS INCOME, MUST DEMON-
 STRATE THAT ONLY HE CAN DO ART. ART THEREFORE MUST APPEAR TO BE
 COMPLEX, INTELLECTUAL, EXCLUSIVE, INDISPENSABLE, INSPIRED. TO RAISE
 ITS COMMODITY VALUE IT IS MADE TO BE RARE, LIMITED IN QUANTITY AND
 THEREFORE ACCESSIBLE NOT TO THE MASSES BUT TO THE SOCIAL ELITE.

FIGURE 10

George Maciunas, mechanical for Fluxus calling card and "Fluxus Art-Amusement" manifesto, 1965. Gelatin silver print, composition: 4 1/16 × 4 7/16 (10.3 × 11.2 cm); sheet: 4 3/16 × 4 5/8 in. (10.6 × 11.8 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

Fluxus would be a rear-guard purgative for the individual and social body, fluxing these systems from within.

"Fluxing" the system, in contrast to an old revolutionary avant-garde model of "toppling" the system, was not total. Fluxing had to be recurrent; it had to happen time and time again. There would be no pretense of a single moment of emergence in some utopian state. Rather, it was a commitment to a process. While Fluxus artists attempted to occupy and rearrange the system from within (because there was no "outside")—creating alternative systems of production, distribution, and consumption—their works also suggested that the greatest potential impact might occur on the level of the individual subject. A Fluxus event score on a little card or a compactly boxed FluxKit offered something one



FIGURE 11
 George Maciunas et al., FluxKit, 1965. Vinyl-covered attaché case containing objects in various media, (closed) 13 3/8 × 17 1/2 × 4 15/16 in. (34 × 44.5 × 12.5 cm). Published by Fluxus Editions. Assembled by George Maciunas. Designed by George Maciunas. Edition unknown. Containing objects by Eric Andersen, Ay-O, George Brecht, Dick Higgins, Joe Jones, Alison Knowles, Takehisa Kosugi, George Maciunas, Nam June Paik, Benjamin Patterson, Mieko Shiomi, Ben Vautier, and Robert Watts. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

could carry around for regular use (fig. 11). Purgatives conventionally stimulate the bowels, but Maciunas extended the metaphor to include the mental faculties. Performing a score or playing a game within a FluxKit might purge the mind. Cognitive channels could be fluxed against the forces of reification to open up flows of conscious creative thinking.

The impossibility for Fluxus artists to completely destroy the hold of commodity logic on consciousness did not mean that individual consciousness was not still contested ground and a site of potential self-transformation. Fluxus relied on performance, but did

not hold out for the sort of mass transformation in reception envisioned by Walter Benjamin in his assessment of the revolutionary power of film circa 1936.¹⁷ Key to Fluxus was the *embodied* actor-to-audience relationship that performance afforded. Such a relationship allowed Fluxus artists to manifest forces of organization, systematization, automation, commoditization, mediatization, routinization, and globalization as generalized experiences within the system while spotlighting specific subjective experiences of acting within and upon those forces.

The intersubjective nature of Fluxus performances enabled audience members to make connections more easily to their own lives. A performance within the space-times of everyday life could inflect the broad stream of perception, pushing things normally unnoticed to the surface of consciousness. And even if only one person left the concert hall, restaurant, sidewalk, or other Fluxus “venue” thinking, seeing, or doing things slightly differently, it was nonetheless validating. This quotidian intent is evidenced by the fact that Fluxus event scores were based on the idea that they could be performed either in a public concert or by anyone, alone, at any time—they were above all a means to self-actuation. Of concern are the particular ways Maciunas, Brecht, Watts, Knowles, Paik, and Shiomi imagined this possibility within a newly delimited scope of potential action.

My deployment of Maciunas’s controversial term “rear-guard” is intended to capture the ambivalence, contradictions, and anxieties surrounding the artist’s relationship to the dominant system by the early 1960s. Appropriation, occupation, exposure, and performance became the key tactics necessary to negotiate systemic operations, protocols, and constantly shifting relations of power. Fluxus designed strategies to be repeated continuously (for regular mental purging)—they had to be in order for individuals to (re)produce themselves as conscious, critical subjects of the system.

Of course, the name Dada also represents a multitude of meanings, including its nonsensical mocking of a purposeful avant-garde. What *Corporate Imaginations* shows is how Fluxus’s doubts about the avant-garde took shape within a distinct historical context. The failure of the avant-garde to stand up to totalitarian governments and the triumph of US postwar capitalism produced a sense of limited horizons for artists seeking out strategies of resistance and change. Contemplating the idea of Fluxus as rear-guard—instead of neo-avant-garde—while checking any impulse to merely replace one label with another, opens up the necessary theoretical space for rearticulating Fluxus’s relationship to both the early twentieth-century avant-garde and the politics of everyday life in the 1960s and 1970s.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL COMPLEX

The postwar period saw major developments that enabled advances in capitalism and an organizational and systems logic through which both an “organization man” model of subjectivity appropriated by Maciunas to found Fluxus and the artists’ strategies emerged.

The architectural historian Reinhold Martin's concept of a postwar organizational complex helps articulate the complicated ambivalence of Fluxus's relationship to the system. Martin describes this as "the aesthetic and technological extension of what has been known since the early 1960s as the 'military-industrial complex.' Its defining epistemologies coalesce into an organicism that operates on the model of a total, if pliant, system. Within this system architecture acts as a conduit for organizational patterns passing through the networks of communication that constitute the system's infrastructure."¹⁸ While corporate architecture's close proximity to big capital makes it a distinct case study for Martin, it was indeed this same organizational complex—particularly its ability to integrate subjects and spaces into naturalized organizations, in often subtle expansions of social control—that necessitated the also more subtle tactics of Fluxus geared toward disrupting, destabilizing, redirecting, or critically adapting to circumstances and behaviors that were quickly becoming automatic.

The main elements that came to define what has been variously termed "late," "monopoly," "advanced," or "multinational" capitalism did not constitute a radical break from what existed previously. For one, monopolistic arrangements are older than capitalism itself. With the rise of industrialization in the eighteenth century, monopolies could increase in scale and scope, and in one variation or another they were common to all industrialized capitalist nations by the end of the nineteenth century. Mergers and acquisitions continued in the early twentieth century, but it was roughly between the years 1940 and 1970 that a distinct multinational version was shaped and solidified in an advanced form. The key relationships and processes that emerged were, generally speaking, six-fold, involving giant corporations, the state, consumerism, internationalization, the military-industrial complex, and the role of the media, all contributing to the development of a more integrated world economy.¹⁹ Most pertinent to my discussion of Fluxus, however, is the fact that these six elements required technological and organizational developments that had not been possible prior to this period. Organization became at once a material substrate that held the vastly more complex sets of relationships together into a well-regulated system, and a creed that sanctified and stabilized this new order.

The postwar triumph of Keynesian planning both helped to produce and exemplified this faith in control through organization. The economist John Maynard Keynes had been publishing critiques of the dominant economic philosophy of *laissez-faire* since the 1920s, but it was not until 1944 at the Bretton Woods Conference that his ideas had their first major impact. At this pivotal gathering, arduous negotiations, particularly between Britain and the United States, produced the map for the postwar international economic order in which the United States was uniquely positioned economically and militarily to play the most powerful role. As the lead British representative, Keynes proved persuasive in assuring *laissez-faire* skeptics that a regulated economy and individual initiative could coexist productively, and indeed that state intervention was necessary to the survival of capitalism, which, despite its shortcomings, he considered to be the best of all possible alternatives. In the years following the end of the war Keynesian economics was widely

established throughout North America, Europe, South America, and Australia. Fears of renewed depression after the surge of a wartime economy prompted governments to implement Keynes's ideas on state control, judiciously injecting funds or restricting credit to manage imbalances of overproduction, inflation, and unemployment.

In other words, Keynes's philosophy contributed to a change in circumstances where a well-managed flushing of the system with capital would keep the system regular, evening out the uncomfortable irregularity of boom-and-bust cycles in the social (capitalist) body. In a sense, what Keynes advocated was a systemic purgative, applied in a consistent and controlled manner to keep the capitalist system running smoothly. Tightening and loosening the belt was mandatory to control the flows. As we shall see, there is a surprising, strange, and complicated correlation between these economic policies and what Maciunas and the Fluxus collective were staging performatively from within the cultural realm.

But the so-called organizational society did not come about solely through the embrace of Keynesian economics. It was also supported by new ideas about systems from the 1940s to the 1960s. Pioneered in the United States, systems engineering evolved in large part from wartime military strategic decision making, where its success led advocates to want to apply it across society. Classical science, with its overspecialization, compartmentalization, and attempts to understand wholes as merely the sum of their parts, was no longer sufficient to address society's large-scale, complex problems and accelerated rate of change. The rise of cybernetics as a new interdisciplinary field of research, first outlined by Norbert Wiener in his books *Cybernetics, or, Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (1948, second edition 1961) and *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (1950), was the clearest manifestation of this trend, inciting individuals in diverse fields to reconsider systems as organized "interactions" of parts and variables, and, more significantly, as nonlinear "processes" of information transmission.²⁰

About the same time, the Austrian biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy, working primarily in the United States and Canada, laid the modern foundation for systems theory. He first proposed the idea in the 1940s and then formalized it in his 1951 article "General System Theory: A New Approach to the Unity of Science."²¹ Together, cybernetics and systems theory generated excitement for the prospect of developing a general systems approach with cross-disciplinary application around the main objectives of seeing overarching systemic order, understanding control mechanisms, and learning how feedback could guide a system to be progressively self-correcting.

The question of the relation between systemic order and individual action prompted much debate. This was the era in which William H. Whyte Jr. published his sociological study *The Organization Man* (1956) and Sloan Wilson published his fictional account of life within the new corporate system, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955).²² Both books were popular sellers, the latter also via its Hollywood adaptation to the big screen in 1956, and their theoretical-fictional characters were soon caricatured into stereotypes, broadly signifying sheepish subservience of the individual to the mass organization. Yet

such popular views did not do justice to the more complicated figures both Whyte and Wilson described.

The Organization Man in particular offered an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of organization in postwar society, and, most significantly, suggested that a new historical subject of these organizational systems had emerged.²³ It is worth quoting Whyte at length:

The corporation man is the most conspicuous example, but he is only one, for the collectivization so visible in the corporation has affected almost every field of work. . . . The word *collective* most of them can't bring themselves to use—except to describe foreign countries or organizations they don't work for—but they are keenly aware of how much more deeply beholden they are to organization than were their elders. They are wry about it, to be sure; they talk of the "treadmill," the "rat race," of the inability to control one's direction. But they have no great sense of plight; between themselves and organization they believe they see an ultimate harmony and, more than most elders recognize, they are building an ideology that will vouchsafe this trust.²⁴

While Whyte's reading can be overdetermined at times, one of its most compelling aspects remains its signaling of the phenomenon by which a resurgent belief in organization was engendered within the individual to the point of defining him or her as a social subject. Playing a lead role, corporations found means—both ideological and material—to present organization as universally beneficial: what's good for the company is good for the worker.

Whyte's assessment of the organization man's disdain for "collectives" and relative apathy toward life on the "treadmill" (recall Enzensberger's use of this same metaphor) provides insight into a common circumstance or disposition at the time as we attempt to comprehend Fluxus's "corporate imaginations." For big corporations, fostering employee loyalty would ostensibly offset potentially disruptive water-cooler discussions about wearying office mechanization, the boredom of deskilling, the risk of losing jobs to machines, and what some were calling a general proletarianization of white-collar employees. Often via more elastic means of control, workers would increasingly become willing participants in the propagation of organization and their own further incorporation, leading to the greater stability of normative power relations and the system as a whole.

I do not see Fluxus artists as either "in advance" or "tools" of these systemic processes. Over the course of his life Maciunas produced what he called "learning machines." These were interactive fold-out charts and diagrams designed to educate the "user" in an unconventional yet engaging and efficient manner on such topics as the history of the world. It is not too much of a stretch to extend Maciunas's intentions for his learning machines to Fluxus as a whole. Fluxus performances and objects also were kinds of learning machines: strategies for how to adapt to life under the changed conditions, to become aware of the very process of subjectification. Fluxus artists were learning how to operate within and upon the system's symbolic and material flows. *Corporate Imagina-*

tions sees their practices as specifically local, but immanent within capitalism's globalizing space-time, which placed new demands on the subject to keep time (and keep up) and relate to others in an increasingly extended, interconnected, mediated environment.

FLUXUS'S MULTINATIONALISM

Fluxus was founded on the multinational roots and multicultural orientations of its artists. For instance, Maciunas was born in Lithuania, spent time as a young child in a sanatorium in Switzerland recovering from tuberculosis, fled Lithuania in 1944 with his parents and sister when the Soviet Union invaded, and lived out World War II with his family in Germany, spending a period in a detention camp after the war before they immigrated to the United States in 1949. Paik was born in Korea, fled to Japan with his family at the onset of the Korean War, attended university in Tokyo, after graduation continued his studies in West Germany, and relocated yet again to the United States in 1964. Other artists traveled the opposite direction, from the United States to Europe. The African American double-bass player Ben Patterson crossed the Atlantic in hopes of escaping the racial barriers in American orchestras, and George Brecht left the United States to live as a full-time artist in Europe in 1965, never to return. It is not difficult to see why meeting so many artists with similar stories of displacement, migration (whether forced or by choice), and experience of crossing borders to build a new life fueled Maciunas's vision of a unified yet geographically expansive art collective.

As his awareness grew of artists around the world engaged in creating new types of performances and objects, Maciunas quickly determined that his unique contribution could be *organization*. His graphic design and architectural skills, not to mention his adeptness at appropriating the postal system, petrol pumps, and copy machines of the US military, signified his own creative status, but also complemented his belief that organization was the key to getting things done on a transnational and transcontinental scale.

In Maciunas's practice, art and organization became inextricably intertwined: a *Fluxus News-Policy Letter* tapped out on his beloved IBM Executive typewriter announced the latest business of the Fluxus collective while also detailing plans for upcoming Fluxus Festivals where his *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* (1962) would stage the mechanized regimentation of the body in everyday life. All of this was the stuff of Maciunas's performative practice. This nexus of art and organization defined his artistic persona to the point that I argue he constructed a new model of the artist as organizer, which went hand in hand with a new model of incorporated collectivism for Fluxus.

Maciunas spent an inordinate amount of time writing memos full of lists and guidelines to colleagues around the world, attempting to ensure that Fluxus would be structured and run efficiently to distribute Flux-Products as vehicles of an anti-commodity (pro-use value) philosophy. Once Ben Vautier was designated head of Fluxus South in Nice and Willem de Ridder of Fluxus North in Amsterdam, for example, they responded

to instructions from Maciunas in New York regarding the production or distribution of new materials while maintaining the degree of creative autonomy that any artist, or regional manager, must have for a successful enterprise. Oftentimes, raw material (in the form of ideas) was sent from artists in the United States, Europe, and Japan (Vautier, de Ridder, Brecht, Yoko Ono, Paik, Knowles, Shiomi, Knížák, Robert Filliou, Ay-O, Watts) to Maciunas, who then designed and branded Flux-Products in New York, from where they could flow to potential markets around the globe. Maciunas's creation of a mail-order sales option complete with a catalog of all the Flux-Products signaled a desire to distribute the goods via market channels but on their own terms.

It is instructive to consider the nature of what I am calling for the time being Fluxus's multinationalism, and the fact that the major sites of Fluxus activity were in the United States, Europe (with an especially strong contingent in West Germany), and Japan against the backdrop of post-Marshall Plan economic development and political realignments.²⁵ New York had become the world's new economic and cultural epicenter. Above all else, multinational corporations were rising like the gleaming new glass and steel skyscrapers that housed their headquarters as ultimate sites of power.

Maciunas might have stayed in Europe after the first round of Fluxus Festivals in 1962 and 1963 (although poor health was increasingly becoming a factor in his decisions). Instead, he opted to return to New York, where he established Fluxus HQ, sharing what was still considered the world's "headquarters city" with giants like IBM and General Electric (see fig. 10). In doing so he set in motion a process of simulating the multinationalization of corporate organization that was reshaping the world's economic, geopolitical, and cultural landscape. The conjoined powers of big business and the state had been restructured so that the economy—and increasingly art as tied to a developing art market—functioned satisfactorily only insofar as the entirety of social existence was bent toward the needs and desires of capital, increasingly regardless of national borders.

Beginning in 1947 and lasting for four years, the Marshall Plan sanctioned the spending of millions of US dollars in Europe and Japan to ensure the rebuilding of these nations along the lines of capitalist democracy. It was among the earliest postwar signs not only of US dominance, but also of a neocolonial mission based on the opening of new stable markets to absorb the overabundance of US consumer goods. The excesses of overproduction, which Keynes himself had approved for the sake of keeping the system in balance, had to be expended in new ways and places. Fluxus's multinationalism raises important questions about art's relationship to and role within the restructuring of the economic and cultural landscape and the redirecting of flows of capital and goods. The issues we now see much more clearly in our era of globalization and global art were only then forming on an emerging global scale, and commentators were asking whether art could do anything but be taken up in the dominant stream.

By introducing ideas such as "corporate imaginations," "incorporated art collective," "rear-guard," "multinational," and "performing the system" to describe Fluxus, I pursue an interest in the ways artists become historical subjects who compel us to understand

art's evolving presence within the flexible power of capitalist organization and the contingent relationship between the individual and the system. Fluxus artists' performative practices allow us to examine the ways that society was changing in this particular period of capital expansion, as they literally brought to life aspects of the system that were then being naturalized as automatic routines. This capacity of the art to appropriate, occupy, expose, and perform the system can by no means be ascribed entirely to authorial intention. This is why close readings of the work, so often neglected in Fluxus studies, are imperative. While the artists themselves were not always fully conscious of the procedures their works set in play, the works resonate within larger critical frames precisely because of each artist's own discursive imbrications.

If Maciunas is the protagonist with whom my historical narrative begins, his *modus operandi* of organization raises important questions of difference within the group that a discussion of the work of George Brecht, Robert Watts, Nam June Paik, Alison Knowles, and Mieko Shiomi can help to answer. Each had a complicated relationship to Maciunas's models of an incorporated art collective and the artist as organizer (who was also expected to be self-regimented). I emphasize how the tensions within Fluxus were themselves historically specific, often tied to debates about the need for collectivism, art's social role, and the growing desire of some artists to acknowledge specific embodied subjects (both artist and viewer). The work of Maciunas, Brecht, Watts, Paik, Knowles, and Shiomi can by no means be reduced or essentialized to their identities. I want to make it clear that I see this as one factor among many influencing their interests and choices. Yet it is evident that as they pursued a general strategy of mimesis of the capitalist system, they suggested how corporate operations and protocols—tending to dispose of subjective experience—impact individual subjects differently.

In chapter 2, I examine the intricacies of how Maciunas performed the role of artist as organizer. A comparison with his peers, especially Andy Warhol, who presented himself as head of the Factory in 1963, and Claes Oldenburg, who opened *The Store* on Manhattan's Lower East Side in 1961, is crucial for illuminating both wider trends and important distinctions at the time. This chapter also explains why Maciunas's emphasis on organization distinguished his strategies historically. Whereas early twentieth-century avant-garde artists tended to view the proletariat as the ideal subject on which to model their own "revolutionary" personas (aside from the Futurists, who were more complicated when it came to class), in Maciunas the artist left the factory for the postwar office site and organizational society at large precisely when the organization man was codified as a new social subject. His program of working within and through organization suggests his idea of a critical rear-guard, but it also always risked propagating the dominant system itself (and its dominant white male subject).

Chapter 3 extends the discussion of Maciunas's individual role of the artist as organizer to explain how he structured and ran Fluxus as an incorporated art collective. Based on an examination of extensive correspondence with Fluxus artists in the United States, Europe, and Japan, multilingual publicity posters, collective newsletters, graphic signs,

an inventory coding system, copyright protection, official rubber stamps, advertisements, et cetera, it becomes clear how Maciunas set the stage for Fluxus's strategy of mimesis of advanced capitalism, here called performing the system. Appropriating tools, occupying spaces, and exposing operations of the system evinced a historically specific understanding of the possibilities (and impossibilities) for critical art practice. Performances and objects became part and parcel of performing the system, while Maciunas's aspirations to organize Fluxus on a multinational scale spoke to the broader reality of an expanding marketplace, raising questions as to whether art could chart its own flows. *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* (1962, fig. 12) is a performance given special attention because it encapsulates Maciunas's fascination with the executive role as well as his ambivalent relationship to organization. The Italian typewriter king became Maciunas's doppelgänger, so to speak, for his successful merging of art and industry, progressive politics and incorporation. Maciunas's favorite form of Flux-Product—the FluxBox, aka a FluxKit—is also considered closely. Although identified with the industrially produced consumer object, these FluxBoxes were anti-commodities—ways of reusing, revaluing, and recirculating mass consumer excess—part of the plan to flux both the individual and social body of shit.

Maciunas's collective platform for performing the system was strongly influenced by George Brecht's innovation of the event score, which became the template for Fluxus performances and is the topic of chapter 4. Maciunas considered Brecht the quintessential Fluxus artist because his event score—with its economic and efficient use of language—seemed the ideal means to produce “egoless” work in the tradition of Marcel Duchamp and John Cage. Did Maciunas envision this historical evolution as some sort of organization-man aesthetic? Maybe so, but the reality of what the event score offered was more complex. Brecht's employment with major corporations, such as Johnson & Johnson, gave him firsthand experience of how standardization and efficiency protocols toward maximum productivity dismantled individual subjectivity, as reflected in the deadpan corporate graphic of the event score. Yet his training in science also equipped him with scientific theories of time for analyzing contemporary experience. And his personal interest in Eastern philosophies and chance provided methods for alternative ways of being in the world. Drawing from each of these strains of his experience, he constructed a role of the artist as researcher (for which Duchamp and Cage were guides).

He proposed that everyday actions should be thought of as “events” within the realm of art—such as his 1961 *Word Event (Exit)* (fig. 13)—so that “the details of everyday life, the random constellations of objects that surround us, stop going unnoticed.”²⁶ This assumes a broader significance against a cultural backdrop of what Daniel J. Boorstin described in 1961 as “pseudo-events”—a new kind of synthetic novelty that had flooded experience primarily through the prevalence of images.²⁷ Both Brecht and Boorstin located the site of potential transformation in the individual subject and believed more in continual discovery than in some ultimate “cure” for society's experiential malaise.



FIGURE 12

George Maciunas, *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti*, 1962, performed during Fluxus/Musik og Anti-Musik det Instrumentale Teater, Nikolai Kirke, Copenhagen, November 23, 1962. Gelatin silver print, 7 15/16 × 9 15/16 in. (20.2 × 25.2 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

These things were essential to Fluxus. At the same time, Brecht was attuned to the individual's existence within systems, developing his own critique of institutional modes of displaying and distributing art. This becomes clear in my discussion of the distinct character of *La Cédille qui sourit* (The Cedilla That Smiles), a shop run by Brecht and Robert Filliou in Villefranche-sur-Mer, France, within the context of Fluxus's "corporate" expansion.

While Brecht explored the process of aesthetic de-subjectivization through a nexus of language and performance, Robert Watts was the Fluxus artist most deeply invested in exploring this process through objects, particularly the homogenizing impact of commercial branding. Chapter 5 analyzes the extent to which Watts's participation in Fluxus facilitated a conception and awareness of the art object precisely within the logic of the commodity and its rule of exchange. He entered into Maciunas's Fluxus-branded identity and copyright system with greater imagination and industry than any other artist.

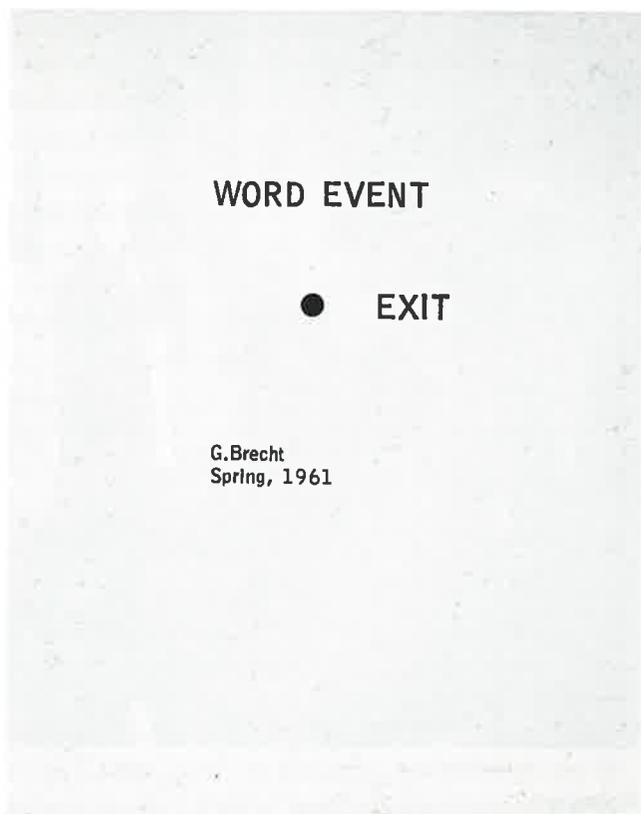


FIGURE 13

George Brecht, *Word Event (Exit)* event score, 1961. One of sixty-nine offset-printed card from cardboard box with offset-printed label, $3 \frac{5}{16} \times 2 \frac{5}{8}$ in. (8.4 × 6.7 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008.

Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

His thick catalog of Flux-Products included aprons (at least eleven styles), furniture, stationery, place mats, underwear, and undershirts (both men's and women's), all letter-coded in Maciunas's inventory (fig. 14).

Beyond these appropriations of the commodity form, works like *Stamp Dispenser* and *Dollar Bill* (both ca. 1962) demonstrated Watts's predilection for creating alternative systems with "the system," imagining that existing modes of exchange might be tampered with, alternative flows set in motion, and a singular faith in what constitutes value thrown into doubt. Yet Watts, Maciunas, and businessman Herman Fine went a step further when they founded the explicitly commercial enterprise Implosions, Inc., proposing that it could be a parent company to Fluxus. Watts's work complicated notions of the avant-garde and rear-guard, helping us to understand this art historical problematic within Fluxus at large.

Whereas Watts interrogated the role of objects in the system, Nam June Paik scrutinized its channels of communication. Chapter 6 traces the evolution of Paik's work from the late 1950s through the 1970s in three developmental stages: the expressionistic and violent aesthetic of his early "action music" in which he performed himself as the



FIGURE 14

Robert Watts, *Male Underpants*, ca. 1966. Screenprint on underwear, approx. $10 \frac{5}{8} \times 12 \frac{1}{16} \times \frac{1}{8}$ in. ($27 \times 30.7 \times 0.3$ cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

“yellow peril” (a strategic appropriation of the racist stereotype of insidious Asians plotting to conquer the West); the clinical study of electronics and physics that yielded his first altered television sets and robots; and his pioneering video sculptures and performances with the cellist Charlotte Moorman, whose half-nude body was extended via audio-video appendages in works such as *TV Bra for Living Sculpture* (1969, fig. 15). I argue that Paik’s strategy evolved from avant-garde shock in his early action music (akin to Bertolt Brecht’s estrangement effect in theater of the 1930s) to “negative feedback” in his later TV and video work (informed by the cybernetic and media theory of his own day). Paik also performed the system, but forged his own historically specific model of the artist as communicator within society’s mass media. Employing technological metaphors instead of Maciunas’s organic ones (purging, fluxing), Paik conceived of “art for cybernated life” as the best means to prevent viewers from becoming passive receivers, and to draw attention to the escalated degree of techno-mediation located in the body itself.

Paik is an especially pertinent case because his artistic choices—variously positioning him central to, at the fringes of, or temporarily let go from Fluxus (by Maciunas)—dramatically expose the issues of individualism and ego Maciunas ostensibly wanted to expunge via models of the artist as organizer and the incorporated art collective, of which Brecht seemed exemplary. His purposeful racializing and sexualizing of his work suggests that the very internationalism and diversity upon which Fluxus was founded could not (and should not) be policed and contained by any singular collective model (no matter

FIGURE 15
Nam June Paik with Charlotte
Moorman performing *TV Bra
for Living Sculpture*, 1969. Photo
by Peter Moore. © Barbara Moore /
Licensed by VAGA, New York.
Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery,
New York.



the purported radical aims). While his work challenged the normative model of subjectivity of the dominant system and Maciunas's Fluxus system, I consider whether the works he performed with Moorman did not also risk reproducing conventional gendered subject-object relations.

Alison Knowles, the only woman in the founding Fluxus group who performed in Europe, further complicated Maciunas's organizational model and Paik's communicative model, as chapter 7 explains. Close readings of specific scores and performances tell how Knowles's staging of everyday labor and leisure activities materialized the immaterial process of routinization that was increasingly defining both. Her score for *Proposition #2: Make a Salad* (1962, fig. 16) merged Brecht's laconic event score with the idea of a recipe, a form of information traditionally passed on between generations of women. The performance itself presented domestic food preparation, labor conventionally gendered feminine, through its repetitive and monotonous, yet also multisensory and pleasurable, actions. *The Identical Lunch* (1969) framed the standard noontime break from work in terms of repetition and difference. It showed that, actually, there is no such thing as an identical lunch, while exposing the fact that so-called "free time" is always already factored into the protocols of the capitalist system to keep its labor force up and running.

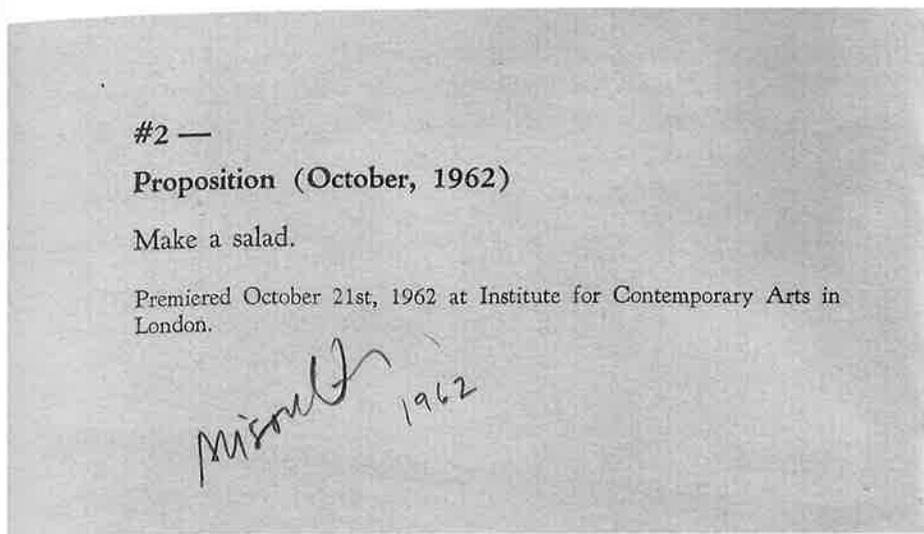


FIGURE 16

Alison Knowles, score for *Proposition #2: Make a Salad*, 1962. Photo courtesy Alison Knowles.

Even when performing works by others, Knowles introduced her own unscripted elements that altered the meaning. For instance, Paik composed *Serenade for Alison* (1962), instructing her to do a pseudo-striptease by pulling off layers of panties from under a kimono he chose for her to wear. She decided on her own to attach transistor radios to the outside of the kimono, and as the panties came off she twisted the radio dials, creating a “noise” that disrupted any easy objectification of her by the viewers. Knowles’s performances often included these subtle gender tactics. They were neither naive nor utopian imaginations somehow outside of routine, but situated precisely *within* routine, exposing and altering how the (gendered) subject operated *through* it. Her works encouraged viewers to visualize the aesthetic structure of daily life, and to see that routines could be ritualized in a continual process by which they might refuse to become desensitized and automatic.

In the concluding chapter, I open the discussion to the ideas of global mapping and global imaginations via Mieko Shiomi’s *Spatial Poems* (1965–75, fig. 17). Through a close analysis of her practice as a case study within Fluxus, I am able to further address Fluxus as a whole in the context of emerging globalization. The placeholder term “multinationalism” I use here in the introduction to acknowledge a period of historical transition gives way to a more detailed discussion and ultimately an understanding of what I identify as Fluxus’s incipient “artistic globalism” as its major art historical contribution.

The scores Shiomi sent to artists around the world, asking them to not only perform but also report back on their precise locations and behaviors at specific times, and the

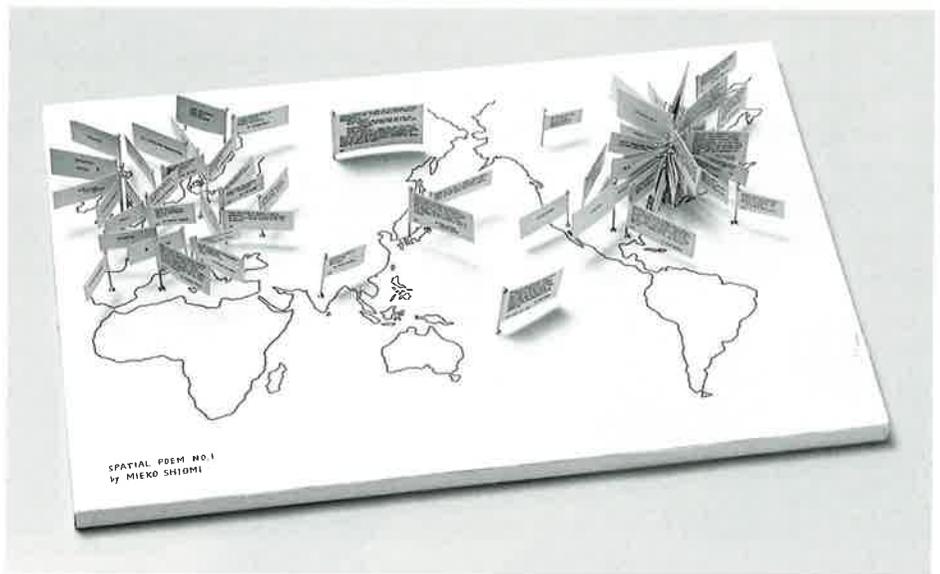


FIGURE 17

Mieko Shiomi, *Spatial Poem No. 1, Word Event* world map, 1965. Ink and pencil on board with sixty-nine offset-printed cards mounted on pins, and typewriting on paper with cardboard box, 11 15/16 × 18 × 7/8 in. (30.3 × 45.7 × 2.2 cm). Published by Fluxus. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. With permission of Mieko Shiomi.

artists' responses, which she then recorded on her so-called "world map," represented both a geo-historical-artistic expansion of the imagination and a new level of (self-)surveillance required by an emerging society of control. Shiomi's work, like Fluxus as a whole, contributed from the realm of art in these complicated, wider processes whereby the world became "global" and subjects became "globally conscious"—processes that would not be fully articulated in discourse until decades later.

When we examine Fluxus in its contexts, focusing on the artists' performativity (as necessarily staged in relation to systems of language, institutions, structures of meaning, and receptions), we come to understand how Fluxus represents a process of working through the contradictions of the early twentieth-century avant-garde in ways that are historically specific: Maciunas wore a bowler hat and a Tristan Tzara-like monocle, yet his "businessman" functioned more like the postwar man in the gray flannel suit; Brecht's event score followed the logic of Duchamp's readymade yet spoke of a spectacular postwar culture of pseudo-events; Watts evoked the fetish power of objects, like the Surrealists, yet merged this with the advancing power of corporate automation and branding to manipulate consumer desires in the 1960s; Paik's early action music called up Bertolt Brecht's theory of alienation, yet his altered TVs and video performances were conversant

with contemporary theories of cybernetic feedback; Knowles's performances of routine activities referenced the old avant-garde notion of an art-life continuum while shedding the utopianism to address the aesthetics of daily life within 1960s routinized society; and Shiomi's *Spatial Poems* recalled the avant-garde's internationalism yet pointed toward a new era of transnational and transcontinental expansion and consciousness. This book shows how their efforts all at once instantiated, helped produce, questioned, rearranged, and refused the growing relationship between art and corporatism in the 1960s.

2

THE GREAT EXECUTIVE DREAM

For Leonardo da Vinci, the artist was an intellectual; for Baudelaire, a genius; for the 1930s (as the scene shifts to the United States), a worker; and the 1950s, a Beat. What a fall from grace! It is said that when we hit bottom there is only one direction to go, and that is up. In one way, it has happened, for if artists were in hell in 1946, now they are in business.

ALLAN KAPROW¹

I think I used to joke about George being a capitalistic communist—something like that.

ROBERT WATTS²

George Maciunas wore many hats. Among them were those of the artist, designer, architect, historian, revolutionary, joker, and, seemingly at odds with all of these, the businessman. Writers sometimes use the shorthand “impresario” to describe Maciunas. While this is not inaccurate, to leave it there only begins to suggest Maciunas’s full contribution to Fluxus and how one hat in particular enabled him to perform a changed role for the critical artist in the postwar period.

Maciunas was most pleased when wearing his beloved bowler hat, as exemplified in his *Self-Portrait* of 1963 (fig. 18). Yet it was also evident in his performances, most notably *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* (1962), which became a staple at Fluxus concerts. Although peculiar at first sight in the 1960s, such an anachronistic sartorial display was a part of Maciunas’s strategic “refashioning” of the early twentieth-century avant-garde artist, evolving to be properly suited for the changed circumstances of the times. With this hat, Maciunas signaled his preoccupations with organization and systematization, giving these ideals identity and purpose in his model of authorship. The nature of this model and its importance are the focus of this chapter.

From the beginning, Maciunas declared himself “chairman” of Fluxus, and it was he who made organizational claims for the collective. Thus, in referring to Fluxus’s “organization” or “collectivism,” I mean as Maciunas was defining them. Some art historians have focused on Maciunas as a designer. He was prolific in graphic design, and the



FIGURE 18
George Maciunas, *Self-Portrait*, 1963.
Photo: bpk, Berlin / Staatsgalerie Stuttgart /
Art Resource, NY. With permission of the
George Maciunas Foundation.

graphic identity he created for Fluxus was central to his corporate imaginations. “Designer” also has the advantage of situating Maciunas neatly between an avant-garde tradition of artist designers (dating back at least to El Lissitzky in the 1920s) and the advertising boom of the 1960s orchestrated by the designers concentrated on New York’s Madison Avenue. Ultimately, however, understanding Maciunas only as a designer fails to identify the essential labor he performed—organization—of which design was a crucial manifestation.

Other writers prefer to emphasize the Maciunas of the joker’s hat. This too is warranted to the degree that Maciunas himself likened Fluxus to a “joke” or a “gag,” and humor was indispensable to him in Fluxus, as in life. Yet such accounts overlook the joker’s need for his jokes to have a foil to give them a critical punch. Maciunas himself provided this foil as he easily traded joker’s cap for bowler hat in performing his role as Fluxus chairman. He embodied both humorous play and serious order, and Fluxus was

contingent upon the relationship between the two. A meaningful exploration of this relationship relies on a serious approach to how—and to what ends—issues of organization and systematization operated within Fluxus.

ORGANIZATION IN EARLY FLUXUS

Even with stable footing in the United States, Maciunas never abandoned particular Eastern European sensibilities. From what recipients of his Fluxus communiqués called his “Lithuanian-English stream-of-consciousness” method of letter writing (which they found difficult to decipher), to his ambiguous accent when speaking English (vaguely Eastern European yet irreducible to any single dialect), to his sharing of his favorite Lithuanian dark bread and borscht with Fluxus friends (which they preferred to his diet of canned food), Maciunas remained a cultural amalgam.³

In fact, the first sign of something called Fluxus emerged in this commingling of Eastern Europe and America.⁴ On the evening of October 8, 1960, at an art gallery in Great Neck, Long Island, a group of Lithuanians, including Maciunas and the gallery’s owner, Almus Salcius (whom Maciunas met through another Lithuanian, his friend the filmmaker Jonas Mekas), gathered to plan for the creation of a Lithuanian cultural club.⁵ After much debate, they settled instead on the idea of publishing a journal. Maciunas proposed the name “Fluxus,” to which the others agreed. Their second big decision was to allot Maciunas funds to purchase a typewriter for the journal’s production. By the next meeting a month and a half later, however, Maciunas and Salcius found themselves alone in their determination to see the project through, and, facing a shortage of personnel and financing, the journal was put on hold indefinitely. This false start afforded Maciunas two key advances: the name Fluxus itself and the IBM Executive typewriter with its condensed Gothic sans-serif font, with which he would become personally identified in his Fluxus work.

During this period Maciunas was introduced to New York’s underground art scene, full of painters, poets, musicians, and filmmakers who were rejecting traditional media boundaries in favor of exciting new types of performance. He attended the series of concerts hosted by Yoko Ono at her Chambers Street loft in late 1960, and quickly set about persuading Ono and others of the great potential of Fluxus as both a journal and a publishing house for their work. Some of these artists, whom Maciunas would soon organize into Fluxus, including Dick Higgins, Jackson Mac Low, George Brecht, and Al Hansen, took experimental music classes with the composer John Cage at the New School for Social Research in New York. Under Cage’s mentorship they adapted Zen-inspired experiments in chance, simultaneity, and unconventional notation to their own compositions.

Inspired by all that he was seeing, and with encouragement from the composer Richard Maxfield (whose class he took when Maxfield succeeded Cage in teaching experimental composition at the New School for Social Research), Maciunas began to organize his first performances. These included a proposed literary evening with the poet Frank Kuenstler and his magazine *Bread &*. It was a pivotal moment. Kuenstler lined up the

performers, while Maciunas designed the brochures and secured the use of the New York Lithuanian Society's auditorium. However, at the last minute, the event was canceled. In 1979, Maciunas's mother recalled why:

At that time some people turned up who were sympathetic to Communism. . . . They decided to acquaint the large American public with the new direction of the magazine [*Fluxus*]. There were announcements in the papers, they sent out invitations, and the auditorium was lent by the Lithuanian Society. But when the appointed day came the Board of Directors of the Lithuanian Society rescinded its agreement since they had found out the essence of the meeting. To them, who had fled from the Communists, it seemed blasphemous to hold such a meeting if it even vaguely recalled Communism. Yurgis and his friends had to stand at the entrance of the auditorium and turn everyone back. Yurgis was very disappointed and rejected the Lithuanian Society completely. He even changed his name from Yurgis to George.⁶

The episode was a huge disappointment for Maciunas, and he blamed the Lithuanian Society. Not only did he want nothing to do with them, cutting ties completely, he also Anglicized his first name. It also further motivated him and Salcius to internationalize their original idea of a Lithuanian cultural magazine and run their own venue. In order to get politically or aesthetically "challenging" work staged, Maciunas needed greater control over organization.

Two years later, with this event still in mind, he wrote a revealing letter to his old childhood friend from Kaunas, Vytautas Landsbergis (later to become Lithuania's first head of state after independence from the Soviet Union): "Now I have no possibility of writing in Lithuanian, because I write in English, and I have no contact at all with the Lithuanian immigrants, because their decadent chauvinism and reactionary bourgeoisism does not interest me. (Salcius is a rare exception, though he is still far too interested in parochially Lithuanian and not for the non-national (supranational) question.)"⁷ For Maciunas, Salcius remained the best that a culturally unprogressive Lithuanian community in New York had to offer, aside from his longtime friend, the underground filmmaker Jonas Mekas. The quotes from Maciunas and his mother remind us that the period when he began organizing Fluxus was one of real cultural negotiation for him. Although he emigrated from Germany with his family in 1949 at the age of nineteen and was generally acclimated to life in the United States by the 1960s, attempting to enter the New York art world as a kind of publishing impresario (at first) represented a distinct challenge. Initially, it seemed that affiliation with his fellow Lithuanians would be a good way of distinguishing himself and the magazine, but this quickly pressurized his other concerns, namely a more radical view of art, politics, and, in his words, the "non-national (supranational) question." The willful Anglicization of his name might have eased his passage through the various New York enclaves—both uptown and downtown—vital to his own professional survival and the execution of Fluxus.⁸

In 1961 Maciunas and Salcius opened the AG Gallery (A for Almus, G for George) at 925 Madison Avenue. The uptown address suggests that Maciunas intended to reach an audience beyond his downtown bohemian circles. Yoko Ono's Chambers Street series ran contemporaneously (December 1960 to May 1961), and although her loft events were free and open, they were unpublicized. People found out about them by word of mouth, meaning those in attendance were usually sympathetic artists and friends. It remained a fairly exclusive venue, whereas AG Gallery's location and Maciunas's publicity gave it the potential to be a more high-profile, widely patronized enterprise for the same performance-based art.

The gallery got off to a lively start, with exhibitions of interactive paintings by Ono herself and inkblot canvases by Maciunas as well as two performance series, "Bread & AG" with Kuenstler and Maciunas's "Musica Antiqua et Nova." As soon as midsummer, however, the gallery's financial accounts placed it in the red with no recourse for getting back to black. The doors closed on July 30. Despite AG Gallery's failure, it was another short-lived venture by the two Lithuanians that would influence the formation of Fluxus in significant ways. Maciunas gained firsthand knowledge of the importance of an organization for getting things done and how (or how not) to run a business. Moreover, he saw the potential of using a business model to promote radical art. We can see this in his announcement for the "Musica Antiqua et Nova" series, which stated: "Entry contributions of \$3 will help to publish FLUXUS magazine."⁹ The gallery was not an end in itself but a means. He hoped its operations would finance the real goal of the magazine, which in his mind was taking on an increasingly experimental character.

"Musica Antiqua et Nova" was also an example of the importance Maciunas placed on the relationship between past and present. According to Maciunas, the series was intended for people to "rejoice in the polychromy where it can be discovered—at the frontiers of the ancient and the very new music."¹⁰ His interest in mixing the old with the new may have seemed fusty to the growing contingent of novelty seekers at the time, but Maciunas was a great student of history, and his historical knowledge combined with an ability to trade on anachronisms became central to his construction of the role of the artist. His persistent acknowledgment of the past's bearing on the present facilitated his sense of new limitations on art's social efficacy in the 1960s.

These points were brought into sharper relief once Maciunas's firsthand knowledge of experimental art expanded from New York to Europe. Anxious to escape the debt owed by AG Gallery, Maciunas left the United States in November 1961 to take a job at the US Air Force base in Wiesbaden, West Germany, working first in the architecture department and later in graphic design.¹¹ The transatlantic journey enabled him to make the contacts that would form the basis of Fluxus's international network of artists from North America, Western and Eastern Europe, and Asia. The Korean-born artist Nam June Paik was his most instrumental liaison in this regard. When Maciunas arrived in Wiesbaden, Paik was living in nearby Cologne and rapidly making a name for himself as a composer and performer in the West German Neue Musik scene with his self-titled "action music." The Korean used what cachet he had to connect the Lithuanian to artists, musicians,

FLUXUS NO.2 FRENCH YEARBOOK-BOX

Dantei Spoerri, ed. Works by Arman, Cesar, Christo, Dufrene, Yves Klein, Arthur Kopcke, Rotella, Spoerri, Benjamin Vautier, Jacques de Villele, Jean Tinguely.

J.C.Lambert, ed.: F
 F. Dufrene Tango, Comptines and other poems
 Robert Filliou Poems, compositions Biography in cards
 J.C.Lambert ALEA poesie, Liste Aleatoire
 Gherasim Luca Le secret du vide et du plein
 " Proportion, Coupable ou non.
 Emilio Villa Un eden Precoc
 Sonderborg & Gastone Novelli scribbles
 Kumi Sugai calligraphy

FLUXUS NO.3 GERMAN & SCANDINAVIAN YEARBOX

H.K.Metzger Marx, Stürmer, Cage...is Anarchism anarchized?
 J.P.Wilhelm Winifred Gaul - Dialogue avec le neant
 Dieter Rot Poetry machine & essay
 Gerhard Rühm Action music, audience compositions
 Tomas Schmit
 F.Trowbridge
 Dieter Hölsmanns La Scarification S'Alangant dans le centre
 Gyorgy Ligeti Die Zukunft der Music: Eine Kollektive Komposition
 M.Koenig Automation in electronic music production
 Nam June Paik Apology of John Cage New compositions
 Towards the New Ontology of Music
 Ode to Chen-chu or to Dmitri Karamazov and Zen exercises (record)

Tomas Schmit Action music & audience compositions
 Karl-Erik Welin New possibilities in the Interpretation of Cage and his followers
 Music Machine

K.Wiggen Possibilities of Electronic Television
 Öyvind Fahlström Color in new art
 W.Gaul Electronic painting and its programming
 K.O.Goetz Experimental Film with Ossifograph
 Kirchgässer Collected visuals
 Arthur Kopcke, ed. Works, compositions
 " Kinetics
 Harry Kramer Bernard Schultze
 Franz Mon Osmotic painting
 Andre Thomkins Decollage (originals in Fluxus only)
 Wolf Vostell to be determined
 Per olof Ultvedt Theatralisches BYL
 C.Caspari Anthology of possible architectural critique
 Jörn Janssen Sonorealization of City
 Fehn Indeterminate theatre
 Heussner Indeterminate & Immaterial theatre
 Werner Ruhnau

FLUXUS NO.5 HOMAGE TO THE PAST

M.von Biele Chance methods in musical compositions of the past
 Paolo Castaldi Italian Futurist noisemusic
 Phillip Corner Medieval musical extremities of Avignon
 Dick Higgins Tradition of experimental literature in English
 Fumio Kotzum Cosmology of Indian Music
 G.Maciunas Early concretism in Mousorgsky's Nursery Cycle
 " China's & Europe's cultural debt to Siberia
 Dr.P.G.Helke Overtone structure of ancient wind musical Instruments
 Instruments
 H.K.Metzger Machine music of Athanasius Kircher
 " Mortiz Hauptmann and the musical time
 " Zen monk music (essay & record) (being consulted)
 Prof. Nomura Indeterminism in Korean Medieval Art
 Nam June Paik Byzantine abstract-lettristic poetry
 Alexis Rannit Renaissance Instrumentation (essay & record)
 Don Smithers Stone Instruments of Korean court
 Isan Yun to be determined
 Ying Yuch Chieh, Ink splasher of Chan painters

FLUXUS NO.7 EAST EUROPEAN YEARBOX

English & Russian Editions

A.Volkonski (*) Experimental music in USSR (being consulted)
 Dr.Zofia Lissa Polish experimental cinema-music
 K.Penderecky Polish concrete music
 J.Patkowski to be determined
 V.Zavalishin Abstract sound poetry in Russia 1900-1921:
 Annenskii, Kruchlonych, Shurshun, Klebnikov etc.
 (being consulted)
 G.Maciunas Potentialities of concrete prefabrication in USSR
 Miroslav Miletić New music in Yugoslavia
 W.Borowski Cybernetics in Concrete Art
 Yevgeni Murzin Photoelectric Machine automatically playing
 pitch-time graphs
 to be determined ballet Without Gravity (in orbital space stations)
 to be determined Junk architecture
 Henry Flynt Analysis of Communist Culture
 " The Fraud of "Western Artistic Freedom":
 " Culture for a Decadent Alienated Elite
 " New Culture for Fully Industrialized Communist
 Society
 Vaclav Kaslik Czech musique concrete (record)
 "Zamek" works (photographs)
 Soviet composers glass electronic music (record)
 Joseph Byrd Critical analysis of the theories of Zhdanov
 " Critical analysis of current Marxists estheticians
 " (in regard to lack of dialectic approach)
 Anthology of Soviet Realism:
 Bertolt Brecht, El Lissitzsky, V.Mayakovsky,
 Yury Pimenov, A.Korneichuk, Y.Evushenko

FIGURE 19

George Maciunas, back cover of *Brochure Prospectus for Fluxus Yearboxes*, second version, 1962. Offset print, 7 7/8 x 8 3/16 in. (20 x 20.7 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives, VF8. Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

composers, and gallerists. It was Paik who created the opportunity, via gallery director Rolf Jährling, for Maciunas to stage the first proto-Fluxus performance, *Kleines Sommerfest: Après John Cage*, at Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal on the evening of June 9, 1962. In the event program, Maciunas is listed as the "chief editor of the new art magazine FLUXUS," giving a lecture entitled "Neo-Dada in New York." The reference to Dada contextualized Fluxus for the German audience, but he would soon publicly disavow any use of the term "neo-Dada" as he sought to establish Fluxus's identity in its own right.

Proceedings at the Wuppertal performance indicated that Maciunas's plans for the journal had expanded again. He envisioned a series of concerts to support a multi-issue publication outlined in *Brochure Prospectus for Fluxus Yearboxes* that he made especially for distribution at this event (fig. 19). This document is remarkable within Fluxus's development for several reasons. First, it gives clear graphic representation to the international scope Maciunas imagined. He planned to produce seven Fluxus Yearboxes, the majority of which were geographically themed, such as *Issue No. 6 Italian/English/Austrian Yearbox* and *Issue No. 7 East European Yearbox*. Artistic content from New York was the easiest to get, but he aspired to publish work from North America, all points in Europe, and Japan under the Fluxus imprint. The issues that were not geographically themed were historical, as in *Issue No. 3 Homage to a Distant Past* and *Issue No. 4 Homage to Dada*—another sign of the importance he placed on the past for Fluxus's evolution.

Second, the *Brochure Prospectus* presented Fluxus as an official organization with a particular structure. Under the heading "Editorial Committee," Maciunas is listed as the "Chairman" and other artists are named as heads of the regional sections. The German section was to be edited by Manfred de la Motte, Jean-Pierre Wilhelm, Heinz Klaus Metzger, Nam June Paik, and Wolf Vostell. This was an early indication of how graphic design would function as a vital organizational site for Maciunas—at once instantiating a degree of real organization (hierarchical yet decentralized) and projecting an image of the even greater organization he hoped Fluxus would achieve. Both could potentially stir the imaginations of other artists to have faith in his plan.

Third, the *Brochure Prospectus* was a business venture. Below the editorial credits, Maciunas placed the following announcement:

SUBSCRIPTIONS: for each yearbox / standard fluxus / 20 NF. 16 DM. \$4.00 / luxus fluxus / (with inserts of originals) / 40 NF. 32 DM. \$8.00¹²

By quoting the prices in three national currencies Maciunas signaled that his plans for international production would be matched by international distribution. The abbreviation "NF" is a reminder that while France devalued its currency in 1960—one of several adjustments within the postwar Bretton Woods system—the new franc and German mark remained among the strongest European currencies at the time (or at least those eroding in value the slowest). It made sense for Maciunas to target these markets. He even proposed a two-tier system of product development: "standard" and "luxus" editions, the latter costing double. At this point Maciunas moved beyond merely "publicizing" to "advertising" Fluxus.

This raises the fourth important point. Although Maciunas had previously drawn up tentative plans for the Yearboxes, the *Brochure Prospectus* was the first created specifically for public distribution. He raced to get it done in time for the Wuppertal event. This suggests that the scope, structure, and business of Fluxus were strong enough in his imagination (and bolstered by enough real groundwork) that he was ready to be held accountable in the public domain. Looking back on this moment in 1978, Maciunas

confirmed: "So then the idea was to do concerts as a promotional trick for *selling* whatever we were going to publish or produce."¹³ As was the case with AG Gallery, public performances were considered a means to the end of selling the real product. A business model for Fluxus was developing in Maciunas's imagination and would soon be elaborated.

As Jon Hendricks notes in his invaluable *Fluxus Codex* (1988), the precedents for the Fluxus Yearboxes were early twentieth-century art almanacs, especially the *Dada Almanach* of 1920 edited by Richard Huelsenbeck. This compendium of Dada's international offerings even included the idea of issuing standard and deluxe copies of the publication *Dada Anthology* (4–5), at 4 francs and 20 francs respectively.¹⁴ That Dada was essential to Maciunas's process of imagining Fluxus is not in question—he explicitly acknowledged the connection—but the comparison also highlights the degree to which he wanted to push levels of organization, international expansion, and business in Fluxus beyond Dada, evolving it into a historically distinct organism.

Maciunas worked tirelessly from his office-apartment on Johann-Sebastian-Bach-Straße in Wiesbaden. The communiqués he sent from this address are the first instances in which he identified his own location as the Fluxus headquarters with the abbreviation "HQ," and signed his name not just as "Chairman" but as "George Maciunas, for Fluxus administration."¹⁵ From this point on he was *performing* an organizational role in Fluxus. His efforts were rewarded when, between the fall of 1962 and the summer of 1963, Fluxus made its bona fide debut with concerts in Wiesbaden, Düsseldorf, Copenhagen, Paris, Amsterdam, the Hague, and Nice. However, both the relative success of the events and their makeshift nature—with plans for venues, accommodations, performers, and props often difficult to confirm, coming through at the last minute, or falling apart altogether—convinced Maciunas that Fluxus had to become an organizing body in its own right. In other words, beyond the idea of performances as fundraisers for publications, he wanted Fluxus to coordinate both performances and publications through its own efficient system. The scale of his ambition for Fluxus made greater organization not only desirable but necessary.

During his time in Wiesbaden, the most conspicuous sign of his organizational mindset was the introduction of a *Fluxus News-Policy Letter*. He outlined his reasons for doing so in the inaugural issue dated May 21, 1962:

Due to (1) rapidly changing events, (2) increase in number of FLUXUS Yearbook and festival collaborators, (3) time consumed in typing all there [*sic*] developments to each separately, and (4) high cost of letter postage, it is found necessary from now on to issue News-Policy Letters printed periodically of which this will be No. 1.¹⁶

The rapid rate of change, growing rank and file, and expanding geographic scope all made it impossible, or at least highly impractical, for Maciunas to maintain personal correspondence with each and every artist. He was plainly seeking both time- and cost-saving measures. Consolidating the most pertinent information for a general Fluxus readership in mass mailings did the basic job of keeping people informed, but also identified readers

as part of a larger body called Fluxus. It articulated a connection between the individual and the collective that he hoped the *Fluxus News-Policy Letter* itself would further solidify. Most significantly, the document would convey not only “news” but also “policy.” Maciunas envisioned a unifying set of protocols generated with input from all members but ultimately issued from his HQ. Whether artists would actually abide by them remained to be seen. The bulk of the first *Fluxus News-Policy Letter* is devoted to a tentative schedule of planned performances, including who will perform what, when, and where. In the final section, however, Maciunas takes things to a truly bureaucratic level. He provides a list of limitations on what compositions are acceptable to perform, stating that such regulations are necessary “to make this series economically realizable on very limited funds.” He sets deadlines, creates a letter code for the performers, promises reimbursement for travel costs, and names the “Festival Planning Committee.” Hierarchy, centralization, delegation, economy, and a general sense of protocol all combined to create a sense of administrative authority. The *Fluxus News-Policy Letter* had the dual effect of constructing Fluxus as a real organization, and metaphorically representing it as such.

On the surface, given his networking success, it is surprising that Maciunas left Germany and returned to the United States in late summer of 1963. Closer examination of his situation, however, affirms that the move was not wholly of his own instigation. In a letter to Emmett Williams at the time, he wrote: “I went to sleep, but next day found out to my great surprise that the Air Force has not forgotten me or my sickness. Besides, their investigators dug up something against me apparently, since they don’t give me permission to go on TDY trips and other restrictions, so I think they are getting rid of me for those ‘other’ reasons. My days are numbered to June 14th.”¹⁷ Poor health, plaguing him since childhood, had caused him to miss days of work, but he clearly felt that the US Air Force had ulterior motives for letting him go. He was secretly utilizing military privileges and resources to develop Fluxus: reduced APO postal rates, cheap gas with military coupons, printing facilities, and other supplies. In a letter to Jonas Mekas, Maciunas openly encouraged exploitation of the military postal system: “As soon as I get [access] we can exchange with bulk mail—just any bulk—send . . . anything by parcel post—it’s very cheap.”¹⁸ La Monte Young followed through on this plan, as Maciunas confirmed in a letter to him in October 1962: “I got all your three letters, the one to 633APO also.”¹⁹ While Young did not mail “in bulk” on these occasions, it shows that Maciunas was using the military post for Fluxus business. Further confirmation of this is provided in *Fluxus News-Policy Letter No. 6*, where Maciunas called for Fluxus proposals to be sent to his “APO 666” address “till the end of April only (or mid May) (please reply before end of April),” and in *Fluxus News Letter No. 7* (inexplicably the word “policy” is missing from the title of this issue) of May 1, 1963, where next to the date he wrote “last APO day.” Setting a deadline must have worked, because this issue included recently received proposals by Tomas Schmit, Nam June Paik, Henry Flynt, and Jackson Mac Low.²⁰ But it was in discussing plans for Robert Watts’s *Dollar Bill*, a Fluxus “counterfeit” of US currency, where Maciunas revealed an awareness of his transgressions: “The only

difficulty will be mailing \$ bills by APO [army post office] I may loose [sic] APO deal.”²¹ This was not a dream of a utopian postal system, but rather a very pragmatic, if stealth, plan to work the system from within, sending Fluxus materials through it undetected.

In the same October 1962 letter to La Monte Young, Maciunas berates Young for failing to take advantage of another opportunity to “work the system”:

Got your string trio. WHY THE HELL DID YOU PRINT IT! You wasted \$100 completely!!!! I could have copied for nothing and have done it on a transparency directly, so I could print quick ozolith copies for immediate performances. Now the damn thing is printed on both sides of paper and I can't even transparentize it for quick ozolith prints (for festival performance copies—for the players I mean) very thoughtless of you. But I will definitely put it in fluxus [sic], so don't worry in that direction.²²

In no other capacity than his role as a graphic designer for the US Air Force, where his office was linked to a print shop, did Maciunas have free access to these types of printing technologies. And he had previously noted the extremely high costs of German commercial printing that he was eager to avoid.²³ In this light it is especially intriguing that the US Air Force restricted his mobility and access. Was his dismissal by the military an early sign of how the organization of Fluxus might both appropriate and disrupt the system at large?

Just as financial concerns had prompted his departure from the United States to Europe, they sent him back. Not much has been made of this return in Fluxus literature. However, I consider it a pivotal event that would strongly influence Fluxus's development as an “incorporated art collective.” The fact that performance festivals in Europe did not “eat up as much \$ as NY concerts,” according to Maciunas, and that audiences with an appetite were easier to find in Europe, as Alison Knowles confirmed, meant that Maciunas would have to construct a very specific identity for Fluxus if it was to have both political praxis and popular appeal—his twin ambitions as he arrived once again on American shores.²⁴

While the performance art that became associated with Fluxus emerged in different contexts on three continents (albeit with important cross-cultural influences), Maciunas's imagining of Fluxus's particular collective form was inextricably linked with the United States' booming mass consumer and corporate culture of the early 1960s—that was then also transforming consumer and organizational patterns in Europe and Japan—and the rise to international preeminence of American Pop art—in whose shadow Fluxus operated.

From the time of Maciunas's return to New York—where Andy Warhol, Claes Oldenburg, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, Tom Wesselmann, Jim Dine, and others were already visualizing the material culture of American consumer capitalism in large-scale, colorful paintings and sculptures exhibited at pioneering shows such as the *International Exhibition of the New Realists* (1962) at Sidney Janis Gallery—he continued to arrange performances but placed new emphasis on organizing objects, information, and people in an increasingly “incorporated” system. Fluxus's process of mimicry in relation to the dominant system really began to unfold, as the next chapter will demonstrate.

THE ARTIST AS A MAN OF THE WORLD

When Allan Kaprow wrote "The Artist as a Man of the World" in 1964 (the source of this chapter's epigraph), he charted the changed conceptualization and significance of the avant-garde artist in society at midcentury. Beatnik culture symbolized for Kaprow the last gasp of the artist as modern visionary. Over-self-indulgence to the point of exhaustion had rendered the artist socially impotent. Kaprow wanted to know "what can be done exactly where we are?" and challenged his peers to pursue an "art politics of persuasion" in which the best would dare "to gamble on the world as it is, for good or for bad."²⁵ His provocative claim that in 1964 artists were "in business" was a Cagean pragmatics of acknowledging the world rather than pretending to not be in it. He felt he could no longer recognize artists as distinct from the personnel of other industries: increasingly commercialized, professionalized, specialized, isolated, and, ultimately, bland and conformist.

Wanting the artist to somehow bear a greater value of contact with the world, he proposed Happenings as collective performance space-times that prioritized "experience." He believed that artists operated in what he called the "subtle social complex," whose terms he admitted artists were just beginning to understand.²⁶ The essay marks an important moment of self-reflection on Kaprow's part in which he recognized not only that art's relationship to its contexts was undergoing epochal changes but also that he and his peers were in a process of discerning their own implication in the larger system and what this meant for their own practices. It was a matter of finding ways to adapt so as to offer more meaningful social engagement than lining up the latest brand of art for sale like a car dealer with his Fords or a stockbroker with his shares.

In his founding Fluxus Manifesto, Maciunas identified many of the same problems that Kaprow did: "purge the world of bourgeois sickness, commercial, intellectual, professional culture." Despite their shared sense of what was wrong, their versions of the "artist as a man of the world," as some sort of corrective, were greatly at odds. A recollection by Kaprow of his dealings with Maciunas at the time is illuminating:

When I came back to New York City in 1963, I received a form letter from him that seems to have been sent to a long list of artists appended to the letter. . . . It proposed that I should give him exclusive and eternal rights to my career (such as it was). And in return, he would promote me. . . . So, with this letter in hand, I called him on the telephone and said that I had no plans to be managed, but that I enjoyed his joke at a time when most artists avoided any form of organization whatsoever. To my great surprise, George was deeply offended. The master of "gag art" wanted to be taken seriously.²⁷

Kaprow did not want to be organized by Maciunas, and the two men soon realized they could not abide each other's personalities and ideas about art. Thus, it is highly possible that Maciunas was precisely the artist Kaprow had in mind as the "artist in business" in 1964. Both men had Cage as a common "father," and their distinct practices (Kaprow's

Happenings versus Maciunas's Fluxus) and surrounding rhetoric often come off like two "sons" fighting over the legacy.

It was also in 1964 that Maciunas wrote his controversial tract against Happenings entitled "Comments on Relationship of Fluxus to So-Called 'Avant-Garde' Festival." This was a two-pronged attack aimed at the cellist Charlotte Moorman, who founded the New York Avant-Garde Festival in the very same year as Fluxus, and Kaprow for being the recognized leader of Happenings, the festival's preferred art form. Several words in Maciunas's handwritten text are crossed out, circled, or inserted by carets, as if it was a draft for which no clean final version ever appeared, but its derisive message is unmistakable:

Lately it [the designation avant-garde] has been adopted by a neo-rococo group of theatre people like Kaprow, Hansen, Higgins, Paik etc.—who pro [crossed out] like to produce elaborately staged & rehearsed [inserted] Wagnerian [crossed out] theatre pieces with much acting, countless [inserted] rehearsals [crossed out], long exact [inserted] scripts, scores etc., & call for some unexplained reason [circled and inserted] these professional [circled and inserted] neo-Wagnerian operas "happenings."²⁸

I analyze Maciunas's critique of Happenings in depth in the next chapter, so here I only want to note three important things: Maciunas's distancing of himself and Fluxus from Happenings, his labeling of Happenings as "professional," and his public airing of the problematic nature of the "avant-garde" moniker itself by that time. So adamant was he in his convictions about the festival that he blacklisted his Fluxus friends Higgins and Paik for fraternizing with the "false" vanguards, as I discuss in chapter 6.

The exact months of publication of Kaprow's and Maciunas's texts are unknown, so it cannot be confirmed whether one might in fact be a direct response to the other. But the timing and language are close enough to reveal important differences. Kaprow thought the artist had to evade the business of art through the "experience" of Happenings that could ostensibly refuse art's commodity status. Maciunas's practice, in contrast, suggested that there could be no such escape, especially not via the self-indulgent theatrics, a kind of pseudo-freedom, of Happenings. Therefore, the artist should go *into business* purposefully, but not uncritically. In effect, the artist had to *perform* it.

But the challenge of appropriating organization as a strategy was immense. The same year that Maciunas founded Fluxus, Robert Presthus coined the term "the organizational society" in his book of the same name. Presthus was not alone. Many authors grappled with the sheer pervasiveness of organization(s): "Everything is organized: play, work, family, community, charity, religion, education. From the moment of birth the individual is provided a well-ordered framework for experience and action. . . . No longer are there interstices of freedom outside the large organizations, for the simple reason that outside the organization there is simply more organization."²⁹ And within this new postwar reach of organization(s), the role of the individual was of major concern: "Contemporary

organizations have a pervasive influence upon individual and group behavior, expressed through a web of rewards, sanctions, and other inducements that range from patent coercion to the most subtle of group appeals to conformity.”³⁰ Presthus asked, “Does organizational logic enhance the survival chances of our society, or does it limit our ability to meet the demands of change in a swiftly changing world?”³¹ This question implicitly runs through Maciunas’s use of organization in Fluxus, where it was at once part of the problem and the means to a solution. While Maciunas conveyed a critical understanding of the centrality of organization in his contemporary moment, he also embodied its logic. How exactly did Maciunas fashion his “artist as a man of the world?” The figure was cut, in part, from the cloth of his personal experiences.

AN ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

Maciunas wrote several “biographies” over the course of his life. His text *George Maciunas, 3 Biographies*, from around 1968, offers three in one.³² In biography number one, Maciunas characterizes himself as the “Deacon at Milan under Ambrose.” In the second, he becomes the subject of bureaucratic and clinical statistics. And the third presents a more conventional résumé. The “three Maciunases” are utterly distinct and partially fabulous. Yet he was all three at once, so to speak: a juxtaposition that suggests the elusive and constructed nature of identity itself. The biographies emblemize the mix of imagination, anachronism, bureaucratization, and concretism that informed his model of the artist. Maciunas’s desire to mimic authority may have inspired the fantastical role of Deacon at Milan under Ambrose, while his underlying desire for order was represented by the clinical statistics of the second biography, and his lived experience was much closer to that of the average white-collar worker as suggested by the third.³³

Maciunas was born in 1931 into an upper-middle-class family headed by his Lithuanian father, Aleksandras Maciunas. His father was an experienced and esteemed engineer, who held a chair at the university in Kaunas and served as the chief electrical engineer of Lithuanian operations for the huge German engineering corporation Siemens.³⁴ This post grew out of professional connections made as a student in Berlin and his fluency in German. It was also his German ties to Siemens, however, that would have identified him immediately as a Nazi collaborator when the Soviets invaded Lithuania in 1944. Aleksandras also had a history of anti-Soviet activities, dating back to his politically active high school days when he fought with the partisans against the USSR in the Bolshevik revolution. Given his personal circumstances, Nazi-controlled Germany was a more hospitable environment than Soviet-occupied Lithuania, and he fled with his family. In Frankfurt, the father was able to continue working for Siemens, enabling him to provide a comfortable existence for his family at a time in German history when no one “did well” unless they were collaborating with the Nazis or working for the war industries.

Maciunas’s mother, Leokadija, was born a Russian citizen, her father an officer in the tsar’s army. Prior to marrying Aleksandras in 1928 she had been a ballet dancer. Once

settled, the Maciunas family had a villa in Kaunas as well as a dacha in Kulautuva, twenty kilometers outside the city—the properties a sign of their relative affluence. Both parents took great pleasure in attending the opera and classical concerts, a mutual admiration for “high” culture solidified in Aleksandras’s nickname for his wife, “Fifth Symphony,” after Beethoven’s composition. The lack of apparent tenderness in the name is suggestive of the distant and regulated familial relations under Aleksandras.

From a young age Maciunas was conflicted about his father’s authoritarian attitude. He would play the general with great earnestness, attempting to commandeer his sister Nijole into service. When she did not comply, he would strike her. After these episodes, Maciunas’s father meted out punishment on the boy. And, as his mother later noted, it was at about the same time as these punishments when George was six that he began spontaneously to make inexplicable faces at home.³⁵ It was as if acting and unpredictable behavior might be ways to sidestep (or ease the pain of) his father’s regulations. He was at once playing with and against his father’s authority, testing the boundaries of it within himself and confused by his father’s reactions.

There is no evidence that Maciunas Sr. was a Fascist because he worked for Siemens. The more probable scenario is that, like millions of others, he was trying to keep his family alive and well during the war. But there is also no doubt that his labor, from 1944 to 1946, serviced the German war machine. Preceding World War II, Siemens helped fund the rise of the Nazi Party and the secret rearmament of Germany. During the war, the firm openly supported the Hitler regime and participated in the “Nazification” of the economy. They built factories in and around concentration camps where inmates assembled electric switches. Maciunas rarely if ever mentioned his childhood years spent in Germany, his relationship with his father, or his father’s business, suggesting a dark cloud and lack of resolve over those experiences. At least some of the delight Maciunas would take as an adult from being labeled a “cultural Bolshevik” (whether by himself or others) likely came from the implication that he was also anti-Fascist.

Soon after the family’s immigration to the United States in 1948, however, Maciunas’s education prepared him well to follow his father’s professional (if not political) footsteps. As his “third biography” narrates, he studied architecture, graphic design, and art at the Cooper Union School of Art in New York (1949–52), earned a BA in architecture (while also studying musicology) at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh (1952–54), and ended his formal education at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University (1955–60), where he gained substantial knowledge of art history without completing a degree. The extensive historical charts and atlases that he made during this time at the IFA, covering antiquity to his present day, were an early sign of his interest in devising efficient modes of organizing information. The multidisciplinary education at art schools and technical institutes might have fueled his belief that the various realms were not so far apart—art, like architecture, was becoming increasingly professionalized and commercialized. At the same time it predisposed him to crossing traditional media and disciplinary boundaries, seeing how their dissolution could be productive. This idea came

alive for him in New York's underground art scene right at the time he was finishing his formal education.

The third biography also tells of his employment at several major companies. He worked at the premier corporate architects Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) from around 1955 to 1957, the giant Olin Mathieson Chemical Corporation from around 1957 to 1960, and the revered design firm Knoll Associates during 1961. Precise details of his responsibilities have proved impossible to confirm with the corporations themselves, as none have personnel records dating back that far.³⁶ According to his own descriptions, he undertook the following tasks: "Skidmore, Owings & Merrill—detailing, metal components / Olin Mathieson [sic] Chem. Corp. Aluminum div.—product development (alum. & plastics) (in charge of architectural products), Knoll Assoc. (product and planning unit)."³⁷ In general, he was making his living as a draftsman and designer, and at the time of his employment each of the companies was located in the heart of New York's bustling corporation row: SOM's address was 575 Madison Avenue, Olin Mathieson Chemical Corporation, Metals Division resided at 400 Park Avenue, and Knoll had its offices and showroom at 320 Park Avenue. As he trooped to and from work at these firms from 1955 to 1961, his profile resembled that of Sloan Wilson's fictional corporate servant "the man in the gray flannel suit," who filed in and out of office buildings in midtown Manhattan at this time. Wilson's 1955 novel was a fictionalized account of his own experiences.³⁸

An important part of Wilson's gray-flannel profile was World War II military service. Soldiers were trained to be obedient and loyal, and, according to Wilson and other analysts, this facilitated their transition from the military to the corporate army. The argument was that some men needed the familiarity of bureaucracy, including the hierarchical chain of command, which the corporate system provided, simply to cope with civilian life after the war. Here again, Maciunas had an interesting relationship to the gray-flannel "type." He was a generation too young to have fought, but he became a civilian graphic designer for the US Air Force at its major Cold War base in Wiesbaden in the fall of 1961. Although his experience was vastly different from life on the battlefield, Wiesbaden was the headquarters of the United States Air Force in Europe, and Maciunas would have personally experienced the strict protocols required in every military office. And like the men who were discharged from the military and entered the new corporate army, Maciunas left his station in Europe and returned to the United States to perform an organizational role in an "incorporated art collective."

Wilson's white-collar professional in a gray flannel uniform quickly came to symbolize blind allegiance and obedience to the organization. In the story itself, however, Wilson's protagonist, Tom Rath, is *not* the one-dimensional yes-man the resultant stereotype signified. Rath expresses ambivalence regarding the sacrifices demanded of the individual by the corporation, and ultimately takes himself off the fast track to success. Like Rath, Maciunas did not fit easily within the military or corporate system. His appropriation of tools of the military system for the good of Fluxus potentially cost him his job. At SOM, he became disgruntled with his lowly position as a draftsman (given his architec-

ture degree). Whereas Rath is uncertain about taking on greater executive responsibility, Maciunas's internal conflict with the corporation arose from not having enough. Unwilling to tolerate the experience of being little more than a number on personnel and payroll lists, he quit. These dissatisfactions would be played out in Fluxus's mimicry of the corporate system with increasing complexity and ambivalence.

Maciunas's disdain for being the low man on the corporate ladder did not prevent him from wanting to be in business. He aspired to run his own. The desire was in fact a fundamental and consistent aspect of his "organizational profile" that predated and then converged with his artistic role and founding of Fluxus. It was apparent in his opening of AG Gallery, but this was neither his first nor his last attempt to build a business. Jonas Mekas's recollection of Maciunas's business "acumen" is humorous:

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

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

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

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

I don't have to tell you that George couldn't sell any of it.³⁹

As outlandish as it sounds, this scenario was not atypical for Maciunas. During AG Gallery's months of operation, he also imported replicas of medieval instruments from Europe for resale in the United States. Much like his overly enthusiastic acquisition of canned "nightingale tongues," it turned out there was not quite the level of consumer interest in pan flutes, gemshorns, sackbuts, or the like as he had imagined. Time and again his one-man enterprises misjudged demand in terms of both concept and quantity, failing miserably. But these schemes suggest that Maciunas had a sense of the profit being made by others through the expansion of international trade at the time. He hoped to capitalize on it, too. In Fluxus he would more fully realize his executive dream by taking advantage of organizational systems to "compete" in the new multinational expansion of culture.

MACIUNAS THE SYSTEMATIC THINKER

Maciunas's compulsion to run a business found an ideal complement in his obsessions for order and efficiency. Several of his projects outside of Fluxus indicate the pervasiveness of his systematic thinking—it inflected *everything* he did. The more this aspect of

his practice is brought to the fore of art historical discussions, the better we can understand the significance of his systematic thinking in Fluxus, where it manifested in its most comprehensive form.

Along with business, Maciunas had a deep interest in pedagogy—so much so that he spent literally hundreds of hours organizing information into charts toward the invention of a new form of knowledge production that would revamp the educational system. In 1969 he produced his *Learning Machine*, which he described as a “recategorization of all fields of knowledge according to a more logical system.”⁴⁰ I agree with Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt’s great analysis of it as an attempt to replace text-oriented knowledge with a visual system of information, but would revise her account slightly to be more precise. The *Learning Machine* represented less a replacement of text than a displacement of linear narratives as the normative mode of organizing information in the production of knowledge. It was this that resulted in his greater emphasis on visual juxtapositions through charts and intricate folded and foldout sections. Amazingly, for someone who spent a lot of time learning, both in and out of school, Maciunas did not enjoy reading books. He sought more efficient means of taking in and processing a broad range of information. Schmidt-Burkhardt’s explanation of the binding criterion of the *Learning Machine* as “networked thinking” is astute. Only networked thinking, created through the organizational system of a chart, could prevent students from losing sight of broader contexts in the myopia of overspecialization.⁴¹

Maciunas’s ideas about learning were highly topical given the broad debates on education reform at the time. Social scientists argued that the university had turned into a factory for churning out gray-flannels, compliant young men and women suited to reproduce the dominant values and methods of corporate capitalism. These scientists were out to quantify Sloan Wilson’s fictional description in real life, concluding that college graduates had the necessary technical skills but seemed to care little for independent thinking and philosophical critique. Were rank-and-file white-collar workers worried solely about the means, while leaving the ends to be decided by an elite few executives? In contrast, was Maciunas thinking about both in Fluxus?

Just one year after Wilson’s novel appeared, William H. Whyte Jr. published the popular sociological study *The Organization Man*. Whyte’s description epitomized the conditions of American society as increasingly determined by the bureaucracy of big organizations, which subtly implicated the individual in the marrying of his or her own interests and ambitions to those of the organization—of which the corporation was the archetype.⁴²

A great irony emerges in comparing the critiques of the education system by Maciunas and Whyte. The latter perceived the overarching problem in this way:

Because they are the largest single group, the corporation-bound seniors are the most visible manifestation of their generation’s values. But in the essentials their contemporaries headed for the other occupations respond to the same urges. The lawyers, the doctors, the

scientists—their occupations are also subject to the same centralization, the same trend to group work and to bureaucratization. And so are the young men who will enter them. Whatever their differences, in one great respect they are all of a piece: more than any generation in memory, theirs will be a generation of bureaucrats.⁴³

In Whyte's opinion, universities were conceding too much to the ideal of efficiency, driving the push for tighter and tighter organization. This was not surprising to him since corporations were investing more funds in universities than ever before, with a planned return of graduates tailored to their methods and mandates. Maciunas drew up a six-year educational program, having this to say on the same issue:

The major fault in present education is INEFFICIENCY which causes apparent symptoms of premature specialization and fragmentation of knowledge. Inefficiency in turn is caused by the inability of the slow, time consuming, linear-narrative method of information media (books, lectures, TV, films, memory computers) to communicate even the essentials of the ever expanding field of knowledge within a limited time. This lack of general comprehension among students, leads to specialization being randomly chosen, representing neither student's true intent nor his aptitude, with the final result of his frequent dissatisfaction, indifference in future study and work and imbalance in job market.⁴⁴

Maciunas saw the same bureaucratization as Whyte, but called for even greater "efficiency" (Whyte's bugaboo) to address its failings. Sounding not so dissimilar from the average business manager of the day, Maciunas was concerned with job aptitude and satisfaction in an evenly balanced job market. Whyte and Maciunas identified the same problem, but whereas Whyte claimed that the stress on efficiency needed to give way to more open learning, Maciunas vindicated efficiency as the very means to such learning.⁴⁵ Maciunas's logic of efficiency, and the organization necessary to realize it, was central to the evolution of Fluxus as an organization/organism that mimicked the system, working through it to purge both art and life.

My argument is also supported by Maciunas's document entitled "The Grand Frauds of Architecture: Mies van der Rohe Saarinen Bunshaft Frank Lloyd Wright," first published in *Fluxus I* in 1964.⁴⁶ It expresses the contentious relationship Maciunas had with what by 1960 had become an "established" or "domesticated" modernism, as he audaciously indicts the four "modern masters." Maciunas judged the modernists on value, economy, and efficiency, finding them guilty of designing structures that appeared to be living up to these criteria but actually concealed major shortcomings in material, form, and function. His chart presents a comparative analysis of recent buildings by each architect: van der Rohe's Chicago Lake Shore Drive Apartments (1949–51), Saarinen's MIT Auditorium (1952–55), Bunshaft's Lever House (1952), and Wright's Guggenheim Museum (1956). The Chicago Lake Shore Drive Apartments, for instance, travestied the curtain wall by placing a structural wall behind the glass shell—an appearance of

efficiency revealed by Maciunas as inefficiency. Moves such as this constituted nothing short of “fraud” and “swindle,” as Maciunas concluded:

Intentional (by will) perversion of truth (value & economy) to induce another (client) to part with some valuable thing (money for this value) / to pervert the truth, the architect conceals inefficient use of materials under an illusion of efficiency. Client unknowingly gets less value (inefficient result) for more money architect spends less time (omiting [sic] logical deliberation) and gains more money (higher % fees for more money spent by the swindled client)!⁴⁷

Once again, Maciunas advocates more efficiency, not less. And the greater efficiency, economy, and value he called for could not be realized without his underlying *modus operandi* of organization and systematization. The older architects had failed to live up to their own avant-garde tenets, but Maciunas was prepared to recalibrate them while operating within capitalism.

On this point Bunshaft is particularly relevant. By 1950 he had become a partner in Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and director of its New York office, completing Lever House (1952), the Istanbul Hilton (1955), and the Chase Manhattan Bank (1959), all of which launched SOM’s reputation as the leading commercial exponent of an architectural mode that became known generally as the International Style. Maciunas worked under Bunshaft at SOM from 1955 to 1957, and he targeted Bunshaft’s production for SOM specifically in “The Grand Frauds of Architecture.” His entry-level status—one imagines him begrudgingly detailing Bunshaft’s “fraudulent” designs—would have excluded him from executive planning, but he would have been aware of the corporate milieu in which SOM was expanding internationally with high-profile jobs like the Istanbul Hilton. SOM would go on to become one of the world’s largest corporate architecture firms, with a truly global reach, and it was precisely in the period of Maciunas’s employment that this expansion began. Maciunas might also have been privy to the firm’s role in promoting the corporatization of art. While designing a new building for Chase Manhattan Bank, SOM convinced Chase to purchase an art collection to enhance its interiors, bringing in a curator from the Museum of Modern Art as an advisor. Art critics panned the Chase collection, but it set an important precedent that other corporations would soon follow.

As a positive alternative to the “failed” buildings of the modernists, Maciunas devised his own *Prefabricated Building System* to tackle the problem of mass housing (figs. 20, 21). He began work on the project in the mid-1950s, and copyrighted and published it in 1965. The design comprised nine prefabricated components and a flexible sliding panel system. Maciunas diagrammed the building procedure in six steps, beginning with a picture of twelve precast concrete piles set in a four-by-three grid in the ground and ending with a fully contained, single-story, rectangular dwelling composed of exterior and interior panels. The diagram makes it look so simple and easy that one imagines his prefab structures proliferating across the landscape like a child’s erector set sprawling

APPENDIX 2. MACIUNAS PREFABRICATED BUILDING SYSTEM

1. METHOD OF DESIGN DEVELOPMENT	2. DESCRIPTION OF NUMBERED COMPONENTS	3. ERECTION PROCEDURE
<p>1.1. GENERAL The Maciunas Prefabricated Building System is a modular, prefabricated housing system designed for mass production and rapid erection. It consists of a series of standardized components that can be assembled into a variety of building forms, including single-family houses, multi-unit apartment buildings, and institutional structures.</p> <p>1.2. DESIGN DEVELOPMENT The design process begins with the selection of a service cubical, which is a basic three-dimensional unit. This cubical is then expanded and modified to create the various components of the system. The design is based on a grid system, which allows for the creation of a wide range of building sizes and configurations.</p> <p>1.3. MATERIALS The system is constructed using high-strength concrete and steel reinforcement. The components are cast in a factory setting, ensuring consistent quality and precise dimensions. The use of prefabrication allows for the efficient use of materials and reduces waste.</p> <p>1.4. CONSTRUCTION The erection process is highly efficient and can be completed in a matter of days. The components are delivered to the construction site and assembled in a systematic manner. The use of cranes and other heavy machinery is required for the lifting and placement of the large concrete blocks.</p>	<p>1. SERVICE CUBICAL The service cubical is the basic building unit, measuring 10 feet by 10 feet by 10 feet. It is a hollow concrete block with a central vertical channel. This cubical is used to form the walls, floors, and ceilings of the building.</p> <p>2. WALL PANELS The wall panels are formed by joining service cubicals together. They are available in various heights and lengths, allowing for the creation of walls of different thicknesses and configurations. The panels are reinforced with steel bars to provide structural integrity.</p> <p>3. FLOOR PANELS The floor panels are formed by joining service cubicals together in a horizontal orientation. They are available in various lengths and widths, allowing for the creation of floors of different thicknesses and configurations. The panels are reinforced with steel bars to provide structural integrity.</p> <p>4. CEILING PANELS The ceiling panels are formed by joining service cubicals together in a horizontal orientation. They are available in various lengths and widths, allowing for the creation of ceilings of different thicknesses and configurations. The panels are reinforced with steel bars to provide structural integrity.</p> <p>5. WINDOW PANELS The window panels are formed by joining service cubicals together in a horizontal orientation. They are available in various lengths and widths, allowing for the creation of windows of different sizes and configurations. The panels are reinforced with steel bars to provide structural integrity.</p> <p>6. DOOR PANELS The door panels are formed by joining service cubicals together in a horizontal orientation. They are available in various lengths and widths, allowing for the creation of doors of different sizes and configurations. The panels are reinforced with steel bars to provide structural integrity.</p> <p>7. STAIR PANELS The stair panels are formed by joining service cubicals together in a horizontal orientation. They are available in various lengths and widths, allowing for the creation of stairs of different widths and configurations. The panels are reinforced with steel bars to provide structural integrity.</p> <p>8. ROOF PANELS The roof panels are formed by joining service cubicals together in a horizontal orientation. They are available in various lengths and widths, allowing for the creation of roofs of different thicknesses and configurations. The panels are reinforced with steel bars to provide structural integrity.</p>	<p>1. Lay panels in position to support roof panel. The roof panel is supported by the wall panels. The wall panels are laid in position and the roof panel is placed on top of them. The roof panel is supported by the wall panels and the floor panels.</p> <p>2. Lay panels in position to support floor panel. The floor panel is supported by the wall panels. The wall panels are laid in position and the floor panel is placed on top of them. The floor panel is supported by the wall panels and the roof panel.</p> <p>3. Lay panels in position to support wall panel. The wall panel is supported by the floor panel. The floor panel is laid in position and the wall panel is placed on top of it. The wall panel is supported by the floor panel and the roof panel.</p> <p>4. Lay panels in position to support ceiling panel. The ceiling panel is supported by the wall panels. The wall panels are laid in position and the ceiling panel is placed on top of them. The ceiling panel is supported by the wall panels and the floor panel.</p> <p>5. Lay panels in position to support window panel. The window panel is supported by the wall panels. The wall panels are laid in position and the window panel is placed on top of them. The window panel is supported by the wall panels and the floor panel.</p> <p>6. Lay panels in position to support door panel. The door panel is supported by the wall panels. The wall panels are laid in position and the door panel is placed on top of them. The door panel is supported by the wall panels and the floor panel.</p> <p>7. Lay panels in position to support stair panel. The stair panel is supported by the wall panels. The wall panels are laid in position and the stair panel is placed on top of them. The stair panel is supported by the wall panels and the floor panel.</p> <p>8. Lay panels in position to support roof panel. The roof panel is supported by the wall panels. The wall panels are laid in position and the roof panel is placed on top of them. The roof panel is supported by the wall panels and the floor panel.</p>

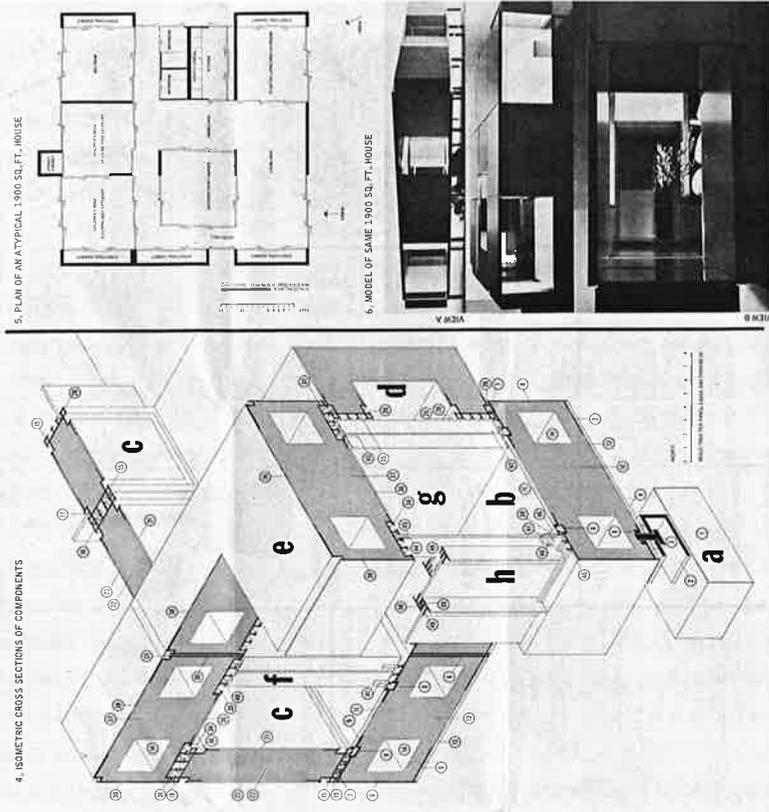


FIGURE 20 George Maciunas, *Prefabricated Housing System* (verso), as published in *Communitists Must Give Revolutionary Leadership in Culture*, 1965, The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

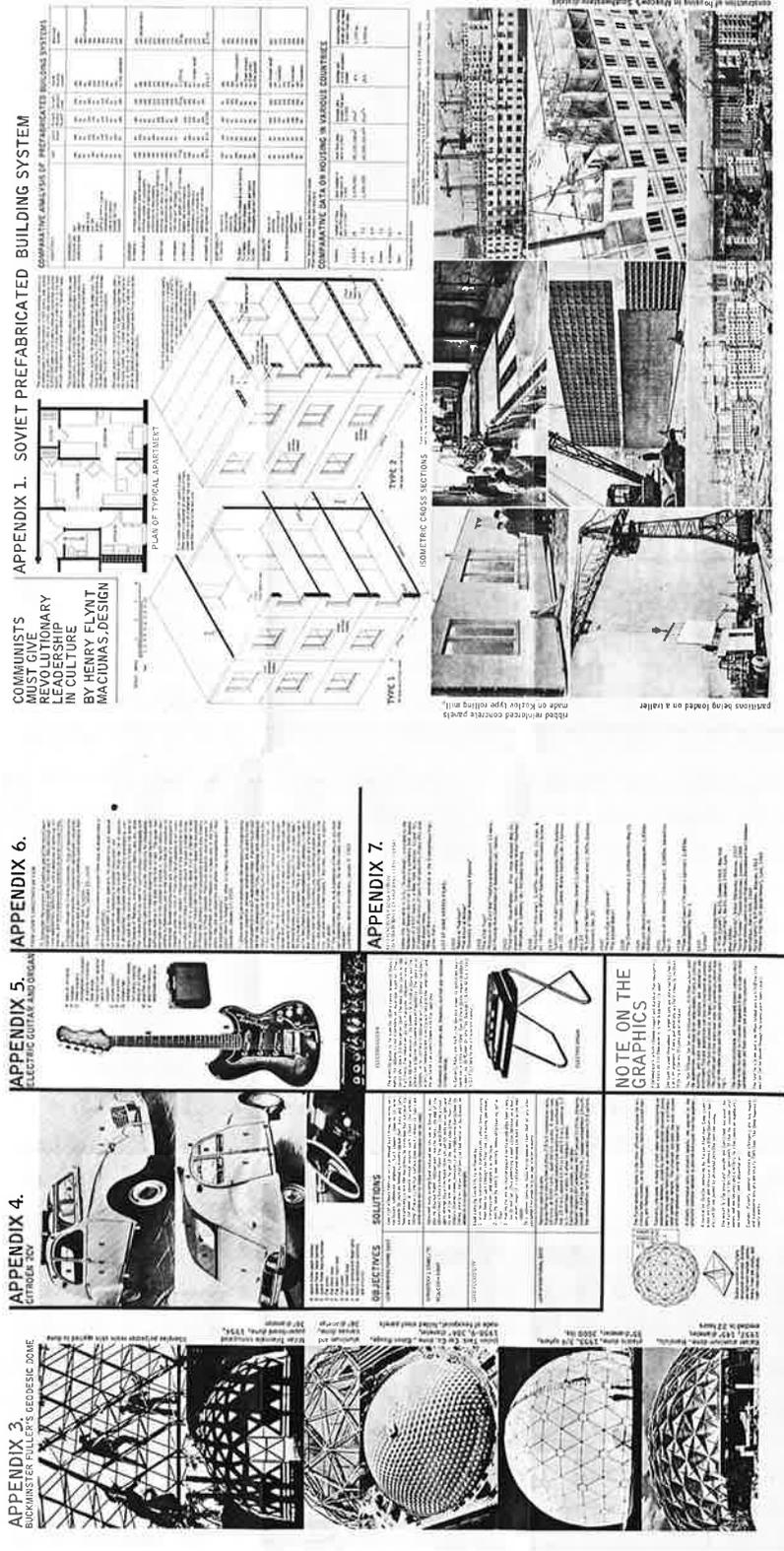


FIGURE 21 George Maciunas, *Soviet Prefabricated Building System*, as published in *Communists Must Give Revolutionary Leadership in Culture*, 1965. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

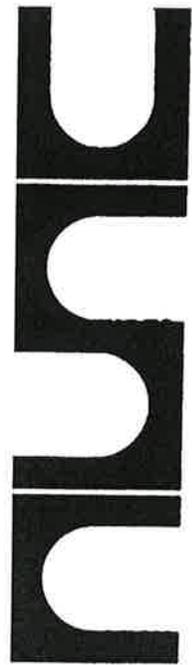
across a living-room floor. According to Maciunas, the system allowed for the utmost flexibility and adaptation so it could expand, contract, or change shape in relation to the required function (be it private, commercial, or governmental) as well as any geographic or climatic restrictions.

To promote his design and demonstrate, through "hard data," how it succeeded where earlier designs fell short, he presented a "Comparative Analysis of Prefabricated Building Systems" in his preferred chart format. The "Maciunas System," as he titled it in this chart, was measured against a tent, Levitt House, Buckminster Fuller's Wichita House and Geodesic Dome, and the Soviet Housing System. Maciunas concluded that while the Soviets had previously designed the most efficient system, his own system was even more so. The price per square foot of his system may have been a bit higher than the Soviets', but ultimately his "gave the most performance for the least cost."⁴⁸ Basing his claim of maximum efficiency on objectives of workability, economy, adaptability, and durability, he implied that if his program were put into production it would surpass the Soviet achievement of producing three million new dwelling units in 1960 alone.

Although it might be reconceived to do so today, Maciunas's system was not designed to rise above one story, nor did he address this potential in related texts. In this sense it was inefficient for high-density urban centers, where the need for mass housing is the greatest. How might his plan have worked in New York or Moscow in the 1960s and 1970s? In fact, when his prefab panels are opened to specific questions of place, his system was most appropriate for accommodating middle-class citizens, including the so-called organization men moving in droves to the suburbs of American cities at precisely that time—a dwelling designed to produce a subject as efficient at home as he was in the corporate office. Maciunas himself had lived in the new housing development of Levittown, Long Island, when his family first arrived in the United States, and therefore knew firsthand this model of standardized, mass-produced suburban living.

Yet in a footnote to his *Prefabricated Building System*, Maciunas stated, "George Maciunas' prefab building system described on these pages is being considered for pilot production in the U.S.S.R."⁴⁹ Whether this is true is unclear. But it strongly suggests that Maciunas had in mind a "state-based" model of production and distribution. This is curious given that roughly four or five years earlier, in 1960, Maciunas wrote up another formal design proposal for what he called *The Structural Mechanical Panel*—likely the same component panel of his *Prefabricated Building System*—with a different model.⁵⁰ On the first page of this document he announces his corporate credentials: "Mr. Maciunas is an architect. He graduated from Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1953 and worked for Skidmore Owings and Merrill for 5 years. He then worked for the Olin Mathieson Chemical Corporation on special research projects for approximately one year."⁵¹ Here again is the Maciunas of the third version of his biography—the corporate, white-collar professional.

The project proposal is signed by an organization named the Universal Structure Corporation (USC). USC was a corporation started (or at least planned) by Maciunas and several other individuals for the express purpose of raising funds, producing his special



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HARRY R. HAUSER
GENERAL COUNSEL

FIGURE 22

George Maciunas, Universal Structure Corporation
letterhead, n.d. Author research image.

panel, and distributing it. Maciunas even designed a letterhead for the company in which the three-letter acronym, USC, is turned into a graphic logo crowning the names of the corporate executives (fig. 22).⁵² The names of Maciunas's corporate partners as they appear on the letterhead are: Martin A. Greenberg, president; Leopold Benson, treasurer; Donald M. Anton, advertising and marketing; and Harry R. Hauser, general counsel. Maciunas lists himself as head of research and development. In this investment-seeking proposal, "incorporation" legitimated Maciunas's design. It was presumably the best way of being taken seriously toward the realization of the project. The *Prefabricated Building System* and *The Structural Mechanical Panel* represented a state model and a corporate model of use—not an avant-garde model. In other words, we have examples of Maciunas working consciously within bureaucratic systems—be it Communist or capitalist—and

appropriating the systems' tools of organization to push through his alternative, yet, so he claimed, utterly efficient designs.

THE ARTIST IN THE BOWLER HAT, CIRCA 1962

Scuttling about the street on Fluxus business, Maciunas was hopelessly out of style and out of sync with his contemporary moment. His attire resembled less the man in the gray flannel suit than the man in the bowler hat. Both were manifestations of a similar social type—the anonymous middle-class businessman who tends to conform to authority—but were marked by temporal (and to a lesser degree geographic) displacements. Maciunas's delight in playing the man in the bowler hat comes through in a letter to La Monte Young in 1962: "*Fluxus I* is definitely coming out, in fact the whole issue is at printers, I have done all my work. Printer is doing on credit (my bowler hat having impressed him)."⁵³ Maciunas implied that it was the fact that he "looked the part" (thereby presenting Fluxus as a legitimate enterprise, as he did by creating a corporate logo for USC) that allowed him to get the job done, despite not having the cash up front. He perceived a certain cultural and economic cachet to the bourgeois uniform.

This comes through more subtly in a letter Emmett Williams received from "the boss" Maciunas in 1963: "DON'T GET EXCITED ABOUT STREET COMPOSITIONS! You are not forced to participate in streets. Everything will be OK. Tomas, Vautier and his 'crowd' plus myself (with bowler hat) will perform in the street."⁵⁴ His suggestion that his wearing of the bowler hat will help ensure that nothing goes wrong—such is the respect it commands—may have been tongue in cheek, yet his persistent self-representation in the bowler hat and desire to be identified with it indicates that he also took this particular appearance seriously. Through this look, he performed his Fluxus executive role, restaging the normative social type of the businessman in artistic terms. But what did it mean for Maciunas to dust off this particular hat in the early 1960s?

If he was simply trying to look professional or businesslike to garner special favors from printers and other tradespeople, the bowler hat was hardly the fashion at the time. Already in the 1920s and 1930s, the bowler was being replaced by the fedora as the hat of choice for men who filed in and out of office buildings every day in most Western countries, apart from England, and very much so in the United States.⁵⁵ Think of the iconic image of Gregory Peck starring as *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* in the 1956 film adaptation of Wilson's book—his stance is that of a soldier "at ease," a fedora topping off his corporate uniform.⁵⁶ To wear a bowler hat in the early 1960s signified a much earlier era: the heyday of the bowler in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the same period with which so much of Maciunas's "found imagery" resonated.

From its first appearance, the bowler hat was admired for its combination of function and style. Edward Coke, a member of the English landed gentry, first commissioned one in 1850, ordering the hatters James and George Lock of London to design him a round, hard, stay-put hat for his gamekeepers.⁵⁷ By the 1860s the bowler hat had begun its move

from the country to the city, with which it would become lastingly identified. Initially, laborers and servants wore it, and the middle classes made it an ornament of informal walking attire.⁵⁸ Eventually it became *the* classic item of bourgeois attire in London, signaling upward mobility among a sturdy, rising middle class. Within these shifts, the bowler affected the thoughts, behaviors, and sense of identity of those who wore it, and contributed to their gentrification.

Economic pressures forced many gentry to migrate to the cities to reinvent themselves as businessmen, and it is within the context of their relationships to the urban high bourgeoisie, the business managers and industrialists, that the concept of the “gentleman” emerged. As Bertrand Russell sardonically put it, the gentleman “was invented by the aristocracy to keep the middle classes in order.”⁵⁹ Clear class boundaries developed, encompassing stable identities based on subtle negotiations of assimilation and othering. What constituted a gentleman was complex and indefinite and “gave the arbiters of high society an unpredictable discretionary power to bind and to loose.”⁶⁰ As Fred Miller Robinson states in his history of the bowler, a “gentleman was no longer simply someone of gentle birth, who owned a landed estate, but someone who could aspire to gentility through forms of emulation.”⁶¹ If the nobility and gentry had commanded others to obey their rank, gentlemen *persuaded* others to defer to their *taste*. Today, this typifies what we have come to think of as “Victorian”—a complex cultural designation that the bowler hat embodied.

Selecting this accessory indicated Maciunas’s deployment of anachronistic imagery throughout Fluxus. His graphic design came to life in a clash of innovative typography, contemporary news references, and pictures of a turn-of-the-century bourgeois world. Men in dark suits and high collars with moustaches and bowlers graced the pages of the Fluxus newspaper, posters, advertisements, and labels. In the early twentieth century, the bowler also held symbolic importance for the avant-garde. Certain members of the Futurists, Dadaists, and Surrealists used it to position themselves within the cultural politics of their day. Placed on Maciunas’s head, then, the hat called up not only the history of the bowler itself but also an avant-garde history in which the hat’s ability to signify was also shifting and ambiguous. For Maciunas the bowler hat was more than a parodic gag; it was an essential prop for performing a role. The bowler helped activate Maciunas’s performative reimagining of the vanguard artist in an evolved postwar form.

The notion of the performative as a critical strategy to open up the process of making meaning is by now familiar, beginning with the philosopher John Langshaw Austin and the sociologist Erving Goffman in the 1950s through to the philosopher Judith Butler today, to name a few of the most influential theorists.⁶² I draw on this collective body of work, though there is no need to rehearse the specific theories here. In the field of art history, Amelia Jones’s examination of “performative subjects” in postwar artistic practice has been especially important to my thinking.⁶³ Jones and Andrew Stephenson open their 1999 book *Performing the Body / Performing the Text* with a useful articulation of performativity for my history of Fluxus:

Since the 1960s, visual art practices, from body art to Minimalism, have opened themselves to the dimension of theatricality in such a way as to suggest that art critics and art historians might reassess our own practices of making meaning through an engagement with the processes of art production and reception as *performative*. In this way, artistic meaning can be understood as enacted through interpretive engagements that are themselves performative in their intersubjectivity. Thus, the artwork is no longer viewed as a static object with a single, prescribed signification that is communicated unproblematically and without default from the maker to an alert, knowledgeable, universalized viewer.⁶⁴

I am thinking in these terms when I argue that Maciunas “performed” an organizational role in Fluxus and that Fluxus artists “performed the system.” Doing so enables me to describe the ways in which Maciunas’s (and other Fluxus artists’) strategies—both his model of individual authorship and collectivism—evinced an awareness of the changed circumstances of art production in his historical moment without reaffirming a static, unmediated, or determined model of authorial intention. Maciunas articulated certain aims and set specific strategies in motion, but I hope to indicate how they made meaning only in relation to other subjects, discursive engagements, and broader social and political situations, and in ways that sometimes contradicted (or seemed to contradict) Maciunas’s original critique.

Second, within this theoretical framework of performativity, I take up an alternative understanding of *things*. Drawing from the ideas of Bruno Latour, Lorraine Daston, Miguel Tamen, and others, I am interested in an understanding of things as actors in the associations that make up the ever-changing social. As Latour argues:

If you can, with a straight face, maintain that hitting a nail with and without a hammer, boiling water with and without a kettle, fetching provisions with or without a basket, walking in the street with or without clothes, . . . keeping track of your inventory with or without a list, running a company with or without bookkeeping, are exactly the same activities, that the introduction of these mundane implements change “nothing important” to the realization of the task, then you are ready to transmigrate to the Far Land of the Social and disappear from this lowly one. For all the other members of society, it does make a difference . . . and so these implements, according to our definition, are actors, or more precisely *participants* in the course of action waiting to be given a figuration.⁶⁵

In this vein, I attempt to keep “things” squarely within the purview of a discussion of Maciunas’s performativity. I explore the idea that “in addition to ‘determining’ and serving as a ‘backdrop for human action,’ things might authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on.”⁶⁶ In all of these ways the bowler hat was a crucial prop in Maciunas’s performativity. Because I purposefully emphasize forces of organization and systematization in my study, it is all the more important to deploy an active notion of “things” in order to ensure their place in the process of meaning making specifically, and the holding of social aggregates generally.

Around 1963, Maciunas produced a self-portrait that came to stand as *the* self-portrait of his Fluxus career (see fig. 18). The stately black-and-white photograph depicts him from the shoulders up, wearing a dark suit, white shirt with a high round collar, striped wide-knotted tie, monocle, and bowler hat. A bifurcating light source that casts him half in shadow and half in light exacerbates the composition's symmetry. On the right, his face is almost completely obscured, rendering him a mere silhouette. On the left, the symmetry is disturbed only by the monocle's singularity.⁶⁷ Roundly topping it all is the crisp and solid-looking bowler hat, its black curves set starkly against the white background. It provides the dominant "icon" or "logo" of the image.

The history of avant-garde uses of the bowler hat is too long to recount within the scope of this study. However, a brief discussion of some key precedents is necessary for understanding the significance of Maciunas's own deployment of the hat. In 1879, Édouard Manet painted a self-portrait in a bowler hat in which two things are plainly evident: he wanted to be seen as a painter, hence the technically difficult inclusion of his own painting hand and palette, and he wanted to be seen as a well-turned-out boulevardier, opting to wear a bowler hat, jacket, tie, and stickpin as opposed to a typical studio smock. For Manet, immortalizing himself in the bowler hat was a conscious appeal to the conservative art establishment whose acceptance he desired, even as he challenged it with his modern painting style.⁶⁸

After the turn of the twentieth century, the Italian Futurists used the bowler hat in their inflammatory yet ambiguous self-promotion. The impresario Filippo Tommaso Marinetti was the son of a wealthy and influential Piedmontese lawyer, and he often financially supported his fellow Futurists.⁶⁹ They, by contrast, were poor sons of the petit bourgeois or working class; their fathers were shopkeepers, teachers, lesser bureaucrats, and the like. They attended technical schools rather than universities or art academies. For these reasons they were highly class conscious of maintaining their hard-won positions as artists. In a famous photograph of the Futurists taken on the 1912 trip to Paris, when they distributed the Futurist manifesto and launched the great traveling exhibition of Futurist painting, Luigi Russolo, Carlo Carrà, F. T. Marinetti, Umberto Boccioni, and Gino Severini stand in a row on a curb well posed and groomed in their high-collared white shirts, dark ties, dark suits, double-breasted topcoats, polished shoes, and gloves. Carrà holds a walking stick, and all wear bowler hats (fig. 23).⁷⁰ This attire legitimized the Futurists.

At a time when Italians were considered parochial, uncouth, and hardly a source of vital modern culture within Europe—especially compared to Parisian aesthetes—the Futurists in their bowler hats set up the possible "performance" as upper managerial class. Arriving in Paris with the bold proclamation, "We are beginning a new epoch in painting," the Futurists needed an equally bold self-imaging.⁷¹ True Parisian bohemians at the time, by contrast, would not have been caught dead with *le chapeau de la bourgeoisie* on their heads. For the Futurists, performing the artistic subject in a bourgeois uniform lent them an air of sophistication and credibility, but also created ambiguity around the



FIGURE 23

The Italian Futurists in Paris: Luigi Russolo, Carlo Carrà, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Umberto Boccioni, and Gino Severini in front of *Le Figaro*, February 9, 1912.

incendiary claims their artwork was said to embody. The Futurists traded on the fluid class significations of the bowler hat, variously coming off as *supra* capitalists or fanning the flames of working-class revolt, as suited their ambitions to achieve avant-garde preeminence. Although Maciunas's background and motivations differed dramatically from those of the Italian Futurists, his own use of the bowler hat resonated with theirs in terms of how it recast their avant-garde agenda, making it less easily contained and consumed.

Because bowler hats appear so often in Dada artworks, it is perhaps surprising to remember that the Dada artists themselves were rarely seen wearing them, even as a form of parody. I mention Dada here partly to dispel the notion that Maciunas and Fluxus merely repeated Dada, or were "neo-Dada." In photographs of the famous *First International Dada Fair* that opened in 1920, we see Raoul Hausmann in his favorite checked worker's flat cap and John Heartfield in a fedora (fig. 24). That same year Richard Huelsenbeck and Hausmann paused for a photo while on a trip to Prague, also wearing a worker's flat cap and fedora, respectively (fig. 25). And when the Parisian Dadaists had themselves photographed to mark the opening of the exhibition *Dada Max Ernst* on May 2, 1921, at the *Galerie au sans Pareil*, no one wore any hat at all (fig. 26). In contrast, Dada photomontages, paintings, and drawings are replete with humorous yet pointed attacks on the bowler-hatted bourgeois citizenry of the day. Weimar republicans, especially, are rendered as mindless automatons, as George Grosz's drawings and paintings

FIGURE 24
First International Dada Fair, Berlin, 1920,
showing Raoul Hausmann in the checked
worker's flat cap and John Heartfield in a
fedora.



FIGURE 25
Richard Huelsenbeck (left) and Raoul
Hausmann in Prague, 1920.



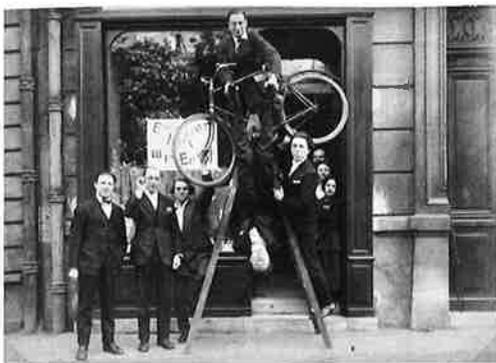


FIGURE 26
Parisian Dadaists in front of the exhibition
Dada Max Ernst, Galerie au sans Pareil,
Paris, May 2, 1921.

depict most scathingly. Grosz himself preferred to dress in a skeleton mask as he walked down the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin as “Dada Death” in 1918.

The Dada work that resonates most with Maciunas’s self-fashioning as the man in the bowler hat is Max Ernst’s 1920 collage *The Hat Makes the Man* (fig. 27). Catalog pictures of a variety of ordinary hats, including the bowler, are stacked one atop the other in constructions that strangely resemble organic forms, machines, and anthropomorphic phal-luses, all at once. Ernst knew the writings and theories of Sigmund Freud from his time as a psychology student at the University of Bonn (1910–14).⁷² Freud’s book *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905) helped Ernst develop his method of visual and linguistic punning.⁷³ Indeed, the puns in the collage relate specifically to Freud’s identification of the hat as a common symbol of repressed desire, adding new meaning to the cliché inscribed as the title of the work, “C’est le chapeau qui fait l’homme.”⁷⁴

On the silver screen, no one captured the spirit of this message more satirically than Charlie Chaplin in his bowler-bedecked character, the Tramp. Every time this funny little fellow in tattered tailcoat and oversize shoes, with a cane and waddle walk, put on his bowler hat, it was an obvious affectation, a means of lampooning the greedy, self-important bourgeoisie whose gentlemanly ways the Tramp tried to emulate. At the same time, it signified a genuine sense of personal dignity and social aspiration that also defined the character. Chaplin’s performance surfaced the class conflict and potential identity slippage coursing through the hat’s history, and Maciunas was outspoken in his praise of Chaplin’s (as well as Buster Keaton’s) “economic” style of comedy.

Manet, the Futurists, Dadaists, and Chaplin all in their own ways helped set the stage for Maciunas’s performative “artist in the bowler hat.” Above all, however, it is the Belgian Surrealist René Magritte’s identification with this famous hat that is most telling of Maciunas’s strategy at the turn of the 1960s. Of all the prior artistic deployments of the bowler hat, Magritte’s was the most ambivalent.

In 1965, a year and a half before Magritte’s death, Duane Michals took a series of photographs of the Belgian artist in his suburban Brussels home performing the bowler-hatted

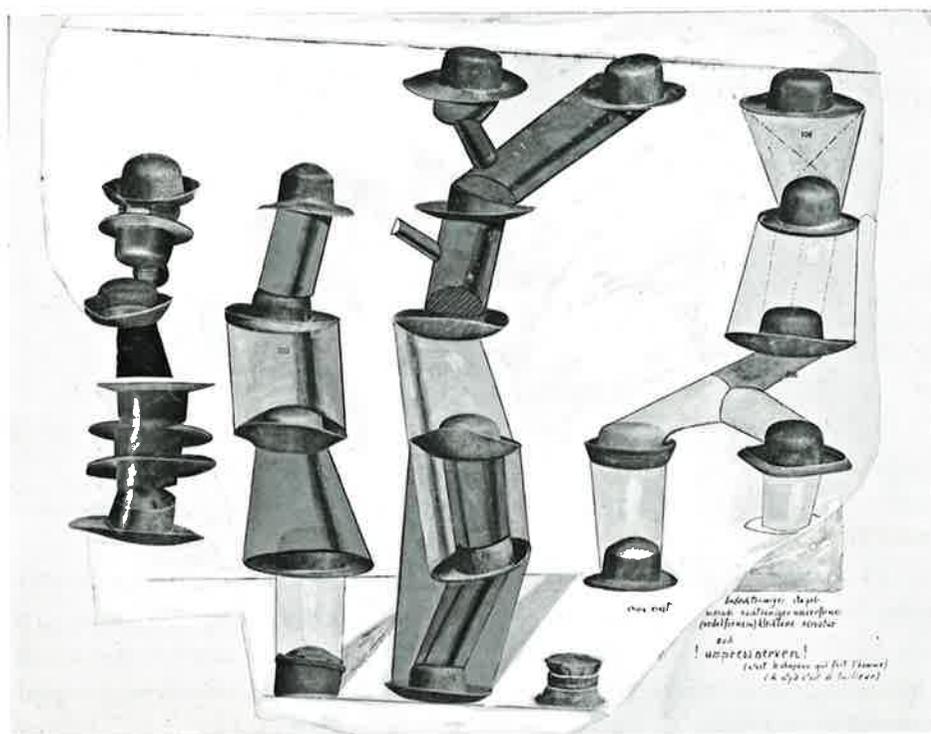


FIGURE 27

Max Ernst, *The Hat Makes the Man*, 1920. Cut-and-pasted paper, pencil, ink, and watercolor on paper, 14 × 18 in. (35.6 × 45.7 cm). Purchase (242.1935), Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

man of his paintings.⁷⁵ Although Maciunas's self-portrait appeared some two years before this series, photographs of Magritte posing as the quintessential bourgeois male exist from as early as the 1930s.⁷⁶ Magritte had long identified with this type, but it was Michals who got him to perform the identification explicitly. In one photograph, Magritte's flat hand partially obscures his face from view, just as apples, doves, and other objects frequently do in his paintings. It is also similar to the visual obfuscation of Maciunas's half-silhouetted self-portrait—the seeing and not seeing of a figure—that sets up a relationship between the particular individual and an anonymous type.

Magritte's persistent fascination with this type is most commonly read as critical satire: he shows us the mannequin society in which, under the forces of mass production, consumption, and bureaucratization, individuality has succumbed to soulless anonymity. But this argument simplifies Magritte's deployment of the bowler hat, just as it is inadequate for explaining what is at stake in Maciunas's role. Most importantly, such a reading greatly limits the *thingness* of the bowler hat itself in the work of each man.

In her introduction to the edited volume *Things that Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science* (2004), historian of science Lorraine Daston writes: "Shifting attention from being to becoming can undermine seemingly obvious assumptions about *thingness*. One of the most thing-like properties of prosaic things is sharp outlines: it belongs to the essence of things to be neatly circumscribed; we know where one leaves off and the next begins."⁷⁷ On the surface, this assumption of circumscribability seems particularly apropos to the compact, sturdy, and crisply contoured form that provides the bowler's reasons for being. The bowler, named after Mr. Bowler and resembling a bowl, neatly caps the bourgeois male who himself is notoriously "contained"—a history formulaically, albeit parodically, replayed in Magritte's or Maciunas's sharply delineated self-portraits. This version of the story might hold up well except for the fact that things threaten to overflow their outlines. As Daston continues: "It is precisely the tension between their chimerical composition and their unified gestalt that distinguishes the talkative things from the speechless sort. Talkative things instantiate novel, previously unthinkable combinations. Their thingness lends vivacity and reality to new constellations of experience that break the old molds."⁷⁸ In both Maciunas's and Magritte's self-portraits, it is the iconic form of the bowler itself that signals the hat's *inability* to be contained by those hard-shellacked outlines—too perfect, too safe, too immutable in the shifted context of the 1960s. It is the very *thingness* of the bowler hat that renders Maciunas's anachronistic deployment of it potentially disruptive.

Because the bowler hat had changed throughout history, it and the variety of heads it sat upon were ever more ambiguous. As individuals were forced or eager to construct new social identities for themselves, the bowler seemed the ideal thing to help them do so. But each new deployment destabilized the bowler and, in turn, made all social identities just a little more precarious and uncertain—"new constellations of experience that break the old molds." The shifting significations that accrued to the object itself would be reactivated in the work of Magritte and Maciunas.

Through the series of photographs Magritte performed both the artist as bourgeois and the bourgeois as artist. Fred Miller Robinson makes a convincing argument as to why Magritte conflated the two figures: "If Magritte can be the man in his paintings, then that man can be he: an artist with an outlaw imagination, someone with a great deal held in reserve."⁷⁹ Magritte was an embodiment of the staid exterior and active inner life. It was not a condemnation of bourgeois existence per se, but rather a belief that behind the bland, conformist exterior, the bourgeois subject had within him the capacity to reconnect with the mysteries of life. Moreover, that reconnection exacted a sublimation of revolt as that which can remain *within* the individual psyche. Surrealism would be domesticated and the bourgeoisie could be reassured of the *real* world as something untransformable—the false comfort of the bowler hat.

When Maciunas donned his bowler hat, a process of mutual activation occurred: "Like seeds around which an elaborate crystal can suddenly congeal, things in a supersaturated cultural solution can crystallize ways of thinking, feeling, and acting."⁸⁰ Maciunas

provided a platform from which the hat would speak anew, but at the same time the hat influenced how Maciunas thought and behaved. On Maciunas's head, the bowler hat represented stories of how and why it had been used or not used by the historical avant-garde to impel artistic and social ambitions within the complex relationship to the bourgeoisie of which it was born. The hat evoked its transference from the head of a lowly gamekeeper chasing after poachers on his noble's estate to the bank clerk enjoying a Sunday stroll in the park. While giving the illusion of stability, the hat exposed identity as mutable. It was the perfect prop for Maciunas's performance of the "anti-executive executive."

Both Magritte and Maciunas wanted to bring back attention to something they saw as inherent to everyday life that the bourgeois economic and cultural order had the ability to obscure. Yet for Magritte the solution was to attempt through his Surrealist "dream techniques" to represent a "perfectly natural exchange" between the subversive and the everyday.⁸¹ Magritte not only wanted the real world and its subjects to yield to mystery; he also wanted mystery to return to the real world. Maciunas refused Magritte's escapism into dream life. Instead, the bowler hat facilitated his *performative occupation* of bureaucratized and routinized daily life as it was, creatively exposing these forces and looking for ways that the system might be rearranged and turned in on itself—fluxed and flushed out.

In relation to the established gray flannel corporate uniform of 1960s New York, what type of businessman did Maciunas's self-presentation call up, and how did it position him within the system?⁸² The late nineteenth and early twentieth-century businessman was a symbol of gentlemanly Victorian values for Maciunas to parody, but also of the colonial economy of empire defined by an alliance of statist organization and the big capital of trading companies that would become the template for the organizational society of multinational corporations that emerged after World War II. Maciunas's own efforts to start a business recall this template. Around the same time that Maciunas designed the letterhead for his Universal Structure Corporation, he produced another letterhead for himself that read: "George Maciunas—Import Merchant, 550 Fifth Avenue, New York 36."⁸³ This self-identification as an "import merchant" rings of a Victorian world of exotic tea, oils, carpets, and lacquer boxes wrested from far-off colonies, not of his own skyscrapered milieu run by Unilever, Seagram's, GE, and IBM. Maciunas folded this prior history of capitalism and the avant-garde performatively into his contemporary practice. By doing so, he visualized history itself.

Maciunas's insertion of his anachronistic bowler-hatted businessman into the domain of the man in the gray flannel suit activated a Benjaminian disruption of history's continuum. As Walter Benjamin wrote:

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to

man singled out by history at a moment of danger. The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it.⁸⁴

In Maciunas's performative role, there was no pretense of performing history "the way it really was." On the contrary, the very point was that it was staged. His anachronistic self-presentation underscored that the capitalist system is not natural or immutable; nor is the status of the avant-garde. His *passé* model of the executive in the early 1960s was provocative enough to call up an image of his contemporary gray flannel counterpart, and the Futurists, and to cause wonder at the difference. This was a critical moment of "fantastic confusion" effected by Maciunas's strategies.

Claes Oldenburg helpfully recalled the fashion politics of New York artists in the early 1960s: "At that time in particular, one could be anti-bourgeois by being bourgeois. It got very complicated. If the bourgeoisie said that artists must dress like bohemians and you dressed like they did then you were confounding them. If you look at the pictures of people in the sixties, they all wore very conservative outfits. Andy always had a tie."⁸⁵ Even within this sartorial role-play, Maciunas stood out. No one else dressing conservatively in the 1960s fashioned himself in a dark suit, high round-collar shirt, and a bowler hat. In a historical period in which it was perceived that conformism to a culture deadened by the logic of advanced capitalism threatened to overwhelm any potential of avant-garde critique, Maciunas attempted to dislodge that tradition from a naturalizing historical continuum and give it new life and urgency.

Maciunas's "artist in the bowler hat" circa 1962 evoked the confluence and contingency of history and the system. His model of the artist drew attention to the all-encompassing, yet pliable, nature of the capitalist system and the individual's position within it. The system remains flexible precisely because it is historical. Crucially, however, in contrast to Benjamin's belief in the power of the "historical blast" to produce a singular revelatory (and revolutionary) moment, Maciunas's postwar practice offers no such belief or hope. Instead, what it required was a commitment to a process through which historical consciousness would be continually (re)produced. Ultimately it was not the aims but the means of the businessman—namely, organization—that interested Maciunas. The bowler hat helped activate and gave visual identity to his desires for value, economy, and efficiency toward an evolution of the avant-garde.

FROM FACTORY TO OFFICE

In the Soviet Union of the 1920s, artists such as Alexander Rodchenko, Vladimir Tatlin, and Varvara Stepanova conceived of the avant-garde artist as a constructor-producer, another model from which Maciunas would draw inspiration while distinguishing his own. The Russians also made a point of being photographed in their artist's "uniform."



FIGURE 28
Alexander Rodchenko wearing a Constructivist uniform designed by himself and Varvara Stepanova, 1922.

A famous picture from 1922 shows Rodchenko posing with his hand on his hip, military boots on his feet, a pipe set between his teeth, and a garment that steals the show (fig. 28). It resembles a workman's coveralls, but with noticeable attention to design. The materials are durable—wool and leather—and its form is at once functional and stylish—loose fitting in the limbs for easy movement when “working,” tight in the ankles and wrists so that no dangling cuffs will get caught in the “machinery,” and equipped with many leather-trimmed pockets for storage and easy access to “tools.”

In stark contrast to the bourgeois in his bowler hat, Rodchenko represented unambiguously the sartorial left in this Constructivist suit designed by him and Stepanova.⁸⁶ The intended wearer was a new breed of postrevolutionary cultural producer who was part artist, part worker, and part soldier. Behind Rodchenko in the photograph are exam-



FIGURE 29
Vladimir Tatlin modeling “utility clothing” of his
own design, ca. 1923–24.

ples of his *Spatial Constructions*, the concentric geometric cutouts he displayed like hanging sculptures, but which he understood as “laboratory experiments” (the photograph also shows how they were retractable for efficient flat storage).⁸⁷ In its entirety, the image functions to align the artist with the new Soviet mandate for rational production.⁸⁸

Like Rodchenko and Stepanova, Tatlin designed utilitarian work and leisure clothes and modeled them for the camera (fig. 29). He also reimagined his practice and the space of the studio. Descriptions from the time reveal the proletarian image of the artist he sought to represent. A Russian newspaper item from 1918 stated: “The equipment of a new studio which will be directed by Tatlin . . . at the Petrograd Free State Artistic Teaching Studios . . . will be . . . metalworking machine tools and joiner’s benches. As is known, Tatlin has been working with iron, wood, and bronze rather than with clay

or marble. He produces objects which can be immediately utilized, so to say.”⁸⁹ The industrial appearance of Tatlin’s studios, first in Petrograd and then in Moscow, was a constant source of amazement to visitors. This carried over to his “new art teaching” at the new state schools, where he served as the general supervisor of four instructors: a joiner, a mechanic, a house painter, and a specialist in mosaics.⁹⁰ During the struggle to secure Bolshevik supremacy, Rodchenko’s and Tatlin’s self-performances of the artist as a producer, artistic labor as production, and the studio as a factory (or laboratory) became models of the full realization of the dream of revolution. For the Soviet avant-garde, one’s self-construction via these models was essential to being socially relevant.

Maciunas was eager to trace Fluxus’s artistic lineage back to Soviet productivism, asserting a link to the LEF, of which Rodchenko and Tatlin were members under the leadership of figures like Vladimir Mayakovsky. However, in a somewhat surprising move, it is not the foundational LEF—publishing its journal from 1923 to 1925—that interested Maciunas particularly, but what emerged as *Novy LEF* in 1927–28. In a letter to the German Fluxus artist Tomas Schmit, Maciunas heralded the general importance of the LEF: “Fluxus objectives are social (not aesthetic). They are connected to the group of LEF group [*sic*] . . . and concern itself [*sic*] with: Gradual elimination of fine arts (music, theatre, poetry, fiction, painting, sculpture etc. etc.)”⁹¹ He also represented the association graphically, naming the “New LEF” of 1928 specifically, in his *Expanded Arts Diagram* (1966).⁹² Using an efficient diagram format to visualize the development and proliferation of the avant-garde, Maciunas organized himself into this history as the precise evolutionary conduit.

It seems more than splitting hairs to wonder why Maciunas preferred to link Fluxus to *Novy LEF* of the late 1920s as opposed to the groups and individuals participating in the rich debates about the relation between form and content of the early revolutionary period that constituted such a dynamic, if incomplete, project. He never explained why, and it might have been historical accident. Without access to archives or an easy flow of information between East and West, information on the Soviet avant-garde was not the easiest to come by in the United States at the time. Perhaps, for whatever reason, Maciunas had a greater awareness of *Novy LEF*. Or perhaps he had more specific knowledge that *Novy LEF* represented a move away from the Futurist poetics of LEF toward a new emphasis on reportage and factography. This would have appealed to his concretist sensibility.⁹³ A further supposition, however, is that Maciunas identified more readily with the artists working within what he perceived to be a fully developed Soviet bureaucracy in the late 1920s. On many occasions he noted his admiration for Soviet efficiency. This idea finds some basis in a letter Maciunas wrote to the Soviet leadership, possibly to Nikita Khrushchev himself, in the early 1960s, requesting an official Fluxus presence in the Soviet system. From one “chairman” to another, Maciunas expressed his belief that Fluxus “should commence coordinating our efforts with the socio-political aims of your party leadership,” seeking “reapprochement [*sic*] and unity between concretist artists of the world and the concretist society which exists in the USSR.”⁹⁴ It would seem that

Maciunas's knowledge of Novy LEF did not extend to their official displacement by a Stalin-backed Socialist Realist collective at the end of the 1920s.⁹⁵ Whatever the case, Maciunas received no reply to his letter. Ignored by the Communist Party in Moscow, he set up shop in New York.

In contrast to scholars who argue that Maciunas not only drew from, but actually realized, the early twentieth-century avant-garde productivist model—proclaiming that he “was the author as producer” theorized by Benjamin in 1934, albeit a performative iteration—I argue that it was precisely this model of authorship that Maciunas's practice called into question and evolved into an alternative model specific to the 1960s.⁹⁶ As much as Maciunas admired Soviet productivism, extolling it in his rhetoric, his own practice demonstrated a transition in subject from production to organization. His emphasis on design was integral to this, but for Maciunas design was more about organization—a visual means of organizing information, objects, and people into systems—than production. The designing and selling of Flux-Products, for instance, was but one facet of the larger aim: to *re-organize* the system from within.

The argument that Maciunas was “the author as producer” is based partially on a claim that he enacted the operations of a factory. But this is also flawed. The Fluxus scholar Jon Hendricks offers valuable insight in this regard: “A few Fluxus works were actually mass-produced, if 500 can be called mass production, but usually each work was carefully assembled by Maciunas, who would vary the contents as elements ran out or as his attitude towards the work changed. No Fluxfactory was ever built.”⁹⁷ This last point is vital: Maciunas's studio did not simulate a factory. He may have had a lingering ideal of this, but he never pursued it fully. Instead, Maciunas left Rodchenko's and Tatlin's productivist costumes hanging on hooks, preferring instead to put on an outmoded business suit and bowler hat while his work space increasingly resembled an office. Maciunas's prized “tool” was his IBM Executive electric typewriter that sat imposingly on his tool bench—cum-desk (fig. 30). This office machine would scarcely have gotten around in one of Rodchenko's pockets.

Understanding Maciunas means understanding *how* he lived and worked, and there are a few striking examples of this that underscore the distinction between the productivist model and Maciunas's model. Alison Knowles remarked on Maciunas's ability to turn the most unlikely space into an office during his time working for the US Air Force in Germany:

Before we arrived in Germany that winter, to live in the Ehlhalten house built by the potato farmer, we learned that George had worked the previous winter as a draftsman by day, and in the back of his car by night! . . . In fact, each night became a performance in itself. First George bought the food at the PX, either eating there or adding to his stash of small stock items for the car. No need to eat in a restaurant—ever! One imagines the interior of the car as the ultimate in space organization, with its boxes, probably the glove compartment became a desk, correspondence inside the compartment, and the piles of clothing that had to be worn each night in neat piles on the floor. The driver's seat was perhaps hollow to provide storage for food etc.⁹⁸

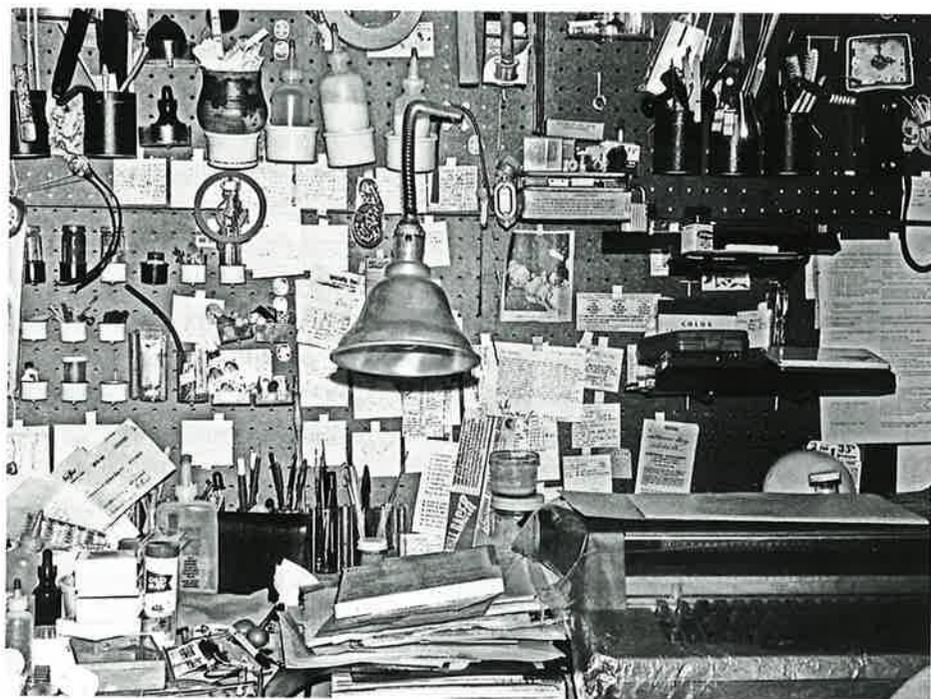


FIGURE 30

George Maciunas's Studio at 349 West Broadway, New York, December 1969. Inv. AS 2012/1309. Photo: bpk, Berlin / Staatsgalerie Stuttgart / Hans Sohm / Art Resource, NY.

Although Knowles is imagining this “ultimate in space organization,” it is based on her personal knowledge of Maciunas. She was familiar enough with his organizational mindset and systematic thinking to know that it was not a far-fetched scenario for how he could transform himself from Air Force draftsman by day to Fluxus executive by night, even under challenging circumstances.

In 1968, Maciunas lived at 80 Wooster Street in New York. His purchase of this building marked the beginning of the Fluxhouse Cooperative, Inc., and the site became a hotbed of Fluxus activity. The artist Geoffrey Hendricks described Maciunas's work space at this address, shedding further light on the nature of his artistic labor:

George kept the basement for himself. This he did partly for reasons of economy. But the mechanics of a building, the furnace, the meters and controls, are generally located in the basement and the “super” will have his office there, so that in a larger, metaphorical way it was the place for George. This space was designed for work and storage, and a great deal of the time George was there working on an array of projects, charts, objects, payouts, designs and programs. . . . Along the glass wall in the back . . . he organized a lot of his work activity—his typewriter, his tape deck and tape, storage for music . . . his work table

for cutting, pasting and layouts, and I seem to recall a bed and sleeping area at that end built into a storage wall. . . . He had a large room for storage with aisles of shelves filled with boxes all carefully labeled in his distinctive handwriting and printing.⁹⁹

In this space, Maciunas was not attempting to approximate the techniques, aesthetics, or environment of manufacturing industries. His “tools” were a typewriter and a tape recorder. His “work” was to cut, paste, lay out, and type. His “products” were charts, objects, designs, programs, and payouts (often to printers, who did the actual production).

In his practice he was not anachronistic. He was keenly aware of the midcentury exodus of light industry from Manhattan, particularly in the area known then as Hell’s Hundred Acres, where he bought 80 Wooster Street and other abandoned industrial loft buildings to establish Fluxhouse Cooperative, Inc. For any artist living in Manhattan in the 1960s, offices and shops were, for better or worse, the immediately visible, socially relevant sites of labor and exchange. Undoubtedly factories and industrial work persisted in the artistic imagination, as seen in the practices of the Minimalists and Pop artists, and to a degree that of Maciunas. Yet crucially, at the same time many of these artists, especially Maciunas and Fluxus, began focusing on the types of spaces and labor associated with an emerging post-Fordist or postindustrial economy.¹⁰⁰

Maciunas’s practice consistently visualized connections between past and present, and in this case there were important historical correlations to be drawn between the factory and the office. As C. Wright Mills observed: “The industrial revolution now comes to the office much faster than it did to the factory, for it has been able to draw upon the factory as a model.”¹⁰¹ Mills was referring to the rapid rate at which white-collar office labor was mechanized and regimented in the twentieth century, making it an increasingly important focal point in discussions of labor’s alienation. Maciunas’s evolution from the model of the artist as producer at once instantiated and performed this shift. Overwhelmingly, organization replaced production as Maciunas’s aesthetic mode—signified, if anachronistically, by the bowler hat.

Maciunas was certainly not alone in rethinking the role of the artist and the category of artistic labor in the postwar era. Here I touch on only two of the most relevant examples. As Caroline A. Jones has shown in her 1996 book *The Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist*, both Frank Stella and Andy Warhol traded on non-artist types of labor in constructing artistic identities that would demythologize the reigning Abstract Expressionist model of an angst-ridden romantic genius.¹⁰² Both the industrial worker and the business executive were invoked in ways that ultimately reinforced Stella’s and Warhol’s authority and validity as artists, if in unconventional forms.

In the late 1950s, Stella drew from personal experience as a house painter to perform his own model of the artist as producer. He claimed: “I think I was very strongly against having to identify myself as an artist. I wanted to identify myself as somebody who was able to make painting . . . not so much as a craftsman, but as a person with the capability

of making art.”¹⁰³ In his *Black Paintings* of 1958–59 he attempted to present painting as a skill like that of any other manual worker—deliberate, focused, flat application of industrial paint from a can, without a trace of Abstract Expressionist angst. Although his conscious effort to distinguish himself from a bourgeois high-art tradition was clear, Stella’s artist was hardly the worker-producer on the cultural front of revolution à la Rodchenko and Tatlin. Stella altered his technique to paint in a “matter-of-fact” manner like a house painter who, as a self-employed worker, had no great impetus or means to organize for revolt and who ostensibly just put paint on a house without fuss or self-reflection.¹⁰⁴ As Jones asserts, “In place of ego-saturated painting, he hoped to substitute the integrity of a made thing, the freshness of a pristine industrial object—paint as good as it was in the can.”¹⁰⁵ Around 1965, however, Stella would alter his practice and artistic identity to produce art that looked even more “egoless”—the ideal type to convey this was the executive who directed assistants in the formulaic application of paint around strips of masking tape to “mass produce” more Stella brands. Stella the artist, like a proper businessman, opted for standardization.

Warhol also adopted a practice of standardization in the silkscreens he produced in his studio that, unlike Maciunas, he famously named the Factory in 1963. Even more so than Stella, however, Warhol relied on the rhetorical position of the executive. His now-infamous statements, made the same year he opened the Factory—“I think everyone should be a machine. . . . I think somebody should be able to do all my paintings for me”—convey a contradictory sense of him wanting his ego “out of” the production process but also “in control of it” as he directed those who worked “for him.”¹⁰⁶ Warhol was arguably the most important contemporary to Maciunas in terms of building the logic of the market system into his artistic practice.¹⁰⁷ But despite their shared understanding of art’s commodity status, Warhol was content to ship his art products direct to the central marketplace, just like Campbell’s and Brillo. While Warhol’s “factory manager” had no real truck with art’s trajectory from temple to supermarket, Maciunas’s “organizer” planned for art’s final obsolescence.

In his 1966 book *New Tendencies in Art*, the Argentinian poet and critic Aldo Pellegrini explained just how problematic the productivist model had become:

The changed situation of the artist of today corresponds to a fundamental change in the attitude toward art, [that has] lately become general. . . . [It] consists in that the artist, formerly a creator of a work of art, is now a manufacturer of consumer goods. In this fashion the artist has lost his characteristic alienation of the past and has become incorporated into mass society as a normal member. This mass society is characterized by a vast, passive, and indifferent population whose fundamental function is to consume. On this population an active group of manufacturers of articles is busy. The artist has incorporated himself into this group.¹⁰⁸

Pellegrini was known for founding the first Surrealist group in Latin America in 1926, but on this occasion he articulates a particularly postwar degree of consciousness.¹⁰⁹ First,

consumption is no longer seen as merely one of several processes impacting society: consumerism has become a general state of being. Second, artists are like manufacturers of any other commodity. In fact, the more they produce, the more they are incorporated into the system and the more they service a passive consumer population.

Pellegrini's account of the producing and consuming subject may be overdetermined, but it is important as an index of a broader perception of the problems facing the so-called vanguard artist at the time. By the 1960s, the "artist as producer" operated symbiotically with the "citizen consumer" in a seemingly uninterrupted, unending cycle—all easily administered. For critics it appeared to be the sad fate of Walter Benjamin's model. And, if this model had run its course, was Maciunas's "artist as organizer" a viable critical alternative? To drive home his point Pellegrini added: "In the United States, to be a modern painter is to belong to a social category as desirable and enviable as that of a university professor or president of a corporation."¹¹⁰ Echoing Kaprow's critique in "The Artist as a Man of the World," Pellegrini's disdain for a perceived leveling of professions within the growing corporate culture is understood.

Stella, Warhol, and Maciunas were at once products of and participants in this rapidly corporatizing environment. But it was only Maciunas who discerned a potential for a critical occupation and inversion of the system. He distinguished himself from his contemporaries through a unique combination of three primary strategies: an awareness of the new limitations on the avant-garde tradition within the system of advanced capitalism, an earnest desire to evolve the avant-garde, and organization as the artist's new labor. Maciunas's artist as organizer had left the factory for the office and organizational society at large.

3

PERFORMING THE SYSTEM

FROM MACHINE TO SYSTEM

On March 20, 1962, while working for the US Air Force in Germany, George Maciunas conceived the performance *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti*. It premiered at the *Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik* held in the Städtisches Museum Wiesbaden in September of that same year. The performance's straightforward title belied a most unconventional eulogy to the Italian typewriter king who died unexpectedly in February of 1960. Individuals formally attired or dressed in uniforms—soldier, businessman, postman, priest—stood in a row on stage (fig. 31). From their hands unfurled narrow rolls of paper—used tapes from Olivetti adding machines, or, as Maciunas deemed them, “scores” for the performance (fig. 32). Reading the tabulations down the tape, the individuals performed actions sharply on cue with their designated numbers, becoming like automata as they moved in synchrony with the persistent tick, tick, ticking of a nearby metronome set at 120 beats per minute. With each tick of the instrument, a performer advanced to the next line of numbers and acted accordingly, over and over. As per Maciunas's orders, they performed exactly in time. But the precision and regimentation clashed with a random disorder of sights and sounds as performer number one raised and lowered a bowler hat from his head, number two opened and closed an umbrella, three bowed toward or away from the audience, four stood up and then sat down, five gave a military salute, and so on, while tongue clicks and lip smacks erratically punctuated the sonic space.



FIGURE 31

George Maciunas, *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti Version 3 Ballet*, performed during Fluxus Festival / Theatre Compositions / Street Compositions / Exhibits / Electronic Music, Hypokriterion Theater, Amsterdam, June 23, 1963. Gelatin silver print, 8 1/8 × 11 15/16 in. (20.6 × 30.3 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image
 © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

Maciunas's *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* was juxtaposed with an official image of Olivetti that had been propagated to the public in the form of his famous showroom on New York's Fifth Avenue, opened in 1954 (fig. 33). Here is how one critic described the space at the time:

The passerby comes upon a sudden gap in the continuous stone and glass surface of Fifth Avenue, to find himself peering . . . into a world astoundingly remote from the street. Marble the color of water, flecked with foam and golden bubbles, surges from the depths of the interior right out under his feet. A Mediterranean sky inside also ignores the steel-rimmed glass boundary. A crowd has gathered around a girl who is typing on an Olivetti portable outside of the store; it is poised on a steep crest of the marble. Other models, and several calculating machines, are up on waves eddying inside.¹

The writer then likens the showroom to a "grotto" within which it is "impossible to convince oneself that beyond the wall is a tangible Fifth Avenue neighbor."²

Yet making the fantastical, ethereal interior of the showroom seem convincingly connected to the functional, tangible exterior of everyday life was precisely what Olivetti



FIGURE 32
George Maciunas, *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* score, 1962. Diazotype and typewriting on adding machine tape, 36 3/4 x 2 5/16 in. (93.3 x 5.8 cm). Published by Fluxus. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

aimed to do. As a three-page photo spread in the April 11, 1955, issue of *Life* magazine shows, Olivetti's sidewalk attraction of a real typist at a typewriter in front of real typists on break from their real jobs substantiated the relationship (fig. 34).³ It allowed passersby to test one of the lovely machines, a Lettera 22, before (or without) even stepping across the threshold into the otherworldly showroom. *This* is how Olivetti wanted to be remembered: as a marriage broker of art and industry, of aesthetics and daily routine, of external beauty and internal functionality.⁴

The extreme divergence between Maciunas's automaton dance and Olivetti's surrealist grotto brings into stark relief the most significant aspect of Maciunas's "remembering": the absence of the machines themselves! Olivetti produced office machines said to vie in beauty with Constantin Brancusi sculptures, and yet not a single typewriter or adding machine appeared on stage. Maciunas's refusal to showcase the fetishized machines in his performance, substituting the used adding machine tape to drive the mechanically performing bodies, suggests not only an alternative remembering of Olivetti's utopian promise for modern design but also a strategic performance of the capitalist system itself. Maciunas focused not on the machine but on the tape. At once a record and a refusal of the calculating process, the used tape could expose operations of the system eclipsed by the pretty machines.

Although the performance schedules announced by Maciunas sometimes differed from what was actually performed, we know from various firsthand accounts and photographs that *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* was repeated at numerous concerts, including Wiesbaden, Düsseldorf, Paris, Nice, and Copenhagen during the first European Fluxus Festivals, and also at 12 *Fluxus Concerts* held in New York from April 11 to May 23, 1964. Arguably, it became the performance with which Maciunas was most strongly identified—the fact that he wore a bowler hat during it contributed to this.⁵ Unconventional performances like *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* were conceived by Fluxus artists as a way of closing the perceived gap between art and life (an old avant-garde aspiration), just as Olivetti had attempted to breach the walls of the conventional showroom. Yet if Olivetti saw the promise of machine efficiency and organization as fulfilled by good design, Maciunas complicated this vision. Through the executive figure of Olivetti and his alternative corporate model, Maciunas called up a particular set of modernist arguments and debates, but *performed* them in terms of his own reimagining and evolution of avant-garde practice. Olivetti was prime material for this boundary crossing, and for the inversions that would reveal design itself as a form of (cultural) capital.

In this chapter I extend my discussion of Maciunas's individual mode of authorship to demonstrate how the specific performance *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti*, his organization of the collective, and his theory of "Fluxus Art-Amusement" as manifested in FluxBoxes were all ways of performing the system, materializing its immaterial forces and raising questions as to art's capacity for social critique. In coining the term "performing the system" I also intend to situate Fluxus as an important precedent in a history of systems aesthetics, a history in which Fluxus has not factored at all until now. I argue

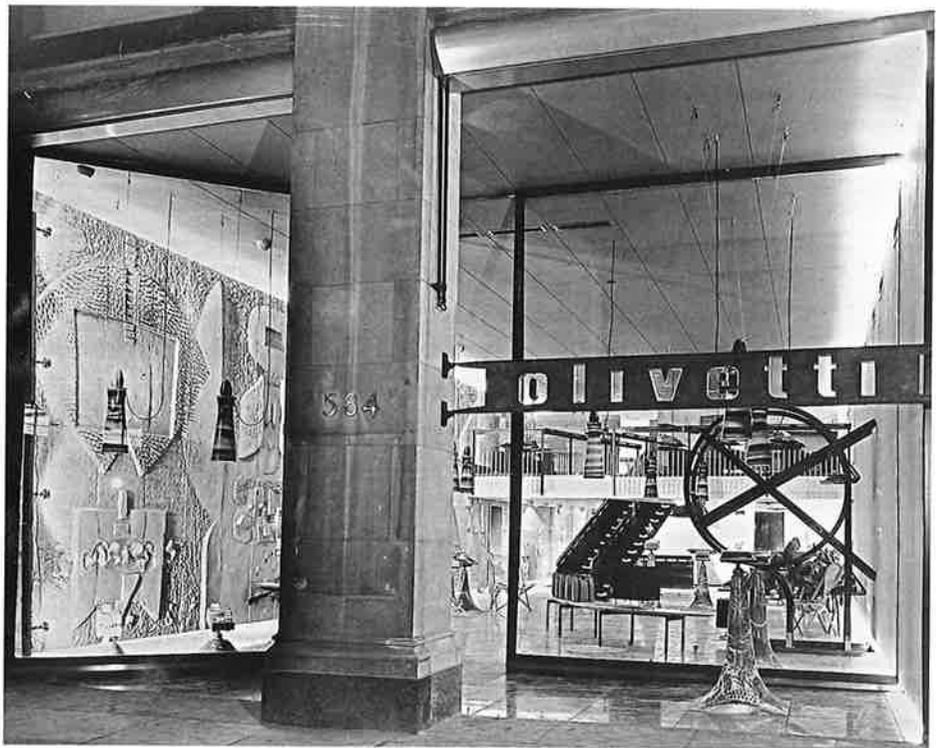


FIGURE 33

The Olivetti showroom, 548 Fifth Avenue, New York (1954–82), view of the interior from outside. Courtesy Associazione Archivio Storico Olivetti, Ivrea—Italy.

that appropriating the system as a medium is precisely what Fluxus artists were doing, even if they were not consciously calling it “systems aesthetics.” Art historians generally date systems aesthetics to the late 1960s when the sculptor, critic, and theorist Jack Burnham published his essays “System Esthetic” (1968) and “Real Time Systems” (1969). Today he is most famous for his 1968 book *Beyond Modern Sculpture: The Effects of Science and Technology on the Sculpture of This Century*. This unique survey of twentieth-century sculpture employs ideas and language of general systems theory, including cybernetics, endeavoring to bring art into dialogue with the hard and social sciences. For Burnham, innovations in science and technology overwhelmingly determined the course of sculptural practice, leading to the then-current situation of sculpture’s “dematerialization,” whether via minimalism, conceptualism, process, or performance. Yet his technological bias compels him to articulate this “dematerialization” in very specific terms: “It is a refocusing of aesthetic awareness—based on future scientific-technological evolution—on matter-energy information exchanges and away from the invention of solid artefacts. These new systems prompt us not to look at the skin of objects, but at



FIGURE 34
The Olivetti showroom, 548 Fifth Avenue, New York (1954–82), view of the sidewalk typewriter from the interior. Photo courtesy Associazione Archivio Storico Olivetti, Ivrea—Italy.

those meaningful relations within and between their visible boundaries.”⁶ Burnham acknowledged that he was strongly influenced by general systems theory as advanced by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, who in 1950 wrote: “As opposed to the analytical, summative and machine theoretical viewpoints, organismic conceptions have evolved in all branches of modern biology which assert the necessity of investigating not only parts but also relations or organization resulting from a dynamic interaction.”⁷ Bertalanffy described a historical development whereby the idea of a “system” had become the primary conceptualization of collective organization “irrespective of whether inanimate things, living organisms, or social phenomena are the objects of study.”⁸

The “systematic sociology” of Talcott Parsons in the 1950s contributed to the dissemination of this idea across the sciences and beyond by the 1960s and 1970s. As he stated: “A social system . . . is not a concrete entity but a way of establishing certain relations among components of ‘action’ that are distinctive relative to the manifold of concrete reality.”⁹ Corporate management was a particularly fertile field for a systems approach, as managers needed different tools to address newly complex problems of

planning and growth. They were indebted to John Maynard Keynes's prewar efforts to "conceptualize interrelationships among complex phenomena and integrate them into a systematic whole."¹⁰ What these individuals across diverse fields shared was a new emphasis on studying interactions and forces—the invisible stuff holding a system together—and "systems think" became rampant.

The pinning of great hopes on general systems theory for solving problems marked an epistemological shift at midcentury that had major implications for art. While in the first decades of the twentieth century society was envisioned as a finely balanced, well-oiled *machine*, fostered in large part by Frederick Taylor's "scientific management," the post-World War II period saw this dominant conceptualization displaced by that of society as a *system*.¹¹ Straightaway this was more problematic in that it offered no easy visual metaphor. The idea of society as a machine fired the imaginations of early twentieth-century avant-garde artists. Umberto Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (1913), Francis Picabia's mechanical portraits such as *Here, It's Stieglitz Here* (1915), Raoul Hausmann's *Mechanical Head (Spirit of the Age)* (1920), Max Ernst's collage *The Hat Makes the Man* (1920, see fig. 27), and many others all express the character of society and its subjects through a machine aesthetic. In contrast to a machine as a singular device, a system is a relation among things. As a nebulous abstraction, the concept of a system tends to subsume or efface *how* it is composed. How does one visualize the interactions and forces that gather and bind those things in a systematic whole?

In 1978, the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London presented an exhibition by the artist Conrad Atkinson entitled *Picturing the System*. In the catalogue Atkinson wrote, "All societies produce and cultivate the conditions which nurture the kind of cultural practice (art and artists) which is needed to support the ideology of a particular system, and that the function of the system is to render the system of controls invisible. In this situation the artist who opposes even *aspects* of his or her society has little choice but to attempt to render these controls visible for analysis."¹² My term "performing the system" is meant to convey this same sort of process of making the invisible visible, while also distinguishing Fluxus practices as a prior, and indeed pioneering, instance of systemic critique in postwar art contemporaneous to the "systems think" across disciplines. My choice of "performing" over "picturing" is also intended to stress the artists' active, embodied, and intersubjective means of coming to terms with their newfound awareness of working inside the system by artistically testing where its limits lie. Finally, this in turn is part of my wider efforts to understand art itself as a kind of thinking, generative of knowledge and in conversation with the often more officially recognized thinking done in other fields.

Sometimes the references to systems in Fluxus were explicit. Nam June Paik, who studied cybernetics in 1962 and 1963, is a case in point. At other times it was implicit. Maciunas's thinking about systems was enacted primarily *in and through* his organizational aesthetic, as is true of the aesthetic modes adopted by his fellow Fluxus artists. This is what makes it so interesting and important—to understand precisely how thinking

occurs through a nonlinear visual language. Fluxus registered a burgeoning shift in historical consciousness about systems that artists such as Jack Burnham, Hans Haacke, the organizers of the *Whole Earth Catalogue* (1968–72), Conrad Atkinson, and many others would develop and be able to articulate explicitly in the late 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, although Atkinson understood the power dynamics involved in the reproduction of ideology, I contend that Fluxus's approach was at once more subtle and more comprehensive in terms of performing "the system" at a truly systemic level—deriving aesthetic modes from its very operations and protocols. In the case of Maciunas, this meant targeting organization as the historically dominant mode of social control.

AN INCORPORATED ART COLLECTIVE

As Maciunas tested the limits of avant-gardism through Fluxus, why was it *the corporate system* that captured his imagination at this time? Olivetti oversaw the production of showrooms that looked like art galleries, and typewriters that were collected by New York's Museum of Modern Art and displayed in the special exhibition *Olivetti: Design in Industry* in 1952.¹³ He hired artists and poets as employees, and practiced worker social welfare policies that seemed to break all the rules for success while the company registered increasingly impressive profits. Maciunas also had a great executive dream, which played both with and against such achievements.

The fact that he conceived a performance "in memoriam" to the Italian executive indicates that he knew enough to consider him an outstanding individual worthy of tribute. This is underscored by the fact that the very same year, Maciunas composed a series of Fluxus performances in "homage to" several individuals: *Homage to Dick Higgins*, *Homage to Jackson Mac Low*, *Homage to La Monte Young*, *Homage to Philip Corner*, *Homage to Richard Maxfield*, and *Homage to Walter De Maria*. Maciunas made sure that all publicity distinguished the Olivetti piece as "in memoriam" and not "homage to." Beyond this, the biggest difference was that Higgins and all the others were friends of Maciunas. Olivetti was the only public figure Maciunas did not know personally whom he honored with a performance in his name. Doing so after Olivetti's death signaled that his work was not only to be celebrated, but even more, to be remembered.

Maciunas's experience with Olivetti machines might have come through his own office work or displays at the Museum of Modern Art (he and his mother visited New York's museums on a regular basis). He might even have stopped at the sidewalk typewriter on his own lunch break, since from 1955 to 1961 his midtown office jobs were located mere blocks away from the showroom at 548 Fifth Avenue. The showroom quickly became a landmark, and seeing it in person would have been part of keeping up with current trends as a designer at SOM and Knoll. In addition, Olivetti was making big news internationally by the mid-1950s. Major US newspapers and magazines, including the *New York Times*, ran stories that lavished praise on Olivetti while grappling with the apparent contradiction of his ideas and success. *Time* magazine had this to say in 1954: "Olivetti runs his business

in a way that shocks many Italian industrialists. By his example, he tries to demonstrate the widespread changes he feels are needed if democracy is to survive. The bankruptcy of the managerial class has gone so far, says he, that the big monopolies cannot reform, and should gradually be transformed into joint stock companies owned by local communities and by such foundations as workers' and technicians' cooperatives.¹⁴ The author added, "Olivetti carries his ideas outside his business. He lives simply, dresses more like a struggling bookkeeper than a captain of industry, and spends every free hour working on social projects."¹⁵ These descriptions could almost apply to Maciunas in his own confusing practice and appearance. Olivetti emerges as Maciunas's doppelgänger, so to speak. And yet, by 1953, Olivetti machines earned Italy more money (US \$2.4 million) than any other mechanical export (except Necchi sewing machines), and the demand for his famed Lettera 22 portable typewriter (1950), the one on the sidewalk, used religiously by journalists and writers around the world, continued to outstrip production. When Olivetti died in 1960 his company was by far the largest European producer of typewriters and adding machines, and was IBM's only serious competitor in the US market.¹⁶ Olivetti represented a successful business model that countered both Italian Fascism and US Fordism. He caused his own "fantastic confusion."¹⁷

Olivetti's politicization of the role of the corporate executive might have inspired Maciunas. It was during the reign of Fascism in Italy that Olivetti created his greatest disruption. When Mussolini came to power Olivetti took over the executive role from his Jewish father, Camillo, because he was considered a "safer" public face for the firm. Camillo was a looming figure of success for the son, as was Maciunas's own father for him. Olivetti Inc. undoubtedly profited from the general business climate created by Fascism.¹⁸ But Olivetti's strongly antifascist ideas sent him twice into exile: first to London in 1927 for supporting the Socialist leader Filippo Turati, and then to Switzerland in 1943 after being imprisoned by the government in Rome for distributing antifascist propaganda. But he used his forced wartime absence to theorize the role of corporations in industrial society, revealing more fully his deep interest in the relationship between humans, machines, and organization.

Significantly, vis-à-vis Maciunas's reimagining of the avant-garde, after Olivetti witnessed what he called "the tragic failure of the socialist revolution" in the early 1920s, he pinned his utopian aspirations to the corporation, believing it could be recast as the major force in society through which self-fulfilling human endeavor and cultural regeneration could take place.¹⁹ Olivetti factory workers received low-cost meals, low-cost housing designed by Olivetti architects, free medical care, summer camps and kindergarten for their children, education, and cultural programs. Olivetti started the publishing house Edizioni di Comunità to issue works by the philosophers and sociologists he deemed most important. And, in what would have been his most radical move had it come to pass, he espoused the idea of transforming the corporation into a joint stock company or workers' cooperative. For leftist critics it could be construed as capitalist paternalism. Yet Olivetti's ability to appropriate and alter American organizational practices in such a way

as to simultaneously produce strikingly beautiful and functional machines, build a unanimous reputation for the way he "incorporated" his workers, and generate a profit, all on a relatively small scale and all with the ultimate goal of *communitas*, seriously unnerved other executives. Olivetti's systems approach had the company competing with the giant IBM, using many of the same tools, yet on the back of the company's profits pushing through then-unconventional ideas about the organization of capital.

To think about anything requires an image or a concept, a model. The interdisciplinary discourse at the time brims with the difficulties of grasping just what a system was. How were its boundaries defined? How did it relate to concrete reality? How might artists visualize the social system as members of the historical avant-garde had visualized the social machine? Could the system somehow also be seen as a *thing*, thereby concretizing the connection between systemic forces and the individual subject in his or her daily life? These questions played out in Fluxus, where system and organization come to represent the same referent from different points of view. As the systems theorist Arnold Mysisor explained it in his 1977 book entitled *Society—A Very Large System*: "The 'System' signifies the *thing aspect* of what we observe, namely, the structural and material characteristics of the parts. System answers the question, 'How is it made and put together?' 'Organization' reflects the functional aspect of this structure and answers the question, 'How does it work?'"²⁰ Maciunas turned these questions back on their proponents, and from the answers formed an "incorporated art collective." This came with considerable risks. On the one hand, performing the system, materializing its *thingness*, might render it more tangible and scrutable. On the other hand, a strategy of mimesis might run the danger of reproducing the very systemic forces it wanted to question.

When the first Fluxus Festivals came to a close and Maciunas left Europe to return to the United States in the late summer of 1963, his letters confirmed that New York was the new official Fluxus HQ. It was a symbolic move in that despite the broader shifts taking place in the urban economy, New York remained "headquarters city," preferred by more Fortune 500 companies than any other metropolis. However, Maciunas would not manage Fluxus by himself, nor would it be a solely New York operation. Using his contacts made prior to and during his time in Europe he appointed the artists Ben Vautier in Nice, Willem de Ridder in Amsterdam, and Takehisa Kosugi in Tokyo to be regional outpost chairmen. All three men either utilized a preexisting or created a new means of distribution for Fluxus products in their respective locales, including the European Mail-Order Warehouse / Fluxshop run by de Ridder (fig. 35). A few years later Ken Friedman became head of FLUXUS-WEST in California. From 1965 to 1968 Maciunas could also send Fluxus items for distribution to Robert Filliou and George Brecht in Villefranche-sur-Mer, France, where they ran a shop called *La Cédille qui sourit* (The Cedilla That Smiles), as the next chapter discusses. In the March 8, 1967, newsletter, Maciunas noted that Milan Knížák had opened a FLUXUS-EAST center in Prague. A brave move on the part of Knížák, considering that he was hounded by the Czech police and arrested several times for his public performances.

FIGURE 35
 Willem de Ridder and various artists,
 European Mail-Order Warehouse /
 FluxShop, 1984, reconstruction after
 1964–65 photograph. Painted wood and
 acrylic structure containing Fluxus
 editions and related materials, 84 × 73
 1/4 × 79 3/4 in. (213.4 × 186.1 × 202.6
 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman
 Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum
 of Modern Art, New York. Digital image
 © Museum of Modern
 Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art
 Resource, NY.



All of these artists received publications and objects assembled by Maciunas in New York, while they supplied ideas and prototypes and managed their own local Fluxus events. Here is Maciunas's early assessment of Vautier's potential for regional management: "I like Ben Vautier. He has enthusiasm for Fluxus like Tomas [Schmit], daring imagination & he seems to have \$\$\$ which none of us seems to have (and that I like very much). Also I seem to feel he can organize things, so Nice Fluxus should come off very well."²¹ Chairman Maciunas provided the central Fluxus administration of this decentralized regional management system at a time when the simultaneous concentration and expansion of capital in the multinational corporation constituted a shift to a new economic phase variously termed "late," "advanced," or "multinational" capitalism.

The essential characteristic of the multinational corporation is that it makes "direct investments in other countries and thereby extends the organic operations of the firm across national borders. . . . It works to break down the isolation of individual economies and to integrate them into a world system."²² The likes of IBM, US Steel, Polaroid, GM, and GE became symbolic and real sites through which hegemonic values and methods were administered on an increasingly multinational scale via supple new forms of

systems analysis.²³ Their rise as multinationals was accompanied by a surprising degree of revolutionary rhetoric. "Revolution" and "revolutionary" became operative words in the management lexicon not only to promote so-called radical changes in corporate structure, management, and technology, but also to assert that they actually constituted the most important revolution of the day.

Adolf A. Berle, in his 1954 book *The 20th Century Capitalist Revolution*, observed that the Enlightenment tradition of revolution, combined with the teleology of technological progress, was continuing through and in accordance with capitalism, not against it.²⁴ For many it was a confusing, if not blasphemous, appropriation by corporate elites (and their ad men), which today also adds to the confusion of Maciunas's strategies. He imagined an "incorporated" approach for his fluxing of the capitalist system, too. In this historical context, Maciunas's choice of executive title (that could also play on the idea of being the head of a political party) and a headquarters in New York to run Fluxus on an international scale distinguished him and Fluxus from all previous artists' groups—especially "Pope" André Breton and his exclusive Parisian Surrealists.

Maciunas continued his appraisal of Vautier: "Another good thing—he has that store where I can deposit lots of matter (printed matter I mean not semifluid matter). So I plan to deposit 100 of each item in his store."²⁵ Aldo Pellegrini's analysis from 1966 is instructive: "Countering the School of Paris was the School of New York. The competition between the two schools becomes in the final analysis, a competition between products. The American dealers no longer need to import; they prefer to export . . . and have succeeded in doing so. . . . Intense movement in the American art market is shown in its sensitivity to factors that have repercussions on the general economy. It can be observed to suffer fluctuations parallel to those of the New York Stock Exchange."²⁶

In the postwar period, major investment in art tethered aesthetic and economic successes more tightly and on a larger scale than ever before, to the point of symbiotic fluctuations diagnosed as market well-being. In basing his headquarters in New York, Maciunas directed Fluxus from the central node of an expanding international system of mass commodity production, distribution, and consumption, into which a growing international art market was rapidly integrating. Fluxus would simulate US commodity lines with the expectation that American goods, and Fluxus goods, would be exported abroad to new international markets—the same places where multinational corporations were establishing physical plants for distribution, research, development, and, increasingly, production itself, and where American art was finding new buyers.

A 1966 letter from Maciunas to Vautier points to the reach of Fluxus business:

Regarding our mailing lists. OK. I will mail out your things in U.S. & you can mail out flux things in Europe. Send all your things in bulk to me. . . . Regarding your idea of printing all performance pieces with possible variations, yes I agree. To make it more economical, I would print maybe 10 pieces on a piece of paper. . . . 21 1/2 cm x 16 1/2 cm is OK, since it is close to standard 8 1/2 x 11 in., in USA paper sizes. Could you translate into French?

I would like to get pieces from Erebo-Bozzi-Pantani-Allocco-Oldenbourg-very much [sic], but could you get them—translate them . . . and send them to me. . . . I am getting some very nice pieces of Milan Knizak from Czechoslovakia, will print them in the fall.²⁷

Like an officer of a multinational corporation working with overseas employees, Maciunas had to navigate everything from language and customs to paper size differences in order to manage Fluxus on an international stage. Willem de Ridder was a reliable Fluxus man in Amsterdam to whom Maciunas also sent executive directions:

Ben Vautier will get in touch with you directly and probably contribute some money for European Fluxus box. . . . Japanese Fluxus festival will be in March 1965 So [sic] you may plan on this date. But don't use any Fluxus money for making a trip. The money should be spent on European Fluxus book. OK? Send 100 of this book to N.Y.C. & 100 to Japan. Official address of Fluxus in Japan is FLUXUS c/o Kuniharu Akiyama.²⁸

Money matters are difficult to uncover in Fluxus history. We know for sure that there was never much of it, and certainly no profit. But various documents, such as this letter, indicate that there was some collective pooling of resources (out-of-pocket donations via individual artists and mail-order sales) that could be construed as Fluxus money. Financial oversight was one of Maciunas's executive duties. He was the biggest backer, and evidently did not approve of perks like travel stipends, even for his regional head. De Ridder would have to make do with a few kind words from the boss: "We are very pleased to hear of your activities and energetic efforts—please push—on—. . ."²⁹ We also get a sense of the decentralization and specialization performed by the group. As Vautier and de Ridder worked on the European FluxBox, Kuniharu Akiyama was presumably thinking ahead to the Japanese Fluxus Festival. Yet it is clear that Maciunas's ends relied on the very hierarchic and bureaucratic means that his performing automata in *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* seemed to want to question.

Another passage from in the same letter to Vautier points to the central contradiction of Fluxus's "incorporation":

In a few weeks I will also mail you political leaflets (1000) with statistics proving U.S. genocide in Vietnam exceeding Nazi genocide in Europe. (Nazi genocide—5% of Europeans) (U.S. genocide—6% of Vietnamese) VERY IMPORTANT TO HAVE THIS PAPER SPREAD WIDELY.³⁰

Like Olivetti, Maciunas used his outpost chairman to achieve both a wider consumer base for Fluxus products and a wider audience for political ideas, in this case opposition to the Vietnam War. If Fluxus somehow turned a profit, the former could fund the latter. The shifting structure of concentration and expansion of multinational capitalism was performed by Fluxus with counterhegemonic aims.

Inherent to this radical, incorporated art collective was the problematic potential for Fluxus to accelerate the general internationalization of the art world along market lines. By the mid-1960s Hans Hofmann warned, "Art has become international, almost too much so."³¹ Fluxus wanted to surf the flows of capital in order to purge the system and reorganize it from within, but to do so it would need to develop a force strong enough to navigate the same forces of internationalization that were bringing a standardized, commercialized, and domesticated "avant-gardism" to more corners of the globe. Such was the state of things by 1964 that the art critic Harold Rosenberg observed matter-of-factly:

A fairly uniform modern-art "package" today constitutes the production of all countries in painting and sculpture, except those in which governments interfere. The package contains X percentages of the following: modified Cubist canvases and sculptures (in stone, wood, metal); Action Painting in varying thicknesses of pigment; canvases bearing expanses of one or two colors terminating in hard or soft edges; free-standing constructions and reliefs incorporating found objects or having the character of fragments of rock or ore; compositions of panes in wire, cord, plexiglass; commodity ("Pop") art, relating to mass consumption, marketing and entertainment; motorized and other gadget art.³²

Beneath this litany of internationally commoditized art styles (and proliferating art journals) was a deeper lament about the homogenization he saw resulting from developments in reproduction technology, mass communications, and transportation that plugged more parts of the world into the dominant Western markets. He continued: "A modernist painter or sculptor in the most backward country of Africa or Latin America (and in the large international exhibitions such countries are now almost invariably represented [in]) is synchronized with a world system to the same extent as the local oil refinery or airport."³³ Rosenberg's blatant Western-centricism notwithstanding, he is able to see how the dominant art system is as closely tied as any other industry to the international flows of capital. For Rosenberg, the cost was an effluence of "pictures relating to pictures relating to other pictures, rather than to any visual or intellectual perception."³⁴ Rosenberg's account reminds us that the biggest challenge facing Fluxus was to regulate its own flows so as to mimic but not merge with the dominant system.

One of the most important aspects of Maciunas's attempts to navigate the dominant system was the creation of a Fluxus system of distribution—another sign that the early twentieth-century avant-garde prioritizing of production was being rethought. This system consisted of retail shops, a mail-order business with a catalog, and makeshift warehouses usually located in the shops or artists' dwellings. In the case of Ben Vautier in Nice, his record shop with a simple name *Magazin* but flamboyantly decorated facade (which caused controversy among the locals), opened in 1958, predating Fluxus. As we have seen, the shop made Vautier an attractive candidate for Fluxus regional management, and it was subsequently incorporated into the Fluxus distribution system. Maciunas's venture in New York had fairly inauspicious beginnings, as the Japanese artist Ay-O, who lived in



FIGURE 36

Staged photograph for an advertisement for the FluxShop and Mail-Order Warehouse, 359 Canal Street, New York, 1964. Pictured from the top: Daniel Spoerri, Alison Knowles, Dick Higgins, Ay-O, Letty Eisenhauer, and George Maciunas (on the sidewalk).

New York in the early 1960s, recalled: "Shortly after New Year's Day in 1964 he showed up at my loft on Canal Street. 'I want to open a shop,' he said. 'A shop, not a gallery. Do you know if there are any lofts available around here?'"³⁵ Adamant that Fluxus products belonged in a shop as opposed to a gallery, Maciunas did rent a decrepit loft at 359 Canal Street next door to Ay-O, and this became the site of New York's first FluxShop.³⁶

With the help of several Fluxus artists, Maciunas took a staged photograph for publicity purposes during the moving-in period (fig. 36). It shows Daniel Spoerri, Alison Knowles, Dick Higgins, Ay-O, and Letty Eisenhauer descending the fire escape laden with parcels while Maciunas waits for them below, his arms also piled high with boxes. They

represent satisfied customers heading home with their purchases. In a curious twist Maciunas has the others wearing bowler hats, while he uncharacteristically dons a top hat. The image works on different levels, both poking fun at the idea that the FluxShop should have such a “classy” clientele, and setting up Maciunas as the executive directing his Fluxus “workers” in a day’s job of doing publicity—the hats a playful reminder of this hierarchy. The street view confirms that number 359 had a storefront window perfect for advertising the amusements inside to passersby, but also hints at the deteriorated state of the neighborhood. The street and sidewalk are strewn with litter, and there is no foot traffic—a potential concern if one is about to open a shop, and possible motivation for staging a photograph full of customer activity.

As per Maciunas’s mandate, the FluxShop stocked inexpensive and unpretentious Fluxus items. His graphic advertisement *FluxShop News* (ca. 1967, see fig. 6) organizes into a neat grid the plethora of curious things one could buy for four dollars or less: “50¢ flux clinical record,” “flux newspaper \$1 no. 5–8,” “fluxpost stamps \$1,” “games and puzzles \$3,” “fluxdust \$3.00,” and “same card deck \$4.” These were the average prices, with only a few costlier exceptions: “fluxkit for \$150,” “clock cabinet \$100” and a “table 25 × 25 \$90.”³⁷

The staged photograph and *FluxShop News* are prime examples of how Maciunas’s *imaging* of Fluxus corporate imaginations emerged disproportionately to its practical realization. His ads often appeared prior to the products’ existence, as if to build anticipatory consumer hype that would send customers flocking. He created a graphic identity for the Fluxus system of distribution before that system could be construed as viable, or that made it seem bigger than it really was (often due to lack of funds). He purposefully traded on a play of the real and the metaphorical, creating a powerful cultural imaginary that continues to this day. Here Maciunas played the ad man, like that other gray flannel iteration denizen of Madison Avenue who championed the ability of everything from soap and cereal to lingerie and electric blenders to change your life. Like Andy Warhol, Maciunas used his experience as a commercial graphic designer to bring an understanding of the power of advertising into his art. Although I am working to a degree with the cultural imaginary created by Maciunas—a paper trail of plans, ambitions, and aspirations—this does not diminish its importance in terms of its historical specificity regarding the critical possibilities for art, the role of the artist, and the reverberations that are still felt in art today.

Fifty cents for a “flux clinical record” was laughable compared to the prices increasingly commanded by Abstract Expressionist and Pop art canvases by the mid-1960s, but it also represented a bargain relative to the wares of another artist-cum-businessman whose own shop had existed in New York less than four years earlier. Claes Oldenburg’s *The Store*, located at 107 East Second Street from December 1, 1961, to January 31, 1962, was filled with supersize representations of everyday objects made of plaster-covered muslin over chicken wire painted in eight shades of vibrantly colored unmixed enamel with large, dripping brushstrokes. Their real selling point, in line with the emerging Pop aesthetic, was their resemblance to cheap mass-produced consumer goods: little girls’ dresses, women’s shoes, 7Up signs, sundaes, hamburgers, and more—the kind of things

sold in discount stores (or diners) on Canal and Orchard Streets, where Oldenburg and Maciunas alike found inspiration.

Maciunas worked very hard to get Oldenburg to join Fluxus in 1962 based on his past activities and growing reputation. It is quite possible that it was *The Store* in particular that impressed Maciunas, just as he appreciated Vautier's ability to run a store in Nice. Oldenburg showed initial interest, contributing several objects to Fluxus, namely plastic food items in a plastic box, and the two artists came even closer to consolidating their "business" interests in 1965, when they met to discuss the possibility of a joint venture between Fluxus and the gallery Multiples. According to the proposal, Fluxus would handle production and sales abroad through the Fluxus mail-order business, while Multiples would have exclusive rights in New York.³⁸ Although the deal never went through, the mere proposal is evidence of the seriousness with which Maciunas went about expanding Fluxus's multinational business operations.

The comparison to Oldenburg also highlights important distinctions between the two projects. Although Oldenburg's *The Store* set an important precedent of strategic appropriation of the capitalist distribution tool of a retail outlet, the intentions behind *The Store* versus the FluxShop were fundamentally different. In his notes from *The Store* Oldenburg wrote: "It is my intention to create the environment of a store, by painting and placing . . . objects after the spirit and in the form of popular objects of merchandise, such as may be seen in stores and store-windows of the city. . . . The store may be thought of as a season-long exhibit, with changing & new material."³⁹ He made personal business cards that identified him as the "proprietor," but also announced the date when *The Store* would end, unlike a real store, and the support of Green Gallery. Despite Oldenburg's unconventional approach, *The Store* was always intended as art.⁴⁰

He even made a point of making his artistry visible by sculpting and painting at the back of *The Store* while visitors browsed up front. His aesthetic was at once familiar, recalling Abstract Expressionist canvases, and fresh, announcing a new Pop sensibility. This way his customers could be sure that although the objects resembled household items and the site of purchase had changed—a shop as opposed to a gallery or auction house—what they were buying was indeed genuine "art" created by the hand of the individual artist (a potential genius), and not by an assembly line that churned out actual cans of 7Up by the thousands. Oldenburg also produced numerous potato chips and candies of the same plaster, muslin, and paint to give away for free. In the context of a store, this little "gift" functioned at once as an alternative form of exchange and a marketing strategy. Once visitors to his establishment got a free taste of an Oldenburg work they would likely want more, even if it cost them. Potato chips and candy being among the most addictive of foods, it is hard to stop at just one.

While Maciunas purposefully matched FluxShop prices to those of neighboring stores on Canal Street, selling "art" for as little as fifty cents, Oldenburg's prices were much higher: a *Big Sandwich* cost \$149.98, a *Girdle* went for \$249.95, and, perhaps most outrageously of all, a 9.99 sign hanging in the window came with its own price tag of

\$399.95. The irony of paying \$399.95 for something that announced a price of \$9.99 was obvious and registered Oldenburg's awareness of art's commodity status and general critique of consumer culture. But the fact remained that his works were priced according to art market rates, not the rates of the cheap restaurants and shops that were his source of inspiration. An actual sandwich in a New York diner in 1961 cost only sixty cents.

The art-world connection was very quickly foregrounded when *The Store* moved from the original gritty storefront to be reinstalled in the clean, sanctioned exhibition space of Martha Jackson Gallery less than one year later.⁴¹ Oldenburg's own language ultimately reinstated the perceived gulf between art and life that Maciunas wanted to eradicate through a purging of both. Around the time that the Multiples deal fell through, Oldenburg dissociated himself from Fluxus, due to his disinterest in collectivism generally and Maciunas's politics in particular. The FluxShop was distinguished as an earnest attempt to occupy a critical space through the production of anti-commodities within Fluxus's performance of the system at large. Both *The Store* and the FluxShop can be characterized as performances. However, only the FluxShop was critically performative of the broader structures, operations, and protocols of the system.

Distribution was essential to the "revolutionary flood and tide" of art proposed by Maciunas.⁴² He conceived of Fluxus products (and performances) as temporary strategies that should have a critical impact on the average consumer. By opening a shop he aimed to engage these subjects in the same terms and spaces through which they increasingly defined themselves. The same people who felt excluded from galleries and the Museum of Modern Art could feel they belonged in the retail shops on Canal Street. Maciunas did not simply find inspiration there for what to depict; he saw a model to appropriate and critically restage.

Such navigation of "high" and "low" sites of consumption polemicized the standard critique of commodity culture authored by the Frankfurt School and those art histories influenced by it. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer wrote of passive consumers duped by a culture industry beyond their control. Other cultural critics, notably Raymond Williams, who also often condemned the historical push toward socioeconomic life increasingly devoted to consumption, have theorized active, critical consumers who constantly contest the ideological forces of capitalism.⁴³ From this perspective, the equalization of access in shopping cultivates a potentiality not present in the viewing of art. The experience of being in a shop could constitute a more active mode of being because it is tied to an act of decision making (to buy or not to buy) based ostensibly on use.

It misses the mark to characterize the systemic level of Maciunas's critique as merely consumer politics, yet Williams's ideas remain relevant. Maciunas's emphasis on modes of distribution and consumption—to the diminishing import of production—coupled with his lack of trepidation in occupying spaces *within* commodity culture, suggests the potential Williams sees for contestation. If contestation were to be achieved, however, the FluxShop would have to be somehow exceptional from its nickel- and dime-store neighbors, as a counterhegemonic site of consciousness raising. The purgative process would

have to be as regular and ongoing as the opposing tides. Fluxus goods would have to be flushed continually through the system (and bought) to prevent the forces of reification from building up so much sediment, encrusting (psychic) channel walls and blocking critical flows, a tale told in the final section of this chapter.

LABORING BODIES

In Fluxus Maciunas simulated the structure of the multinational corporation at the same time that he questioned the nature of work and daily routine within advanced capitalism. Both were central to his performance of the system: questioning the system's thing aspect—how it is made and put together—and its organization—how it worked. On this point I return to my discussion of *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti*. Maciunas was familiar enough with his subject's story to know that Olivetti intended his office machines to add up to much more than the average dictating or calculating apparatus. Olivetti's ideas about humane production methods and the redemptive value of good design were part and parcel of his overarching ideology of labor within the capitalist system. However, the two ideas have separate aims: the factory-based producers of the machines and the office-based consumers of those machines, respectively. As Maciunas's artist as organizer left the factory for the office place, he performed the complex and shifting relationship between these two types and sites of labor.

As much as Olivetti believed in the time- and hardship-saving value of machines and their necessity to successful industry, he even more fervently championed good design's ability to inspire intellectual and spiritual values in those who consumed it. The motivation of the new office workers could not be only a question of financial incentive. They, like their factory counterparts, had to be inspired with a sense of the possibility of their own self-realization in the industrial system. Only "elegant and serious design," the Olivetti motto, could achieve this. Taking inspiration from the Bauhaus, and drawn to Walter Gropius in particular (in complete contrast to Maciunas), Olivetti made the pioneering, if risky, business move of entrusting his corporate vision to artists. Beginning with strategic hiring practices in the 1930s, the Olivetti personnel list soon became a who's who of the best modern Italian artists.⁴⁴ The sculptor Marcello Nizzoli epitomized the Olivetti transition from "fine artists" to incorporated "workers." Nizzoli's MC 4S Summa adding machine (1940) was said to be a testament to the remarkable success of Olivetti's idea of bringing artists into business. As the Italian critic Mario Labò wrote in 1957: "At first sight [it is] a cold and unrewarding device that to an attentive and willing observer then reveals a deep fascination. The accord between the 'the artist' and 'the mechanics' soon became perfect, united as they were in a common drive toward the finest result. . . . So the Summa was born. . . . And the spatial continuity, the fluency of the surfaces, which reflect the artist's will, are at the same time an absolute requirement of the technical execution."⁴⁵ Such was the near rapture with which enthusiasts spoke of Olivetti machines. Especially important for my discussion is Labò's description of the

power of the aesthetic to grab the attention of the willing viewer-user, making the “cold” and “unrewarding” mechanism of the adding machine an object of “deep fascination” through which creativity itself was directly conveyed.

Conspicuously absent on the idealist consumption side of this equation was the very thing that made possible Olivetti’s role as marriage broker between aesthetics and industry, artists and business: organization, the church that sanctified, contained, and institutionalized these unions. In contrast, these forces of organization are precisely what Maciunas represented in *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti*. Through the used adding machine tape as score and the metronome as timekeeper, we see the system in terms of its administrative operations and implication of real bodies in the processes of rationalization and mechanization. Maciunas showed that the same calculations that drive the business of business also drive the human body, dictating when and how it will act. The performer identified as number three, for instance, must carry out a designated action, standing up and sitting down, whenever “3” appears in a line on the adding machine tape. In his revised score dated November 8, 1962, Maciunas included a possible scenario for how numbers correlated to performers correlated to actions:

- 16387—point finger, open umbrella, sit on chair, lip-fart (8), bow down
- 0086—lift bowler hat, list boater-hat [*sic*], lip fart, close umbrella
- 1057—point finger elsewhere, place bowler hat on head, draw air (piglike), raise-up
- 608—open umbrella, lift bowler hat, lip fart⁴⁶

Each performer must concentrate on each row of numbers, and act ever so quickly, with the knowledge that the next tick of the metronome sends the body collective on to the next line of numbers, and the next set of actions.⁴⁷ In metronome speed, Maciunas’s instructed 120 beats per minute is exactly at the border between *moderato* and *allegro*, moderately fast, as if to convey both the monotony of the movement kept at a steady pace (and a funeral march for Olivetti) and the ever-present pressure to accelerate. Tick, tick, tick, the body must keep up.

Maciunas sometimes categorized the Olivetti performance as a ballet (fig. 37), calling up avant-garde precedents such as Fernand Léger’s *Ballet Mécanique* of 1924 and Oskar Schlemmer’s Bauhaus dances of the 1920s. But Maciunas’s performers seemed the estranged descendants of Léger and Schlemmer’s dancers, mechanized by the rhythms of conveyor belts on the factory floor. Holding up their adding machine tape scores, they were the administrators, secretaries, clerks, accountants, and household budgeters pushing buttons on the calculating machines to which they were appended. They were the “salaried masses” forecasted as early as 1930 by Siegfried Kracauer but appearing in full force in the postwar period, when fundamental structural changes in the economy made white-collar workers the fastest-growing sector of the labor force.⁴⁸ As technology developed, products and services multiplied, markets widened, transportation and communication expanded and were transformed, and activities within the corporation multiplied, expanded, and

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

PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTIONS

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

Each horizontal row is performed simultaneously at preferably fast tempo such as 2 regular beats per second. A conductor or metronome may direct the group if necessary. Blank row represents silence of one beat.

VERSION 1. (poem)

Each performer pronounces his assigned number in any language.

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

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

VERSION 3. (ballet)

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

VERSION 4. (chorale)

- 0 - smack with lips smartly (sound like drop falling into water) on each indication of 0
- 1 - smack with tongue (click like opening corked bottle)
- 2 - lip-fart (through tight lips)
- 3 - lip-fart (with tongue between lips)
- 4 - draw air (upper teeth over lower lips)
- 5 - draw air, open mouth, vibrate deep throat (pig like sound)
- 6 - blow air between lips vibrating them
- 7 - dry spitting
- 8 - lunger
- 9 - sniff wet nose (wet nose with water if necessary)

VERSION 5 (string quartet or ensemble)

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

FIGURE 37

George Maciunas, *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti Versions 1-5*, 1962. Mimeographed sheet, 11 11/16 x 8 1/4 in. (29.7 x 21 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

specialized in step. Accounting, advertising, personnel policies, finance and systems specialists, and research and development all became essential to successful operations. Keynesian government intervention and oversight required firms to keep more extensive records. Manhattan alone saw an 80 percent increase in white-collar workers from 1950 to 1970, and in 1953 business guru Peter Drucker described how the “salaried masses” consolidated with an “employee society”: “a hierarchical . . . system in which everybody is related to people through his relationship to a strictly impersonal, strictly objective, strictly abstract thing, the ‘organization,’ the ‘corporation,’ the ‘government agency,’ etc.”⁴⁹ Just as the bodies in *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* are generalized types, gray-flannel iterations, who, in their repetition in a row on stage, appear as anonymous operators, at once keeping the system running and being run by it through their useless, discrete, unconnected acts.

It makes a difference that Maciunas chose to “remember” Olivetti with a score made of used adding machine tapes rather than used sheets of typing paper, which he could easily have done. In a letter to Emmett Williams regarding the preparations for one staging of *In Memoriam*, Maciunas wrote: “You know the Olivetti piece, you need no score. Just get a tape from any Olivetti adding machine and you have a score. Offices, stores they throw them away by tons, just go and ask.”⁵⁰ The nonchalance of these instructions conveys a sense of not only awareness, but also acceptance of the machine as desktop fixture, and by implication the mechanization of office work. More than any other machine, the calculator drove the organizational society.⁵¹ While typewriters were the significant profit and growth carrier for the office machine industry until the 1940s, calculating machines determined economic success from the 1950s until the middle of the 1960s. In the performance, the correlation of bodies and numbers created little chance for the sort of “excessive” linear narrative that might emerge from the words of an aborted office report or defunct memo tossed in the waste bin. Numbers created an “economic” visualization of the expanding relations of bodies and machines. Barring the realization of full automation, within the new pool of white-collar employees, finger dexterity and body efficiency were prized more than ever above a capacity to think creatively. The clickety, clickety, clicking of the adding machine echoed in Maciunas’s tick, tick, ticking of the metronome.

Most importantly, in Maciunas’s composition it is the very *absence* of the machine that enables us to *see* the process of mechanical regimentation and control more clearly, its inscription in the body itself. Without machines to tantalize the eye, the embodied subjects come into greater relief, as does the viewer’s own embodied relationship to them—a reminder of routine and the rat race. And the used paper tapes, as refuse of the body-machine encounter, more easily become a metaphor for the new horizons of control within organizational society. Where is Adriano Olivetti’s promise for advanced design? The performance undermines Olivetti’s “better living through good design” philosophy by revealing the Taylorized workplace and proletarianized white-collar workers that are the ultimate destination and mechanizing purpose of those fetishized machines.⁵²

Maciunas’s attitude toward artistic and professional labor surfaced with wider dimensions (and further contradictions) in a letter to German Fluxus member Tomas Schmit.

Maciunas strongly urged Schmit to train and find a “professional” nine-to-five job in an applied art such as engineering, industrial design, or graphic art. He explained: “Fluxus way of life is 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. doing socially constructive and useful work—earning your own living, 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. spending time on propagandizing your way of life among other idle artists and art collectors and fighting them, 12 p.m. to 8 a.m. sleeping (8 hours is enough).”⁵³ Here Maciunas embraces routine, based on the clock of the standard capitalist workday. Taylorist specialization divides the artist into a working, art-making, sleeping machine. And Maciunas, the artist-organizer, is organizing bodies down to the level of biological needs (“8 hours is enough”).

While this degree of bodily regimentation might have been appealing to Maciunas, his excessive efforts also indicate that he understood he could not successfully manage an art collective in this manner. He spent a significant amount of his own regimented Fluxus hours—that is to say, when he was not earning a living at the small design firm Jack Schad, or as a freelance graphic designer for various travel agencies or Jonas Mekas’s *Film Culture* magazine, among other clients, “performing” what any successful corporate executive was learning at the time: the critical nexus of organization and communication in the maintenance of control. Parallel to “system” replacing “machine” as the dominant conceptualization of society in the postwar period, corporate leaders realized that a new kind of worker control was needed. Past approaches through Taylorism and technical control, particularly the assembly line, were found wanting and often not directly applicable to the increasing ranks of white-collar workers. The new system was bureaucratic control, which was “embedded in the social and organizational structure of the firm and is built into job categories, work rules, promotion procedures, discipline, wage scales, definitions of responsibilities, and the like. Bureaucratic control establishes the impersonal force of ‘company rules’ or ‘company policy’ as the basis for control.”⁵⁴ It was this institutionalization of standardized, efficient procedures and behaviors that increasingly defined all organizations after 1945, and especially the large corporations. The new bureaucratic control ushered in what Gilles Deleuze theorized more comprehensively as the “control society.”

Although Maciunas’s obsession for order sometimes resulted in draconian policing, on the whole his administrative authority was based on attempts to induce a sense of affiliation and loyalty among Fluxus artists, especially to prevent those who may not have agreed with his broader political aims from jumping ship—what’s good for Fluxus is good for the “worker.” A letter from Maciunas to Emmett Williams dated April 25, 1963, suggests his diplomatic side: “Bad news! George Brecht wants out of Fluxus, thinks Fluxus is getting too aggressive (this Newsletter No. 6). So we will have to compromise, find a midpoint between Flynt, Paik & Brecht. . . . It would be very bad without Brecht. He is the best man in New York (I think).”⁵⁵ The infamous *News-Policy Letter No. 6* provoked disagreement from several Fluxus members, not just Brecht, due to Maciunas’s ideas for agitational public performance, such as blocking traffic in the Holland Tunnel. Henry Flynt thought they were not seriously political, while Brecht found them too factious. But

Maciunas's final words resonate with the lingo of international bureaucratization. In corporations, as well as foreign services, it became more common to speak of "our man in Berlin" or "our man in Tokyo." And while some of these servants were easily made redundant or shuffled over to another city, others posed special cases—"our best man in New York"—for whom the organization might make allowances in order to keep him in place. Brecht was one such Fluxus "worker" whom Maciunas wanted to keep close to HQ.

The front page of the February 1964 issue of the Fluxus newspaper *ccV TRE* is characteristic of how Maciunas's graphic design became a site for imagining and instantiating the bureaucracy of Fluxus (fig. 38). A plausible reading of the page might go like this. The name *ccV TRE* appears in big, bold letters across the masthead like a logoesque acronym. "IBM," for example, was instantly recognizable for what it represented. In contrast to the fixity of "IBM," however, Maciunas eventually allowed "ccV TRE" to stand for something different in each issue: *Fluxus cc Valise TRianglE*, *Fluxus Vaudeville TouR-namEnt*, *Fluxus Vague TREasure*, and so on. Duchampian punning pokes fun at the idea that a handful of letters could represent the big and bold ideas that corporations professed them to—Maciunas threw them into flux. Underneath the title, the editors are named George Brecht and the Fluxus Editorial Council (mainly Maciunas, who did much of the graphic design and soliciting of material), which makes it sound like a bigger, more structured operation than it actually was.⁵⁶

At the far left of the page one can read the "Latest News." But below this headline, where the news should be, only columns of numbers are printed. They recall the adding machine tabulations on an *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* score. But whatever the specific numbers represent, the grid of twelve standardized columns, each with seventy-nine rows of five-digit numbers, connects Fluxus visually to a rational logic of order and systematization—apparently what is "making the news." It also mimics the pattern of repeated lines of the name "Fluxus" at the top of the newspaper, conveying a sense of the organizational patterns within the system at large. Just to the right of the grid there is a photograph of a man in a high-collar white shirt, dark suit, and tie in three-quarter pose facing left. This juxtaposition sets up a visual play in which the serious man "looks over the numbers" approvingly. And the man seems strangely familiar. A caption identifies him as Adolph Koshland, who is "one of the prominent bean dealers of the Pacific coast, well and favorably known in the bean industry . . . and has built up a large bean business in the last few years."⁵⁷ In reality, however, it is a photograph of Maciunas in what seems a direct reference to his 1963 self-portrait—Maciunas again performing the quintessential late nineteenth and early twentieth-century business entrepreneur. This hybrid Koshland-Maciunas character appears on the page as if representing the anachronistic capitalist benefactor of Fluxus. The choice of beans as his commodity emphasizes the parodic quality of the gesture—he is a real "bean counter." However, as one continues reading the page, one understands it as more than just Fluxus fun.

Prominently placed at the center of the spread is an advertisement for a "new" product. With its Sears, Roebuck and Co. catalog aesthetic and patent date of 1896, however, one

quickly realizes that Maciunas is playing with time again. He admired the catalog format for its orderly and efficient presentation of products, mining all sorts of mail order and auction house catalogs for images and slogans to use in his own Fluxus publicity. In this case, the advertisement reads: "Fashions with custom comfort for executives, diplomats, businessmen, lawyers. Saluting device." Beneath this is a diagrammatic drawing of a man's head topped by none other than a bowler hat. The sectional view reveals a machine inside the hat that allows for its automatic tipping—a major energy-saving device for the "gentleman" that would have also conserved the efforts of the artist performing *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti*. The old-fashioned-ness of the advertisement skews our historical associations. In the postwar period, as time-saving fashion accessories gave way to real "thinking machines," automation hardly looked this quaint. It was not yet Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, but IBM and Olivetti were beginning production on the first mainframe computers that could potentially take humans out of the picture altogether.

The far right of the page gets down to Fluxus business. Beneath the catch line "Now that you're ready for the real thing" is a list of the Fluxus products that were "available now" through Fluxus editions. These products could be ordered via mail through the Fluxus post office box or purchased at 359 Canal Street, the site of the FluxShop. The most important part of the list is the graphic code presented by Maciunas to organize Fluxus artists and their works:

FLUXUS a Monthly Review of the University of Avant-Garde Hinduism. Edited by Nam June Paik / FLUXUS b L'OPTIQUE MODERNE Collection de presente par

DANIEL SPOERRI / FLUXUS c WATER YAM, arranged by George Brecht

FLUXUS cc V TRE, monthly newspaper, edited by George Brecht⁵⁸

Maciunas's explanation of the system in a letter to the French Fluxus artist Robert Filliou conveys the earnestness and glee with which he executed it:

Now you are "F" fluxus, "f", because all special solo editions are lettered (year boxes are numbered), understand? Nam June Paik's review is Fluxus "a", Daniel's book is "b", George Brecht Yam box is "c", La Monte Young's 1961 compositions . . . is "d" and I forget what is "e", maybe you are "e" not "f", I must look at the chart. . . . Is it now all clear? The Emmett is "f" or "g" and so on until x, y, z, then we have a-a, b-b, etc., then a-a-a. So in 100 years we will have a-a-a-a-a-a etc.⁵⁹

Like his assigning of numbers to performers in *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti*, he uses letters to identify artists—ad absurdum. The individual subject is reduced in the extreme to an abstract symbol and inserted neatly into a rational system of classification.

Maciunas's statement becomes even more provocative when we compare it to a report presented by the records administrator for the Standard-Vacuum Oil Company to the

American Management Association in 1958, addressing the serious new challenge of increased numbers of employees and volumes of paper:

This leads us to the heart of our paperwork system: our communications code. In order to control the flow, storage, and retrieval of paper and the information it contains, we decided to create a coding system which would classify each piece of paper introduced into our communications network. . . . As our company's activities expand, code numbers are added as needed. With our four-digit subject classification numbers, we have reached the point where we know what each piece of paper is about. There is another important question to ask about each paper: Who is concerned? This leads to further coding by use of a two-digit number as a prefix to the subject number.⁶⁰

Each piece of paper! This explanation is its own parody, and not far removed from Maciunas's own description. The use of coding systems became a rational and efficient means to manage everything and keep the corporation and the system running smoothly. Maciunas's coding system was a performative appropriation and exposure of such bureaucratic measures of control. Perhaps is it such a coding system that Adolph Koshland (aka Maciunas) looks upon approvingly. With such bureaucratic measures he might further "incorporate" the radical art collective. And if all else failed, one could always resort to a tried-and-true measure. In the lower left corner one sees an instructional diagram on knot tying, including a "running noose" just right for a person's neck—the ultimate expression of the humorous yet unsettling themes of (potentially deadly) order and control conveyed on this front page.

Maciunas also drew upon the long-established legal model of negotiating control over creative works known as copyright. The *ccV TRE* masthead also reads "© COPYRIGHT 1964 BY: FLUXUS, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED." Maciunas wanted to place all Fluxus artists under copyright contracts, and brokering such agreements became a key strategy—part of his artistic labor as an organizer. The contradiction of seeking recourse in the dominant legal codes (ostensibly the ultimate arbiter of control in an organizational society) one wants to disrupt is clear. And yet Maciunas's appropriation of copyright laws, with their roots in the nineteenth-century capitalist publishing industry, fit within his collective model of incorporation. A letter to Tomas Schmit is typical of Maciunas's executive overtures:

Would you be interested to offer me exclusive rights to publish your works. . . . The works will be copyrighted when published, which means their performances will be controlled by yourself through Fluxus, and indiscriminate copy prohibited. . . . My one condition however (like that of any other serious publisher) is that once you agree or decide to offer your works for publication and they are accepted, they can not be offered and published by any other publisher. This is necessary to protect my investment in printing and distribution.⁶¹

A tension in Maciunas's words surfaces the general contradiction between incorporation and a radical art collective. The fact that he worked in these legalistic terms speaks of an awareness of the professionalization of the artist as well as a critical effort to control and redirect this trend. Here are his stated reasons for instituting Fluxus copyright:

1) Eventually we would destroy the authorship of pieces & make them totally anonymous—thus eliminating artist's "ego"—Author would be "FLUXUS." We can't depend on each artist to destroy his ego. The copyright arrangement will eventually force him to it if he is reluctant. 2) When we hold copyright collectively we propagandize the collective rather than the individual. 3) When Fluxus is noted after each Fluxus copyrighted composition it helps to propagandize the broader—collective aspect of the composition. For instance: your piece is reprinted or performed with notice of "by permission of FLUXUS." people then know there must be more like these—& find out about Brecht, Shiomi, Paik, etc. Same works in reverse when someone performs Shiomi—interested people find out via FLUXUS about Brecht, Paik, yourself, etc. Do you understand?⁶²

While his copyright was aimed at protecting Fluxus artists from arbitrary fluctuations of the dominant market and the profiteering of private gallerists—Fluxus artists would agree to a fixed 80/20 split of sales with the collective—it also served to administrate them more firmly into the organization and potentially entrench their professionalization. Moreover, it ambivalently validated the systems' laws based on private property, above all, functioning to aggregate their forces in the imaginary.

The *Fluxus News-Policy Letter*, a newspaper, name lists, official titles, an inventory system, and copyright were all real means for Maciunas to organize artists into Fluxus while making visible organization itself. Were his efforts deprofessionalizing artists, as he intended, or further professionalizing them? His confounding ambivalence toward the very forces he aimed to critique suggests a critical path *through* bureaucratization as much as against it.

"FLUXUS ART-AMUSEMENT"

In 1964 Maciunas declared, "Fluxus must be *rear-guard*" (fig. 39).⁶³ Behind, buttock, ass, anus, the dung sweeper behind the elephant, the doctor who applies the enema—the scatological connotations lent to the idea of flux by this provocative claim are numerous. Indeed, Maciunas's scatological sense of humor pervades Fluxus. Graphic designs are replete with comical variations on anal insertion, be it a finger, as in his design for Yoko Ono's *Do It Yourself Fluxfest Presents Yoko Ono & Dance Co.* (1966, fig. 40), or a strange, antiquated gadget resembling a "gas" gauge, as in his announcement for the performance evening *Flux-Harpsichord* (1961, fig. 41). He made sure to include Ono's film *Four* (1967) in the *Fluxfilm Anthology*, undoubtedly appreciating the continuum of bare asses on the screen, and designed a disposable Fluxus *Nude Back Apron* (1967) imprinted with an

<p>PUBLISHING, MASSPRODUCING & PERFORMING WORKS BY:</p> <p>GENPEI AKASEGAWA ERIC ANDERSEN AYO GEORGE BRECHT STANLEY BROUWN GIUSEPPE CHIARI PHILIP CORNER ANTHONY COX WALTER DE MARIA WILLEM DE RIDDER ROBERT FILLIOU HI RED CENTER DICK HIGGINS TOSHI ICHIYANAGI JOE JONES ALISON KNOWLES JIRI KOLAR ARTHUR KOPCKE TAKEHISA KOSUGI SHIGEKO KUBOTA FREDRIC LIEBERMAN GYORGI LIGETI JACKSON MAC LOW GEORGE MACIUNAS JONAS MEKAS ROBERT MORRIS LADISLAV NOVAK CLAES OLDENBURG YOKO ONO BENJAMIN PATTERSON JAMES RIDDLE DITER ROT TAKAKO SAITO WILLEM T. SCHIPPERS TOMAS SCHMIT CHIEKO SHIOMI DANIEL SPOERRI</p> <p>BEN VAUTIER ROBERT WATTS EMMETT WILLIAMS LA MONTE YOUNG</p>	<p>PUBLICATIONS:</p> <p>Periodical newspaper: V TRE (4 times per year) Periodical yearbox Complete works: (supplemented yearly) of: George Brecht, Takehisa Kosugi, Chieko Shiomi and Robert Watts. Individual compositions by: Eric Andersen, Giuseppe Chiari, Dick Higgins, Hi Red Center, Alison Knowles, Gyorgi Ligeti, Jackson Mac Low, Yoko Ono, Benjamin Patterson, James Riddle, Tomas Schmit, Daniel Spoerri, Ben Vautier, Emmett Williams, La Monte Young. Films by: Eric Andersen, Ayo, George Brecht, Walter de Maria, Dick Higgins, Joe Jones, Alison Knowles, Arthur Kopcke, Takehisa Kosugi, Shigeo Kubota, George Maciunas, Yoko Ono, Benjamin Patterson, James Riddle, Chieko Shiomi, Robert Watts, La Monte Young.</p> <p>MASS PRODUCED OBJECTS BY:</p> <p>Ayo, George Brecht, Joe Jones, Shigeo Kubota, George Maciunas, Yoko Ono, Claes Oldenburg, Benjamin Patterson, James Riddle, Takako Saito, Tomas Schmit, Chieko Shiomi, Daniel Spoerri, Ben Vautier, Robert Watts, La Monte Young.</p> <p>boxes, cards, chess & checkers, clocks, clothes, fingerprints, flags, food, holes, machines, music boxes, organs, postage stamps, puzzles, rocks, signs, sporting goods, suitcases, tablecloths, etc.</p> <p>art, amusements, circus, compositions, concerts, events, everything, films, gags, games, jokes, music, non-art, nothing, objects, paintings, plans, poetry, theatre, vaudeville, etc.</p> <p>FLUXSHOPS & WAREHOUSES</p> <p>New York, P.O.Box 180, New York, N.Y. 10013 Amsterdam, Postbox 2045, Holland Nice, 32 rue tonduiti de l'escarene, France La Cedille qui Sourit, 12 rue de May, Villefranche- sur-Mer, France c/o Akiyama, 3-814 Matsubaracho, Setagayaku, Tokyo, Japan.</p>	<p>FLUXUS FESTIVALS, CONCERTS</p> <p>WIESBADEN, W.Germany, Sept.1962, at state museum, 14 concerts. COPENHAGEN, Denmark, Nov.23 to 28, 1962 6 concerts. PARIS, France, Dec.1962, 7 concerts. DUESSELDORF, W.Germany, Feb.2 & 3, 1963, at Academy of Art. AMSTERDAM, Holland, June 1962, 2 concerts. HAGUE, Holland, June 1962, 1 concert. NICE, France, July 27 to 30, 1963, 1 concert & 7 street events. COPENHAGEN, "2 internationale koncerter for nyeste instrumentale teater og anliart," Sept.1963 AMSTERDAM, "Internationaal programma nieuwste muziek, nieuwste literatur, nieuwste theater", Dec. 1963. AMSTERDAM, "16th.Fluxus Film Festival", 24 Feb.1964 NEW YORK, "Fully Guaranteed 12 Fluxus Concerts", at Fluxhall, April 11 to May 23, 1964 NEW YORK, Fluxus Symphony Orchestra Concert, June 27, 1964, at Carnegie Recital Hall. MILAN, Italy, Nov.16, 1964 at Galleria Blue. ROTTERDAM, Nov.23, 1964 AMSTERDAM, Holland, Dec.6, 1964 WARS COPENHAGEN, Dec.3 to 23, 1964 NEW YORK, Sept.1964 to Jan.1965, at Washington Sq.Gallery. NICE, France, 7 concerts Oct.31, to Nov.7, 1964 MARSEILLES, France, Mar.8, 1965 at Marseille University theatre 1965 perpetual Fluxfest NICE, Perpetual Fluxus Festival, NEW YORK, weekly concerts since June 27 '65 at Cinematheque. NEW YORK, the 83rd.Fluxus concert: Fluxorchestra at the Carnegie Recital Hall, Sept.25, 1965</p>
<p>ART</p> <p>To justify artist's professional, parasitic and elite status in society, he must demonstrate artist's indispensability and exclusiveness, he must demonstrate the dependability of audience upon him, he must demonstrate that no one but the artist can do art.</p> <p>Therefore, art must appear to be complex, pretentious, profound, serious, intellectual, inspired, skillfull, significant, theatrical, it must appear to be valuable as commodity so as to provide the artist with an income. To raise its value (artist's income and patrons profit), art is made to appear rare, limited in quantity and therefore obtainable and accessible only to the social elite and Institutions.</p>	<p>FLUXUS ART-AMUSEMENT</p> <p>To establish artist's nonprofessional status in society, he must demonstrate artist's dispensability and inclusiveness, he must demonstrate the selfsufficiency of the audience, he must demonstrate that anything can be art and anyone can do it.</p> <p>Therefore, art-amusement must be simple, amusing, unpretentious, concerned with insignificances, require no skill or countless rehearsals, have no commodity or Institutional value.</p> <p>The value of art-amusement must be lowered by making it unlimited, massproduced, obtainable by all and eventually produced by all.</p> <p>Fluxus art-amusement is the rear-guard without any pretention or urge to participate in the competition of "one-upmanship" with the avant-garde. It strives for the monostructural and nontheatrical qualities of simple natural event, a game or a gag. It is the fusion of Spikes Jones, Vaudeville, gag, children's games and Duchamp.</p>	

FIGURE 39

George Maciunas, flier for editions, concerts, and "Fluxus Art-Amusement" manifesto, 1965. Offset-printed sheet, 11 x 8 7/16 in. (28 x 21.5 cm). Designed by George Maciunas. Produced by George Maciunas. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

image of just what the title indicates. All of these exposed bottoms were prime targets for what he himself believed to be a wonderful remedy—enemas! As he stated: “Why would Daniel [Spoerri] not want people to have a run after his meals? Enema is one of the healthiest things for stomachs (and heads).”⁶⁴ This dual effect of an enema is crucial: it clears not only the intestines, but also the mind. Was this the force that Fluxus was to have on the individual and social body? It would seem so, as Maciunas explained in a postcard to La Monte Young in 1962:

I got this nice box of a disposable enema unit which I will use to put Fluxus prospectus in. I will get box reproduced with all the nice instructions printed over it—great box, listen to this: “. . . in preparation for proctoscopy and sigmoidoscopy; in the relief of constipation due to fecal or barium impactions”. Or this: “. . . assume knee-chest position until strong urge to evacuate is felt (usually within 5 minutes)” etc. etc. Wonderful! (Got the box in London.) So I will roll up the prospectus like the tube they speak about, so people can stick it up their ass and squeeze gently . . . until strong urge is felt. . . Nice?⁶⁵

This was art you could literally stick up your ass—for medicinal effect. Maciunas had no truck with pretentious art, and the ribald aspect of “rear-guard” conveys this. At the same time, the term represents a serious leveraging against the problematic of the “avant-garde” moniker, returning us to our previous discussion of Maciunas’s critique of Happenings and the limits to vanguardism. As I have stated, his reverse wordplay was a direct response to Charlotte Moorman and her New York Avant-Garde Festival. Moorman had trained in classical cello at the Juilliard School of Music in New York, and by the start of the Avant-Garde Festival she was a respected professional musician. The shared birth year of Fluxus and the Avant-Garde Festival makes it understandable that there would be some rivalry between the two artists. But it was the absolutist nature of Maciunas’s attack—Fluxus loyalty could only be demonstrated by an Avant-Garde Festival boycott—that surprised many Fluxus artists. Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, Nam June Paik, and others thought it should be possible to participate in both. In this instance, Maciunas abandoned his supple new management style, temporarily dis-incorporating those who would associate with his competitors.

While Maciunas began his text “Comments on Relationship of Fluxus to So-Called ‘Avant-Garde’ Festival” by calling Happenings “neo-Wagnerian” and the people who did them “neo-rococo,” he ultimately alit on the critical term that he would deploy most often, “baroque”: “The so called ‘Happenings’ [are] derived from Baroque ballets staged in Versailles, with waterworks, fireworks, casts of hundreds, many simultaneous acts music, dance, warfare, etc. etc.”⁶⁶ “Baroque” or “neobaroque” was a barbed condemnation, for it placed Happenings in a particularly unsavory cultural lineage. In order to express the depth and scope of his critique Maciunas reached back to prerevolutionary France and the spectacles at the Chateau Versailles, one of the most extreme examples of elaborate and decadent aesthetics history has to offer. This connection is also visualized

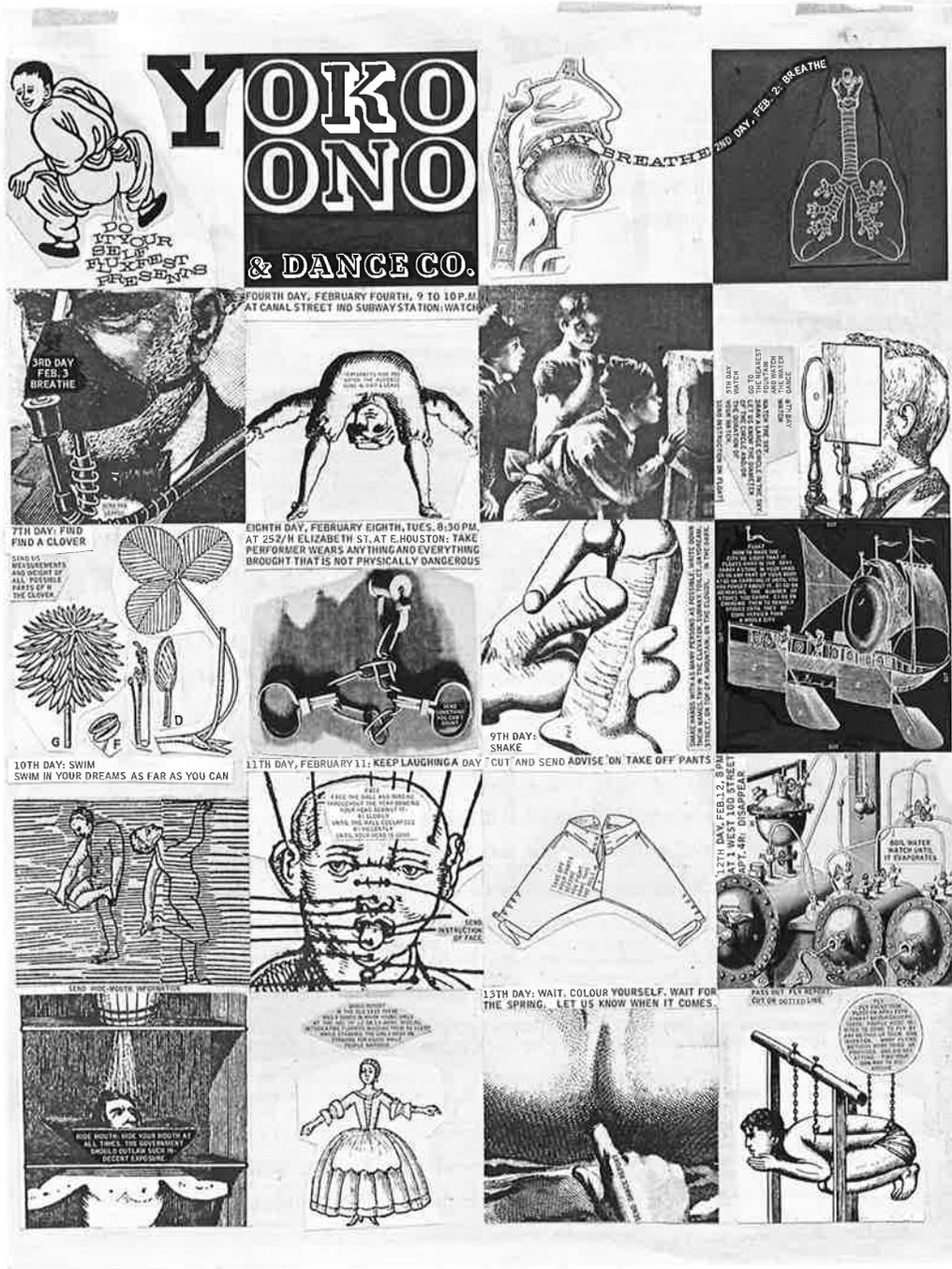


FIGURE 40

Yoko Ono and George Maciunas, mechanical for *Do It Yourself Fluxfest Presents Yoko Ono & Dance Co.*, 1966.

Cut-and-pasted photostat, ink, transfer type, typewriting, and correction fluid on paper, 21 5/8 × 16 7/16 in. (55 × 41.8 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

MARCH 24, 8PM. AT 80 WOOSTER ST.
FLUX-HARPSICHORD



NEW REALIZATIONS & PIECES BY:
GEORGE BRECHT, DICK HIGGINS,
ICHIYANAGI, JOE JONES, KNOWLES
MACIUNAS, NAM JUNE PAIK, LARRY
MILLER, TOMAS SCHMIT, Y. TONE,
Y. WADA, WATTS, LA MONTE YOUNG

FIGURE 41

George Maciunas, flyer for *Flux-Harpsichord* at 80 Wooster Street, New York, March 24, 1961. Lithograph, 11 × 8 1/2 in. (28 × 21.6 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

in his diagram *Fluxus, Its Historical Development and Relationship to Avant-Garde Movements* (ca. 1966, see fig. 9), where “Neo Baroque Theatre . . . Happenings,” beginning in 1959, evolve directly from “Baroque Theatre Versailles Garden Spectacles.”⁶⁷

If one followed Maciunas’s logic, traveling back in time nearly three hundred years, one might land at the most magnificent of all Versailles events, the Great Royal Diverissement of Louis XIV in 1688. The king’s guests picked candied fruit from imported Portuguese orange trees, delighted on caramels, fine liqueurs, and a palace made of marzipan, and were regaled by Molière’s infamous comedy *George Dandin* (1668) in a grove illuminated by hundreds of candles in crystal chandeliers. The king and his court dined on a five-course meal, including 265 different dishes. It all culminated in a brilliant fireworks display with pyrotechnicians lighting up the night sky with “XIV.” The fetes staged by les Menus Plaisirs du roi at Versailles were elaborate orchestrations, requiring the participation of many, that integrated the arts in innovative ways—all aimed at expressing the absolute monarchy of the ancien régime.⁶⁸ Maciunas’s own comments hint at the fact that the splendidous fetes and warfare were two sides of the same quest for hegemonic power.

Maciunas could not stand wastefulness. This was especially true when it came to food, but extended to every little thing that he saved obsessively. Happenings, he said, were the contemporary expression of the excesses of Versailles. Both were exalted moments of consumption. The implications of this are twofold. First, the aesthetics he despised embodied inherently reactionary politics, and, second, the forms of expenditure were tied to specific cultural and economic realities.⁶⁹ As I have suggested, Maciunas's call for a regulated purging of the system with Fluxus goods resonated strangely with the dominant Keynesian mandate for controlled government infusion of capital into the system to ensure market stability. Although the agendas were distinct, both programs relied on a general dynamic of (in)flux and flow. Writing at roughly the same time as Keynes, from the 1920s to the 1940s, the French intellectual Georges Bataille offered an alternative formulation of the "general economy" in terms of consumption and excess that is also useful for positioning Maciunas historically. Bataille is particularly important, because he accounted for the role of culture within what he identified as the "excessive" force of postwar international capitalist production. As he worked to counter traditional economic theories based on scarcity and the notion that individual effort must be reduced to the necessities of production and conservation in order to be valid, Bataille argued that ceremonious expenditures of excess—whether in the form of money or waste—could have a social function and even recalibrate social and economic relations of power. In place of productive humanity, *homo faber*, Bataille proposed a model of human activity based on the desire for loss, the desire to expend what he called the "accursed share"—the excess that is normally excluded from the "economic." The so-called unproductive expenditure of the accursed share could be "luxury, mourning, war, cults, the construction of sumptuary monuments, games, spectacles, arts, perverse sexual activity. . . . All these represent activities, which at least in primitive circumstances, have no end beyond themselves."⁷⁰ Importantly, the losses in these types of expenditures, far from being incidental, actually constitute their meaning. In the erotic joy of willed loss there was a utopian possibility for undermining the rational utility, subjectivity, and homogeneity created within the restricted economy and surpassing its limits. I am pointedly not arguing for such utopianism on the part of Maciunas, but Bataille's logic sets us up well to ask what happened when, in contrast to his perception of Happenings as wasteful, Maciunas wanted to turn "waste" into something "useful."

Examples abound of Happenings where food was present for reasons other than eating. Several were by artists Maciunas blatantly distanced from Fluxus. There was Carolee Schneemann's *Meat Joy* (1964), in which she and seminude participants writhed orgasmically on the floor amid raw meat dished out to them by female performers dressed as maids. Allan Kaprow orchestrated *Soap* (1965), which required participants to smear jam on cars then wash it off, then take more jam and spread it over the naked body of their Happening partner, whom they then placed in a hole in the sand for the tide to come wash him or her clean.⁷¹ It would seem that Kaprow's "tide" had nothing to do with the "revolutionary flood and tide" of Fluxus.

Although Maciunas was the most vitriolic critic of Moorman, Schneemann, Kaprow, and company, he was not alone in his characterization of their works. Oldenburg, who remained friendly with the Happenings crowd, having produced some of his own Happenings in the late 1950s and early 1960s, described what he called the "Kaprowesque" aesthetic: "Kaprow actually put a lot of himself into these things. Many of his works were very expressionistic, and very sensational, and dramatic, and melodramatic, highly melodramatic."⁷² Maciunas had no patience for such theatrics, which despite their stated participatory, anti-authorial pretensions seemed to him to reassert self-indulgent absolutism in the same manner as the Great Royal Divertissement. Whereas Bataille might have theorized the erotic display of Happenings in utopian terms of exceeding capitalism's rational restrictions, Maciunas considered them merely another form of useless expenditure. Neither the erotic display of bodies nor their potential to reconstruct an expressive artistic subject (not so different from the exhausted model of the Abstract Expressionists) fit the Fluxus model of simple, efficient, economic "events" as conceived by Brecht, and investigated in the next chapter.

Maciunas condemned the excess explicitly when writing about a performance by another Fluxus rival, the German Wolf Vostell, in a letter to favored Fluxus artist Robert Watts: "This Vostell is a swindler. . . . Now he sees those Fluxus events, so he comes with his 'Decollage musique' takes a glass stands behind the glass (audience in front of glass & throws a cake into the glass & then smears the thing, and he does the same thing—the only thing over and over and over. And I hate to see those cakes go—I thing [sic] it is immoral to destroy food, besides I like cakes."⁷³ Wasted cake in particular forms the substance of his criticism. Maciunas's obsessive response to Vostell's actions, along with the policing of his Fluxus workers (Vostell was out, Watts was in), suggests Maciunas's own anal retentiveness and the psychic ramifications surrounding issues of excess, waste, and excrement. The shit had to be purged, but Vostell's haphazard, undisciplined, and unsystematic approach was something Maciunas could not tolerate—Happenings' superficial replication of the consumptive excesses of the ruling elite. In terms of the general economy, art might be a ceremonious expenditure of excess, as Bataille claimed, but according to Maciunas it remained something that had to be regulated through the system, by systematically performing the system's very operations and protocols.

If Moorman, Schneemann, Kaprow, and Vostell represented the avant-garde, then according to Maciunas the avant-garde had gone belly up in its own pretension and decadence. The marzipan palaces of the baroque culture at Versailles had been transmuted into the raw meat, smeared jam, and splattered cakes of postwar consumer society. The correlation was oversimplified, yet it remains instructive. As Angela Ndaljian articulated, the eighteenth-century use of baroque in reference to art and music took on derogatory connotations of "extravagance, impetuosity, and virtuosity, all of which were concerned with stirring the affections and sense of the individual."⁷⁴ Until the twentieth century, "the baroque was generally considered a chaotic and exuberant form that lacked the order and reason of neoclassicism, the transcendent wonder of romanticism, or the social awareness of realism."⁷⁵ Certainly Maciunas's Fluxus strategy

did not correspond to any one of these three movements, yet each had something—a sense of order, wonder, or social awareness—that, like earlier art historians, he perceived the baroque to be woefully lacking. He used this understanding of baroque art history to strategically position his own ideas.

In contrast to the neobaroque tendencies he perceived in so-called avant-garde Happenings, Maciunas proposed an alternative “rear-guard” action he called “Fluxus Art-Amusement”: “Fluxus art-amusement is the rear-guard without any pretention [*sic*] or urge to participate in the competition of ‘one-upmanship’ with the avant-garde. It strives for the monostructural and nontheatrical qualities of a simple natural event, a game or a gag. It is the fusion of Spike Jones, Vaudeville, gag, children’s games and Duchamp.”⁷⁶ The populist lineage he constructs for Fluxus in this 1965 manifesto is the obverse (or reverse) of the baroque heritage he ascribes to Happenings. In attempting to challenge the elitism, pretension, professionalism, and henceforth “high value” of art, Maciunas sought recourse in the “low” and “base.” This was a strategy as old as the avant-garde itself, and also pursued by Happenings. But Maciunas changed the tactics. His bag of traits—from which he paradoxically pulled both a love of jokes and gags and a deep desire for organization and systematization—set him apart from his historical avant-garde predecessors and his avant-garde contemporaries. In other words, resonant with the general neoclassical call for order that ushered out the baroque (and rococo) period, there was a strategic call to order underlying Maciunas’s vaudevillian masquerade in the period of Happenings. Through Fluxus as an incorporated art collective, he aimed to propagate “Fluxus Art-Amusement.”

Although most dictionaries categorize “amusement” and “entertainment” as synonyms, I suggest that Maciunas proposed “Fluxus Art-Amusement” as a critical alternative to the “entertainment” of mass consumer culture. His association of Fluxus with a vaudevillian tradition is important in this regard. Although vaudeville had always been a commercial venture, by the early 1960s it represented a bygone era when certain forms of entertainment remained relatively renegade. Vaudeville stood for the ribald fringes of popular culture before the business of entertaining developed into an industry in which large corporations fought to bring order, predictability, and control to the entire sector.⁷⁷

No longer able to deny art’s commodity status, “Fluxus Art-Amusement” would interrogate the commodity form in both its high-art and low-culture manifestations. As Maciunas wrote in the Manifesto: “Art-amusement must . . . have no commodity or institutional value. The value of art-amusement must be lowered by making it unlimited, massproduced [*sic*], obtained by all and eventually produced by all.”⁷⁸ The idea of amusement afforded Maciunas the possibility of countering the pretentious decadence of art (including the latest passing wave of the so-called avant-garde) and the mindless glut of consumer culture, both based on the flows of excessive expenditure and a resultant waste. The significance of Sigmund Freud’s analysis of the joke within the “psychic economy” is not lost here. For Freud, the joke functions as a means of psychical expenditure in the expulsion of a prohibited thought: “Since laughter at a joke—is an indication of pleasure, we shall be inclined to relate this pleasure to the lifting of the cathexis which has previously been

present.”⁷⁹ The joke must have at least as much force as that of the inhibition, suppression, or repression of the thought, and if it does then the cathetic energy used for the inhibition can be lifted and discharged by laughter. Within Fluxus, this is precisely how amusement was to function. Relating the individual psychic economy to the social economy at large, “Fluxus Art-Amusement” would flux the individual psyche—like an enema for the mind—enabling the individual to creatively “regulate” him- or herself. While Vostell’s cake throwing was simply wasteful to Maciunas, expenditure through “Fluxus Art-Amusement” was in its own way useful and productive. How more precisely might this work?

THE WORLD IN A FLUXBOX

From the beginning Fluxus objects were for sale, hence the name “Flux-Products.” A great variety of these products were produced through what Maciunas called Fluxus editions. This emphasized their nonunique status—many artists were creating multiples in the 1960s—while also sounding like an official product line attached to a real company. The many items listed in Maciunas’s advertisement *FluxShop News* (see fig. 6) were part of the line, but by far the most characteristic form of the Fluxus product was the FluxBox.

It is of no small importance that this standardized format was one of many Fluxus ideas born of Maciunas’s extreme thrift. The loft and FluxShop at 359 Canal Street opened onto a world of bargain buys to set his imagination awhirl. On one outing he discovered a shop selling small plastic boxes in a bulk bin at a price too cheap for him to ignore. The sight of the compact, compartmentalized containers with a snap top no doubt delighted his systematic mind—he knew he could do something with them, organize something in them. One imagines him scuttling back to his loft with arms full of the clear and colored boxes eager to write to his regional outpost chairmen for “raw materials.” Maciunas did write these letters, soliciting themes and contents for the boxes. But just as often he assembled the boxes himself, creating graphically eye-catching labels that allowed him to control Fluxus’s branded identity, as he did with every Fluxus design. Inside the perky boxes he would order any number of miniature found things: keys, corks, pills, plugs, ticket stubs, lightbulbs, used postage stamps, machine parts. Most of what he carefully deposited in the boxes was trash.

Sometimes these boxes of discarded items were called FluxKits. For example, there was Maciunas’s *Burglary FluxKit* (1970, fig. 42), each section of the box containing a selection of old keys long separated from the locks they opened. Robert Watts produced *Light FluxKit* (1972, fig. 43), encasing a variety of lighting devices well past their days of illumination. And Yoshimasa Wada contributed *Smoke FluxKit* (1969, figs. 44, 45), full of odd and sundry materials that produced either fragrant or putrid-smelling smoke when lit. Most notorious of all was Vautier’s *A Flux Suicide Kit* (1967, figs. 46, 47), inside which one found a rope, matches, a razor blade, and other deadly devices. As Vautier stated about his prototype (1962, fig. 48) that preceded the Maciunas-designed FluxKit, “In the original kit I used two live electric wires: you tie them to your ears and put your

FIGURE 42

George Maciunas, *Burglary FluxKit*, 1970. Plastic box with offset-printed label containing twenty-three keys, overall (closed) $3\frac{15}{16} \times 4\frac{11}{16} \times \frac{3}{8}$ in. ($10 \times 11.9 \times 1$ cm). Designed by George Maciunas. Published by Fluxus. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.



FIGURE 43

Robert Watts, *Light FluxKit*, 1972. Plastic box with offset-printed label containing objects in various media, overall (closed) $2\frac{3}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{16} \times 9\frac{3}{16}$ in. ($6.1 \times 23 \times 23.4$ cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

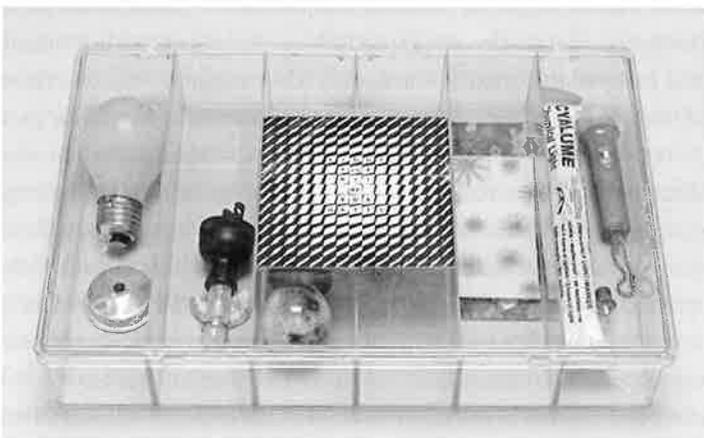


FIGURE 44

Yoshimasa Wada, *Smoke FluxKit*, 1969. Plastic box with offset-printed label containing objects in various media, overall (closed) $3\frac{15}{16} \times 4\frac{3}{4} \times 1$ in. ($10 \times 12 \times 2.6$ cm). Designed by George Maciunas. Published by Fluxus. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.





FIGURE 45

Yoshimasa Wada, *Smoke FluxKit*, 1969. Plastic box with offset-printed label containing objects in various media, overall (open) 3 15/16 × 4 3/4 × 1 in. (10 × 12 × 2.6 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

feet into a bucket of water, sleeping pills, rope. They were real systems.”⁸⁰ The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers several definitions of “kit”: “A collection of articles . . . forming part of the equipment of a soldier; a collection of personal effects or necessaries, esp. as packed up for traveling; the outfit of tools required by a workman.”⁸¹ Naming the boxes “kits” conveyed this essential meaning of “function.” They went beyond being mere collections of related or curious things; they were systems meant to enable the so-called viewer to *do* something. It is in this sense that they were anti-commodities. Perhaps in the ultimate case of the *A Flux Suicide Kit* the person needed to be “fluxed” out once and for all in order for the (Fluxus) system to operate more efficiently?

Maciunas needed the *mode of exchange* to get Fluxus products into circulation, making their relationship to the commodity form provocatively and productively ambivalent. But it would be too simple to say that the FluxBoxes represented a championing of use value over exchange value and leave it at that. This was the overarching aim, handed down from the historical avant-garde, but it does not explain how the boxes might possibly achieve this—and herein lies their historical specificity. Barring the user’s willingness to commit burglary or suicide, I argue that these bizarre little amalgamated box-kit-products had a potential usefulness that tracked directly with Maciunas’s ideas for purging the system.

FIGURE 46

Ben Vautier, *A Flux Suicide Kit*, 1967.
Plastic box with offset-printed label
containing objects in various media,
overall (closed) $3 \frac{15}{16} \times 4 \frac{3}{4} \times \frac{7}{8}$ in.
($10 \times 12 \times 2.2$ cm). Designed by George
Maciunas. Published by Fluxus. The
Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus
Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of
Modern Art, New York. Digital image ©
Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by
SCALA / Art Resource, NY.



FIGURE 47

Ben Vautier, *A Flux Suicide Kit*, 1967.
Plastic box with offset-printed label,
containing objects in various media,
overall (open) $3 \frac{15}{16} \times 4 \frac{3}{4} \times \frac{7}{8}$ in.
($10 \times 12 \times 2.2$ cm). Designed by George
Maciunas. Published by Fluxus. The
Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus
Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of
Modern Art, New York. Digital image ©
Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by
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FIGURE 48

Ben Vautier, prototype for *A Flux Suicide Kit*, 1962/1984. Suitcase containing objects in various media, overall (closed) 3 3/4 × 14 9/16 × 7 1/16 in. (9.5 × 37 × 18 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

In a letter sent to outpost chairman Ben Vautier in 1964 regarding the preparation of his *Mystery Boxes* (1963), executive Maciunas conveyed his pleasure at their particular functionality:

We are packing your mystery boxes in nice carton boxes—the following items: 1. In flat boxes 30 × 30 × 1 cm—dust, 2. In wood boxes 20 × 20 × 5 cm—egg shells, 3. In carton boxes 25 × 25 × 25 cm—garbage: chipped plaster, used mimeograph stensils [*sic*], dried up tea bags (used), orange skins. Etc. Each box sold for \$2 nicely sealed, so there is no way to tell what is inside unless you open. Is that OK? . . . This will be very practical since we can dispose of garbage by this . . . and even get money for it.⁸²

In Fluxus performances, the actions of everyday life were restaged and revalued. In the FluxBoxes, the things of everyday life—including the detritus of mass consumer society—were repackaged and, through commerce, mystery, and humor, also restaged and revalued. As opposed to a resource-guzzling, trailblazing avant-garde, Fluxus's rear-guard scooped up what was left after the glut of consumption to shoot it back into circulation: neatly packaged shit. The most obvious contemporary parallel is the Italian artist Piero Manzoni's 1961 *Merda d'artista* (The Artist's Shit), a set of sealed and labeled tins said to be full of this special organic matter. More than anything else this early conceptual gesture humorously, if ambivalently, questioned issues of ego and authorship.

In contrast, Maciunas explained Fluxus's motivation as "a desire to stop the waste of material and human resources . . . and divert it to socially constructive ends."⁸³ To create

social value out of society's shit. This was a taller order than at any time in history, as a robust postwar policy of planned obsolescence in industrial design meant that there was more shit being produced than ever before, coming out at a faster and faster rate. The ideology of planned obsolescence, whereby products are intentionally designed to have a limited useful life, thereby pressuring the consumer to buy again, has roots in the 1920s and 1930s, but it was not popularized and widely implemented until the 1950s. Much has been written on the rise of junk as a material in art at this very same time. In New York, Robert Rauschenberg's *Combines*, Robert Stankiewicz's scrap metal and machine-part sculptures, and John Chamberlain's auto-body assemblages all evidenced a broader junk aesthetic by the mid- to late 1950s. In Paris, Arman was filling vitrines with common household waste and César was compressing old automobiles into blocks. Artists across the United States and Europe, in particular, took advantage of the changing materiality of their Western consumer landscapes, where trash became an almost obvious choice for producing art that felt concretely connected to life. A real chipped teacup or a real rusted baby carriage wheel was more interesting and personal to them than the overwrought (abstract, expressive, symbolic, angst-ridden) paintings that then dominated art galleries and discourse.

What distinguishes FluxBoxes from most other junk art was the emphasis on repackaging and branding the trash as a Fluxus product for resale through a well-planned Fluxus distribution system. In fact, with the junk neatly concealed inside the labeled boxes, they can hardly be said to exhibit a junk aesthetic at all. In order to vie for the attention of the consumer the FluxBoxes had to be seductive in appearance like an Olivetti machine, but they had also to be amusing enough on the inside to hold it. Only in this way would their broader function as an "educational means to convert the audiences to . . . non-art experiences in their daily lives" succeed within the spectacle of consumption.⁸⁴ If many artists at the time were exploring ways to bring art closer to life, the FluxBoxes were an attempt to push this at the very point of connection between materiality and consciousness. What I am calling the social recycling of the FluxBox was premised on the idea of close observation, tactility, functionality, and humor, inducing creative awareness in a new viewer-user.

In the eighteenth century, both the arts and the sciences experienced a disciplining of their fields. Neoclassicists wanted to rid art of its embarrassingly chaotic and decoratively baroque (and rococo) characteristics. In the mid-twentieth century, Maciunas aimed to purge the avant-garde of its neobaroque (and neo-rococo) tendencies. To achieve their goal, neoclassicists called for Enlightenment principles of rational order, which found quintessential visual representation in the symmetrical, stately oils of the French painter Jacques-Louis David. To achieve his, Maciunas relied on the same Enlightenment tradition, but found a fitting representation in the form of the box.

It may seem strange to draw this historical parallel, but it is validated by Maciunas's own repertoire of influences. For example, he adored encyclopedias. Denis Diderot's eighteenth-century *Encyclopedia, or a Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Crafts*, is the textual embodiment of Enlightenment concern for the pedagogical function of the ordering of knowledge (and the world). These tomes (like catalogs), where information is so efficiently

sorted and retrieved, were Maciunas's primary source of data for his numerous historical charts. In the sciences, Maciunas drew great inspiration from the nineteenth-century Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev's 1869 periodic table of the elements. It was the model for his 1969 *Learning Machine*, and the FluxBox also represented this type of system.

In her book *The World in a Box: The Story of an Eighteenth-Century Picture Encyclopedia*, the Dutch art historian Anke te Heeson writes: "The box persists into the twentieth century as a fundamental means of educating. . . . The apparent paradox of the *Weltkassen*, a box for the world, that is, a surveyable, handy, and always accessible structured space for accommodating the complexity of our surroundings, thus persists, having acquired its own special stamp in the eighteenth century."⁸⁵ This stamp from the "age of order" certified the box for subsequent ages as a viable format for organizing the world around us, for making it comprehensible and therefore manageable. Consciously or subconsciously, Maciunas's decision to purchase the plastic boxes before he knew exactly what he would do with them was impressed by such historical validation of the box format. The perky box itself was manufactured to continue this desire: the succinct shape, the encasement (requiring user interaction in the process of popping it open and snapping it closed), the interior sections—all of these characteristics confirmed the plastic boxes' contribution to the concept of order. Moreover, within Maciunas's schema of "Fluxus Art-Amusement" the boxes provided a pedagogical structure. They echoed his *Learning Machine* as a non-linear, visual means of knowing.

The FluxBoxes ordered the chaotic detritus of mass consumer society. They created the possibility that in microcosmic form, the endless assemblage of products churned out by systematically controlled conveyor belts and the waste of consuming subjects with reproducible desires could be knowable and manageable. But, crucially, known and managed in terms alternative to those of commodification. Because, as te Heeson noted, "Order is, above all, an exercise in value management."⁸⁶ The collecting of garbage and its division and organization in the FluxBox offered a recontextualized means to look at the *things* of the world. Maciunas's series of boxes entitled *Your Name Spelled with Objects* (1972–76), for instance, included multiple small items that stood for the letters in a person's name: vial for V, screw for S, die for D, eyedropper for E, and so on (figs. 49, 50). The user was asked to take out each item one by one and arrange them so as to "spell" his or her name. Very cleverly, through this action the "consumer" was asked to consider him- or herself as composed of objects. And this was the important task, to get individuals to see the world differently so that their relationship to it might be altered—so that the very *order of things* might be reorganized.

In his text "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art," Maciunas conceptualized the relationship between art and life that informed Fluxus: "The 'anti-art' forms are directed primarily against art as a profession, against the artificial separation of a performer from audience, or creator and spectator, or life and art; it is against the artificial forms or patterns or methods of art itself; it is against the purposefulness, formfulness and meaningfulness of art."⁸⁷ Maciunas's emphasis is on the contrast between artifice and nature: a time-honored

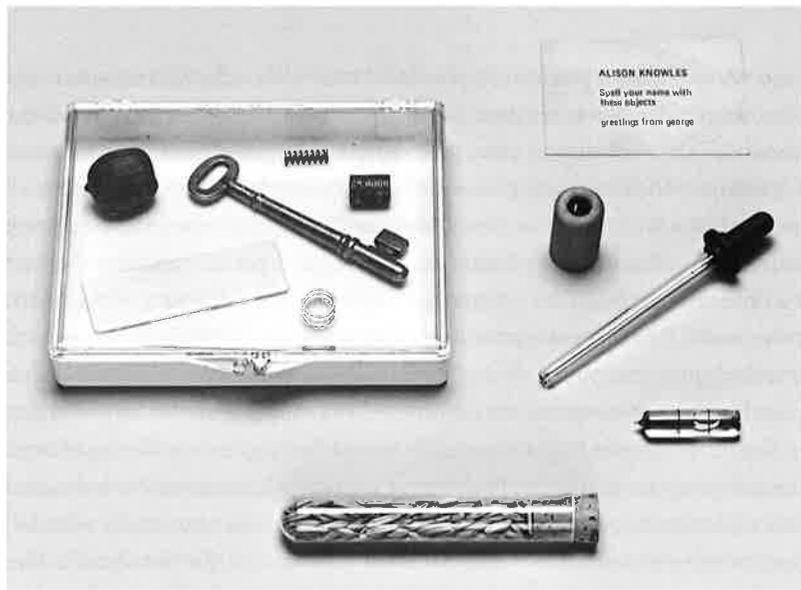


FIGURE 49

George Maciunas, *Your Name Spelled with Objects: Alison Knowles*, ca. 1972. Plastic box containing offset-printed card and objects in various media, overall (closed) $3 \frac{15}{16} \times 4 \frac{5}{8} \times 7/8$ ($10 \times 11.8 \times 2.3$ cm). Published by Fluxus. Edition: unique. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.



FIGURE 50

George Maciunas, *Your Name Spelled with Objects: George Brecht*, 1976. Metal cigar box containing offset-printed card and objects in various media, overall (closed) $5 \frac{7}{16} \times 7 \frac{1}{4} \times 3 \frac{1}{16}$ in. ($13.8 \times 18.4 \times 7.8$ cm). Published by Fluxus. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

theme in art history to which he brought a distinct critical purpose. Somehow the artificial system had to be “seen through” if a truer reality was to be experienced; in the process, art as we know it would become superfluous. But how to activate such engaged seeing in subjects increasingly socialized to be consumers of more images and products than ever before? How to see and understand the natural world—including all things from mathematical ideas to physical matter—beyond the artifice of the cultural logic of multinational capitalism? In *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, the philosopher Michel Foucault discusses the manner in which eighteenth-century natural historians devised and instituted a method of classification to aid the fundamental process of knowing the natural world. He focuses on the work of Carl Linnaeus, the father of taxonomy and the *Systema Naturae*: “The system is arbitrary in its basis, since it deliberately ignores all differences and all identities not related to the selected structure. But there is no law that says that it will not be possible to arrive one day, through a use of this technique, at the discovery of a natural system. . . . One cannot find the way to this natural system unless one has first established with certainty an artificial system.”⁸⁸ Similarly, Maciunas’s writing suggests the possibility of one day discovering a natural system, but as his strategies attest, and Linnaeus himself emphasized, until the natural method appears in its certain and finished form, “artificial systems are absolutely necessary.”⁸⁹ This belief informed Maciunas’s entire construction of Fluxus, from his own role as an artist-organizer through its incorporated collectivism down to each little FluxBox.

In 1972 Maciunas produced *Excreta Fluxorum*—literally a box full of shit—based explicitly on Linnaeus’s system of classification (fig. 51). There are several versions, but the largest, presented at the *Flux Science Show* in 1977, includes an impressive thirty-four fecal specimens. Human excrement is represented by a rock labeled simply “Cro-Magnon” (implying that humans had been excreting shit for a very long time, and Fluxus had a lot of work to do).⁹⁰ Like Linnaeus, who expanded his system as he received new plant and animal specimens from individuals around the world, Maciunas’s collecting and categorizing was an ongoing, expansive process. As Fluxus artist Geoffrey Hendricks recalled:

Certain Fluxus boxes required materials gathered from around the world—for example . . . as many kinds of shit as possible for his *Excreta Fluxorum*. . . . My son Bracken, aware of this one summer . . . realized that the grasshoppers he had in a jar were producing shit and this had to be gotten to George, and then one time visiting at 80 Wooster Street he asked to see George’s shit collection, and there in a labeled box were all the jars and packages of shit that he and different people had gathered.⁹¹

And as Larry Miller recounted from the 1977 trip to Berlin for the show of *Flux Labyrinth* at the Akademie der Künste: “I had arrived a week or two ahead of George to find materials . . . but was relieved that getting the elephant shit was an item on his *own* list. It was one of the first things he did when he arrived, so that it could be drying along with other samples for his shit-box collection.”⁹² Maciunas and his Fluxus “workers” were also shit collectors, sweeping up the dung from behind.

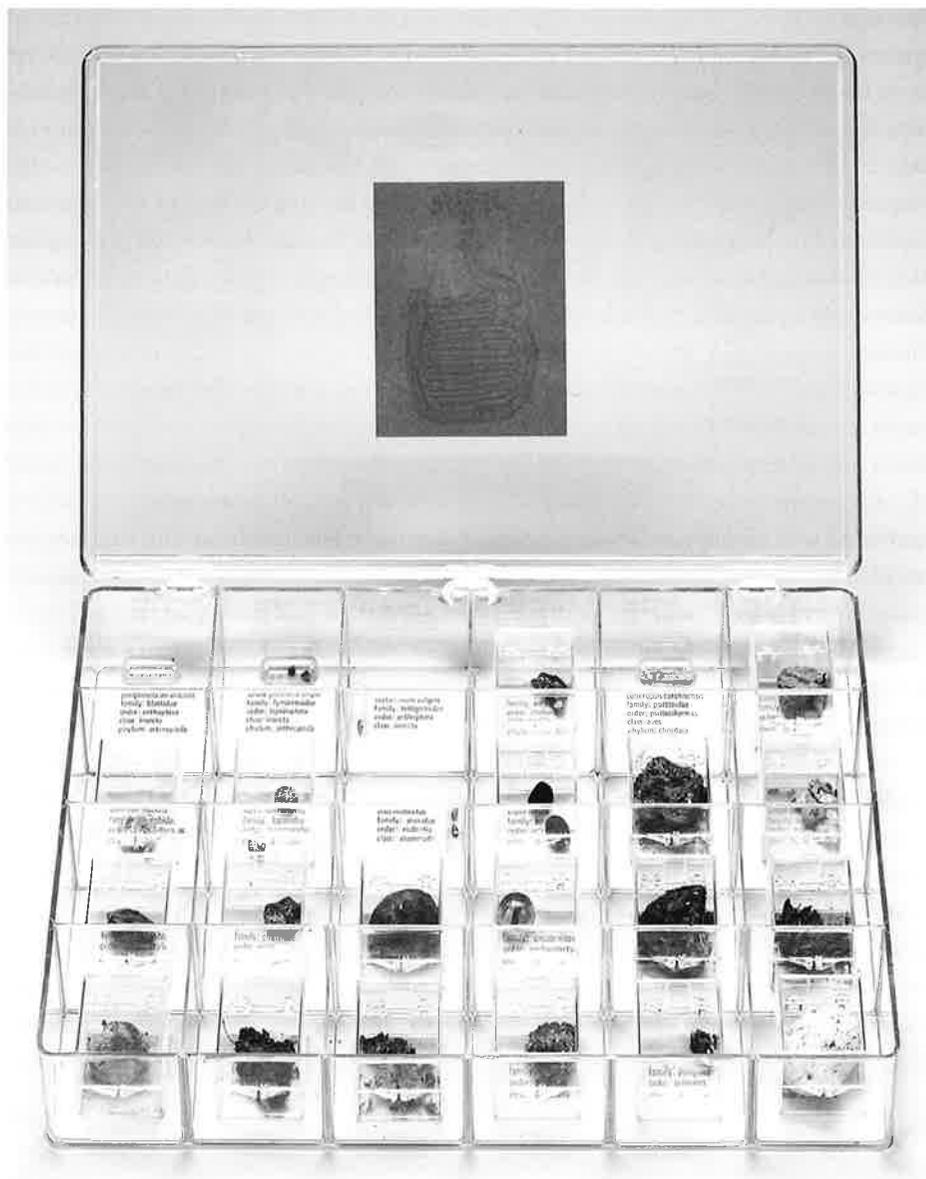


FIGURE 51

George Maciunas, *Excreta Fluxorum*, 1972. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

In a letter to Ben Vautier in 1973 Maciunas wrote: "Meanwhile I have several new boxes, one a collection of all kinds of shit: caterpillar, bird, horse, sheep, hamster, etc. all in correct Latin, so no one will know what the shit is all about."⁹³ His giddiness at his own ability to tell a joke and amuse is palpable. Maciunas—like other subjects navigating the new organizational society—needed the psychic expenditure of the joke to expulse tententious thoughts, to regulate himself, to keep himself up and running. And the operation conveyed to Vautier was indeed characteristic Maciunas, creating a "fantastic confusion," using Linnaeus's Enlightenment-inspired genus and species classification system for something as base and humorous as shit. Here Maciunas's rear-guard relates most literally to the abject sense of Fluxus: the guard of the rear end, those that husband the offal and shit that come out of society's big anus, and put it meticulously into boxes. The conscious artist would work *through the rear-end* routine of everyday life, not to stave off but to expedite art and the artist's demise: *Excreta Fluxorum*.

This was the "revolutionary flood and tide" of Maciunas's 1963 Fluxus Manifesto. It was a cultural imaginary in which "Fluxus Art-Amusement" (as objects and performances) flooded the culture industry like an enema, washing away pretentious art and mindless entertainment in a fantastic purge. This was not revolution in the early twentieth-century avant-garde sense of the term. Instead it was a commitment to a process, and, ultimately, it is not clear whether Maciunas believed that the so-called natural system would ever truly be experienced so that Fluxus's artificial system would no longer be necessary.

In an interview near the end of his life, Maciunas remarked that the FluxShop in New York did not sell a single thing the entire year it was open, not even a fifty-cent sheet of stamps.⁹⁴ This seems remarkable. Whatever its accuracy, it returns us to the main difference between Oldenburg's engagement with the commodity form through *The Store* and Maciunas's in the FluxShop. In contrast to the FluxShop's reportedly woeful sales record, Oldenburg boasted that his plaster sculptures practically flew off the shelves by themselves: "I find that I can always sell an ice cream sundae, nothing to it. . . . People were just dying to buy objects for their houses."⁹⁵ What made Fluxus products so confusing was that they looked too dissimilar from either a traditional art object or a plastic commodity to attract any consuming public whatsoever. They did not make sense in either lexicon, making it impossible to know precisely how to categorize them as objects. Where or how, for instance, would one place a FluxBox? As a sculpture on a living room shelf, a game in a cabinet, a travel item in one's briefcase or shoulder bag, or simply as a miscellaneous item in the kitchen drawer? Ironically, perhaps Fluxus's ability to create a "fantastic confusion" worked too well. And given the anal expulsiveness of a multinational capitalist organizational society pursuing efficiency and commercial consumption so religiously it risked constipating its own ability to imagine an alternative, Maciunas's prescription for a purgative remedy to be taken in the rear—acting within and upon the desire for order and the rule of exchange—was an apt proscription, indeed. Other Fluxus artists would propose their own "strategies for living."

4

GEORGE BRECHT

Scoring Events

I guess you could say that if there's something unique about what you might call my "art," something you don't see in other places, then it probably comes from the fact that I've been a scientist. There's also that I've studied Oriental philosophy, plus the art side—it puts these three areas into a common field.

GEORGE BRECHT, 1976¹

In the early 1960s, George Brecht lived in the woods of East Brunswick, New Jersey, worked at Personal Products Corporation, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson headquartered in New Brunswick, and made a habit of sending little cards with a few words or lines of text on them through the mail to friends. Unlike conventional postcard sentiments such as "Thinking of you" or "Wish you were here," Brecht's cards offered perplexing word combinations like, "Two Vehicle Events: Start. Stop" and "Three Lamp Events" (fig. 52). Brecht earned his living as a research chemist, yet was also dedicated to making the curious compositions.

Brecht said that his professional career as an artist did not begin until 1959. He actually started painting in the early 1950s, but without any formal artistic training, he identified as a professional chemist as long as he worked as one. Depending on which of these two dates one goes by, there was a stretch of at least six to as many as fifteen years when he worked as a scientist by day and as an artist nights and weekends. On the surface, these two realms seem far removed from one another, even to reiterate long-standing dichotomies of science versus art, corporate versus independent, objectivity versus subjectivity, and so on. But upon closer examination, it becomes evident that Brecht's two fields of activity were profoundly intertwined, cutting through categorizations of profession and hobby and pushing him to commit to art full time in 1965. As I will argue in this chapter, the often-surprising correlations between his scientific and artistic activities informed his development of an "event" aesthetic embraced by his Fluxus colleagues, the particular role of the artist he constructed within Fluxus's "corporate imaginations," and the manner in which he too "performed the system."

THREE LAMP EVENTS

- on.
off.
- lamp
- off. on.

"It is sure to be dark
if you shut your eyes." (J. Ray)

Summer, 1961

FIGURE 52

George Brecht, *Three Lamp Events*, from *Water Yam*, 1963. One of sixty-nine offset-printed cards, $4 \frac{3}{8} \times 2 \frac{5}{8}$ in. (11.1 × 6.6 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

Brecht called his compositions event scores, and the cards he printed them on event cards. Together they constituted a new compositional format in the late 1950s. Although Brecht did not take part in the earliest Fluxus Festivals in Europe in 1962 and 1963, his event scores were performed there. Artists not only in New York but also in Europe and Japan knew about them (either by receiving them in the mail directly or by learning of them through friends). Brecht said that he became aware of something called Fluxus when he received news of the European tour on a "brown paper thing with a list of pieces they were doing and a map of an interview-tour of Paris Fillious [*sic*] and Patterson had done."² The list included works by Brecht. Given the fact that he spent the majority of his time in a corporate research laboratory, logistically far removed from typical art spaces, how exactly did his connections with Fluxus artists first come about? Some details of Brecht's introduction to the artistic milieu leading to Fluxus will emerge in the following

chapter on Robert Watts, who was an important first contact for Brecht, but I begin the story here.

Brecht began his crossover from science to art in the early 1950s, and by the second half of the decade was exhibiting his artwork publicly. In 1956 his recent paintings formed half of the exhibition *DON BLOOM / GEORGE BRECHT* at Old Mill Gallery in Tinton Falls, New Jersey. At the same time he attended exhibitions of other artists, a practice that led him to meet Robert Watts and Allan Kaprow, both of whom taught art at Rutgers University. There are conflicting accounts in Fluxus literature as to whether Brecht met Watts in 1956 or 1957. In a 1978 interview Watts admitted to being a little fuzzy on the exact date of their meeting before saying, "maybe '56."³ Geoffrey Hendricks stated that when he joined the art department faculty at Douglass College (the women's college at Rutgers University) in the spring of 1956, Watts and Kaprow were already in contact with Brecht. Kaprow was also asked how he met Brecht (in a 1995 interview), and like Watts, he replied that his memory on that was "very blurry," but he tried to fill in some of the details: "Bob Watts, who knew Brecht first, had been doing some collaborative or consultive work with George. I then met him. . . . Then, the three of us got together—it must have been '57 or so—and devised a proposal." He did not clarify whether he met Brecht in 1957 or that this was simply when they all got together to write the proposal; nor did he state how long before this Watts and Brecht met.⁴ In a 1972 interview, Brecht himself addressed the question of how he met Watts more directly, also without nailing down the exact year: "When I saw his [Watts] work once at Douglass College I thought Wow Yeah! So I kinda sought him out. I had a show on of some of my things then in New Brunswick, so I wanted to make a special effort, first to meet him, second to see more of his work, and third to egotistically invite him to see my marvelous work. [Laughter]"⁵ The lack of any record of a Watts exhibition at Douglass in 1956 and the clear record of a solo show of his paintings there in 1957 suggests that the latter was indeed the date of their meeting, which is affirmed by the art historian Julia Robinson in her timeline of Brecht's life (though without any bibliographic sources cited).⁶ The generally accepted account in Fluxus literature is that Brecht attended the exhibition at Douglass in 1957, and soon after phoned Watts to say that they should get together and talk.⁷ This was Brecht's first real connection with artists who were beginning to think beyond the confines of traditional media and disciplinary boundaries to explore alternative art practices. For a guy living in New Jersey and working at Johnson & Johnson the encounter with these artists proved at once revelatory and complementary to his own early ideas about art. It led to an extended period of artistic collaboration prior to and paving the way for his involvement in Fluxus.

One aspect of the encounter worth emphasizing is the common base in visual art for Brecht, Kaprow, and Watts, painting in particular, and a desire to break away from the perceived confines of traditional media as propelled by interdisciplinary interests. However, it was not until all three entered the classroom of John Cage at the New School for Social Research (for varied lengths of time, it should be said) that music became a subject

of focused study informing their practices. Brecht was not trained in music, but as we shall see, his scientific and philosophical interests converged in highly generative ways with Cage's approach to composition to develop his event aesthetic.

Brecht's discovery of the Rutgers art arena preceded only slightly George Maciunas's introduction to the downtown New York performance scene via artists such as La Monte Young, Jackson Mac Low, and Yoko Ono. These worlds converged in two main forums: first and foremost, John Cage's experimental composition class at the New School, which was attended not only by Brecht, Watts, and Kaprow, but also Young, Mac Low, and many other proto-Happenings and Fluxus artists; second, Young and Mac Low's coedited publication *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, which was initiated in 1960 and published in 1963. Maciunas learned of Brecht's work through these forums. Indeed, both of them participated in *An Anthology of Chance Operations*, Brecht as a contributing artist and Maciunas as the graphic designer, which enabled him to see Brecht's scores firsthand. Impressed by what he saw, Maciunas contacted Brecht directly, propositioning him about creating more work for his own planned Fluxus publications.

In a 1972 interview, Brecht recalled this first approach by Maciunas:

There I was, sitting in the woods, in East Brunswick, New Jersey. . . . All of a sudden there was this guy there, and there was no outlet for this work at the time, for *anything* we were doing at the time. . . . So this guy turned up, and if you had things to be printed he could get them printed. It's pretty hard in East Brunswick to get good offset printing. It's not impossible, but it's not easy, and since I'm very lazy it was a relief to find somebody who could take the burden off my hands. . . . Maciunas, a Lithuanian or Bulgarian, or somehow refugee or whatever—beautifully dressed—"astonishing looking" would be a better adjective. He was able somehow to carry the whole thing off, without my having to go 57 miles to find a printer.⁸

The statement sheds light on Brecht's situation and a series of perceptions at the time. First, the relative remoteness of his location (fifty-seven miles from the nearest good offset printer) meant that Maciunas could provide a service in the name of Fluxus that Brecht needed and did not relish doing himself. Second, Maciunas appeared to Brecht as a man who could get things done, and Brecht accepted this with relief. Third, Brecht's description of Maciunas as an "astonishing looking" "refugee" reminds us at once of other people's view of Maciunas as a foreigner (even one who escaped duress) and Maciunas's self-performance of Eastern European-ness within the amalgamated identity he performed in the United States, as discussed in chapter 2.

Brecht facilitated Maciunas's development of Fluxus in several ways. When they met, Brecht had already published the first issue of his own newspaper showcasing recent experimental art. The publication, entitled *V TRE*, was a two-sided sheet with works by Ruth Krauss, Jackson Mac Low, Dieter Roth, and Claes Oldenburg, among others. Rather than mailing out copies for free, as he did with his event cards, Brecht sold them for fifty

cents apiece, a sign of his own business orientation. The unusual title *V TRE* came about by chance, he claimed, "from a so-to-speak faulty neon sign that I saw on route 22 in New Jersey, coming back from someplace to someplace once—it was a bowling alley or something like that. All the letters had been blanked out somehow except for V TRE."⁹ Maciunas saw *V TRE* not only as a sign of Brecht's imagination and (business) initiative but also a means to publicize Fluxus. He wanted to incorporate it into his own plans. The two men agreed to continue publishing it together under the aegis of Fluxus with Brecht as editor and Maciunas in charge of printing and financing.

Brecht's connection with Maciunas and Fluxus continued to grow even after Maciunas left the United States and took a job with the US Air Force in Wiesbaden. This was based largely on their decision to have Maciunas design and publish Brecht's collected works as a Fluxus edition. In his self-confessed laziness, Brecht preferred transatlantic collaboration to doing it himself. Brecht even admitted later that if Maciunas had not come along, he probably would never have made the effort. Maciunas the artist-organizer provided a useful service to Brecht, and Brecht provided Maciunas with greater means for constructing Fluxus's identity. Above all, formalizing the relationship with Brecht affirmed "events," not "Happenings" or "actions," as the primary mode of Fluxus performance. Maciunas wanted "events" to be considered quintessentially, and no doubt exclusively, Fluxus. It was a mutually beneficial relationship.

In a postcard dated November 23, 1962, Brecht reported to Maciunas that he had sent his scores to his APO (Army Post Office) address. This was but one instance of how they worked the military postal system with their ample Fluxus correspondence as they finalized the design. The following passage from a letter by Maciunas represents a typical exchange between the two Georges:

George—I forgot to add suggested card sizes. I think 9cm square would be nice, the box could then be 9cm cube. . . . Enclosed is a 9×9 card (not the paper I will use). Wood boxes I can have made here cheaply. . . . I will have at first some 300 boxes made and order the other 700 from Japan. They make them there much nicer. . . . Let me know soon your decision on card size. Is 9×9 ok (box 9×9×9) Regards & Yam¹⁰

His closing referenced the title for Brecht's collected works, *Water Yam*, which in turn related to the series of performances Brecht and Robert Watts were planning at the same time for May 1963 called Yam Festival, which I discuss in detail in the next chapter.¹¹ While Brecht and Watts were planning their festival for venues in and around New York, Maciunas was busy preparing *Water Yam* in Wiesbaden with the help of a young German artist named Tomas Schmit, who became Maciunas's "Fluxus assistant" upon joining the group. Schmit stayed at Maciunas's apartment and worked full time on putting together Brecht's box. They completed the preproduction in time to submit it to the printer by May.

The finished edition comprised Brecht's event cards placed loosely in a flat rectangular box with a label designed by Maciunas on the top (fig. 53). Maciunas never actually



FIGURE 53

George Brecht, *Water Yam*, 1963. Cardboard box with offset-printed label containing sixty-nine offset-printed cards, $5 \frac{7}{8} \times 6 \frac{5}{16} \times 1 \frac{3}{4}$ in. ($15 \times 16 \times 4.5$ cm). Designed and produced by George Maciunas. Published by Fluxus. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

commissioned Japanese box makers, instead making the boxes himself, but his inclination to do so signaled a willingness on his part to exploit an international market for cheaper labor and goods as corporations were also increasingly doing. The significance of *Water Yam* as a product of Fluxus “corporate imaginations” will be discussed in another section, but first we need to get a better sense of its contents. What was an event for Brecht? How and why did he develop the idea of an event score?

A COMMON FIELD: THE ARTISTIC AND SCIENTIFIC ROOTS OF EVENTS

Brecht’s participation in John Cage’s experimental composition class at the New School for Social Research beginning in 1958, and the fact that this fostered his preexisting interest in chance, are widely recognized by Fluxus scholars. However, the broader scope of his studies, especially in science, and the impact this had on his idea of events are less

examined. Until now, art historians have tended to celebrate Brecht's event scores as proto-Conceptual works, emphasizing his pioneering role in the development of language-based art in the 1960s and 1970s. To a lesser degree they note the influence of his study of Zen philosophy. Yet his formal training in science, his profession as a research chemist, and his deep fascination with physics and the philosophy of science have been mentioned only in passing, if at all, and are underappreciated as influences in his artistic process.

As the epigraph of this chapter conveys, Brecht modestly yet proudly acknowledged the importance of science to his art—it made it “unique.” He retrospectively adopted Dick Higgins's term “intermedia” to describe what he did from the 1950s on, but for him this meant working not only across traditional boundaries of painting, sculpture, et cetera, as it did for other artists at the time, but also across disciplines of art and science. Brecht called the relationship between art and science in his work a “common field” of influence, and it is this idea that informs my own approach to his work as I reassert the importance of science and the philosophy of science within his matrix of interests that produced event scores.¹² Thinking in terms of a common field of influence helps us to grasp not only the full complexity of his event scores, but also the role of the artist he constructed and the cultural significance of both of these in that historical moment. The interconnections of his scientific and artistic activities are central to the manner in which he too was “performing the system.”

The first sign of the common field of influence was his interest in chance and randomness, expressed as early as 1956 in his artist statement for the exhibition at Old Mill Gallery: “Since I am not concerned with the origin of the elements from which I choose, recent paintings have intentional emphasis on a chance genesis of the first forms, and some experimental paintings have been based on a concept of strict randomness.”¹³ Although still a painter, Brecht found an immediate affinity with John Cage on matters of chance. As a student in his class he documented his diligent curricular (and independent) studies in a series of five notebooks kept from October 1958 to November 1960. These pages provide valuable insight into his thinking as he developed his idea of an event. From the very first entry, dated October 1, it is clear that his interests stretched well beyond the traditional parameters of music composition.¹⁴ The entry includes a hand-drawn diagram of a receptacle board with cords and plugs extending in one direction to various light and sound sources and a bundle of wires running in another direction to a control panel that connects through a 110vac cord and plug to an electrical wall outlet. Engineering and electronics come more readily to mind than music as his probable fields of endeavor.

October 2 marks the debut of the word “events” in the notebooks. It is tucked into a chart with a vertical axis labeled “simple and compound, or precise and imprecise events” and a horizontal axis labeled “single-center and multiple-center, or single wave-length and multiple wave-length events.” “Events” are here characterized as general phenomena of the interrelation of light, sound, space, and time, making Brecht's orientation again seem more obviously scientific than painterly or musical.¹⁵

However, two days later, he began to clarify that these were indeed his concerns in music composition. The title line of this entry reads "Implications of the Spatial Management of Sound-Sources," and by the end of his notes he concludes two things: that "sounds have spatial relationships," and that he must take into account the listener's "orientation with respect to the sources."¹⁶ He also lists particular works by Cage, Anton Webern, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Christian Wolff, and a program of international music on radio station WNYC (on air from 8:30 to 9:45 and featuring Stockhausen, Pierre Boulez, and Jacques Wildeberger), as study material. This is the first of many signs in the notebooks that Brecht was interested in taking advantage of the growing opportunities to hear experimental music (both on the radio and live) in New York at the time.

On October 10 he raised the issue of "The Evolution of Structure in Music" and more specifically "Sources of Structure in Contemporary Music."¹⁷ By October 17 he was thinking about "the effect of different methods of applying randomness" and the possibility of using sound sources as varied as tuning forks, vibrating air columns, and electrostatic speakers. He listed several sound variables and light analogues that he identified as components of an aural-visual event.¹⁸ This is the earliest indication in the notebooks that he would be not merely theorizing an event but actually composing one.

Whereas previously his ideas seemed somewhat fragmented, as notes tend to be, by October 26 he adopted a systematic approach. The "problem" Brecht posed to himself was how to "construct situations in which it is made possible for light and sound events of any desired characteristics (frequency/wave-length, amplitude/brightness, duration, timbre/spectral distribution, morphology) to occur at any point in space and time." He wanted to create his own system through which the occurrence of events could become regularized based on 1) maximum generality, 2) maximum flexibility, and 3) maximum economy.¹⁹

Importantly, Brecht's ideas about his system bear a striking resemblance to those of Maciunas for his system of prefabricated housing that he worked on at precisely the same time. Both were adamant about their systematic approach, placing "system" in the titles of their works. Above all else, they both insisted that their systems should combine generality/universality, flexibility, and economy, with each pushed to the maximum. This is the first time in the notebooks that Brecht identified composition with "economy"—the term that was integral to Maciunas's conception of Fluxus (and art in general) and the one that both Brecht and Maciunas ultimately used more than any other to describe the greatest virtue of event scores.

The same notebook entry continues with Brecht's attempt at a more specific definition of events, which he divides into typologies of macro and micro. The following gives a sense of the scope of his thinking:

macro-events. The events are strung together in time. At any point in time one event, simple or complex (silence, one sound, 2 lights and 3 sounds, etc.) takes place. Each event has a character. The situation is described by a set of space-figures giving the distribution

of micro-events in space. Each figure is for one time period, and the complete set of figures gives the total space-time structure of the entire event. (event = Σ space-time structures).²⁰

If each micro-event (lighting of a light, sounding of a sound source) is capable of occurring in only one point of space (for instance by the static placement of a speaker or a lightbulb), then this space discreteness is analogous to a time discreteness, wherein micro events would only be capable of occurring at certain points in time.²¹ Whereas the micro event is characterized as something as simple as turning on a light, occurring in a discrete space-time, the macro event is a complete set of micro events in a total space-time. An event, identified as a specific performance, consists of (light or sound) activation of a matrix or summation of space-time points.

Over the course of the next week of notebook entries Brecht tried to articulate how this general notion of an event might actually materialize. On November 4 he wrote the following under the heading "General Nature of a Performance": "The overall event (performance) is a selection of space-time events having specific qualities, drawn from a universe in which all possible space-time events, having all possible qualities, were available."²² He considered all points in space within a specific room to be available for activation by sounds and lights of any given qualities. Although he was still working only with the basic elements of light and sound, it is during this period that Brecht first, clearly and consistently, equated "event" with "performance," thereby making a direct connection between his scientifically informed inquiries into space and time and music composition. Moreover, his role as composer is defined as "activating" (through light or sound) the matrix of space-time points.

The final element of his fundamental "event (performance)" dynamic fell into place on November 10, when his additional notations are revealing. Brecht first wrote the fragment, "sound as the activation of space-time." He then circled "activation" and above it inserted the words "making capable of causing change e.g., in an observer."²³ What may at first appear to be a minor point is actually highly significant in that it is the first time Brecht acknowledged an audience for his events. This takes them out of the realm of scientific experimentation (conventionally done solely among scientists in the isolation of a lab) through philosophical inquiry (where an observer may be posited) and into the arena of art, where the impact of the real performance on the real audience is characterized as one of potential transformation.

After this November 10 entry, the interrelation of his scientific and musical interests becomes more pronounced and fluid. Nowhere is this more evident than in his November 30 entry that begins with two underlined statements: "Relativity in the Work of John Cage" and "Space, Time and Causality in the Work of John Cage." He was contemplating possible titles, and the influence of his reading in the philosophy of science is clear as he brings several of its major twentieth-century concerns—relativity, space, time, causality—to bear on his own study of Cage. Further into the entry he singles out a third title,

longer and more encompassing, as the one he aims to pursue: "THE STRUCTURE OF A NEW AESTHETIC // * *John Cage and the Modern World-View: Space, Time and Causality.*" Below this he made an outline, including sections for each field within the "modern world-view" he proposed to discuss: "The Unity of Experience," "Relativity," "Quantum Physics and Psychology" (with "United Field Theory" inserted at the side). Each field in turn had several subcategories. "The Unity of Experience," for example, encompassed "Oriental Thought," "Open Systems (Homeostasis and Change)," and "The Universe as a Space-Time Continuum."²⁴ Brecht concluded this entry with an abstract for the paper he intended to write based on the outline. He would be neither defending Cage's work, which needed no defense, nor contextualizing it among other trends in contemporary music. Rather, his aim was to answer these two questions: What features can be said to characterize our modern worldview? And how are these features reflected in such contemporary work as Cage's?²⁵

The outline shows that he prioritized non-artistic fields of knowledge within his understanding of the "modern worldview." He looked first to physical science, social science, and philosophy. Music, he suggested, could at best "reflect" that which other areas of endeavor actually "produce." Perhaps the mirror metaphor was simply convenient shorthand for describing art's relationship to society, which many writers fall back upon without considering its questionable implications—the relegation of art to a "nonproductive" status. We should keep this in mind without putting too much weight on it at present, as two other points are of greater importance. First, Brecht believed there was a common field of influence worth studying among aesthetic and non-aesthetic discourses. Second, he saw research as central to his artistic practice. These were areas of clear crossover between his scientific and his aesthetic lives.

Even this glimpse at Brecht's notebooks from 1958 to 1960 is enough to see that they provide an invaluable discursive context for his more direct statement on events that followed in 1961. The text is titled "Events (Assembled Notes)" and, coupled with the notebooks, it reveals the diversity of fields and methods Brecht drew from to build an understanding of the kind of score he wanted to compose, as expressed in the opening line: "The score is an event; so is finding an incident of it. In composing music, the composer permits an experience by arranging a situation within which sound arises. If a musical score (sound-score) prepares a musical (sound) situation, the event score prepares one for events in all dimensions (or outside of dimensions)."²⁶ One of the most crucial yet underexamined aspects of Brecht's statement is his insistence that the score's function is to "prepare one for events." This idea was paramount for Brecht, and it is at once basic and with profound ramifications. He iterated it no less than three times in the opening section of the text alone: "Event-score. Haiku. Rather than an 'image of a concrete moment in life' (Watts), it is a signal preparing one for the moment itself. / Event-scores prepare one for an event to happen in one's own 'now.'"²⁷

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, to "prepare" means "to bring into a suitable condition for some future action or purpose; to make ready in advance; to fit out,

equip," or more pointedly "to bring into a state of mental or spiritual readiness." In the case of Brecht's scores, what are individuals supposed to be ready for? In other words, what is an event? "Events are extensible to the limit of form, to the edge of suchness where distinctions are lost, include most naturally all the dimensions of time, space, number, attitudes, emotions, the intuitively-felt ignored in objects."²⁸ It is hardly an exacting definition, if events extend to the very "limit of form" and the "edge of suchness." Yet given Brecht's diffuse parameters, it is also easy to see why one might not know when an event is happening and hence be unprepared for it. The next logical question is, so what? So what if one is unprepared? What are the perceived downfalls or hazards of being ill equipped for events? Moreover, if events are indeed as pervasive and all-encompassing as his definition suggests, Brecht's emphasis on preparing for events implies that one would have to achieve preparedness as a perpetual existential state—the presumption being that most individuals do not already exist in this state, making event scores necessary to facilitate the transition. They appear as prompts to guide the individual into a life-continuum of readiness.

It was not preparedness for events alone that Brecht cared about. There was a time stipulation as well. He wanted his scores to prepare one "for an event to happen in one's own 'now.'" He distinguished this "now" from a past, present, or future, in search of a "unity of experience." It was an idealistic expression of his fundamental concern with time, about which, as his notebooks evidence, he derived knowledge from each of his preferred fields of study: physics, the philosophy of science, Zen, and experimental composition. Time was for Brecht the key point of connection between the visual arts and science.

When he recalled this period in a 1976 interview, however, Brecht spoke less of a unity of experience and more about relativity and time. This provides a more productive insight into the way his scores operate than his previous notion of the "now": "I was already questioning the premises in physical science, what are the irreducible elements that come into the scientific consideration of time? So I was reading Reichenbach and all those people, who were writing about time in science, and relativity, time in relativity, and so forth. All those come together—that's the connection."²⁹

Hans Reichenbach was a philosopher of science who began publishing on the philosophical implications of the theory of relativity (among other things) in the 1920s. Practitioners in various fields read his ideas on space and time, as advanced in books such as *The Philosophy of Space and Time* (1928, new edition 1958), *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy* (1951), and *The Direction of Time* (1956). Brecht makes direct reference to him in his notebook entry dated December 3, 1958. In particular he was reading Reichenbach's essay "The Philosophical Significance of the Theory of Relativity," which appeared in a two-volume anthology of writings on Albert Einstein edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp in 1949. On the page referred to specifically by Brecht, Reichenbach wrote: "For the philosopher such concepts as time order and simultaneity were primitive notions inaccessible to further analysis. . . . With his reduction of the time concept to that of causality and his generalization of time order toward a relativity of simultaneity, Einstein has not

only changed our conceptions of time; he has also clarified the meaning of the classical time concept which preceded his discoveries.”³⁰ From this Brecht derived two questions for his own consideration: “What are the implications of the relativity of simultaneity to Cage’s work? To music in general, which involves both time-order (e.g. in melody) and simultaneity (e.g. in harmony)?”³¹

Brecht spoke most concretely about how concepts of time influenced his understanding of events vis-à-vis the objects of his scores:

It seemed to me that from the viewpoint of nuclear physics you could hardly consider the structure of an atom without feeling that an object is becoming an event and that every event is an object. If you define an electron in an atomic structure there’s no object-like quality to it—it’s described probabilistically as a field of presence of the electron, and in Oriental thought you get similar intuitions.³²

As far as Brecht was concerned there was no distinction between event as performance and event as object. Relativity was the key to understanding how both events and objects existed in a perpetual state of becoming, never settled in a pure or fixed temporal-spatiality of objecthood or event-hood and sharing these qualities at any given point. In art, performance was the logical mode not only for representing this state of becoming, but also for activating the audience into their own state of becoming.

PSEUDO-AUTHORLESS PRODUCTION

Part and parcel of Brecht’s development of the event score and repurposing of composition itself was an understanding of the role of the (artist-)composer that hinged on “incidentalness.” This was for him best explained via an example. In his piece *Incidental Music* (1961), a performer sticks dried peas or beans to the keys of a piano with tape. So preoccupied is the performer with undertaking this task that thoughts of making sound are extraneous. There are no instructions in the score to tape the beans to specific keys—C, D, or F, for example—to get a particular tone. Nor are there directions on how precisely to place the beans with the tape so as to make more or less noise. There is only the objective of attaching the beans to the keys. Therefore, any sounds that do occur are “incidental.”

The logic is similar to fixing a leaky pipe, for instance, where any sound that comes from banging on the plumbing is beside the point. One may or may not be fully aware of it while focusing on stopping the leak. In the cases of both the pipes and the beans, any sound is incidental. It is neither intentional nor unintentional, as Brecht said: “It has absolutely nothing to do with the thing.”³³ The obvious differences between the broken pipe and Brecht’s piece are twofold. First, Brecht worked within the context of music, where sound is expected, rendering his piece an inquiry into musical composition and performance as such. Second, in contrast to fixing a burst pipe, the act of taping beans to piano keys is nonfunctional, and in its absurdity even seems to make a virtue of this.

But there is something more fundamental at stake with incidental-ness in composition. Beyond questions of whether or not sound is made or what kind of sound it is, there lies the issue of control. Cage often pushed his students on this when they presented their compositions in class, as Brecht later attested:

One of the first pieces I did in his class was one where there were three light bulbs—blue, yellow, red, I think—and they were connected to switches, and there was a score which was arranged from a table of random numbers that gave the duration and the colour. And so someone was pushing the switches according to the score and there were three performers, one on the piano, one on cellophane and I don't remember the other. So the colour corresponded to the instrument, and the performer on that instrument would do something on that instrument during the time his light was lit. We performed it in the class and everybody was to give their thoughts about the situation and Cage, who had played piano, said, "I never felt so controlled before" or "Nobody's ever tried to control me so much."³⁴

This was a major lesson for Brecht. He disliked being thought of as dictatorial and developed his role as a composer away from this, abandoning the use of instructions in his scores altogether as too authoritative and trying to let go of intention as much as possible. He created open-ended structures from which he believed any realization was feasible and every realization acceptable. His score *Three Lamp Events* is a good example of this. It consists of only four prepositions and a single noun (see fig. 52). There are no verbs suggesting a directive from Brecht. The score is open, while still having a shape, and, ultimately, it is ambiguous as to whether the reader of the score need take any further action at all.

On the one hand, as far as Brecht was concerned, a score did not have to be performed; it could exist solely as a thought-image in the individual's head. On the other hand, when told that the British composer Cornelius Cardew considered *Water Yam* to be "a training in performance discipline," Brecht acknowledged that although he did not like the term "discipline," his scores created "the possibility of changing one's way to go," and if a person performed them, he or she would "perhaps acquire certain ways to move through life."³⁵ Recall his awareness recorded in his notebooks of the importance of the relationship between event and audience as potentially transformative. This basic idea was present in his thinking about events from early on, but only later did he particularize the transformation in terms of altering consciousness and behavior—the way one moved through life.

Ultimately, however, he was convinced that there was nothing emphatic about event scores. He acknowledged that he might have been the first person to make a score of water dripping, for example, alerting listeners to the fact that the sound can be beautiful, but felt it was actually not important that he made it. He imagined that people had been appreciating dripping water for centuries in China and Japan. Brecht attempted to take

himself out of the process of reception as much as possible. He made no grand claims to Western avant-garde innovation, downplaying the role of the composer as anything more than a provider of a minimalist structure, the purpose of which was not to control but to focus attention.

This nonemphatic quality extended to the content of his scores. When questioned as to whether the repetition of certain objects (images), especially chairs, tables, and stools, might constitute a kind of personal iconography, Brecht quickly squelched the idea. On the contrary, he said, he selected them because they were the most ordinary things he could find.³⁶ Visitors to his shows seemed to concur with this when they abandoned their empty drinking glasses on the tables in his work. Far from symbolic objects, the tables were seen merely as handy places to leave dishes on the way out. Any rings the glasses left behind on the tabletops were marks of a successful piece as far as Brecht was concerned—art and life momentarily indistinguishable. The result of all of this was a model of pseudo-authorless production encapsulated in Brecht's claim, "I'm not very interested that it's my score."³⁷

INCORPORATING EVENT SCORES

If Brecht gave the appearance of not being very concerned about taking ownership of his scores, Maciunas was the opposite. Only he wanted them for Fluxus. Maciunas and Brecht's collaboration on *Water Yam* emerged in part as a logical extension of *An Anthology of Chance Operations*. A lot of the material gathered by La Monte Young and Jackson Mac Low did not make it into the final design, and they had very few things by Brecht. Maciunas wished to build upon the material at his disposal for another publication.³⁸

As Maciunas organized the first Fluxus Festivals in Europe, Brecht's work was on his mind primarily for its outstanding experimental character. This included his belief that event scores should be the template for Fluxus performances. His earliest scheduling efforts, called "Tentative Programme for the Festival of Very New Music" (1962), show that from the start he wanted to perform scores by Brecht. 3 *Piano Pieces* and *Incidental Music*—5 *Piano Pieces* were slated for *Concert No. 1 Piano Compositions, U.S. Composers*, and *Card Piece for Voice* for *Concert No. 4 Compositions for Other Instr. & Voices, U.S.*³⁹

Brecht's aesthetic importance to Maciunas was also evident in the manner in which the latter officially introduced Fluxus to the public. For the very first evening of Fluxus performances, *Après John Cage* in Wuppertal on June 9, 1962, Maciunas prepared a special text entitled "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art," which Arthus C. Caspari read aloud in German. It was meant to prepare guests for the kind of performance they would see that night. Maciunas felt that linking Fluxus to Dada in the German context would provide both historical credibility and a valuable reference point for viewers of this new thing called Fluxus (although he would soon denounce the use of the term "neo-Dada" to describe the group). The text explains how a composition of truly "concrete" art operates in contrast to illusionism, abstraction, or even realism:

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. . . . Like a mathematical solution such a composition contains a beauty in the method alone.⁴⁰

While no artists are mentioned in the text itself, a large chart by Maciunas was held up behind Caspari during the reading with the names of Brecht, Jackson Mac Low, La Monte Young, Dick Higgins, and other artists, graphically illustrating the ideas in the text. From the beginning Maciunas wished to propagate Brecht as a representative of Fluxus.

Maciunas’s text also reveals how close the two Georges were in their thinking about form at the time:

Rainfall is anti-art, a babble of a crowd is anti-art, a sneeze is anti-art, a flight of a butterfly, or movements of microbes are anti-art. They are as beautiful and as worth to be aware of as art itself. If man could experience the world, the concrete world surrounding him (from mathematical ideas to physical matter) in the same way he experiences art, there would be no need for art, artists and similar “nonproductive” elements.⁴¹

Any one of these things mentioned by Maciunas—rainfall, a babbling crowd, a sneeze, microbes moving—constituted an event, according to Brecht’s definition, as they fall within the limits of form and “suchness.” So although Brecht and Maciunas used different terms at this stage of Fluxus—“event” and “anti-art” or “non-art”—their underlying sensibility that these things were as worthy of attention as art was the same: one should be prepared to experience what is already there.

Moreover, like Brecht, Maciunas turned to mathematics and science for a model of (pseudo)objective authorship—providing only a method from which a form may be created independently of him. Maciunas believed this was Brecht’s foremost contribution to anti-art or non-art, explaining that “the best Fluxus ‘composition’ is a most nonpersonal, ‘readymade’ one like Brecht’s *Exit*.”⁴² He said as much to Brecht directly in a letter written in October–December 1963, where he clarified why he felt his appellations were appropriate for Brecht’s work: “By non-art I mean anything not created by artist with intend [*sic*] to provide ‘art’ experience. So your events are non-art since you did not create events—they exist all the time. You call attention to them. I did not mind at all that many of your events were ‘lost’ in our festival. The most lost or unnoticable [*sic*] the more truly non artificial were they.”⁴³ Maciunas’s praise for the works that were lost on the audience as performances echoes Brecht’s own sentiment that a work was successful when an audience member saw one of his tables as a receptacle for dirty dishes rather than an aesthetic symbol.

Piano Piece (1962) by Brecht also generated this kind of non-performance-performance. The score reads simply: “a vase of flowers on(to) a piano.” Fluxus perform-

ers often interpreted this by placing a vase of flowers on top of a piano, only to look out at an audience waiting in anticipation for the performance to begin. The guests did not understand that what they had just seen was not a preparation for the performance but the performance itself—it began and ended without their awareness. For both Brecht and Maciunas this was the optimal viewing experience, when the lines between a scored performance, setting the stage for a performance, and any random action were blurred. They delighted in this leveling of the hierarchy of experience that could be so confusing for audience members yet had the potential to get them to reconsider what exactly was worth paying attention to.

This scenario was only possible if the artist evacuated his ego from the work as much as possible. The idea that events exist all the time and the purpose of event scores was to call attention to them resonated with both artists. They exchanged views on the limits of form, developing a greater understanding of the nature of Brecht's practice. One letter from Maciunas in particular is worth quoting at length:

I agree to term art, science, etc. as mind-forms or mind-conceptions. Yet I can not [*sic*] see mind-forms or conception (active) being imposed over non-art, non-science, etc. It would seem one could instead impose on them mind-perception. (passive) Since a non-art has been already formed or conceived before mind contacts it. As soon as you form or reform it, then you create art. So I think art & non-art can be defined just as well as mind-form & non-mind-form. Even though non-mind-form depends on mind-form for its existence it does not eliminate its distinction of being non-mind-form. (+-). Your calling attention to respond correctly & in need to any "Exit" for instance would be mind-perception or non-mind-form, since you do not for either the "Exits" nor the responses of all tough [*sic*] to respond correctly. But if you create an exit (or exit sign like we did in the festivals) or create a situation for the "audience" to exit, then it is mind-form, or art, even though it may use readymade sign, exit, etc. . . . I think therefore that the essence of your work is mind-perceptual rather than conceptual or forming. (analogical to Zen, which I think is also perceptual not conceptual).⁴⁴

His words take on added significance today, considering that the dominant trend among art historians is to categorize Brecht as a proto-Conceptualist who paved the way for the first generation of Conceptual artists from 1965 to 1975.⁴⁵ Would it be productive to revise or at least expand our thinking to consider Brecht a "perceptualist," as Maciunas suggested?

This is the essence of the Cagean logic that Brecht pursued. He himself saw a distinction between events and concept art, the latter of which by definition has to do with the conceptualizing faculty of the mind. Events, in contrast, placed no more emphasis on conceptualizing than on perception or memory or thinking in general or unconscious association. The act of imaging or perceiving something is in itself, according to Brecht, an act of arranging—this is fundamentally how we experience. His sense was that if one is in a state of Zen meditation, or a like state of having a blank mind, then it is possible to

experience without structuring, but otherwise this is very difficult to do. By merely indicating or naming, rather than directing or instructing, in his scores, Brecht sought to be the least controlling he could be while providing an example for how to focus on what one has already noticed. He created a method by which anyone could compose their own event score, choosing to focus on whatever they wanted whenever they wanted. Brecht's tongue-in-cheek remark that "even if you did nothing you would still be controlling people's not having anything of yours" shows the extent of the dilemma with which he grappled.⁴⁶

The advantage of the term "perceptualist" is to formalize, more precisely, these nuanced aesthetic, philosophical, and historical distinctions that are in fact crucial to understanding the operations of Brecht's work, and which can easily be lost when his work is subsumed completely under the label (proto-)Conceptual. The term also highlights the fact that the so-called dematerialization of the art object seen increasingly in artistic practices at the time extended beyond the act of conception—art as idea—to the act of perception—the world as a readymade that the artist gets individuals simply to see. Of course, like Conceptual art, Brecht's so-called perceptualist practice continued to rely on some material production, namely his scores, but their planned obsolescence was integral to their production. He envisioned that the minimal text on cards would soon no longer be necessary for individuals to consciously perceive and experience the aesthetic patterns of everyday life. Maciunas worked especially hard to get and keep Brecht involved in Fluxus because the model of pseudo-authorless authorship represented by his event scores seemed so well disposed to corporate imaginations.

Maciunas visualized his admiration for Brecht's event scores in his design for *Water Yam*. He maintained Brecht's simple practice of typing on small cards, but particularized, and corporatized, this with his beloved IBM typewriter. The machine dominated his thinking about how the cards should look, and he was furious when the printer in Germany did not get it right:

My printer is such an IDIOT, he is driving me mad!! He has done NOTHING . . . botched up Brecht's cards—look how he fuzzed up Brecht's cards! My beautiful IBM type is FUZZY!!!! So I had to take the whole works from him (at a loss to me, great loss) and take all these unfinished things to another printer who is already turning out things on time, cheaper and better.⁴⁷

Most graphic designers want their fonts to be crisp, but Maciunas was unusually piqued (using no less than four exclamation marks to express this) that the printer "ruined" things. Seeing the pristine, mechanical, standardized aesthetic of his IBM type violated by individual human error hit a particularly sensitive nerve. It was just the sort of thing his own performing "automatons" in his score *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* were meant to eradicate.

But it was not only the font that contributed to the particular aesthetic of the event cards. Brecht acknowledged that decisions about spacing and word count were also cal-

culated. Words were never squeezed, but rather space was left around them, creating a kind of emptiness. Even when asked about the few longer, more densely notated scores Brecht quickly denied any fundamental divergence. In the case of *Motor Vehicle Sundown (Event)* (1960, fig. 54), for instance, he explained that this was the first notated event, giving the impression that he had therefore not yet determined a graphic style. His reason for using dense notation in another score entitled *Two Definitions* (1961) was straightforward: since they were definitions, he appropriated the look of dictionary entries.⁴⁸ Maciunas himself would have approved of this given his love of dictionaries and encyclopedias for their well-organized, economic, and efficient means of conveying information.

One thing that did ultimately vary in the scores was the size of the cards. Initially Maciunas planned to keep this uniform, too, writing to Brecht, "I forgot to add suggested card sizes. I think 9cm square would be nice. . . . Enclosed is a 9×9 card (not the paper I will use). . . . Let me know soon."⁴⁹ The final product shows that they did not go with the nine-by-nine format. Yet this too could be explained by an economy of means. It is obvious that the size of the card corresponds with the length of the score—the shorter scores are on smaller cards. One cannot imagine Maciunas "wasting" card stock, even to keep a uniform look, as wastefulness was arguably the thing he most despised. The final format was in keeping with both men's guiding principle of economy.

The minimal text set against an abundance of space on the majority of the event cards contributed to the sense of diminished subjectivity in the work. Text and space were visual correlates, signifying the open-endedness of the scores and the perceptual space in which each performer could interpret the piece as he or she wished and act or not act accordingly in the absence of any clear directive from the artist. Brecht was certainly not alone in cultivating this aesthetic of emptiness at the time. Numerous examples could be cited, but among the most famous now are Robert Rauschenberg's *White Paintings* (1951) and *Erased De Kooning Drawing* (1953), Cage's graphic notation for his piece *4'33"* (1952), and Jasper Johns's *Flag* (1954–55), which entombs the colored stars and stripes of the US flag in white encaustic.⁵⁰ All of these works utilize space and the perceived neutrality of the color white to suggest an evacuation of artistic subjectivity from the work, or at least a desire for such on the part of the artists. However, the fact that Brecht held to this visual aesthetic of emptiness so (nearly) uniformly across the little event cards makes them stand out among the work of his peers. The deadpan corporate graphic became an ambivalent representation of the ideals of authorlessness and economy.

THE ARTIST AS RESEARCHER

Brecht and Maciunas both had firsthand experience of working in large corporations. We know that Maciunas was employed for short terms at Olin Mathieson Chemical Corporation and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Brecht remained much longer in corporate employment, from the early 1950s to the mid-1960s at giants Pfizer & Co., Johnson & Johnson, and Mobil Oil. The majority of his corporate life was spent as a chemist in research and development

MOTOR VEHICLE SUNDOWN (EVENT)

(TO JOHN CAGE)
SPRING/SUMMER 1960
G. BRECHT

Any number of motor vehicles are arranged outdoors.

There are at least as many sets of instruction cards as vehicles.

All instruction card sets are shuffled collectively, and 22 cards are distributed to the single performer per vehicle.

At sundown (relatively dark/open area incident light 2 foot-candles or less) the performers leave a central location, simultaneously counting out (at an agreed-upon rate) a pre-arranged duration 1½ times the maximum required for any performer to reach, and seat himself in, his vehicle. At the end of this count each performer starts the engine of his vehicle and subsequently acts according to the directions on his instruction cards, read consecutively as dealt. (An equivalent pause is to be substituted for an instruction referring to non-available equipment.) Having acted on all instructions, each performer turns off the engine of his vehicle and remains seated until all vehicles have ceased running.

INSTRUCTION CARDS (44 per set):

1. Head lights (high beam, low beam) on (1-5), off.
2. Parking lights on (1-11), off.
3. Foot-brake lights on (1-3), off.
4. (Right, left) directional signals on (1-7), off.
5. Inside light on (1-3), off.
6. Glove-compartment light on. Open (or close) glove compartment (quickly, with moderate speed, slowly). Glove-compartment light off.
7. Spot-lamp on (1-11), move (vertically, horizontally, randomly), (quickly, with moderate speed, slowly), off.
8. Special lights on (1-9), off.
9. Sound horn (1-11).
10. Sound siren (1-15).
11. Sound bell(s) (1-7).
12. Accelerate motor (1-3).
13. Wind-shield wipers on (1-3), off.
14. Radio on, maximum volume, (1-7), off. Change tuning.
15. Strike hand on dashboard.
16. Strike a window with knuckles.
17. Fold a seat or seat-back (quickly, with moderate speed, slowly). Replace.
18. Open (or close) a window (quickly, with moderate speed, slowly).
19. Open (or close) a door (quickly, with moderate speed, slowly).
20. Open (or close) engine-hood, opening and closing vehicle door, if necessary.
21. Trunk light on. Open (or close) trunk lid (if a car), rear-panel (if a truck or station-wagon), or equivalent. Trunk light off.
22. Operate special equipment (1-15), off.
- 23-44. Pause (1-13).

A single value from each parenthetical series of values is to be chosen, by chance, for each card. Parenthetical numerals indicate duration in counts (at an agreed-upon rate). Special light (S) means truck-body, safety, signal, warning lights, signs, displays, etc. Special equipment (SE) means carousel, ladders, fire-hoses with truck-contained pumps and water supply, etc.

50 from Contingent Publications, Box 150, A.D. 1, East Brunswick, N. J., U.S.A.

FIGURE 54

George Brecht, *Motor Vehicle Sundown (Event)*, 1960. Letterpress-printed sheet, 22 1/16 x 8 9/16 in. (56 x 21.7 cm). Published by Contingent Publications, East Brunswick, New Jersey. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

(R&D) laboratories. Scientific theories influenced the content of his art, as his notebooks show, but the methods and protocols of the corporate laboratory also had an impact on his role as an artist. Brecht constructed what I am calling the role of “artist as researcher” in ways that both complemented and complicated Maciunas’s “artist as organizer.”

From 1946 to 1950 Brecht worked toward his bachelor of science degree at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science. Upon finishing, he then moved to Brooklyn to take up a position as a quality control chemist and inspector at Pfizer & Co., where he stayed until 1953, when he was hired by Johnson & Johnson and relocated to New Jersey. At this time he also began studying statistics. And when enrolled in Cage’s experimental music class at the New School in 1958, he took classes in philosophy and cultural science. Brecht’s experiences as a student and professional chemist kept him apprised of the latest scientific theories.

He entered corporate research just as it was undergoing a massive expansion from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. A combination of excitement for scientific developments during World War II (especially in physics), the consolidation of the postwar military-industrial complex, and the Soviet launch of Sputnik contributed to the popularity of science and the belief in its importance across public and private sectors of society. Corporations were susceptible to the fever for science, and realized that their earlier in-house R&D had great strategic economic potential. This led them to spend millions of dollars building new, modern laboratories for scientific research. And shiny glass-and-steel facilities were not enough. Corporate managers, scientists, and architects also had to consider what kind of work would be done in them, how it would be done, and who would be doing it.

The nineteenth-century model of individual “gentlemanly scientists” with the means to fund their own work changed forever with the advent of World War II. Up until this point, many scientists still worked alone or with a handful of assistants, pursuing inquiries based largely on their personal interests. It was a less rigorous approach to science, but it also allowed for creativity and independence. Scientists of this generation felt freer to explore multiple and broader arenas. Working on a small scale, they had the added advantage of flexibility. When the bulk of research shifted to large, complex organizations such as corporations with hugely invested interests, it was often not possible to scrap preparations and switch to a new approach without great loss of money, morale, and momentum. As the physicist Percy Bridgman said of his own pre-“big science” generation, “The older men, who had previously worked on their own problems in their own laboratories, put up with this as a patriotic necessity, to be tolerated only while they must, and to be escaped from as soon as decent. But the younger men . . . had never experienced independent work and did not know what it was like.”⁵¹ Brecht counted among these younger men who went straight from academic training to corporate (large-scale and organized) research.

The clearest trace we have of Brecht’s work in corporate laboratories are the six US patents from 1961 to 1971 on which he is credited as inventor or coinventor. On the first four he was the assigner to Personal Products Corporation of Johnson & Johnson, and on the other two the assigner to Mobil Oil. All were the results of his corporate research.

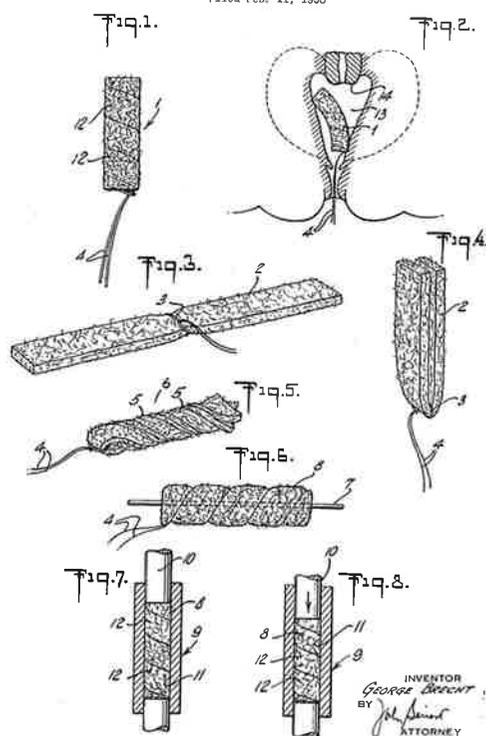


FIGURE 55

Patent 3,011,495, December 5, 1961, Absorbent Product, filed February 11, 1958, George Brecht, New Brunswick, NJ, assigner to Personal Products Corporation, a corporation of New Jersey.

For Personal Products he researched and developed tampons. He filed for his first patent on February 11, 1958, as the sole inventor of "highly compressed catamenial tampons that bend upon insertion" (it was patented December 5, 1961) (fig. 55).⁵² His patent statement outlines the type of experimentation that was necessary for this improvement in tampon functionality, including determining sufficient flexibility according to the Gurley Stiffness Reading on a Gurley R.D. Stiffness Tester and twisting an elongated strip of absorbent, carded cotton lengthwise prior to winding it helically to make the tampon more flexible. Details such as these were used to support his main argument that the invention provided a more effective tampon while also permitting greater manufacturing speeds, providing economies in manufacture, and lessening handling operations. The statement demonstrates that he was not only well versed in corporate mandates of efficiency and economy but also capable of incorporating them into his own research.

When he worked at Mobil Oil, the types of experiments were very different. Patent number 3,347,695 (fig. 56) states that Brecht and his coinventors, Arnold F. Stancell and Andrew J. Foglia, devised a "method of surface activation of non-polar hydrocarbon resin and printing."⁵³ And patent number 3,560,291 indicates that the three of them invented

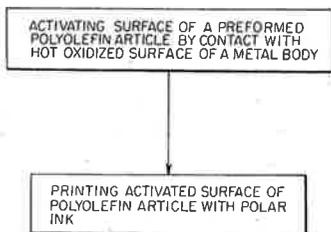


FIGURE 56

Patent 3,347,695, October 17, 1967, Method of Surface Activation of Non-Polar Hydrocarbon Resin and Printing, filed March 27, 1964, Arnold F. Stancell, New Brunswick, New Jersey, George Brecht, Metuchen, New Jersey, and Andrew J. Foglia, Brooklyn, New York, assignors to Mobil Oil Corporation, a corporation of New York.

Inventors
Arnold F. Stancell
George Brecht
Andrew J. Foglia
 By *James F. Sturges* Attorney

a method for “bonding thermoplastic structures, particularly films, sheets, strips and the like, by means of stimulated radiation.”⁵⁴ Despite the range of processes—from compressing carded cotton to placing thermoplastic films in the path of electromagnetic radiation—the laboratories Brecht worked in at companies as large as Johnson & Johnson and Mobil Oil adhered to the same, nearly universal, principles of corporate research.

The productive qualities of corporate research and the corporate researcher had to be defined in that era, and these definitions emerged to a great degree through the design of the corporate laboratories themselves. The architect Eero Saarinen had a particularly strong influence in this regard, as he created groundbreaking laboratories for General Motors (1956), IBM (1961), and Bell Laboratories (1962). Saarinen’s designs set standards that were applied across the labs of major and minor firms alike. Academic and government facilities followed suit in what became a nearly universal and long-standing professional agreement on what constituted a well-designed research laboratory.⁵⁵ The design was based on specific ideas about how best to meet the needs of both the new researcher and the corporation he served. The protocols of operation helped codify a new social subject of “research man.”

This particular model of corporate subjectivity was just as, if not more, familiar to Brecht as the model of artistic subjectivity represented by Cage. The fact is that both combined to influence Brecht's mode of pseudo-authorless authorship. Rather than view the two models as dichotomous—science versus art, objectivity versus subjectivity—I am interested in why and how they overlapped and indeed could be surprisingly fluid. Brecht as a case study opens up possibilities for different understandings of the relationship between art and science at the time and reveals how he also was performing the system and contributing to a historically specific discourse on art and corporatization.

While Brecht was working at the Personal Products research laboratory in New Brunswick, he was also collaborating on the Yam Festival with Robert Watts. Watts worked on the other side of the city at Douglass College. Soon after the two met and became friends, they began having weekly lunches together at the Howard Johnson on the corner of the roads leading to Douglass College and Personal Products. I discuss their relationship in the following chapter on Watts, but it is important here to emphasize this lunchtime connection as indicative of the ways that Brecht's "corporate scientific research" and "art" experiences were never as far apart as they might seem. The fortuitous proximity of their jobs meant that conversations sandwiched in at midday could spread over into his thinking in the lab and vice versa. This too fostered a common field of influence. Brecht felt that although a person who spends many years in science has a particular state of mind and sees the world in a particular way, and an artist generally sees the world in a different way, there is "no reason for a person's not being able to live with both science and art perfectly mixed in his life."⁵⁶

It would be easy to assume that corporate research laboratories were highly controlled spaces, but the reality of how the new spaces were designed and used was not so simple. As William J. Rankin has argued, the relevant analytic model for the corporate research laboratory was less Michel Foucault's panopticon than his later theory of governmentality.⁵⁷ Built into its very design was the idea of the laboratory as an apparatus providing both freedom and control in a manner that did not set these two in opposition. Although they abandoned the previous model of scientific independence, corporate managers understood that they needed to encourage scientific creativity in research in order to achieve the developments that could potentially give them strategic economic advantages. This required an adequate balance of autonomy and regulation. Corporatized science eschewed the academic model of the scientific genius in favor of social conformity, but it did so in a manner that ultimately generated a new spatial power dynamic based on neither the university nor the factory. In this way, at least, the emergence of the "research man" as a new social subject paralleled the codification of the "organization man" via the broader historical shift to more supple than directly coercive relations of power in the corporation. For an individual researcher like Brecht, this meant having a manager who fostered camaraderie, ran interference with other administrators, and strove for conflict avoidance. The success of corporate laboratory design was measured by the well-being of its occupants.

Mid-twentieth-century advanced capitalism had come to rely on novelty for survival, and nowhere was this more obvious than in the realms of science and technology.

Dismantling the individual scientist's agency would have been self-defeating for corporate managers. This is not to say that Brecht did not clearly understand his work as dictated by corporate mandates for efficiency, economy, and productivity, as seen in his patent statements, but rather that his lived experience as a corporate researcher would have been massaged by more psychological considerations. A new emphasis on flexibility and expansibility gave the individual researcher a sense of potential and freedom in his work and was built into the design of the space itself to ensure that he worked in this manner while remaining securely organized within the corporate system.

As Reinhold Martin, in his excellent study of midcentury corporate architecture, and William J. Rankin, in his insightful study of midcentury laboratory design, both explain, the module was the primary device of organizational power deployed in the corporate laboratory.⁵⁸ This represented a distinct move away from architectural rationalization, toward researcher-centric flexibility in building design. The module was a planning unit corresponding to the laboratory or office space needed by one researcher. A laboratory for a research group would comprise several modules arranged together as a series of interconnected parts. Since every module could accommodate any task, the work of individuals was not restricted by discipline or building area. The laboratory fostered a new cross-disciplinary spirit in research that resonated with Brecht's intermedia work as an artist, making it easier for Brecht to see the creative possibilities in a common field of influence. The two practices invigorated each other. Scientists and artists in their commonly, if reductively, circumscribed roles of knowledge production and meaning making, respectively, were not polar opposites in their modes of performing them. "Research man" was at once a creative subject and a manageable object produced through "controlled creativity."⁵⁹ Brecht devised his model of the artist through his experiences in the corporate laboratory whereby the attributes of the corporate research man were transmuted into his model of the artist as researcher.

Brecht spoke of his artistic research in terms of both music and objects. His musical research was guided by the combined hypothesis and question that if music is not just sound, what could it be? The research itself consisted of a series of propositions. As became the standard for many Fluxus performances, he composed scores where the element of sound was displaced by the visual elements of performing. For instance, he wrote a score in which members of a string quartet, holding their instruments, simply shake hands. The deeper connection to science in this kind of "research" was his interest in time. Through this he further developed his hypothesis: If the essential element of music is time, could we not think of everything that takes place in time as music? He challenged himself to make pieces that did not structure time for other people, but allowed it to get longer or shorter, expand or contract, according to each individual's experience.

Regarding his objects, Brecht simply understood them as researches. He claimed that what he did was not intellectual research, but rather an investigation into what happens when things come together: "The research comes into the making of them [objects], and once they're made, the research continues in the process of discovering how people interact with them; how I interact with them."⁶⁰ He emphasized that his scores were

opportunities for individuals to not only think about what they would do in a particular situation, but also actually do something if they so chose. Fundamentally, his artistic research was about seeing how life goes or how it could go.

He found practical application for his academic training in chemistry in the space of the corporate laboratory, where the *modus operandi* of controlled creativity became useful for rethinking modes of production in the artistic realm. Just as he and other artists at the time wished to move beyond the traditional model of the artist as genius and toward (pseudo-)authorless-ness, so too in the realm of the corporate laboratory he found a way of working that was not about the individual scientific genius but a kind of measured creativity in the service of invention and function—qualities shared with Maciunas's artist as organizer. Moreover, the necessary dynamic of control and chance in scientific experimentation resonated with his experimental music compositions. In both realms, it was understood that certain aspects of production were and should be beyond the individual's control, and that this in fact fueled greater creativity.

EVENT CARDS AS NEW MEDIA

One of the most important characteristics of the event scores is the fact that they come on little cards. This gives them a portability that even relatively easy-to-carry sheet music cannot rival. Event cards can be placed in a pocket for access throughout the day, when they can be referred to, considered, or performed. There is intimacy (even potential secrecy) in the way an individual can use them—important qualities for the scores' ability to function as tools. Indeed, Brecht's very decision to use cards as a medium suggests one possible reason why such tools were necessary. Event cards called up a particular aspect of the bureaucratization of everyday life in the 1950s and 1960s, highlighting the scores' significance as "strategies for living."

When Brecht began sending his cards through the mail to friends, the closest thing most individuals had to cards that they consulted on a regular basis and at times had to transport on their person were punch cards. Made of stiff paper and covered with rows and columns of numbers from 0 to 9, punch cards help process digital information via the presence or absence of holes in the predefined number positions. The US government first used punch cards for the 1890 census, a landmark in the acceleration of information technology and the linking of humans and machines, but they were not fully exploited for bureaucratic purposes until the twentieth century.⁶¹ Roosevelt's New Deal-era social programs expanded government bureaucracies to the point that nonmechanical records were no longer feasible for keeping track of individuals and their information within the system. In the 1940s, use of the technology spread beyond government to libraries, police departments, newspapers, hospitals, and universities. However, it was precisely in the 1950s and 1960s, when Brecht produced his cards, that punch cards become ubiquitous objects in everyday life. Everything from paychecks to utility bills to student registrations came in the form of a punch card. As an employee of a major corporation like Johnson &

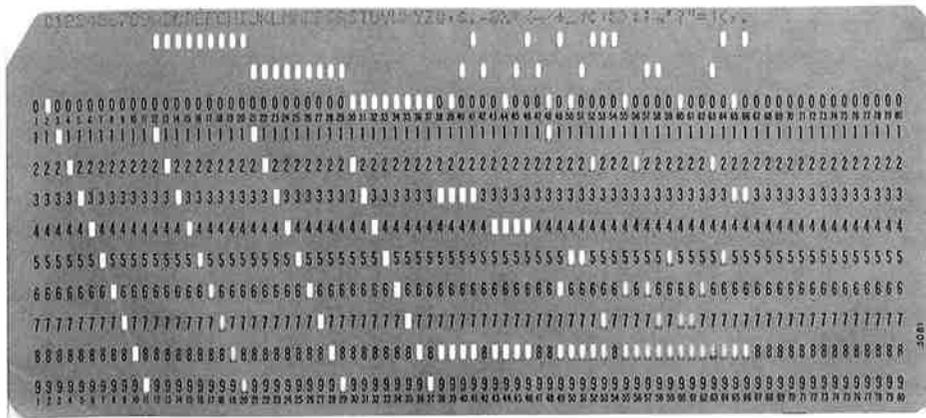


FIGURE 57
 Front of an IBM punch card of the eighty-column type most widely used in the twentieth century. $7 \frac{3}{8} \times 3 \frac{1}{4}$ in. (18.7 × 8.3 cm). This example displays the 1964 EBCDIC character set, which added more special characters to earlier encodings.

Johnson, Brecht likely received his paycheck in the form of a punch card in addition to encountering them in other walks of life where they were integral.

IBM developed punch-card technology into a powerful tool for business data processing, and by 1950 IBM's eighty-column card format, exactly seven and three eighths by three and a quarter inches, dominated the industry.⁶² Hence, punch cards were sometimes simply called "IBM cards," and the punching of one's identity into the cards the "IBM syndrome"; or, in the case of universities in the 1960s, an "IBM pattern of education" (fig. 57). The warning printed on punch cards regarding their use was a defining feature.⁶³ "Do not fold, spindle or mutilate" became the widely recognized phrase intended to educate the public about punch card "care" for their successful tabulation in reading machines. As punch cards proliferated across the social landscape, the warning came to stand for the depersonalization and alienation of 1950s and 1960s "organizational society" at large.

With the individual flattened and hollowed through patterns of numbers and holes, punch cards ushered in a new era of social portraiture. A sense of emptiness in being identified by them was understandable. People felt that they no longer dealt with other people directly but only through abstract, reductive, and dehumanizing punch cards, causing them to fear further alienation in an increasingly bureaucratized, computerized, information-oriented system. As a result, individuals at times disobeyed the warning, taking out their frustrations with the system at large on the cards themselves. Some famous examples of this emerged during the student movement at the University of California in the mid-1960s. As Steven Lubar informs us, student actions extended from getting hold of blank IBM cards and gimmicking the card puncher to write messages such as "FSM" (for Free Speech Movement) and "STRIKE" on them to burning registration punch cards in anti-university protests.⁶⁴

Not surprisingly, IBM presented a very different view of the technology it controlled. A 1955 publicity booklet issued by the company described a much more intimate role for the punch card, and therefore IBM, in everyday life: "IBM first came into your life when your birth was recorded on a punched card. From then on many such cards have been compiled. If you went to school, entered a hospital, bought a house, paid income tax, got married or purchased an automobile, the chances are that permanent punched records were made of these and other personal stories."⁶⁵ The rhetoric cleverly unites the individual with the punch card from birth, creating a sense that it has always been and always will be there, a natural and intimate part of life. Any potential questions about the dehumanization of the subject or the intrusion of corporate data collection into private lives are elided via the message that punch cards do not depersonalize the important events of life so much as collect and preserve them for you—a giant database-cum-scrapbook.

With punch cards the subject was less coerced into conforming within the protocols of the system than administered via numbers and patterns. The corporatized technology broke down the subject from within by dividing the individual into an ever-finer set of indefinitely variable (yet enumerable) regulating codes that incorporated him or her thoroughly, if flexibly, into the system. Punch cards materialized the emergence of a new relationship between the subject and power, which Gilles Deleuze later identified as characteristic of an emergent "society of control."⁶⁶

While Brecht's event cards cannot be compared with punch cards in terms of their actual imprint in daily life, discursively they raise important questions.⁶⁷ How might the event cards be seen as subtle insertions in the bureaucratic processing of life via punch cards? Could the intimate nature of event cards expose the fallacy of IBM's rhetoric? And how did the apparent evacuation of subjectivity in event scores—as visualized in the deadpan corporate graphic of the event card—relate to the hostility people felt toward the perceived subjectivity-dismantling of punch cards? In other words, at a time when the majority of the population wanted greater control over their own lives, why were artists like Brecht espousing (pseudo-)authorless production? Or were the two positions not as far apart as they might at first seem?

The event cards suggest corporate uniformity through their format, especially the black IBM typewriter font on white card stock, yet they never collapse into the standardization of the mass-produced-by-the-millions IBM cards. This relative uniformity creates something of a pattern across the event cards but nothing static like the rows and columns of numbers on punch cards, where the holes punched for a particular individual and transaction result in a pattern within a pattern, and so on, card after identical card.

Event cards combine the open-endedness of the scores with the openness of graphic space, variations in word placement, and slight variations in card size to allow for subjective play. The empty space surrounding the black text is as much a representation of the artist's "non-ego" as it is an interstice between the ones and zeros increasingly regulating the individual's life. The two are concomitant as Brecht cedes space for the viewer-receiver to recognize his or her active role in the production of meaning and value. This

is facilitated by their design for easy use. The larger rectangular punch cards have to be folded to fit in a pocket, against the expressed warning not to do so. Punch cards were designed to accommodate tabulating machines, not individuals.

This is not a romanticized claim for the liberation of the subject in Brecht's event scores. Rather, I see in the event scores a historically specific recognition of the impossibility of being outside the bureaucratized system of regulating codes. Event scores on event cards foreground the interplay of the subjective and the objective, which in actuality always exists but was perceived to be increasingly shut down by the corporatizing forces represented in punch cards. Event cards as new media were a means of creating a position of critical subjectivity within the system, the cardholder granted space (and time) in which to see how life goes and imagine or act out how it could go.

WATER YAM AS INCORPORATED FLUXUS PRODUCT

The aesthetic of the event cards was part and parcel of Maciunas's plan from the beginning to incorporate *Water Yam* into the business of Fluxus. Soon after the two agreed to produce the work, Maciunas announced it in *Fluxus Newsletter No. 4*: "In addition to Fluxus Year Boxes the following special editions are planned. There are editions of works by single composers, poets, artists, or what you like.—George Brecht complete works, boxes cards (issue planned in 1962)."⁶⁸ This sent the message that Fluxus was a legitimate organization with concrete projects in the pipeline and a "good man in New York" like Brecht on board. Others would hopefully follow suit.

Maciunas knew that good packaging and distribution were essential for *Water Yam* to be a successful Fluxus product. However, before he could turn his attention fully to these matters, there was the slight issue of getting the aesthetic of the event cards themselves right. This meant dealing with the first "idiot printer" who messed up his cards. From his correspondence with Schmit, we learn that this printer's name was Buchna, and that rather than go himself, Maciunas dispatched Schmit as his representative, telling him to "go to Buchna—the idiot printer. . . . He will ask for money, etc., etc. tell him that I am now in Holland (better that he doesn't even know which country) and have asked you to pick up [the Spoerri books] for quick delivery & that I will come in a week to pick up . . . the Brecht cards (which he printed all wrong) (and which I will not pick up)."⁶⁹ He devised an imaginative and playful scheme for getting what he wanted while, on principle, avoiding payment (saving money) for work he found unacceptable (or could not afford). Such art of evasion was not uncommon in Maciunas's business practices. Sometimes it seems to have been justified, if the work was substandard, and other times less so, usually because he was broke, as was the case when he fled to Europe in 1962 to evade debts.

Only when it came time to pick up the cards from the second printer, named Becker, who got the look of the cards right, did Maciunas give Schmit explicit instructions about distribution: "Ask him to pack them well as follows: 1. One package for you (was it 160?) / 2. One package for mailing to De Ridder (I think 120) / 3. 100 for you to take to Nice

/ 4. 50 [for you to take to Nice] for me which I will take to Florence.”⁷⁰ Meanwhile, Maciunas had to design the packaging for the event scores in a way that ensured that the overall look of the object matched the Fluxus branded identity he was creating. Whereas the card was essential for the score, the box was crucial for the product. As discussed in chapter 3, it was the box format with which Maciunas and Fluxus products most readily identified, and Brecht’s *Water Yam* was one of the earliest examples. In the same letter in which Maciunas asked Brecht about his preferred card size he also mentioned ordering wood boxes from Japan because they were cheaper and nicer. In seeking both a good price and quality, Maciunas was aware of and eager to exploit an international labor market whereby he might get a better value for a box from Japan than for one from Germany. Although there is no evidence that Maciunas ever bought boxes from Japan, the fact that he was thinking about these economies was another dimension of Fluxus’s performing the system.

Maciunas was meticulous about every detail of the boxes. This matters regarding Brecht, because they were a primary means of incorporating artists into Fluxus. Once he had Brecht’s cards from the printer he relied on his Fluxus “workers” not only for distribution but also for help with the final assembly of *Water Yam*. He implored them not to lose any cards that were “very expensive to print,” before expressing his next-biggest concern: sticking the labels on the boxes correctly. In letters to both Schmit and Willem de Ridder, Maciunas gave precise instructions: “Glue them by applying wet sponge to back of label. Put them on box quickly & press edges to make it stick well. Then press the whole surface . . . & sell, sell, sell!!!”⁷¹ His obvious anxiety about the potential for wrinkles in a poorly glued label demonstrates the degree of quality control he wished to exert.

Once again, images of his dancing automatons spring to mind. Maciunas had little patience for human error. Yet this was not the assembly-line production of a factory, as some have argued.⁷² De Ridder and Schmit sitting in their apartments in Amsterdam and Germany, respectively, attempting to apply *Water Yam* labels to boxes as precisely as Maciunas instructed, hardly constituted mass or mechanized production. Letting go of a romanticized view of an “avant-garde Fluxus factory” enables us to see that Fluxus business operations consisted of a network of regionally decentralized and relatively autonomous workers organized and managed by Maciunas. The Fluxus model of production and distribution resonated more with corporate than factory practices of the day. Indeed, Maciunas’s managerial *modus operandi* (though not successful when tilting too far toward Fluxus policing) resonated with the controlled creativity of the corporate laboratories where Brecht worked.

The label also includes a subtle yet crucial detail of how Maciunas incorporated Brecht into Fluxus. The text “Water Yam arranged by George Brecht” is accompanied by “Fluxus c.” As revealed in chapter 3, “c” was the letter used to identify Brecht in Maciunas’s Fluxus coding system. *Water Yam* was Brecht’s first product, so it received one “c.” Subsequent works by Brecht would be “cc,” “ccc,” and so on. The label on the box, especially for anyone unfamiliar with the art group, effectively gave the appearance of a work by Brecht produced for the company or brand Fluxus.

That said, *Water Yam* changed over time, both in its design and in the number of cards, which expanded as Brecht composed more scores.⁷³ The first boxes held orange cards with black text, but event scores ultimately became identified with the basic aesthetic of white cards with black text, some of which were also printed in the original run. Even these slight variations are not inconsistent with standard product development, including innovation and upgrade. It makes sense to alter the look or quality of a product vis-à-vis material availability, cultural tastes, technological advances, or the waning of consumer interest. Consumers need reasons not only to try new products but also to keep buying old ones. Changing the packaging, logo, or contents can be sources of inspiration to do so. All major companies rely on this strategy, even the most famous and successful ones. Coca-Cola's bottle and logo have undergone multiple design changes since the drink was first created, each change a bet placed on exploiting new markets, increasing consumption, and gaining market advantage over competitors.

With the channels of distribution set up and instructions for labeling in place, the price of *Water Yam* had to be decided. Maciunas was always up front about this with Fluxus artists. To de Ridder, his regional distributor in Holland, he wrote that the minimum price should be two dollars, but that he should sell them for as much as he could. When writing to Schmit in Germany, he quoted the price in local currency, "sell for 10 DM each," reminding us of the international economies through which Fluxus goods were meant to circulate.⁷⁴ Later on, Maciunas offered two versions of *Water Yam* for sale: standard and deluxe. The first came in a wood, cardboard, or translucent plastic box and cost five dollars; the second came in what he variously described as a "special box" or "one-of-a-kind wood box" and cost ten dollars. Both prices were low by fine-art standards and thus can be seen as in keeping with Maciunas's ideal that anyone should be able to buy art. Yet, given this belief, it is intriguing that he created a two-tier product system at all. If democratic art is the ideal, why distinguish between those who can afford five versus ten dollars? In actuality he adopted a market-oriented model of product diversification directed toward both "low-end" and "high-end" consumers.

Finally, Maciunas wanted to copyright *Water Yam* with Fluxus. The details of his proposal to Brecht are worth quoting at length:

The royalties from sale of box *plus* performances by others would definitely go to you as the newsletter makes it clear. So I assume this justifies my going ahead with application for international copy-right. OK? %80 of profits will go to you. (profit) = (Sale price) - (cost of printing, paper) If anyone wishes to reproduce a work or essay they must get permission from you & Fluxus. (both must agree). . . . Why not consider the newsletter no. 5 as a draft for a written agreement. (which it was intended to be). Make all revisions, additions, reservation on the sheet, send it back to me & I will retype it. So later there will be no misunderstanding. I already obtained agreements from Tomas Schmit, Ben Patterson, Rob, Fil-liou, Emmett Williams—so you will be in good company.⁷⁵

The quote gives us a sense of both Maciunas's businesslike approach to the matter but also his efforts to foster a kind of "controlled creativity" in Fluxus.

SELLING EVENTS

The packaged-for-sale nature of *Water Yam* raises questions about the relationships between Brecht's events, commodification, and broader cultural changes that we can recognize only in hindsight today. When Brecht adopted the name "event" for his particular type of composition, he positioned himself within an ongoing conversation among artists about how best to act within and upon the conditions of everyday life—theorized as the site of both greatest alienation and greatest possibility. Many international artists came, each in their own ways, to the same belief that time- and space-based art was the best means of intervention. They generated a string of names to describe their practices. In 1957, the Situationist International wrote of constructing "situations." By 1959, the operative word was "Happenings," although this is also when Brecht introduced his "events." Moving into the early 1960s, several artists preferred the term "action," including Nam June Paik and Joseph Beuys. Meanwhile, Wolf Vostell proposed the idiosyncratic "décollage." There are other examples, but my aim here is not to rehearse histories of performance art told elsewhere. Rather, my point is simply that language mattered at the time and continues to be informative.

Part of this was terminological jockeying for a place within an emerging field of performance art. The catchiest or most provocative term could differentiate one artist from the rest and potentially bring notoriety. But this often went hand in hand with deeper philosophical and aesthetic differences among artists. This was certainly true for Maciunas as he adopted Brecht's term "event" for Fluxus and drew a clear line, not to be crossed, between events and Happenings. Apart from Vostell's "décollage," the terminology had in common its appropriation from everyday language—situation, event, happening, action. This meant that the artists' efforts to address the conditions of everyday life intersected more readily with discourses across fields. Brecht's events are a case in point.

At precisely the time Brecht began composing event scores, the historian Daniel J. Boorstin published his book *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (1961).⁷⁶ The fact that two individuals working in such different fields conceptualized their understandings of occurrences in the world using the same terminology is worth paying attention to. Yet why did Boorstin add the prefix "pseudo," from the Greek word for "false"?

Boorstin was concerned with the conflict between what he called our "extravagant expectations" for momentous events to be brought to us every day via the news and the actual limited amount of novelty in the world. He claimed that an unhealthy, insatiable appetite for the new was leading to negative consequences in how individuals experienced the world. This had everything to do with a historical change in how we under-

stand and report events. By the 1960s, he claimed, earlier professional perspectives on the news—from the earliest US newspapers in the seventeenth century that left the responsibility for making the news entirely to God or the Devil up to early twentieth-century beliefs that the newsperson's task was to give an account of things as they arrived at one's notice, even to chase down the story if needed—were replaced by a much more expansive view of what constituted news and a much more active role for the newsperson.⁷⁷ In Boorstin's abridged version of the history, the responsibility for making the world interesting fell from God to the newsperson, and the pressure to deliver was high. He argued that we once believed there were only so many events in the world, but not anymore. If there were no curious or exciting events visible to the average citizen, the newsperson was expected to find them, and, more alarmingly, if they could not be found, then they should be made. An increased ambiguity as to what constituted real news and the media's and the public's tacit collusion in leaving it up to the discretion of a few individuals—news is whatever a good editor sees fit to print—opened everyday life to a flood of pseudo-events.

A pseudo-event has four major characteristics: it is planned rather than spontaneous; it is planted primarily for the immediate purpose of being reported or reproduced; its relation to the underlying reality of the situation is ambiguous; and it is usually intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy.⁷⁸ The interview is an example of a pseudo-event, but so too is a hotel's staging of its twenty-fifth anniversary celebration whereby the event, as publicized in the news, confirms the hotel's prestige rather than the other way around. As pseudo-events proliferated, they created what Boorstin described as a "thicket of unreality that stands between us and the facts of life."⁷⁹

On the surface it would be easy to romanticize Brecht's events as more authentic experiences in the midst of the fabricated experiences of pseudo-events. But this is the kind of oppositional and mystifying thinking I wish to avoid and challenge regarding Brecht's work. Closer inspection today reveals that the relationship between the two types of events cannot be articulated in such clear-cut terms. They had points of confluence, and shared ramifications for future cultural developments beyond what their makers could have foreseen.

Boorstin emphasized that the "thicket of unreality" was a world of our own making, and this point is crucial for my comparison. Most obviously, pseudo-events relied on the mass media. (Depending on the nature of the pseudo-event, they might also have considerable financial backing.) Brecht's events had neither of these elements. Recall that he started out by sending the event cards though the mail, and that even once *Water Yam* was marketed for sale and the scores were performed by Fluxus artists internationally, Brechtian events were reviewed only rarely, and in small corners of the official media (for example an Emmett Williams review in the *Stars and Stripes* and, when lucky, a few columns by Jill Johnston in the *Village Voice*), or, often months later, in the Fluxus newspaper itself. Otherwise, Brecht's events went unreported. Indeed, the idea of reportage did not factor in his original conception, which allowed, even encouraged, an individual to

perform an event score whenever and wherever one liked, without the presence of an audience, let alone a news camera.

Where the two types of events did intersect is at the level of framing, or staging. As we have seen, an event score frames an everyday event, creating a portal through which the event and art can be considered in a continuum. The device of the score is necessary to create this possibility. Recall Brecht's statement that at base "the event score prepares one for events." In other words, it prepares one for an experience. Until one is conscious enough to be consistently aware of the aesthetic patterns of everyday life (turning on and off lights, exiting rooms), the score stages events as a critical aesthetic strategy within a process ("exiting" visualized in performance so it is seen as something worth paying attention to). The ultimate goal was to diminish the individual's sense of alienation through a more organic, and less punch-card-like, connection with the world.

Importantly, Brechtian events focus on what is already there or what one routinely does, even if these things are presented abstractly or poetically on the event cards. In contrast, the pseudo-event confirmed the dominant view of the news as something that can be manufactured to satisfy demands for experiencing novelty. Both types of events are mediations, but pseudo-events contributed more directly to the increasingly mediated experience of the world through their inextricable ties to the mass-media apparatus. A pseudo-event simply does not exist without publicity, while an event certainly can.

However, the underlying operation of both a Brechtian event score and a pseudo-event, whether unwittingly or wittingly on the part of the makers, is to orient the individual toward thinking of an event—an ephemeral occurrence—as a *thing*. Fluxus artists may have been looking for Cagean "truth" in spontaneity, but their events were also planned and scored. The very act of framing or staging—necessary in the case of Brecht's work to create conscious critical subjects and in the case of a pseudo-event to generate publicity or business—partitions events into discrete units. When composed as a score and notated on a card, exiting a room or turning off a lamp actually becomes a separate entity unto itself. While events were designed to educate users to experience an art-life continuum, the scores and cards in effect set the single event apart from daily life. This breakdown of experience into discrete units created the potential for it to be quantified and valued. Hence, event scores might help individuals become aware of the aesthetic structure of daily life, but they might also help advance forces with the system whereby experience itself can be commodified.

Maciunas's "corporate imaginations" at once instantiated and helped produce this reality by packaging the collected scores and placing them in a shop window and mail-order catalog: a box of experiences for sale. Moreover, there is a connection to the way a new, individualized consumer subject was being configured in the 1950s and 1960s. This went beyond the general advertising onslaught aimed at producing citizen-consum-

ers who spent freely for the “good of society.” The system was designed to offer the individual variety through interchangeable elements in standardized formats, enabling him or her to feel a sense of organic connection to society as a whole by virtue of his or her own personal choice. The event scores represented a variety of experiences that individuals could choose from within the relative uniformity of the event cards. What neither Brecht, nor the practitioners of events, situations, Happenings, or actions, could have foreseen was the extent to which their time- and space-based practices would prefigure and even help generate the events culture that exists today within an increasingly dematerialized form of capitalism.

Brecht conceived his event scores and role of the artist as researcher at a time when economists started studying knowledge in new ways. The basic rationale for this was simply the centrality of knowledge in society. Only since Friedrich Hayek and his fellow Austrian economists in the 1940s had knowledge (inclusive of subjective and objective forms) been considered a part of the economic problem of society, namely, how to best utilize knowledge not given to anyone in its totality.⁸⁰ Following in their footsteps, Fritz Machlup, another Austrian-born economist, pioneered the idea of a “knowledge economy” in a series of lectures from 1958 to 1960 and his 1962 study *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States*. He took on the massive challenge of measuring the production and distribution of all kinds of knowledge in US society, employing statistics in a way no one had before. His results showed that the knowledge economy was worth \$136.4 million, or 29 percent of the GNP, in 1958; had grown at a rate of 8.8 percent per year over the period 1947 to 1958; and occupied people representing 26.9 percent of the national income.⁸¹

Machlup did not take up the term “information society” as such. He consciously stuck with the word “knowledge,” defining it as information communicated and used. But his ideas, backed up by statistical analysis, helped pave the way for the appearance of the information society. The term debuted in Japan in the early 1960s when *joho shakai*, normally translated as “information society,” and the related terms *johoka shakai* (informational or informatized society) and *joho sangyo ron* (on information industries) were used in the social sciences and government reports.⁸² Of particular importance was Jiro Kamishima’s 1964 study *Sociology in Information Societies*. By 1971 an entire dictionary on information societies was published in Japan. These early studies in both the East and the West made convincing arguments for a transformation of labor that was both quantitative (more and more labor becoming information based) and qualitative (information labor as profoundly different from industrial labor).

While some scholars formulated ideas about the information society, others believed that the shift away from industrial labor was paramount and theorized the new society as postindustrial. The validity of “postindustrial” as a descriptor of structural changes whereby mechanical industry is displaced from its role as the central and constitutive element of social, economic, and cultural affairs remains controversial and open to

interpretation, as do its historical dates. However, whether or not postindustrial society actually emerged around the end of the 1950s and early 1960s, the *idea* of it certainly first appeared in US intellectual discourse at that time. The formative period dates from 1958, with the publication of David Riesman's "Leisure and Work in Post-Industrial Society," to 1967, when Daniel Bell published his "Notes on the Post-Industrial Society," his most polished statement of the theory prior to his renowned 1973 book.⁸³

Theories of the postindustrial society tended to be broader in scope than theories of the information society, encompassing a transition from a manufacturing-based economy as well as issues of the diffusion of national and global capital and mass privatization. Both argued for the declining importance of manual labor and a correlated rise in the importance of mental labor, but here too postindustrial theory took a wider view, describing a shift not only to knowledge industries but also to service industries. With neither in the primary business of producing durable goods, further questions were raised about the dematerialization of capitalism in the postindustrial, information age.

In his role as a research scientist, Brecht was operating among the most important knowledge workers within these overlapping sets of theories. Scientific research was seen increasingly as the panacea of innovation in society. One problem in the United States, however, was the preference for applied research, which ultimately would decrease the nation's ability to remain competitive in science and industry, since it depends entirely on basic, rather than theoretical, research. This debate played out in the corporate laboratories where Brecht worked, as firms endeavored to define corporate research and knowledge production, especially vis-à-vis the academy. William J. Rankin complicates previous readings of this midcentury corporate research dilemma by arguing that those who critique industrial research for its implicit embrace of the so-called linear model of "pure" science (or basic research) leading to applied development fail to see that the companies that embraced the basic research model were also the ones that subverted the actual spatial organization of university campuses in favor of labs designed to balance the needs of the individual researcher with management preference for centralization. The laboratories reveal that their model of pure research was more collaborative and management-intensive—that is, less pure—than is often acknowledged.⁸⁴

Brecht's acquisition of patents through corporate research placed him firmly within these historical developments and discourses. Machlup cited patenting as an early sign of the valuing of knowledge from the 1920s. He also believed that research was one of the highest return investments a society could make in terms of increasing economic output and productivity. When Daniel Bell first broached the topic of postindustrial society with the publication of the proceedings of a 1962–63 Columbia University seminar on technology and social change, he claimed social preeminence for the intellectual and argued for the expanding social functions of science, the development of computer-based techniques of modeling and simulation, and growth in both public and private

funding of research and development. By constructing his role of the artist as researcher, Brecht performed this very same shift in production models from the realm of art. The event card was the slim material instigation of a composition to be realized only in ephemeral thought or performance. Brecht's artist as researcher was distinct from Maciunas's artist as organizer, yet both represented a move away from the avant-garde tradition of aligning artistic labor with the manual labor of the proletariat and the art object with the industrial product of the factory toward a historically specific practice associated with white-collar workers in labs and offices: controlled creativity with dematerialized output.⁸⁵

THE CEDILLA THAT SMILES: AN EXCEPTIONAL FLUXUS OUTPOST

In a letter dated December 3, 1965, John Cage wrote to Brecht, "I deeply regret yr. being in Europe. Do come home as soon as poss. Or go somewhere else. For Heaven's sake, don't get pleased by that life."⁸⁶ Cage was referring to the fact that in late April 1965 Brecht left New York to live as an artist in Europe, where he felt there were more audiences for his kind of work. In the process, he finally gave up his career as a corporate research scientist—he worked for Mobil Oil at the time—to devote himself fully to art. Like Cage, Maciunas was not in favor of the relocation. Maciunas wanted "our best man in New York," as he once called Brecht, to remain associated with his Fluxus HQ in the city. As it turned out, Brecht's presence in Europe brought something to Fluxus that Maciunas did not anticipate: a further, and exceptional, expansion of its regional outpost network.

Upon leaving the United States, Brecht went first to Rome, where he met up with his friend Robert Filliou. The two artists had met previously in New York, and Filliou was happy to greet Brecht, raise a glass, and help him embark on his artistic life in Europe. Out of Brecht's newfound sense of freedom and their obvious camaraderie emerged a shared vision. As Filliou explained it, "We wanted to create a 'Free city of the arts,' a center of research, or ideas."⁸⁷ This utopian-sounding idea for a "free city of the arts" turned into an ambitious plan that spring of 1965 in Rome, but it would take several months and a new city before it could be realized.

An acquaintance of theirs suggested the French Riviera town of Villefranche-sur-Mer (Villefranche for short) as an ideal location for their venture, and they accepted the recommendation. Filliou left Rome and arrived in Villefranche first. He sent a letter to Brecht, following up on the details of their discussions:

Marianne and I were sitting in café thinking somewhat dispiritedly about Villefranche, when I had a brainstorm. The bookshop, if it ever sees the light, must come under the sign of humor. We must handle nothing but humoristic, droll books. . . . Besides we can present everything else and still more as humor. . . . It would leave us free to improvise, take lightly and with a grain of salt our new activities, induce us to create (gifts as we spoke of, odd publicity), odd objects for sale.⁸⁸

From the start their plan included opening some kind of shop with "objects for sale." On the surface, a shop does not seem to fit within an idea of a "free city of the arts," but it alerts us to the fact that even within their alternative aspirations, art's commodity status could not be ignored. The question was how the two would coexist. What kind of relationship between the shop and "free city of the arts" would the artists establish?

It is significant that shortly after Filliou established the location, he initiated a relationship between their venture and Maciunas's Fluxus in New York. This seems to have been put into operation quickly, because already by January 1966 Maciunas was less than pleased with the results. This excerpt from his letter to Brecht indicates why: "Some packages (2 of them) were returned unopened by La Cedille qui Sourit (Spori [*sic*] tablecloths) so I ended up paying double postage for getting what I originally had. . . . I hope La Cedille will get more organized once you get there."⁸⁹ Once again Maciunas's impatience stemmed from an apparent lack of organization. He knew that without this, an incorporated Fluxus would not hold together, making the international distribution of goods impossible, and looked to Brecht to provide what it seemed Filliou could not. His letter also affirmed the name of the shop, La Cédille qui sourit (The Cedilla That Smiles). A cedilla is a diacritical mark resembling a hook or a tail, placed under the letter c to show that it is pronounced like the letter s and not k (as in *façade*).

Sometime after this in early 1966, Brecht relocated to Villefranche-sur-Mer to run the shop with Filliou and their respective partners, Donna Jo Jones and Marianne Staffeldt-Filliou. The city's location was fortuitous in its adjacency to Nice, where Ben Vautier was already busy promoting his idea of Total Art and Fluxus, including his own shop. This small stretch along the Mediterranean grew into a hub of Fluxus and Fluxus-related activity.

Like Brecht, Filliou had firsthand experience with Maciunas's efforts to run Fluxus like a business. Recall from chapter 3 the giddy earnestness with which Maciunas told Filliou that he was represented by the letter *f* in his Fluxus letter-coded inventory system. Filliou was also on the distribution list for all of Maciunas's *Fluxus News-Policy-Letters*, which kept him apprised of plans for Fluxus performances and the latest items for sale. And, as noted above, Maciunas wrote in a 1963 letter to Brecht that he had obtained agreement from Filliou to Fluxus-copyright his works. No doubt these various interactions with Maciunas influenced their ideas about opening a shop. From the start, they planned for it to be democratic, humorous, and full of "anti-commodities" for sale—the same complicated mix that informed Fluxus at large under Maciunas.

Yet Brecht and Filliou were working out a distinct model for a shop and the types of exchanges they wanted to take place there. The two artists shared an interest in research, and this figured prominently in their initial planning. In addition to being a "shop" within a "free arts city," La Cédille qui sourit was conceived as a "center of artistic research." It was a designated, self-organized space in which to perform Brecht's artist as researcher, a role for which Filliou was also well suited.⁹⁰ The question was how the various elements could coexist in a single studio-research-center-shop (fig. 58).



FIGURE 58

Interior view of *La Cédille qui sourit*, Villefranche-sur-Mer, France, ca. 1968. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

Once opened, this unique enterprise offered a wide range of products, as one of their publicity notices announced:

LA CEDILLE QUI SOURIT HANDLES EVERYTHING WHICH HAS OR DOES NOT HAVE A CEDILLA. Continuing creation of presents and unusual games, with the collaboration of numerous artists. Distribution of original works. Object-poems. Supplying publications of Edition MAT, MAT-MOT, Fluxus, Something Else Press.⁹¹

It might be assumed that their practice of selling works by other publishing outlets in addition to Fluxus would have irked the Fluxus-attention-seeking Maciunas, but this was squarely within his own practices. His primary goal was to get Fluxus works sold, whether through an official FluxShop or mail-order catalog or venues run by other artists. "I got a shop in San Francisco to handle our stuff," he wrote in a letter to Brecht at Villefranche.⁹² Maciunas was in fact very enthusiastic about *La Cédille qui sourit*, and correspondence between Brecht and Maciunas picked up during the years of its operation, almost all of

it concerning the distribution of Fluxus products: "I am shipping a set of flags (5), a chess set and misc. items to your shop. I figure Flags should be sold for \$40 each. (\$20 for me). I will send you a free set for your self [*sic*] with the next package. Have any other Fluxus items been sold?"⁹³

The two were largely in accord on business matters during this period, as evidenced in their correspondence. Brecht reported on May 26, 1966: "We have sold last two WATER YAMS in wooden boxes (for 75 francs each), several puzzles and one FLUXUS I, in addition to the items I mentioned in my previous letter. Have you sold anything of mine there? Is there any money to be sent to you or us? Can you send a couple of more WATER YAMS in wooden boxes (complete version—Ben has only the early incomplete cardboard box edition). Also two FLUXUS I's?"⁹⁴ His statement conveys the multinational character of Fluxus's operation. Brecht even asked Maciunas if he wanted a small flag done for the French and German market.⁹⁵ Surprisingly, they saw eye to eye on money matters, too, as Brecht confirmed in writing: "Yes, your suggestion is a good one, simplifies matters: you keep proceeds from sales in U.S. and we will keep proceeds of sales at La Cédille."⁹⁶ The operation remained small in scale, but international distribution and sales really did happen and finance was a primary concern, as in any other business.

Among the potentially profitable works created by Brecht and Filliou at the studio-research-center-shop were "Suspense-Poems." Customers could get the works only by subscription, which guaranteed them "a verse-object two or three times a week, without charge for postage or handling, until the poem is complete (about five mailings). The whole, put together through your efforts in the order of arrival, will form a suspense-poem-object."⁹⁷ The poems were not exactly cheap, at thirty dollars or the equivalent in foreign currency, and the proprietors admitted they would be "dispatched by slow freight," but subscribers were assured that each poem was limited to an edition of fifty and signed by the artist. Payment could be made by check or money order with Marianne Staffeldt-Filliou playing the role of "Handler of Affairs" for all transactions.

Beyond the "Suspense-Poems," they created all sorts of games for sale, like "The Useful Game" or "The Mystery Game" (which had several versions). There were also puzzles and other types of poems, all with low production costs. They appreciated the simplicity and humor of word games, and one of their favorites involved filling in purposefully-left-blank spaces within sentences. For instance, "Laughing Game" consisted of the sentence, "The way to get _____ to laugh—is to _____." The first player supplied a name for the first blank and the second player added an action for the second, resulting in such farcical constructions as: "The way to get a laugh out of Brigitte Bardot—is to move her an inch forward," or, "The way to get a laugh out of not getting a hard-on when you thought you might—is to look at your prick until it blurs."⁹⁸

The shop inventory also included conceptual products born of their "artistic research" in the officially titled Department of Scientific Research of La Cédille qui sourit. For example, individuals suffering from unsightly or painful dents on the side of their nose

could inquire about an "Anti-Nose Dent Cream." This was presented as an advertisement complete with doctored before and after photographs revealing the affliction and miraculous improvement, respectively. Even in tiny Villefranche, far removed from the corporate metropolis of New York and the watchful eye of artist-organizer Maciunas, the corporate imaginations of Fluxus existed.

From their department names to their "theoretical" research and products, Brecht and Filliou performed a corporate model of R&D. Of course, like much of what transpired in Fluxus's corporate imaginations, there was a deadpan humor about it: the absurdity of the products, the parodying of advertisements. But what is of greatest significance is the historical specificity of the aspects of the system they singled out for critical scrutiny through this performativity. The work undoubtedly calls up Brecht's experience in the Personal Products laboratory of Johnson & Johnson, where he secured patents for improved tampons. Their notice for the "Anti-Nose Dent Cream" claimed that a patent was pending.

When not performing his role in the Department of Scientific Research, Brecht might be found in what he called the Poetical Statistical Division of La Cédille.⁹⁹ This title also recalled his personal experience in New Jersey, where in addition to his lab work he studied statistics.¹⁰⁰ Brecht asked Maciunas to place this fictional institutional affiliation at the bottom of the card for his *Statistical Poem No. 1* (ca. 1965–66), which Maciunas was producing. Within corporate imaginations, the site of La Cédille emerged in part like a modern laboratory with flexible design for the artist as researcher to move freely from one module to another in collaboration with others as suited his research needs. It was an amalgamated space where the studio, research lab, and shop combined in the artists' own version of performing the system.

Imagination was never in short supply at La Cédille qui sourit, but as was true for Fluxus at large, money always was. This likely was not helped by the fact that on any given day the proprietors might just as easily be found in one of the nearby bars discussing their ideas as in the shop. They kindly advised anyone planning on visiting them to check the local watering holes.¹⁰¹ They did much of their artistic research from the field. Any questions as to their financial acumen aside, the artists and their partners demonstrated a genuine desire to make La Cédille a successful business and fretted greatly over the lack of money coming in for rent and basic upkeep.

The single most important documentation of their work at La Cédille is the book *Games at the Cedilla, or The Cedilla Takes Off*, published by Something Else Press in 1967. Brecht and Filliou put together the manuscript in Villefranche before the latter traveled to New York to continue editing with Dick Higgins and his then-assistant Emmett Williams. The first photograph in the book is a lovely yet straightforward seascape of Villefranche-sur-Mer taken by Higgins. The second photograph also appears at first to be innocuous enough. It shows Brecht and Filliou standing outside La Cédille (fig. 59). The photo takes on greater meaning via the caption, "How we gonna pay the rent *this* month?" It pointedly conveys to readers in the book's opening pages the financially fraught nature of the enterprise.

"How we gonna pay the rent *this* month?"
George and Robert outside the Cedilla (at right).

Photo by J.-J. Strauch



FIGURE 59

George Brecht and Robert Filliou outside La Cédille qui sourit, Villefranche-sur-Mer, France, 1966.

If the caption carries a lighthearted tone, Marianne Staffeldt-Filliou addressed the financial concerns of La Cédille more earnestly in a letter written to Brecht in Villefranche while she was in New York with her husband:

Robert and me have a good time together but I sure am looking forward to be back with you, I really miss you very much, and I know about the trouble you have but try to make it, Villefranche is so important we must stick to it we found a wonderful place there. AS SOON AS SOMETHING COMES UP we will try to help you but I have to economize money for our trip back, all this is even not possible, so go on and we will be back and we will all manage.¹⁰²

We know that the artists tried to manage financially in part through their affiliations with commercial galleries. During his time at Villefranche, Brecht had representation from Marilyn Fischbach of Fischbach Gallery in New York as well as Ileana Sonnabend of Son-

nabend Gallery in Paris. In 1967 Fischbach corresponded with Jan van der Marck, a curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, about including several Brecht works from the Fischbach inventory in an upcoming exhibition called *Pictures to Be Read / Poetry to Be Seen*. By 1968, however, the relationship between artist and gallerist had soured. Brecht wrote to Fischbach asking why he had not received his share of the sale of the work *Three of Swords* (1966), bought by Mr. Joseph R. Shapiro from the same MCA show. He went on to say that communication between them was poor and suggested terminating their working relationship.¹⁰³ All remaining works held by her were to be sent to Higgins at his Chelsea 238 West Twenty-Second Street address for safe holding.

During roughly the same period, gallery owner Ileana Sonnabend was eager to work with Brecht and he appreciated her for, as he put it, being his first gallery contact in Paris “through feelings of personal friendship.”¹⁰⁴ He claims he gave preference to those gallerists who had “the greatest sympathy and understanding of [his] work,” which may go some way toward explaining why things broke down with Fischbach.¹⁰⁵ In a letter from 1965, Sonnabend expressed her delight that in their last meeting they made concrete plans for a show. She recapped what she believed to be the details of their agreement, and her words give a sense of how they operated:

In order to make it possible for you to prepare the show we will give you one hundred dollars a month, starting with the hundred I gave you yesterday, either as an advance on future sales or as payment for some of the work. As far as selling prices of the individual pieces are concerned, you and Michael and I will decide that together. Needless to say we will take care of publicity—invitations or fliers or catalogues. It would simplify things if it were understood that we would have exclusive rights to your work in Europe. We certainly would want to arrange shows in other countries. We would like also to have a commission of fifty percent of the selling price. This is the way we generally work things out. Could you drop a line soon to let me know you agree to these conditions?¹⁰⁶

As Brecht and La Cédille's financial concerns became more urgent, he made an appeal to Sonnabend for direct funding. Her positive response was indicative of her desire to support Brecht's projects: “I understand your difficulties and although this is not a favorable time for us I will try to help you out. In a few days you'll be receiving 1,000 F for two months and I will send you 1,000 more in the middle of June.”¹⁰⁷ That was in 1966, and in 1968 she was still looking out for his financial interests: “I just got this letter from Multiples—I think you might be interested in their proposal. . . . How are things in Villefranche? Hope all is well and 1968 will be a happy and successful year.”¹⁰⁸ Filliou made it clear that he was also busy with other ventures, lamenting to a French newspaper journalist that he had to be away from the artists' quarter of Villefranche too often due to projects, exhibitions, and conferences, including work for his Paris gallery, Jacqueline Ranson.¹⁰⁹

Indeed, it was Filliou's professional relationship with Galerie Jacqueline Ranson that brought about the most explicit association between La Cédille qui sourit and the commercial gallery system. On October 6, 1966, Filliou opened a one-person show there entitled *Exposition Intuitive*. Its success prompted the gallery to grant him free use of the space for another show about La Cédille that opened later that same year. As one journalist wrote at the time, "The public circulating in the capital will therefore be able to take notice of the existence of this 'artists' corner,' for Filliou and Brecht are literally going to transplant 'La Cédille Qui Sourit' from Villefranche to Paris."¹¹⁰

The show was called *To Paris, The cedilla that smiles, unexpected offerings*, and, as the title intimates, it was oriented around the artists' desire to enact alternatives to the commodity and its rules of exchange through the mode of an offering, or gift. This was one of the founding principles of the Villefranche shop, where commodity and gift uneasily yet productively coexisted in their alternative studio-research-center-shop model. In hindsight, it is tempting for some scholars to romanticize the act of gift giving as somehow actually overcoming the art object's commodity status. It is important to resist such readings and instead see the productive aspect as residing less in the singular act of gift giving, without negating the real meaning this had for the participants at the time, and more in the very juxtaposition of the two modes of exchange and the diverging economies they represented. Again, it is the dynamic between any single transaction and the system as a whole that must be kept in perspective.

As with Maciunas's anachronistic calling up of a prior history of capitalism via the visual and metaphorical clash of his bowler-bedecked artist as organizer, juxtaposition enabled Brecht and Filliou to surface history as process. The juxtaposition urged participants and viewers to consider what might be possible and what might be impossible at that time. This in itself was important in an era of postwar capitalist expansion into the deeper recesses of knowledge and experience. The work surfaced at once the growing scientific interest in both objective and subjective knowledge and the forces by which all kinds of knowledge and experience (as pseudo-events) were increasingly being commodified and mediatized.

Ultimately, the caption on that second photograph in the book proved prophetic. Brecht and Filliou could not pay the rent, and the shop folded in October 1968. These facts diminish the value or meaning of La Cédille as an attempt to sustain a critical art practice in a particular historical moment that we can learn from today only if we fail to diffuse retrospective romanticized accounts of the Villefranche project. La Cédille was not a utopian or theoretical project divorced from concrete world cares. As I have shown, it was implicated within the system via the artists' conscious decision to appropriate the models of a research laboratory and shop, but also via Brecht and Filliou's individual ventures. Their aspirations for what they hoped La Cédille might be remain intact, but we are reminded of their real existence as artists, the need to pay bills, and, as I am arguing for Fluxus artists throughout this book, their awareness of the need to devise critical strategies from within the system and their inevitable implication in the very forces they aimed

to challenge. The ambivalence of a strategy of “performing the system” meant that they could not escape complicity in a historical expansion of the capitalist system into the realm of knowledge, service, and experience. When La Cédille opened its doors, it encouraged visitors to not lose sight of the importance of imagination itself. Ultimately, it was a very real, rather than romanticized, politics of imagination in the 1960s around which the tail of the cedilla turned.

5

ROBERT WATTS

Engineering Objects

I thought that all those rigid things I had learned as an engineer, like mechanical drawing, were keeping me from being freer and more open in my drawing and painting. But actually, I wanted to be able to use all of the things I had learned.

ROBERT WATTS¹

RIGID SYSTEMS

Pull open the door of a safe and cause the incandescent wires inside it to heat up, and a paper bag on a patch of artificial grass outside it to hop up and down; or, drop a nickel in a funnel, press down a lever attached to a calfskin-covered painting on the wall nearby, and jump immediately to avoid the shaving cream spewing from the picture's center (fig. 60).² These were just two of the unusual mechanical experiences available to viewers during the exhibition of art objects by Robert Watts at Grand Central Moderns Gallery in New York in 1962. *New York Times* art critic Brian O'Doherty visited the show and did not react quickly enough after paying his nickel, as a mess of shaving cream on his jacket sleeve attested. Yet the very fact that he had to clean himself up after viewing a mechanical work of art contributed to his overall assessment that the show could "evoke an unusually deep emotional response."³

In a particularly telling passage of his review, O'Doherty wrote, "The exhibition can produce a feeling of insecurity so that eventually one looks at the innocent stamp machine on the wall with suspicion. The world of machines seems to be revolting."⁴ As shall become apparent in the following pages, the stamp machine was not entirely innocent, and O'Doherty was right to eye it with suspicion. Already in this pre-Fluxus exhibition, Watts was working out his artistic stance toward objects that led to his association with George Maciunas and Fluxus. But what was it precisely about the Grand Central Moderns show that was so disconcerting? This chapter is about how Watts's understand-

the Speed Scientific School at the University of Louisville in 1944, with a focus on steam power plant design. His school years coincided with World War II, and, though the draft age was lowered from twenty-one to eighteen, he enlisted in the US Navy of his own volition at the age of nineteen on December 11, 1942. Watts saved official documents diligently, and his discharge papers tell us that he spent the first eighty-two weeks of his military life in training: sixty-four weeks with an engineering unit at the University of Louisville, during which time he also completed his degree; two weeks studying oil burning with a unit in Philadelphia; and sixteen weeks at Annapolis. He entered active service on July 1, 1943, and was commissioned on April 25, 1945, as an engineering watch officer and an engineering educational officer. As an engineering officer he served aboard the aircraft carriers USS *Guadalcanal* and USS *Solomons* before being honorably discharged on May 25, 1946. One of the most interesting entries on a version of his curriculum vitae, of which there are many, dated roughly 1979, states that from 1945 to 1946, while he was in the navy, he conducted experiments with radar, sonar, and wire recorders.⁵ No specific explanation of the nature of the experiments is given. However, his military status clearly provided him unique access and opportunity to familiarize himself with these technologies. This had a lasting impact on him, as did his wartime experiences more generally, which, as we shall see, he referenced explicitly and implicitly in his artworks.

Prior to entering active service, Watts last worked at Tubs-Turns Incorporated in Louisville as a mechanical engineer, and on his discharge papers he listed "mechanical engineer" and "engineer designer" as his preferred post-military occupations. Yet, as Watts recalled, he actually had by that time changed his mind regarding his career of choice, and moved to New York in 1946 with the intention of studying art.⁶ The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, otherwise known as the GI Bill, afforded him the option of attending graduate school, but he elected not to use it until he had a clear idea of what program he wanted to enter. In the meantime he got a job as an engineering designer and took night classes twice a week in painting, drawing, and sculpture at the Art Students League of New York. This period of his life from 1946 to 1948 paralleled Brecht's transition from research chemist at Johnson & Johnson to artist. Watts was an engineer by day and a budding artist by night.

His girlfriend, Virginia Nelson Watts, whom he married in 1948, was a painter and by Watts's account knew more about art than he did. Her insights as well as art excursions, including one to Asia House to see art from Southeast Asia and the Pacific region, inspired him to study art history. After failing to get into Yale University due to his low GRE scores, he enrolled at Columbia in the fall of 1949. He had to make up nearly a year of undergraduate requirements to gain admittance into the newly founded master's degree program in "primitive" art history, the institutionally accepted name for the field at the time. Watts was excited to be in on the ground floor of the program, under the directorship of professor Paul Wingert. His course papers demonstrate a broad-ranging curiosity in regional indigenous art, while his thesis examined "The Masks of the Alaskan Eskimo."⁷

Even armed with a master's in art history from Columbia, Watts's transition to a career in art remained in doubt. He continued to make his living as an engineer, taking a job as an instructor at the Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences in Brooklyn for the 1951–52 school year. Watts and his wife had already moved to New Jersey in 1949, so when Rutgers University offered him an instructorship beginning in the fall of 1952, the logistics were easy. In signing the one-year contract with the College of Engineering, Watts once again identified as an expert in applied science and mathematics, not as an artist. Yet even the traditionally strict academic boundaries between disciplines did not prevent him from roving beyond engineering. Geoffrey Hendricks, who joined the Rutgers faculty in 1956, stated, "I guess he was over hanging around the art department a lot because it was more interesting than his engineering colleagues. . . . I guess there was an opening they needed and he got hired."⁸ Events did not transpire quite as fluidly as this, but during his first year of full-time teaching in engineering, Watts made his interest in art evident enough to earn a part-time teaching position in the art department of the New Jersey College for Women, the women's division of Rutgers, also known as Douglass College. The dean wrote to him expressing her appreciation for his "fine attitude concerning the operations of our Art Department" and her hope that the combined load would not be too taxing.⁹ For the 1953–54 term Watts existed as a hybrid engineer-artist, teaching both general engineering classes and introductory design and ceramics, half time each.¹⁰

Watts's head was turned. He switched fields officially the following year, relinquishing his duties in the engineering department and taking a full-time job in the art department at Douglass. Despite his new academic home, Watts realized that the engineering colleagues, who may have failed to excite him in the past as Hendricks claimed, could prove useful in his artistic future. His move to the art department was based less on a desire to leave them or engineering behind than on a hope to develop a kind of practice he felt was impossible within the discipline of engineering alone. As he stated, "My engineering background has not gone to waste. Besides the practical aspect which helps me in changing fuses and such, engineering has been very valuable to me as an artist and designer." The question remains, how so?

Watts believed that his study of art history and engineering fit together because they were each "a kind of rigid system."¹¹ While engineering gave him a real understanding of physics and mechanical systems, what he meant by this was that both disciplines were invented ways of accounting for things, and, in the case of art history, how they relate historically.¹² Perhaps training in both disciplines allowed him to better see how systems are means of organizing information, producing knowledge, and understanding the world. At the same time, they could feel rigid and limiting in their methodologies. As an artist, he could draw from these two rigid systems while developing alternative means of research, documentation, and expression beyond their protocols. At the very least, what is clear from his description is that early on he had an awareness of systems and organization, their benefits as well as their limitations, and a desire to work creatively with and

within them. His *modus operandi* as well as his output marked and were marked by this desire. In the art department he had the degree of freedom necessary to take a different approach to objects.

WATTS, BRECHT, AND KAPROW IN NEW BRUNSWICK

In chapter 1, I emphasized distinctions between Fluxus events and Happenings, and Maciunas's disdain for the latter based on these distinctions. But it is well worth recalling that these two kinds of performance emerged not only contemporaneously but also in proximity. The individuals now commonly regarded as the pioneers of events and Happenings, George Brecht and Allan Kaprow, respectively, plus Watts, developed friendships and collaborated in the same artistic-academic milieu in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Rutgers University and the New School for Social Research were the two most important sites. I addressed the influence of John Cage through his experimental music classes at the New School in previous chapters, and this history is told thoroughly elsewhere, so there is no need to rehearse it here.¹³ My focus is on Watts's relationships with Kaprow and Brecht, especially the latter, with whom he was closest, as they relate to the development of Watts's artistic practice and approach to art education at Rutgers.

In the fall of 1953, when Watts added part-time art teaching at Douglass College to his duties, the Rutgers art department hired Kaprow. Douglass was not simply separate from Rutgers, but on the other side of town, making interdepartmental collaboration a curricular and logistical challenge. It was down to the faculty and students involved to build relationships and develop projects to bridge the divide. For Watts and Kaprow, who still considered themselves painters at the time, this included questioning the limits of painting and whether other media might better serve their interests. As Watts recalled, "I was aware in painting . . . that something inside me wasn't getting out."¹⁴

They were also fans of the interdisciplinary model of art education started by the Bauhaus in Europe and followed by Black Mountain College in the United States. They spoke of this with their colleagues, including Theodore Benson, chair at Douglass, and Helmut von Erffa, chair at Rutgers. Erffa attended the Bauhaus in Germany, and both men took circuitous routes through Europe before landing in New Jersey. Geoffrey Hendricks, who joined the teaching faculty a few years after Watts and Kaprow, confirmed that an "international perspective on art and a world consciousness was present in the two departments."¹⁵ When Black Mountain College closed its doors in 1957, they felt an increased need to actively contribute to the future of alternative arts education.

As I discussed in the preceding chapter, there are conflicting accounts in Fluxus literature as to whether Watts and Brecht met in 1956 or 1957. The generally accepted account is that Brecht attended an exhibition of Watts's work at Douglass in 1957, and soon after phoned Watts to say that they should get together and talk.¹⁶ Two things not in question in the historical record are the immediate affinity the two artists had for each other and their decision to begin meeting regularly for lunch, usually at least once a

week. Their easy friendship can be attributed in large part to their formal training in science—Brecht in chemistry and Watts in physics for engineering—and interest in art. It must have been reassuring to meet someone else who not only came from science and wanted to be an artist, but also could discuss productive intersections of the two fields. In this regard, the main difference between them when they met was that Watts had already transitioned into an art profession, while Brecht still made his living as a corporate research chemist at Johnson & Johnson, leaving him only spare time to make art.

Sometimes Kaprow and Hendricks joined the lunchtime conversations. One of their lunch spots was on the Rutgers campus in the cafeteria run by the home economics department, but more often than not they ate at Watts's preferred destination, the restaurant at the New Brunswick Howard Johnson, where they ordered New England clam chowder and a hot dog.¹⁷ Howard Johnson was located conveniently near the crossroads of Route 1 from Rutgers and Route 18 from Johnson & Johnson, so Brecht could easily get back to his corporate lab and Watts to his university classrooms by the end of the lunch break. Watts and Brecht effectively developed a midday ritual, and this continued until Brecht left for Europe in 1965—nearly “ten years’ worth of lunches.”¹⁸

The lunchtime conversations laid an important foundation of understanding among the artists. They were all transitioning away from painting, and although they did not yet know the exact form their post-painting practices would take, they agreed on certain ideas they wanted to pursue. They also served as moral and technical support for each other's experimentation. There was a comradely sense of “all hands on deck” in the effort to realize their ideas. Indeed, collaborations with Brecht and Kaprow were invaluable to Watts from 1957 on, as he developed his roles as artist and teacher by drawing from art and science and engaging in systemic thinking.

THE ARTIST AS RESEARCHER

Watts's self-imposed end to his painting career coincided with his writing of two important proposals for greater experimentation in art. The first was for an experimental course in art at Douglass that would run through the 1957–58 school year, which Watts submitted to dean of the college, Mary Bunting, on April 25, 1957. Two convictions that would drive his thinking about art and art education throughout his lifetime make their first formal appearance in this text: 1) the fundamental interconnectedness of art and science, and 2) the importance of research. Regarding the first, Watts proposed a science-humanities symposium for freshmen aimed at stimulating and developing “an understanding of basic creative thought and ideas inherent in the arts and sciences.”¹⁹ Wishing to alter the curriculum that set art and science at opposite poles of the learning spectrum, Watts emphasized their shared roots in creativity. One of the main learning objectives of the course was for students to be able to draw analogies between art and science toward developing a fundamentally creative approach to life, which he believed was the true

impulse of individuals in every field of endeavor. The course was designed to foster this in students in their first year.

Watts also proposed to build research into the arts curriculum through a research workshop in audiovisual teaching techniques. It is important to note that in this text the research was targeted at teaching rather than artistic practice.²⁰ Watts undoubtedly believed that improving teaching capabilities via advanced audiovisual means such as multiscreen projection, stereophonic sound, and light projection was crucial to arts education, but it is also possible that he saw this proposal as a first step in a longer process—a strategy to prepare administrators for his more radical ideas of artistic research to come.

Some aspects of the proposal that academics may take for granted today, such as its call for interdisciplinary study, had yet to be introduced into academia, let alone implemented, at the time. It is evident that Watts understood the need to “sell” his ideas to the administration by prioritizing the benefits to students and professors. In other words, this was not an espousal of experimental art for its own sake, but a plan with clear pedagogical objectives. This was Watts’s first major effort to work the educational system from within, pushing through the bureaucracy of a state university what were then radical ideas in arts education.

If the first proposal had the specific aim of a new course, the second proposal, coauthored in 1957–58 by Watts, Brecht, and Kaprow, offered a broader perspective on the state of contemporary art and the progressive directions it should take. The relationship of art and science was once again central to the argument that “both scientists and artists have become aware, for the first time in recent years, that basic concepts for discovery and invention are common to both, and indeed, that many conclusions possess similar ingredients.” Yet they went beyond merely affirming the importance of this affiliation to using it strategically. Their aim was to highlight the inequitable conditions in which scientists and artists work and justify greater arts funding: “Even though it would seem that both have much in common, this apparent fact has been obscured by the differences in utilization of their respective discoveries. Technology is fed by scientific invention, but it is somewhat less clear just who is sustained by the artist.”²¹ The financial aid coming directly from industry gives the scientist a considerable edge on the artist. It was a case of drawing critical attention to something broadly left unquestioned. However, rather than overstate the importance of the artist in society in hopes of hoodwinking the grant committees into giving up funds, they identified precisely the opposite—the deficiency in the artist’s social efficacy—as an urgent problem to address. They freely admitted that the artist’s role and the benefit of artistic work to an (also ill-defined) audience was often unclear, not because artists were unwilling to advance their social role, but because they do not receive the necessary resources to undertake the same level of research and experimentation as their scientific peers.

Like scientists, artists are also fundamentally discoverers, they asserted, and with access to the latest advances in materials and technology they could develop new forms

of artistic expression that would empower them to play a greater social role. Through new forms they could activate the full range of human responses and create meaningful experiences that help individuals to grow and society to progress. Without more financial aid, a vast potential for “creative investigation” goes untapped, as artists are left effectively working with their hands tied behind their backs—a handicap that prevents them from generating the tangible results of their scientific peers.

Beyond their notions of the artist as a researcher, discoverer, and investigator, they introduced another new concept: “multidimensional media.” They defined this as the use of more than one medium for the production of new aesthetic experiences. Today we can see this as the ancestor of our foreshortened “multimedia,” and it is important to recall the degree to which they had to stump for the cause in an era dominated by painting. It was not easy to convince the holders of purse strings that, for example, “an organization of sound and light, produced by electronic means, and designed to create primary responses in the audience”—in contrast to a film, “where primary responses are in relation to . . . some dramatic content, and where the sound and light are mainly vehicles for the conveyance of the content”—was a smart investment that would bring valuable returns. They provide a list of examples ripe for artistic exploration: sound and sound production; light, including color; space; and miscellany, including the human tactile and olfactory spectra, synthetics, and pyrotechnics.²² These categories also fall within the purview of science, underscoring their basic point about the fields’ common ground and art’s ability through research and investigation to also contribute knowledge on such important life matters.

In the last chapter, I argued that Brecht represented a new model of the artist as researcher. Watts also constructed this role of the artist, and the two men’s association clearly contributed to its development for each of them. Brecht infused his artistic practice with insights gleaned in the corporate laboratory; Watts brought the particular perspective of research in the academy. They each had an institutionalized experience, positioning them firmly within the system, through which they became aware of how systemic operations controlled change. In collaboration, their shared desire to work the system took on a greater institutional focus, as they asked themselves what alternative ideas they might be able to push through the dominant system, and how they might leverage this to achieve their goals. They submitted “Project in Multiple Dimensions” to Rutgers as well as to the Carnegie Corporation, a sign that they were willing to take public or private funds, but were doubly rejected. These two documents were the first in a long line of proposals that Watts sent out over the course of the next decade in search of financial support for new ideas in artistic research and multidimensional media.

MECHANICAL OBJECTS

The first fruits of the lunchtime conversations included not only proposals but also the earliest post-painting practices for the artists. Both Watts and Brecht helped Kaprow with

his first environment, made on the Douglass campus early in 1958. As Kaprow recalled, "I felt inclined to take the picture off the wall. I began to do action collages, and the action collages became bigger and bigger."²³ Watts's contribution was informed by a construction he had already made in the basement of his Mount Pleasant, New Jersey, home. It consisted of a series of small flashlight-size bulbs, which as Watts explained, "I arranged . . . on a thin brass rod and made a programmer out of an old record turntable. I programmed it so that I could draw the same kind of fast line myself."²⁴ The "fast line" referred to the newly installed runway lights at the Newark Airport that lit up in rapid sequence—a moving line, as Watts called it, which made a strong impression on him. The construction was the first clear indication that Watts's practice was developing into a hybrid of engineering and artistry. He put this hybrid power to use for Kaprow as well.

Kaprow was already interested in random effects and wanted an electronic programmer. Watts drew from his own training, but also reached across the disciplinary divide at Rutgers to bring in a colleague from the engineering college who helped him devise a system to work effectively in a total environment. Kaprow described it as a "randomizing wheel that went around slowly. It had bumps on it that had a bar across the top that had microswitches that switched on and off various loudspeakers so it constantly changed."²⁵ This was also the source of sound in Kaprow's next environment, shown soon after at Hansa Gallery in New York.

Watts continued to work in this vein for the next several years, exploring the potential for engineering in his art, but also expanding his relationship to objects. His objects fell into three main categories (each dealing with form and content): welded sculpture, thematic constructions of America and war, and kinetic constructions with programmers and other electric parts. The latter two categories are of primary interest here, and they sometimes converged.

His first big solo exhibition of works during this period was at Grand Central Moderns Gallery in New York in 1961. Two works in particular embodied his hybrid engineering-artistic practice and growing critical consciousness, which would soon inform his association with Maciunas and Fluxus. The title of the first work, *Guadalcanal* (1960, fig. 61), is a direct reference to his personal experience aboard the USS *Guadalcanal*, but its composition and meaning are anything but straightforward. Both the USS *Guadalcanal* and USS *Solomons* were Casablanca-class escort carriers, the most numerous class of aircraft carriers ever built, constituting one third of the carriers built in the United States during World War II. While his discharge papers do not provide the precise dates of Watts's service on the ships, there is no indication that he saw direct battle while on them. He is credited with "foreign and/or sea service," but with no specification as to where he actually traveled. From the point when he became a commissioned officer in 1945, both the USS *Guadalcanal* and USS *Solomons* appear to have been used primarily for landing qualification training tours, and one search-and-rescue mission. No matter his duties, however, the profound impact of wartime military service cannot be discounted.

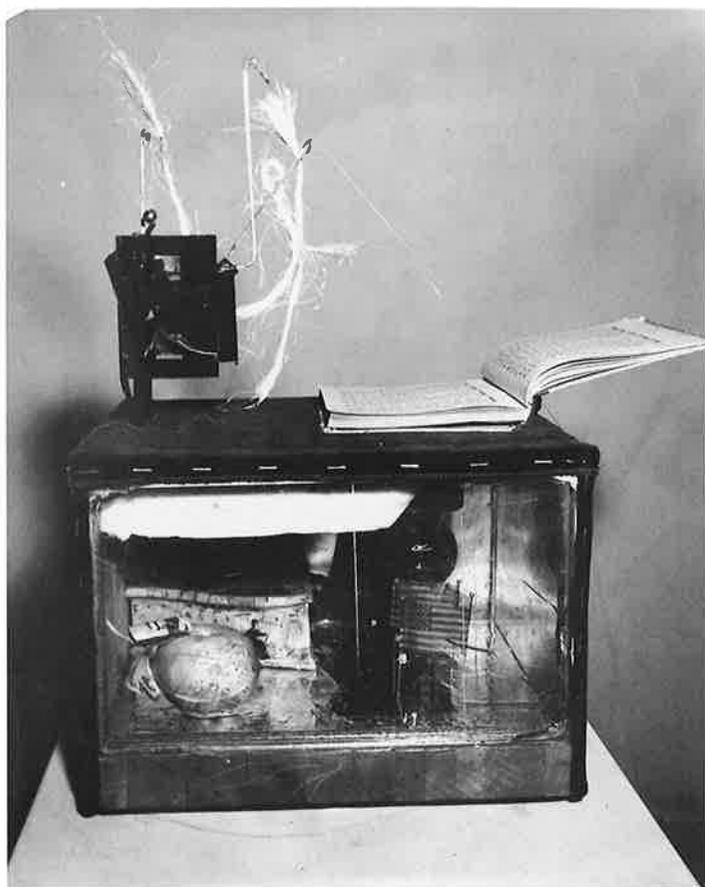


FIGURE 61
Robert Watts, *Guadalcanal*,
1960. Getty Research Institute,
Los Angeles, 2006.M.27.

The back of a photograph of *Guadalcanal* taken by Watts includes his own handwritten description: "Toy piano played from rear. Jerky and random circuitry lights of string and bouncing ball on floor, round bell near string / Blue, red, and ultra-violet light inside changing internal colors. / Jumping man on left. Seated man inside flags on right."²⁶ The basic structure of the work is a box with the front side open, like a diorama, and items placed inside and on top. According to Sara Seagull, an artist and close friend of Watts, the work is "amazing in color," meaning both when it is seen in a color photograph and in person with the colored lights illuminating the inside.²⁷

There is a similarity between this early boxed construction and the Surrealist boxes of Joseph Cornell in terms of their ambiguous juxtapositions of things. And like Cornell's works, Watts's early constructions might be read symbolically—American flags, male figures, et cetera—in a way that his objects from a few years later could not. What sets Watts's work apart from Cornell's, however, is his engineering. Boxes by Cornell were for the most part stationary assemblages of collage and objects. *Jouets surréalistes* (ca. 1932)

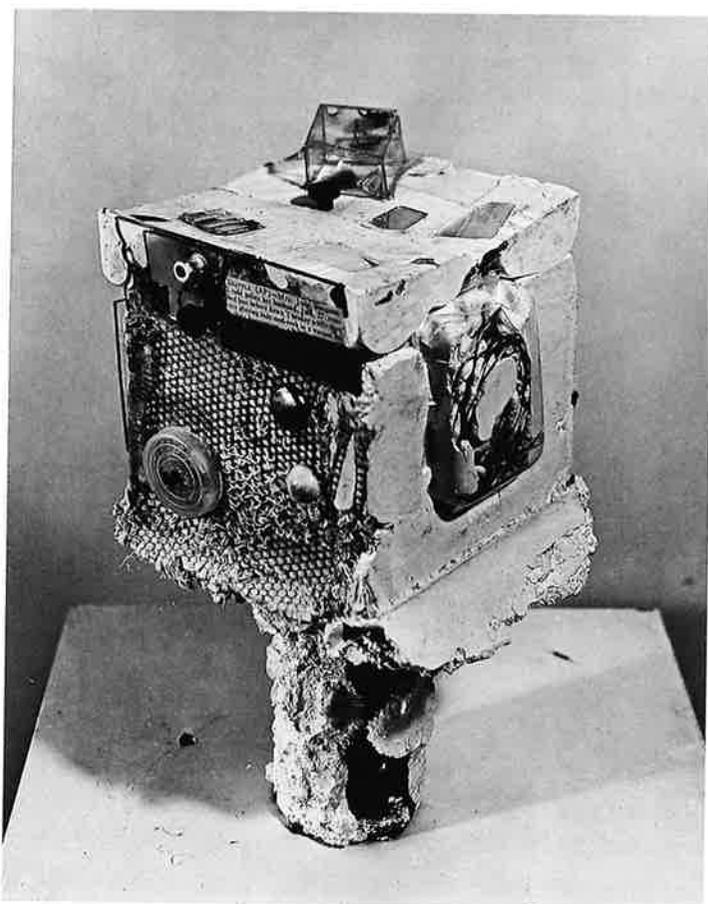


FIGURE 62
Robert Watts, *Model for Monument
to D.A.R.*, 1960. Getty Research
Institute, Los Angeles, 2006.M.27.

might appear to be an exception, as he appropriated industrial mechanical toys as readymades and added collage elements, but his primary interest was the relationship between art and play. In contrast, Watts's overarching concern was the relationship between art and engineering or science. So what are we to make of his mix of art, engineering, and Americana in *Guadalcanal*?

While eyesight alone leaves the exact meaning obscure, we can gain insight into Watts's position on his general themes by considering *Guadalcanal* together with a second work, *Model for Monument to D.A.R.* (1960, fig. 62). Once again we begin with Watts's provocative title. The acronym stands for Daughters of the American Revolution, a lineage-based group dedicated to "historical preservation, education, and patriotism" under the motto "God, home, and country."²⁸ Individuals must prove descent from someone directly involved in the independence of the United States in order to be inducted. Based on the God-fearing, patriotic cheerleading and racialized discrimination that the DAR is historically known for—including their 1939 refusal to let Marian Anderson sing at their

auditorium, Constitution Hall, in Washington, DC, because she was black, prompting Eleanor Roosevelt to renounce her DAR membership—Watts's juxtaposition of the title and particular material suggests a critical commentary and macabre sense of irony.²⁹

A monument is usually a form of commemoration or celebration, and the basic form of Watts's object—a cube atop a cylindrical base—resonates vaguely with the traditional sculptural format of a figure on a pedestal or plinth. Yet the construction as a whole is a mangled mess of plaster, wire, metal mesh, buttons, and newspaper clippings. Granted, it is just a "model," but it shows no sign of developing into the exalted stuff of monuments. His choice of the word "model" becomes part of the irony. The most legible aspect of the work is the newspaper clipping pasted on one side. It includes a grid of statistics on the number of forces killed, wounded, imprisoned, or missing, and, finally, the total number of casualties during World War II. The newspaper name and the captions are unreadable, covered by plaster and dabs of paint. Watts also purposefully obscured the names of the nation-states associated with each set of harrowing numbers. The column of the grid with the names of countries is ripped down the center and folded around a corner of the cube, so that one has difficulty reading the horizontal line of information from country to casualties. The effect of this is to dissociate the work from issues of nationhood or patriotism and to focus the viewer's attention solely on the massive cost of war. The concern here is with the devastation to human life in general, not American lives or Turkish lives in particular, and how patriotism can have the effect of valuing the lives of some individuals over others based on an arbitrary border circumscribing a rigid sense of "home" or "faith"—that some individuals are more "blessed" than others. Watts underscored this point by adhering little pieces of red, white, and blue material, resembling flags or more aptly tatters of flags.

With its exposed wires and knobs, including what looks like it could be an explosive device tucked into one side, the work is visibly mechanical—referencing the technology underlying the death and destruction of the war—if not actually functional. In light of *Model for Monument to D.A.R.*, the male figure inside the flags in *Guadalcanal* seems more confused and trapped than safely nestled in the stars and stripes. Yet perhaps it is a bit of both, referencing a sense of false security in the flag's symbolic power.

The price list from the Grand Central Moderns show provides us with several interesting bits of information. First, the words "model for" were removed from the longer title. The work is listed as *Monument to D.A.R.* and described as a "scale model" for the "full size to be reinforced concrete about 192 feet high." Watts envisioned this as a real monument, though there is no record of it actually having been commissioned by the DAR or any other group. This is listed at \$350. Second, other titles on the list have military or battle references—*Citadel, Victory, Monument*, and *Monument to the 79th (Liberty Division)*—revealing his greater preoccupation with this theme at the time, though the show is by no means singularly thematic. Third, *Guadalcanal* is described as a "motorized construction for solo piano," which helps explain the prominent position of the toy piano and sheet music. They are the only items outside the box, sitting atop the

assemblage. The purpose of the entire construction, including the circuitry, lights, and figures: to play music automatically. Recalling Seagull's description of its beautiful color, the work suggests an ideal alliance of engineering and art.³⁰

Ultimately, it is the "messiness" of the works in both form and content that stands out as the source of their meaning. Seagull asserts the importance of understanding Watts as a "man of World War II," believing like many other soldiers in a "just war" against Fascism when he enlisted.³¹ He was also interested in US history, military history specifically, and his identity as an American. The messiness represents his critical yet complicit consciousness of, or commentary on, America. Seagull saw him "making these zany monuments instead of the traditional man on a horse" and believes that "his deconstruction of American mythos is definitely ironic commentary."³² By 1960, Watts could still relate to his younger self while seeing the ramifications of a vastly changed, post-atomic present with a greater consciousness born of the experience of war.

One year after this first show at Grand Central Moderns, Watts had a second show there, mounting a greater display of his hybrid artist-engineer skills. He pushed the mechanical aspect of his work further, including both more and larger mechanical constructions that extended into the realm of environments, with more sophisticated operations. Watts's introduction to Swiss-born artist Jean Tinguely at this time proved momentous to his development. Tinguely made his artistic debut on US shores with a spectacular art-machine, *Homage to New York*, presented in a performance at the Museum of Modern Art in New York on the night of March 17, 1960. Watts did not attend the event, but he and all his New York and New Jersey-based artist friends heard about the whizzing, whirling, combustible contraption made of scraps from New Jersey junkyards—the machine that destroyed itself in the middle of MoMA's garden.³³

Geoffrey Hendricks recalls that all the Happenings and proto-Fluxus people met Tinguely and saw his exhibition at New York's Staempfli Gallery that same year, and Watts remarked that Tinguely "was the only artist he knew of at the time who was doing similar work" to him.³⁴ Joe Jones, another soon-to-be Fluxus artist, was in fact also making mechanical objects, but as Hendricks points out they relied on very simple mechanics, adding small motors to musical instruments and children's toys in order to automate them. Jones was more aligned with Cornell's interest in the relationship between art and play, and art as a joke or gag, which made him one of Maciunas's favorite artists. Jones made instruments and toys sing and dance by themselves, to the delight of viewers; they were not only less sophisticated but also less bizarre and indeed less threatening than the works on display in Watts's second Grand Central Moderns show.

Recall the opening discussion of the critic O'Doherty's visit to this show and my own questioning of what exactly made the works "disturbing" in his estimation. Audience participation is one possible reason. It was still a relatively unfamiliar, if growing, art exhibition experience in 1962. New York saw the first Happening in 1958, and Claes Oldenburg declared them "dead" by 1961 for having become too "hip" with audiences arriving ready to be shocked. Oldenburg may have overstated the issue, but he was right

in the sense that participation alone was not enough to trouble contemporary art viewers unduly, certainly not the art-savvy O'Doherty.

Untitled was the work that caused O'Doherty the most trouble, and according to Watts it was one of his best. It included the following components: calfskin hung on the wall, a bunch of plastic roses, a green letter O, a funnel, a tube covered with numbers from a calendar, a gilt frame that sat on the floor, an ordinary egg on the frame, a stack of those little plastic measuring cups that come in cans of coffee, and plastic gloves full of water. Watts described its operation thus: "I had a sign that told the viewer to drop a quarter in the funnel and pull the lever. When you pulled the lever down, depending on the pressure of the can, a quantity of soapsuds shot out from the green 'O.'"³⁵ Apparently O'Doherty was standing right in front of it when he pulled the lever, hence the mess on his clothing. Watts claimed O'Doherty "was so stunned he couldn't wake up."³⁶ What made it disturbing was the fact that one paid money, which from photographs looks to have been five cents rather than the twenty-five cents Watts recalled, for the experience of getting hit by shaving cream. One was complicit in making him- or herself the butt of a prank.

Safe (1961, fig. 63) was another work on display that enticed viewers into a startling relationship with machines, precisely as Watts intended:

I used a black safe that you had to open with a combination, which I had posted on the wall. Until you opened the safe nothing happened; but as soon as the door was open, it activated the programmer. You could hear gongs and bells inside the base, and when you looked inside the safe you could see all kinds of things moving. I had incandescent wires inside there, which heat up like a toaster, so you could see all the way to the back. The best part had to do with an artificial grass rug in front that had a lot of brown paper bags on it. One of these was rigged up to the programmer and as soon as the door opened it would start to jump up and down.³⁷

Like *Untitled*, *Safe* did nothing until the viewer engaged it directly based on a familiar activity: dialing a combination to a lock. The contrast between the viewer's instigation of the event—dropping in a coin, turning a knob—and the event itself—spewing suds, jumping paper bags—was the real source of the works' communicative power.

Watts emphasized the centrality of engineering to his objects, singling out as particularly important the relationship between the viewer opening the safe door and the activation of the programmer. It was not simply participation but the *kind* of participation Watts's works activated that was the root of the deeper insecurity and suspicion—the fact that viewers implicated themselves directly in their truly bizarre mechanical operations. O'Doherty could not solely blame the "revolting" machine for his soiled jacket because he himself had triggered the expulsion; he even paid for it. Still, that particular machine's behavior was unexpectedly aggressive. Tinguely's *Homage to New York* demonstrated how humans build machines that repeatedly break down, and Watts's engineering objects showed that they also sometimes operate in ways contrary to our best interests.



FIGURE 63

Robert Watts, *Safe*, 1961. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, 2006.M.27.

There have been fears about the influence of machines in society since at least the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, but as a booming American society stood at the dawn of the computer age in the late 1950s and early 1960s, anxieties escalated about not only bureaucratization and automation, but also machines that had minds of their own. Given the growing discourse on computerization, Watts's works stand out for their obvious low-tech quality. His stripped-down mechanics focused viewers' attention on their own relationship to the animated objects. The most provocative works in the show were moving, both literally and metaphorically, because they performed the broadly changing relations between humans, objects, and machines while reacquainting viewers with simple, familiar objects. The experience may have been disconcerting, but there was also a humanness to it that was far from the experience of relating to the world of things via punch cards, as I discussed in the preceding chapter.

One work in the Grand Central Moderns show seemed to raise questions about life in this society that went beyond all the others. *Band-Aid Event* was a table for committing suicide.³⁸ It included a rubber glove, a piece of adhesive tape with a readymade slit in it, and a razor blade. The dark subject matter was given a further ironically macabre twist through matches for sterilizing the razor blade, a micrometer for measuring the depth of the wound, and a deck of cards for playing solitaire while one waited to die. More optimistically, there was a telephone, rubbing alcohol, and a Band-Aid in case one

changed one's mind. A tape recording from an actual suicide hospital completed the work, as if to convey the complexity of emotions represented by an "event" of this magnitude. It demonstrates the impact of Watts's ongoing conversations and collaborations with Brecht, from whom he received the assignation "event." It also shows Watts's interest in assembling collections of objects under a unifying theme as well as his deadpan sense of humor. All of the constructions in the Grand Central Moderns show were capable of eliciting laughter and anxiety at the same time. Watts engineered the rudimentary art-machines to have a built-in means of helping viewers expel any nervous energy through humor. Watts and Maciunas would soon find they had a mutual appreciation of this power of jokes and the fundamental importance of flux in life.

MEETING BY MAIL

Watts and Maciunas were first acquainted through a grim yet comedic scenario. This did not happen in person, but via the postal system, which figured prominently in both their work. It was sometime in late winter or early spring of 1963, and Maciunas was still in Wiesbaden after the first European Fluxus Festivals, as Watts told the story: "I met George by mail. It must have been Alison Knowles who called me up to say GM was in bad shape with asthma in an Air Force hospital in Germany and needed help or at least some encouragement. . . . I . . . was skeptical that such a person really existed, but Alison was reassuring."³⁹ For this semi-mythical person Watts created a special work of art. He wanted to entertain Maciunas, and little did he know how well it would go over with the patient.

The work consisted of pistol caps adhered to the backs of photographs clipped from a vintage World War II Italian magazine. Maciunas especially appreciated the image of the Pope blessing the propeller of an Italian air force fighter plane. But the real gag was that the viewer was supposed to hit the front of the pictures with a hammer until all the caps on the backside exploded. According to Watts, "GM got a big kick out of this procedure, especially since after he exploded all the caps, he set up the photos' remains for the locals to continue the destruction."⁴⁰ Maciunas found the whole experience even more humorous for Watts's apparent failure to properly address the gift: "Your letter, you know, the one to the hospital did not have my name on the envelope. HA! HA! So what do they do? they [*sic*] open to see to whom it could be & what do they find? the Hospital Events HA! HA!"⁴¹ The fact that Watts helped him laugh while in the hospital made a big impression on Maciunas, and Maciunas in turn shed his mythical status to become a real, if unusual, person for Watts.

Watts delighted in telling the story that during this time, Maciunas had to be convinced by an air force psychologist that he really did have asthma, resulting in a treatment course of two shots in the ass every two days. In hindsight, it is only fitting that their connection began in this manner, with Watts sending a laughter-inducing work to Maciunas, and that the situation had something to do with "the rear."

Once back on his feet, Maciunas turned his attention to recruiting Watts for Fluxus. He immediately requested the use of the work *Hospital Events* for his first public display

of Fluxus works, which took place in one room of Nam June Paik's exhibition at the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal. Watts agreed, and *Hospital Events* was a big success. Maciunas wrote to Watts asking if it was all right to substitute the images for the next exhibition because the "public banged away so hard they ruined the pictures."⁴²

Their transatlantic correspondence reveals not only that Maciunas desperately wanted Watts to contribute work, but also that Watts suggested he could procure financial support for Fluxus. This made Maciunas want him involved even more, as one letter reveals, "SEND ME ALL YOUR STUFF! Still no word from officials re: your application for \$\$. I am ready talk [sic] through my bowler hat till it makes a hole in it."⁴³ This was yet another example, among the many discussed in chapters 2 and 3, of Maciunas invoking his bowler hat as a presumed source of authority and persuasion in Fluxus business.

He convinced Watts to let him produce his event cards, in the same way that he was already doing for Brecht. A subsequent letter provided an update on both issues with a similar sense of urgency: "QUICK! do you prefer your events on page or cards? I am printing your first batch (events 10, 13 etc) on pages, but last batch (casual event, no event etc) on cards. OK? . . . Still heard nothing from your \$\$ givers. Don't they trust Fluxus???"⁴⁴ He also raised the subject of copyright, which we already know he was eager to secure from all Fluxus artists: "This thing on the back may bring some royalties (when performed by others which is more & more likely) if I can copyright."⁴⁵ The speed with which Maciunas and Watts got down to Fluxus business was a sign of things to come. Beyond Watts sending works and ideas to Maciunas for Fluxus production, business plans and real business transactions were the defining aspects of their relationship. The two men corresponded a few more times before, as Watts put it, "the next thing I knew GM was cured and in NYC" in September of 1963.⁴⁶

YAM FESTIVAL

During this initial period of contact with Maciunas, Watts also worked on a project with Brecht called Yam Festival. This was another outcome of the lunchtime conversations at Howard Johnson. "Yam" was an umbrella name for a yearlong series of events and objects, beginning in 1962 and culminating in May 1963 (dubbed Yam Month). Most art historical accounts of this project state that those involved originally thought of "yam" as a clever reverse spelling of "May," yet Brecht recalled it differently, saying that they "somehow came up with Yam" first, and that only later, after they started doing events, did they realize that May was approaching and "yam" was "May" spelled backward.⁴⁷ However it happened, "yam" provided them with a quizzically strong word and image to use in their products, publicity, and branding efforts.

While they organized events over the course of several months, they only produced an official calendar for the final Yam Month. Of greatest interest here, in the context of Watts's early association with Maciunas and Fluxus, are their Yam objects and subscription events. Watts took inspiration from advertisements, and was particularly interested

in what the Miracle Manufacturing Company Distributers in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, had to offer. For example, he clipped and saved one of their newspaper ads for High Crown—Simplex Ball Point Pens on which a name and address or business could be imprinted.⁴⁸ The ad emphasized the low cost of the pens when purchased in bulk (something that Maciunas became known for doing in Fluxus), and a calculation in Watts's handwriting at the bottom of the clipping shows that he seriously considered purchasing 250 pens at six cents each for a total cost of fifteen dollars. He also received a price list from Miracle Manufacturing dated December 17, 1962. Ultimately he opted to order from a local company called Pencils in Hoboken, New Jersey, and received a neat set of number-two lead pencils bearing such requested slogans as "Yam Festival," "Yam Yellow," "Bed Cricket," "Onward," and "Yes," which they sold under the aegis of the festival.⁴⁹

Watts and Brecht co-organized the *Yam Delivery Event* (1962, fig. 64) as a participatory performance through the postal system. They designed and printed an announcement, which, importantly, was not mailed to art-world insiders, collectors, or fellow artists who would readily appreciate the gesture, but rather to individuals selected at random from the phone book. Brecht browsed through the directory and drew up the list. Their random "audience" was but one way they appropriated the business model of a magazine to which one had to subscribe, or a mail order catalog from which one ordered. A found image placed at the top of the announcement depicts a man pushing an object-laden cart through a warehouse, suggesting to recipients that Watts and Brecht ran a real business with an impressive inventory available to all subscribing customers. They used Brecht's PO Box 412 in Metuchen, New Jersey, rebranded as the Yam Festival address. Yet the transactions they proposed were far from the average business sale.

The announcement states that one or both of Watts and Brecht will "assemble a work and arrange delivery to you or an addressee of your choice."⁵⁰ No further indication of what exactly this work might be is provided, so individuals had to respond out of sheer curiosity or blind faith. Fortunately for them, the artists gave individuals quite a bit of agency in determining the price they paid for the unknown item. Watts and Brecht asked them to send either an amount of money of their choosing from one dollar or more, or an amount of money "equal to the date of the month on which the work is subscribed to multiplied by the number of food items consumed by the subscriber on that day."⁵¹ The emphasis is on the performance of the unusual business transaction rather than the ultimate acquisition of the good.

From their use of visual graphics to create the image of a business, to the alternative manner of pricing and distribution, to the humor in all of it, *Yam Delivery Event* is further evidence that the artists who aligned in Fluxus did so because they had very particular shared ideas about art making at that time. The Yam Festival resonated with Maciunas's plans for Fluxus and "corporate imaginations." Watts's proto-Fluxus activities—including the constructions he made for the Grand Central Moderns Gallery exhibitions and his collaborations with Brecht—were the earliest signs in his practice that he was thinking about objects as relational within systems.



YAM FESTIVAL

PART 5

DELIVERY EVENT

by subscription

R. WATTS and/or G. BRECHT
will assemble a work
and arrange delivery
to you
or an addressee of your choice

upon receipt of either

(A) \$1 2 3 5 8 13 21 34 55 etc.

or

(B) a number of \$ equal to the date of the month
on which the work is subscribed to multiplied by
the number of food items consumed by the sub-
scriber on that day.

To subscribe, address:

YAM FESTIVAL, P.O. Box 412, Metuchen, N. J.

FIGURE 64

George Brecht and Robert Watts, announcement card for Yam Festival *Delivery Event*, Yam Festival Part 5, 1962. Offset-printed sheet, 10 1/2 × 4 1/4 in. (26.7 × 10.8 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

WATTS'S FLUXUS OBJECTS

The transatlantic correspondence between Watts and Maciunas provides details of not only Maciunas's display of *Hospital Events* and designing of Watts's event scores, but also the production of one of Watts's multiples that, among a few select others, both instantiated and helped develop his understanding of objects, including a hint of subversive,



FIGURE 65

Robert Watts, *Dollar Bill*, ca. 1962. Double-sided lithograph, $2 \frac{11}{16} \times 6 \frac{1}{16}$ in. (6.9 × 15.4 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

potentially criminal activity. In 1962 Watts sent Maciunas his drawing of a US one-dollar bill. It was the same size and design as a real dollar bill. Maciunas loved the idea of reproducing this, and quickly secured the idea for Fluxus. From the start he understood the systemic implications, and raised the question with Watts, “Can make a nice counterfeit \$?, could start good business on offset press here.”⁵² In this case, Maciunas’s desire to start a business extended to the extreme—counterfeiting to infiltrate the currency system. “I can print \$ bills. HOW MANY? What kind of paper? Funny paper? like cardboard, glass-transparent paper. What?????? You have some preferences or should I choose,” Maciunas wrote.⁵³ Watts did not endorse the idea, as subsequent letters between them reveal. Their final plan was for an obviously artistic variation of the real money. As Watts recalled in 1982, Maciunas produced his *Dollar Bill* (ca. 1962, fig. 65) from a copy of the dry-point etching previously used by Arturo Schwarz, the Italian art historian, writer, poet, curator, and friend of Dada and Surrealist artists, for his portfolio gravure edition of *Dollar Bill*.⁵⁴ The Fluxus edition was thus twice removed from the design of real US currency, and bore the even more obvious deviation of having the same image printed on both sides.

Yet printing Watts’s fake money caused problems for Maciunas in trying to run Fluxus like a multinational corporation. As he explained, “Plate may not be of use to you, since the German offset press here uses slightly different grip, unless you can adapt the grip to US offset. . . . The only difficulty will be mailing \$ bills by APO. I may lose APO deal. . . . German mail no good either, since then U.S. Customs opens packages. I will look for travelers going back to States.”⁵⁵ Despite the fact that he was trying to operate a legitimate business rather than a true counterfeit ring, he was clearly aware of the dangers of sending any sort of simulated dollar bills through the mail.

FIGURE 66
 Robert Watts, *Fingerprint*, 1964. Plastic box with
 offset-printed label containing plaster with ink,
 (closed) $3 \frac{15}{16} \times 4 \frac{3}{4} \times 1$ in. ($10 \times 12 \times 2.5$ cm).
 Designed by George Maciunas. Published by
 Fluxus. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus
 Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art,
 New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern
 Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.



According to Jon Hendricks, Watts's *Dollar Bill* "was intended to be distributed in great quantities, more like give-aways to devalue art as well as money."⁵⁶ Even this symbolic gesture never really came to pass. *Dollar Bill* was ultimately sold in FluxKits containing works by many Fluxus artists, and in the late Fluxus work *\$ Bill in Wood Chest* (1975). The work retains its importance as their first collaboration based on a shared understanding of how objects exist and operate within systems and an awareness of how their own objects introduced into a system might possibly cause confusion, if not actual subversion.

We saw how *Band-Aid Event* demonstrated Watts's pre-Fluxus interest in thematizing and systematizing sets of objects, and once Maciunas decided that the little plastic compartmentalized boxes that he bought in bulk on Canal Street were perfect for Fluxus, he had a ready and willing contributor in Watts. One of Watts's first ideas to be realized in a FluxBox was *Fingerprint* (1964, figs. 66, 67). This did not consist of disparate objects brought together into a "system," like *Band-Aid Event*, but rather was a play on repetition and difference in a single item. While fingerprints generally look the same, they of course never are. Each is unique to an individual, but it takes a close look to see the differences. The compartmented boxes facilitated such close observation. *Fingerprints* also showcased Watts's interest in fragmenting the body into parts in his works. He collected and boxed images of moles and nipples, and named another work simply *Body Parts* (1973). This use of the "body part" represented his growing concern for processes of



FIGURE 67

Robert Watts, *Fingerprint*, 1964. Plastic box with offset-printed label containing plaster with ink, (open) $3 \frac{15}{16} \times 4 \frac{3}{4} \times 1$ in. (10 × 12 × 2.5 cm). Designed by George Maciunas. Published by Fluxus. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

commodification and fetishization within the capitalist system, down to the way we perceive and relate to the human body itself.

At the same time he produced a series of *Chromed Goods* for Fluxus. His stated attraction to chrome as a material was for its ability to refract light and color, but there is undoubtedly a connection to the same concerns evinced in the “body parts.” Jon Hendricks notes the zeal for cars with lots of chrome in the early 1960s.⁵⁷ Watts’s manufacturing process involved casting everyday objects or food items in bronze and then having them chrome plated: a pencil, clams, a sandwich, a book of matches, butter and a dish, a toothbrush, and many others. The brilliant sheen gives the otherwise mundane items a fetishistic attraction. The surface, at once encasing and reflective, commands our attention. We are tantalized beyond the objects’ particularity—an ice cream soda, a wrapped lollipop—and pushed past debates about whether an everyday item can be considered art. These two things are fused into the alluring chrome sheen so that what the works surface, precisely at their surface, is their universal status as commodities.

FIGURE 68

Robert Watts, *Chromed Lollipop*, 1964. Chrome plating over unidentified substrate, approx. $4 \frac{13}{16} \times 1 \frac{3}{8} \times 1 \frac{3}{16}$ in. ($12.2 \times 3.5 \times 3$ cm). Published by Fluxus. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.



The unbranded chrome objects achieve this in their own right. However, Watts presented several in ways that make it even more overt. When he chromed a branded product, he sometimes retained the original packaging, simply replacing the original contents with his chromed version, altering and upping the allure. *Chromed Lollipop* (1964, fig. 68), *Box of Candy* (1964, a Whitman's Sampler), and *Schrafft's Chocolate Covered Ice Cream Drops* (1964) stand out in this regard, as they effectively replace a desire for fruity or chocolaty sweets with a generalized desire for consumption. It is not quite having one's cake and eating it, too, but the ability to have a shimmering box of treats by one's bedside or on the coffee table forever plays on both the desire for immediate satisfaction (candy) and the coveting of the object (art), including the viewer's ability to see his or her distorted image reflected in the object-act of consumption.⁵⁸

By March 1964, Watts was second only to Brecht in terms of the number of items he had for sale through Fluxus. That month's *cc Valise e TRIangle* issue of the Fluxus newspaper included a full-page spread of a mail-order form, listing all available items.⁵⁹ Per Maciunas's letter-coded inventory system, Watts's works were identified by the letter k in various iterations, "ka," "kb," "kc," and so on. For example, *Fingerprints*, "kkt," sold for ten cents and up, presumably depending on the number of fingerprints and kind of box.

Another idea by Watts that immediately captured Maciunas's imagination was for a series of works involving rocks. It is worth listing all the rock products as they appeared on the mail-order form as evidence of how Watts's work was incorporated into the Fluxus system:

FLUXUS kaz series, OBJECTS from ROBERT WATTS ROCKS in compartmented wood or plastic boxes, \$4 to \$20.

FLUXUS kz colored rocks

FLUXUS ky gray rocks

FLUXUS kx even numbered rocks

FLUXUS kw rocks marked by their weight in kilograms

FLUXUS kv rocks marked by their weight in pounds

FLUXUS ku odd numbered rocks

FLUXUS kt rocks marked by their volume in cubic cm.

etc.⁶⁰

Several details are important here. First, Maciunas letter coded both the entire series and each individual work in it, demonstrating his inventory's precision. Second, he emphasized the "compartmented" nature of the boxes, lest a potential customer be as repelled as he was by the thought of purchasing a disorderly pile of rocks in an "un-compartmented" box. Third, Watts's idea to categorize the rocks by color or weight fit perfectly with Maciunas's penchant for classification and organization through the form of the box. Lastly, the rock series evolved fairly organically and epitomized their manner of collaboration. As Watts described it, "I made the first box of rocks. And all the numbers fell off. And then George found a way to get them to stick—the numbers. So from then on, he did 'em. But I kept getting the rocks, I collected the rocks."⁶¹ Maciunas stepped in when Watts had problems completing the work, and Watts was fine with him taking charge of production from there. Once asked if there was ever a case when he oversaw the entire production of a Fluxus work himself, and made multiples in editions of ten or one hundred, Watts replied, "No. . . . I made proto-types."⁶² His ideas were guided by the same ideal of mass-produced objects sold cheaply, but he confirmed that a Fluxus factory assembly-line model never actually happened. Maciunas "was making the stuff personally, by hand," he said.⁶³

Sometimes Watts proposed works that suited Fluxus perfectly, but for one reason or another, perhaps lack of time or funds, were never produced. For example, his idea for a series of kits each based on a single human bodily function: *Eating Kit*, *Bathing Kit*, *Sitting Kit*, and *Sleeping Kit*.⁶⁴ Maciunas even advertised them in his announcements of Fluxus products planned variously for late 1966, 1967, and "on special order only" in 1969.⁶⁵ The fact that Watts chose the most elemental aspects of life, isolating particular activities necessary for survival, underscores my notion of Fluxus objects and events as "strategies for living"—their operations intended to raise the user's awareness of the aesthetic patterns of daily routine so that they might participate in them more consciously and creatively, and thereby enact greater subjective agency in life. In contrast, one thinks of the popularity today of purchasing bath or cookery items as gifts for oneself or others where consciousness raising about the everyday act of bathing or cooking is not so much built into the conceptualization of the production, and may or may not happen—the emphasis is on the branded quality of the items and ensuing pleasure. My point is that Fluxus attempted to

trade on both: to use branding and distribution through alternative market channels in order to push through an understanding of objects and behaviors beyond commodification and fetishization. Where it gets complicated and arguably contradictory is that Watts and Maciunas wanted it both ways: to make money and to help individuals to be freer in their daily lives. That there should be a kit with everything one might need to sleep, eat, sit, or bathe speaks to this wider and uneasy notion of liberation through commerce in Fluxus.

In 1963 Watts stepped up his efforts to realize the commercial possibilities of his "kits for living" and produced the first prototypes of each. *Sitting Kit* included a "Super Hot Seat, Buck Board Tree Seat, Turkey Call, Crow Call, Camo Net Hood, Bamboo Musical Pipes, Face Game Puzzle, Camo Stool," all contained in a blue bag.⁶⁶ Although fully in keeping with the Fluxus idea of a "kit" for the viewer to "use," the prototypes lack the distinctive character and charm of a Maciunas-designed, boxed and branded Fluxus edition. Once again, Watts's idea for this series failed to get off the ground, primarily due to lack of financial backing.

We have seen how Watts and Brecht used the postal system for *Yam Delivery Event* and also how Watts and Maciunas relied on the postal system for their collaboration on *Dollar Bill*. With this in mind, recall once again *New York Times* critic O'Doherty's review of Watts's second exhibition at Grand Central Moderns Gallery: "Eventually one looks at the innocent stamp machine on the wall with suspicion." Although the stamp machine that dispensed actual stamps was a proto-Fluxus work, Watts proposed it for Fluxus, and Maciunas agreed to produce it immediately (fig. 69). It made a difference that Watts displayed the stamps in the *Stamp Dispenser* (1962) rather than as framed objects on a wall or sheets lying flat on a table. The coin-operated machine was the interface for both the inherent commercial aspect of the project, beyond any possible sale of the entire work as art, and the viewer interaction. Only with the insertion of money and the ripping off of the single stamp as it emerged from the slot was the work fully realized.

Real stamps are considered legal tender. But at a certain point, the stamps became Fluxus items in their own right, with both Watts and Maciunas designing their own sheets (fig. 70). There was something about this little item—such a compact conflation and conveyor of image and money that one licked—that attracted both artists. The sheets were available for purchase through the FluxShop and the Flux Mail-Order Catalog. Both Watts's original work and the Fluxus stamps made overt the connection between the object and the system of exchange, but only Fluxus, with its channels of distribution, allowed for performing the system at large.

Watts's stamps and Fluxus were a perfect marriage based on their shared investigation of this kind of insertion of objects into the system as alternative or anti-commodities. Like *Dollar Bill*, however, they cannot be considered a serious attempt at forgery. They too are distinguished from the real thing by their design, hardly standard US postal issue. Although today we have a wide range of stamp designs to choose from at the post office, in the early 1960s the options were much more limited. For example, the stamps authorized by the postmaster general in 1962 commemorated the Battle of Shiloh cen-

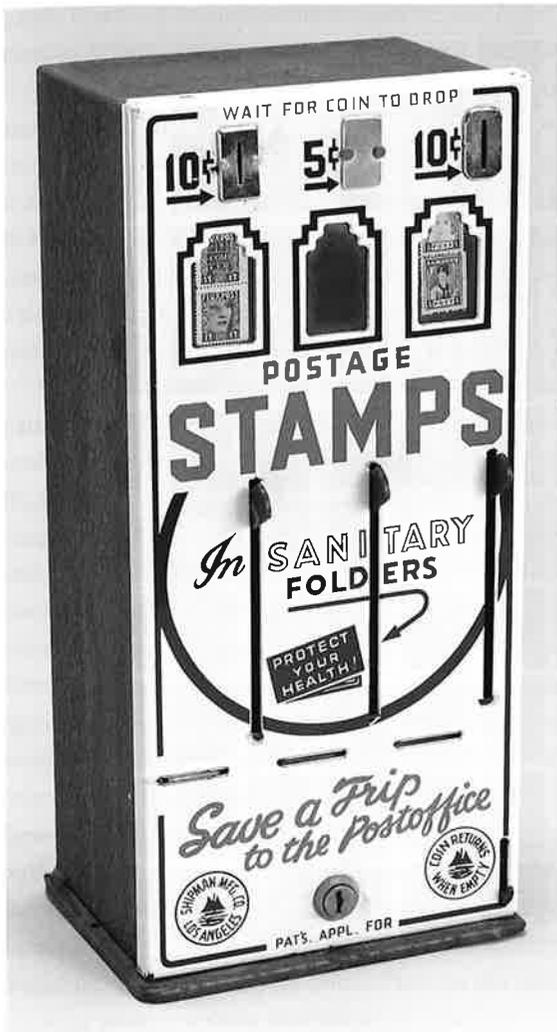
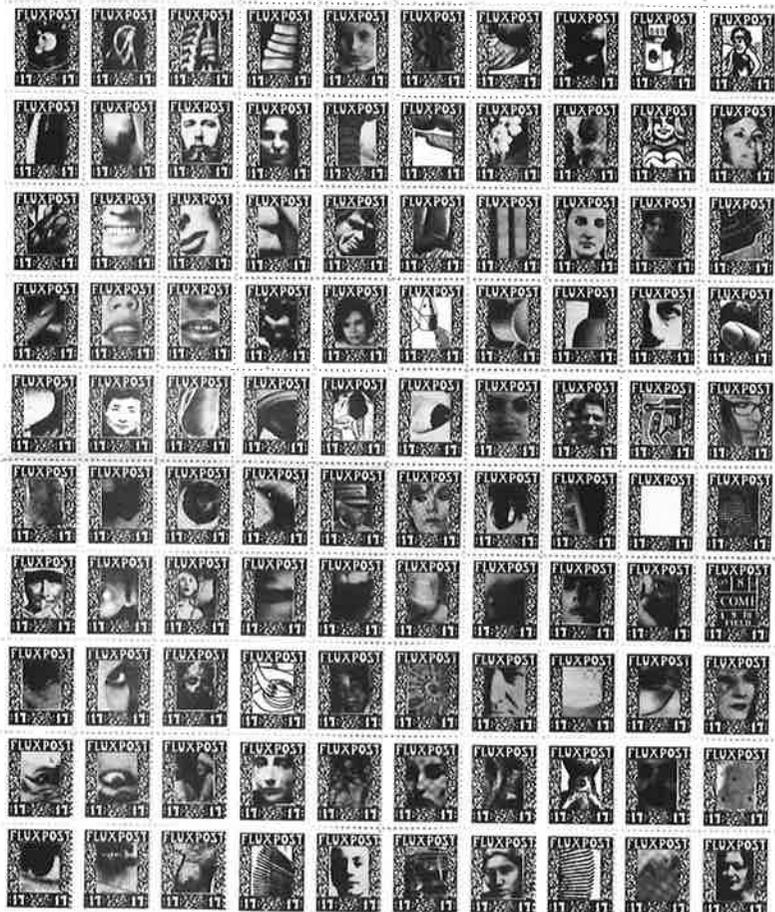


FIGURE 69
 Robert Watts, *Stamp Dispenser*, 1962. Commercial stamp dispenser, 16 × 7 9/16 × 5 7/8 in. (40.7 × 19.2 × 15 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

tenary, the Girl Scouts of America's fiftieth anniversary, the Atomic Energy Act, Sam Rayburn as House speaker, a Christmas wreath and candles, and a jetliner over the US Capitol (as airmail). Compare these to the images on Watts's *Safepost / K.U.K. Feldpost / Jockpost* (1962, fig. 71): a woman's bare breasts, a woman's bare breasts with a pair of pliers positioned within nipple-pinching reach, a topless blonde, a topless blonde overlaid with a cutout of a woman in a swimsuit, a woman's bare breasts and a thigh, and a few frames without breasts containing consumer items or letters. These hardly fit with the postal service's patriotic or commemorative themes. Once again Watts surfaced a propensity for fragmenting the human body, particularly the female body, but in this case it is imprinted on the appropriated format of the postage stamp. Humor, sex, and eroticism



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come together to amuse the sender of the letter and either amuse or offend the recipient—both implicated in the attempt to infiltrate and flux the system.

Watts's appropriation of the stamp format was neither the real thing nor a forgery. The stamps exist in a separate-yet-related third category of simulation, with the effect of bringing the intermeshed state bureaucratic and capitalist systems, and the operations that keep them up and running, under mimetic scrutiny. The stamps are a good example of how Fluxus was serious about its jokes. In other words, they constitute at once a genuine attempt at inserting alternative (anti-commodity) objects into the system (to see what one might possibly get away with) and a playful poking fun at bureaucracy and consumption—the stamp an ideal vehicle, since it operates via licking.

Although Watts began his transatlantic correspondence with Maciunas in 1962, his name did not appear officially on a *Fluxus Newsletter* distribution list or in any proposals until the fifth issue in January 1963.⁶⁷ This issue included Maciunas's plans for special Fluxus editions of single artists' works and, more controversially, Fluxus copyright. In chapter 3, I discussed how Maciunas attempted to copyright the work of all Fluxus artists, and Watts was no exception. As soon as Maciunas began recruiting Watts, he was also prodding him to be among the first artists to sign an exclusive Fluxus contract, or "Faust-Mephisto" deal, as Maciunas himself called it. His statement titled "Conditions for Performing Fluxus Published Compositions, Films & Tapes" (undated, ca. 1965), distributed to Fluxus members, including Watts, begins with the claim that the conditions stated would apply to the complete works of nine Fluxus artists: George Brecht, Albert M. Fine (textual work only), Hi Red Center, Milan Knížák, George Maciunas, Chieko Shiomi, James Riddle, Ben Vautier, and Robert Watts.⁶⁸ The conditions stipulated that if anyone wished to perform one of the exclusive Fluxus works, they had to attribute it to Fluxus in the publicity. Otherwise they would be required to pay a fifty dollar fee to each composer through Fluxus. Maciunas concluded the text by stating that anyone who failed to comply would be liable to a suit in a court of law for the recovery of any monies owed, invoking the legal system to show that he meant business.

The "conditions" caused a ruckus among Fluxus artists, who interpreted them as a kind of prohibition on their works. Watts later recalled the outcome of this episode:

FIGURE 70

Robert Watts, *Events*, 1964. Plastic box with offset-printed label, containing one hundred offset-printed cards, sponge, and stamps, overall (closed): $5 \frac{1}{2} \times 7 \frac{3}{16} \times 1 \frac{3}{16}$ in. ($14 \times 18.2 \times 3$ cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

FIGURE 71

Robert Watts, mechanical for artist's self-published *Safepost / K.u.K. Feldpost / Jockpost* postage stamps, 1962. Fifteen cut-and-pasted gelatin silver prints in artist's frame, $15 \frac{1}{16} \times 21 \frac{1}{16} \times 3 \frac{3}{8}$ in. ($38.3 \times 53.5 \times 1$ cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

"George wanted every artist who was involved with him to sign an exclusive contract . . . which we all refused to do. . . . Nobody did it, and I wouldn't do it either. So George was a little upset about that."⁶⁹ Although Watts opted not to participate personally in Fluxus copyright and royalties with Maciunas, he was not opposed to this aspect of artistic incorporation in general. Indeed, the two would find common ground on this issue in their next business venture.

IMPLOSIONS, INC.

The *Fluxus Newsletter* dated March 8, 1967, announced plans for a new corporation called Implosions, Inc. This was a partnership between Watts, Maciunas, and a third man named Herman Fine. The purpose of the enterprise was to "introduce into mass market some potentially money producing products."⁷⁰ Unlike Fluxus, Implosions, Inc. was expressly a commercial, for-profit business. Anticipating questions about how Implosions, Inc. related to Fluxus, the founders explained that the association was yet to be determined, but proposed that Fluxus might be "a kind of division or subsidiary of Implosions," since "66% of Implosions is Fluxus in personel [sic] and products."⁷¹ It is unclear who and what exactly constituted this 66 percent, but their thinking at that early stage was that Implosions, Inc. would be the umbrella corporation to Fluxus's smaller enterprise. It further pressed the issue of Fluxus's ambivalent status vis-à-vis commercial and noncommercial enterprises.

At the same time, the partners drew up an official business proposal, providing a fuller picture of their entrepreneurial motivations and objectives. According to Watts, it was he and Fine who started Implosions; it was their business and Maciunas became interested when he found out it suited his ideas of mass production and distribution.⁷² Also they needed a graphic designer, so Maciunas joined to fulfill this role. Fine and Watts were already acquainted from an earlier project. From roughly November 1964 to spring 1965, Watts and Brecht ran a performance series called "Monday Night Letters" at the Café au Go Go, primarily a music venue for jazz and other types, which was sympathetic to underground performance, whether Fluxus or Happenings. Fine was Watts's contact at the café, and he kept the series going when Watts and Brecht got too busy and lost interest partway through the year.⁷³

That Watts and Fine took the lead in founding Implosions, Inc. seems to be borne out in its personnel structure. Only they are listed in the proposal as management: Watts as head of design and development, and Fine as business manager. Maciunas, for once, did not hold an executive position, but rather was categorized as "other personnel" working on production, design, and layout. On the brief résumés provided, Watts identified himself as an artist, engineer, and associate professor of art at Rutgers, and he emphasized his experience in "research and development in many mass media processes for artists." He clearly embraced and considered it advantageous to publicize his hybrid role, encompassing art, engineering, and research. Fine listed himself as having "experience in Management Consulting, Survey and Market Research," although at the time he was an

instructor of psychology at Hunter College and a PhD candidate at Columbia University.⁷⁴ Exactly how he gained this business experience is not indicated. Maciunas included being “in charge of Fluxus” as one of his professional credentials, drawing a connection between the interests of the two enterprises.⁷⁵

The business proposal expands the purview of the company beyond what was announced in the *Fluxus Newsletter*. First, Implosions, Inc. planned to tap not only Fluxus artists, but also those they considered “the most creative minds in the arts”—all of this creative energy put in the service of new product production.⁷⁶ They emphasized that the artists would be of international renown, naming Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Claes Oldenburg, and Jim Dine specifically. There is a clear emphasis on capitalizing on the notoriety of Pop art circa 1967 and to harness it not for high-art but for mass-art purposes. Watts and Maciunas certainly understood Fluxus’s marginalized position vis-à-vis arts institutions and the marketplace compared to their peers who more actively performed as the new Pop art darlings of the contemporary scene. These big names of Pop would grant Implosions, Inc. recognition, credibility, and connections beyond what Fluxus could generate on its own. The partners believed that Implosions, Inc. could be the perfect vehicle for merging the talents and interests of artists in both realms who were already acquainted.

For example, Watts was friends with Lichtenstein from their time teaching together at Rutgers in the 1950s. Watts and Maciunas knew Oldenburg and Warhol, without being great friends. Oldenburg had for a brief spell been interested in participating in Fluxus, and he and Maciunas even developed an idea for starting their own company called Multiples, which was never realized. Famous footage from Jonas Mekas’s 1992 film *Zefiro Torna, or, Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas* shows Warhol, as well as Yoko Ono and John Lennon, at one of Maciunas’s dumpling parties. Still, since none of these more famous Pop artists had actually confirmed their involvement in Implosions, Inc., employing their names in the proposal was a clear publicity and marketing strategy by the partners.

Second, the proposal included a research and development division, to be overseen by Watts. Here his artist-as-researcher role took on an added business dimension. In Implosions, Inc. Watts saw a chance to connect not only art and science but also business at the level of creativity. As I discussed in the previous chapter regarding Brecht’s work at Johnson & Johnson, any smart company looking to grow had to make R&D essential, and Implosions, Inc. was no different.

Third, the company would stay out of the realm of production, prioritizing their role as developers and distributors. This was an important decision. Arguably the biggest obstacle to putting art into mass production, in historical attempts from Bauhaus to Fluxus, was a lack of ample means of production. By contracting production out to other companies, Implosions, Inc. eliminated the need for a huge capital outlay (which they didn’t have) for production facilities, and instituted a division (and shopping out) of labor so that those with the infrastructure, skills, and experience to industrially produce their art would be paid to do so, and they could focus on their own strengths: ideas, publicity, and distribution.

That said, while the goal of Implosions, Inc. was to put art into mass production for profit, its role as an R&D and distribution company signaled its participation in the broader historical economic shift away from manufacture in the United States, and in this way contributed to the particularities of Fluxus's "corporate imaginations," visualizing the change toward not only an increasingly corporatized society, but also, more specifically, a technology-, information-, and service-based society. This was the strongest message of the proposal: artists must take advantage of new technologies and materials to create art for a mass audience. The partners acknowledged the history of mechanical reproducibility, but argued that few artists had taken advantage of this. With the development of Pop art, artists were moving more in this direction with a greater willingness "to create specifically for mass production." Hence, the timing was right to form a company dedicated to the full "commercial exploitation of this concept."⁷⁷

Implosions, Inc.'s non-production orientation and the partners' "white-collar" roles were reflected in the proposed yearly budget. The largest in-house outlays were for office operation and equipment (\$9,000); salaries, particularly for those involved in merchandising and sales (\$10,000); and R&D (\$12,000). Production costs represented the single largest portion of the budget, but this was for externally contracted work, not what actually happened inside the company itself. The total budget was set at \$101,000.⁷⁸ Exactly how they raised the funds to get the company started remains uncertain. There is no documentation stating to whom they sent the proposal or who ultimately invested with them in the business. What is clear is that they put together enough money to begin operations, contracting the production of items and distributing them through both mail-order and retail outlets. As Watts recalled, the company Paraphernalia had Implosions, Inc. items for sale in all of their New York boutiques.⁷⁹

In conjunction with the proposal, the partners, and especially Watts, composed lists of "initial prototypes and samples" and "projected projects." From stick-ons to sunglasses, chromed objects, various plastic articles, umbrellas, perfume, fish tanks, paperweights, clocks, vacuum-formed and molded articles, inflatables, printed vinyl and polyethylene items, Velcro items, electric devices, selected clothing, and soap, Watts's lists were endless, and all items were up for consideration by Implosions. His emphasis on new materials was important to all of the partners, but also reveals the strong influence of his engineering background and prior research in new media on the company's direction.

The first lists of proposed products (either typed drafts with handwritten marginal notes or entirely handwritten) are interesting for both the variety of products and the attribution of several to specific Pop artists. Apparently, Lichtenstein was in the process of making a pair of sunglasses; Lichtenstein, Warhol, Oldenburg, and perhaps Dine and Rosenquist were developing stick-ons; and Warhol was conceiving some kind of plastic bags.⁸⁰ If the lists are to be believed, the artists named in the main business proposal had indeed already been contacted and responded positively. No doubt a boon for the fledgling business. Yet evidence of their fabrication through Implosions, Inc. is lacking.

Watts's stick-on tattoos were among the first items put into production. He seemed proud to admit that the tattoo designs were acquired by less than ethical methods: "The tattoos were a product of Implosions. . . . Some were standard high quality, like real American tattoos, you know, seamen tattoos. We ripped off the Seamen's Institute in New York, we photographed all their tattoos. We weren't supposed to. We conned 'em in some way . . . and then we made one sheet of those, which were very beautiful."⁸¹ The story reveals that even after forming a commercial company, the artists did not abandon the unconventional, even unseemly, business practices that they, especially Maciunas, at times executed in Fluxus.

Their dubious design efforts were rewarded when the retail company Paraphernalia in New York placed the first tattoo order. Watts said he designed six or seven sheets and had them mass-produced, packaged, and distributed for sale in Paraphernalia's different boutiques in the city.⁸² The border of these sheets bears the text "Fluxus 301 ©1967, By Implosions, INC. exclusively for Paraphernalia," suggesting that it was worthwhile to make an exclusive financial deal and that the partners agreed to publicly link Fluxus and Implosions. Several dress houses also ordered the tattoos, and Watts explained how they incorporated their product into the fashion: "We'd take a tattoo which we'd hang on a hanger with a dress, like a throwaway," a practice that Watts ultimately found "not very interesting."⁸³

In line with his Fluxus branding efforts, Maciunas's graphic design duties for Implosions, Inc. included making labels for individual products as well as the company logo. His Fluxus style is evident in his Implosions work, notably minus the anachronistic visual flourishes. The company logo is simple and clean: white text on a black circle provides the 54 Bond Street address and phone number of the business, below which is an unconventional visual take on the company name: a crunched three-line version of "Implosions," where the second i of this word also serves as the i of the adjacent INC to denote incorporation. Maciunas's logo was not always used on product packaging but was ever present as the company letterhead.

As happened with Watts's stamps, Maciunas got interested in the tattoos and began designing his own. He completed a set of jewelry designs for ornate necklaces, earrings, and more. The paper stick-ons that materialized hardly look acceptable to complement the formal attire for which they were theoretically matched. The thought of anyone actually wearing them to a fancy dress event is comical, showing how Fluxus humor remained operative in Implosions, Inc.

Along with the tattoos, the most popular and humorous Implosions, Inc. product was Watts's underwear. He designed panties and briefs silkscreened on the front with images of female and male genitalia, respectively (see fig. 14). (Although in the case of the women's undergarment, any sign of actual genitals was blocked by a flower resting in the pubic hair.) Watts was certainly not modest when it came to matters of sex and sexual imagery, so one can surmise that he made a calculated business decision that female customers would prefer it this way, deferring to humor and a "feminine" floral motif.

One reason for the popularity of this item (measured in sales volume) was the partners' targeted advertising. Implosions, Inc. advertised in the *East Village Other (EVO)*, a biweekly underground newspaper in New York that existed from 1965 to 1972 and was considered more countercultural than the *Village Voice*. The ad depicted a man and a woman, bodies cropped to the midriff area, modeling the underwear, with text announcing, "His & Hers handprinted briefs \$5 each 4 for \$17." "Hers" came in white, blue, and yellow, and "His" in white and red.⁸⁴ They conscientiously, yet no doubt with tongue in cheek, especially in this particular publication, covered the male genitalia with a "censored" sign. This seems to have amused many readers.

To their delight, the *EVO* ad had a direct positive impact on sales. The men's briefs attracted considerable interest, with several individuals noting the ad when placing their orders. In a letter to Implosions, Inc. on May 29, 1967, Mr. John I. Kohler of Baltimore wrote, "Please send me a pair of 'His' in white, medium as advertised in the May 15–June 1 issue of the *East Village Other*. Would also appreciate a catalog if you all have one, I think your ad is hilarious!"⁸⁵ Mr. Charles O'Donnell of New York asked, "As advertised in the *East Village Other* please send me one pair of His briefs in white, size-small. I enclose my check for \$5.00."⁸⁶ One order came from as far away as Carson City, Nevada, where Donald L. Bowers also wanted one pair of His.⁸⁷ Even though *EVO's* underground status meant it did not have a large circulation, placing an ad there was a smart strategy on the part of the partners. They targeted a niche audience they believed would appreciate this particular product.

Alas, for a company trying to build a name in distribution, it took them a little while to get the operation up to speed when it came to actually sending out the goods. The same Mr. Kohler who was tickled by the *EVO* ad sent a second letter ten days later, expressing concern as to the delay, "In short, where the hell are my pants?"⁸⁸ Although still in good humor, Kohler obviously expected faster service. The same was true of Mr. R. S. Goodlett, who, after ordering one pair each of Hers and His on June 16, wrote back three weeks later, "Kindly advise me, promptly, the whereabouts of my order."⁸⁹ Handwritten notes, likely by Watts, on these letters indicate that the orders were finally sent, but the demand for the underwear proved a managerial lesson in distribution for these artists as businessmen.

One order written by Watts on Implosions, Inc. letterhead to Allison MFG Co INC gives us an idea of how the company contracted production.⁹⁰ It requests sweatshirts and T-shirts in three distinct series. There was the so-called "front and back" series with the following sayings to be printed on the two sides of a garment, respectively: "save me / from you," "here I come / there I go," "draft beer / not students," "make love / not war," and "satisfaction / guaranteed." The "front series" included shirts with photo screens of nude torsos (some with messages, some without) and others that read simply "Implosions" for direct brand promotion. Finally, the "personality series" traded on the growing celebrity culture in the United States, and included both the partners' personal favorites—Marshall McLuhan, Lenny Bruce, Allen Ginsberg—as well as individuals with real star

power who would appeal more to the general public—Shirley Temple, Humphrey Bogart, Marilyn Monroe. Watts provided instructions for the printing to be done in conventional and Day-Glo colors before signing it “Robert Watts for Implosions.” Below this closing he confirmed that the order was submitted, and an illegible signature next to this record appears to be that of the person who received the order for Allison MFG Co INC.

Exactly which and how many of these clothing items were ultimately produced for Implosions, Inc. is difficult to discern from the records. Beyond this, there are questions of whether any items that were produced were sold with the imprint Implosions, Inc., Fluxus, or both, as was the case with the stick-on tattoos. Jon Hendricks notes that Watts’s T-shirts silkscreened with images of nude female and male torsos were originally produced as costumes for performers in the Fluxorchestra concert at Carnegie Recital Hall on September 25, 1965.⁹¹ After this they were listed as “in stock, delivery within 2 weeks” in *Vaseline sTREet*, *Fluxus Newspaper No. 8*, May 1966, and for sale in the *Fluxus Newsletter* dated December 2, 1968. However, these seem to have been silkscreened by Watts himself, complete with a little Fluxus logo at the bottom. Likewise, his gendered underpants, such a hit with the Implosions, Inc. clientele, were also listed for sale as Fluxus items. Watts’s “personality sweat shirts,” contracted for production from Allison MFG for Implosions in 1967, were also among the Fluxus products planned for that year, according to the March 8, 1967, issue of the *Fluxus Newsletter*. Hendricks confirms that Implosions, Inc. produced at least the McLuhan version of the sweatshirts.⁹²

Implosions, Inc. was short-lived, and it remains interesting that the closest it ever got to defining its relationship to Fluxus was the original statement in the *Fluxus Newsletter*: that Fluxus could be a subsidiary of Implosions, meaning that Implosions, the purely for-profit venture, would be considered the larger, umbrella company, lending weight to the idea of Fluxus existing entirely within a commercial structure. And, as we have seen, the same products were often produced and distributed for sale through both enterprises and brand names simultaneously. Was Implosions, Inc. a way out of certain binds or contradictions that the artists felt in Fluxus? It was surely an uninhibited pursuit of the desire to run a business. Ultimately however, commercial versus noncommercial is a false dichotomy between the two enterprises. Rather, in hindsight, we can see a finer distinction between them that shores up my larger argument regarding Fluxus. For the brief period that Fluxus and Implosions, Inc. coexisted, the relationship was one of the overtly commercial Implosions, Inc. to the performatively commercial Fluxus—identifiable by its ambiguity and ambivalence. This is more than a theoretical distinction, which is not so interesting to me; it actually helps us understand the artists’ consciousness of working within the system and the struggle that ensued for them.

As we know, Maciunas argued that Fluxus was noncommercial while running it like a business, if not a profitable one. Watts, too, distinguished his commercial activity from his Fluxus activity, and his insights into this period of his career are pertinent here:

You know the gallery scene and all that? We were all failures at being able to handle that, deal with that. . . . None of us could get along with those people in New York. The only one who started out good and ended up bad, was able to do it, was Oldenburg. You know, he was really an interesting artist in the early days—he did some very interesting performance pieces. But he was able to get in there and wheel and deal with those high-class operators. But all I did was have fights with Castelli and stuff like that. We fought for 3 weeks running, daily, so I never got into the gallery.⁹³

The statement is a blunt assessment of perceived failures, due to which, Watts went on to say, he and his Fluxus cohorts were left behind. There is an evident conflict between wishing to escape the anonymity of the Fluxus ghetto and avoiding compromise in the commercial gallery system. It was not a case of them being against making money from their art—on the contrary, we know this was not true for either Watts or Maciunas—but they were not willing to do it at any price with respect to their beliefs about the integrity of the artist and what art should be. By these standards, Oldenburg “started out good and ended up bad,” in Watts’s opinion. A combination of a lack of business savvy and social skills and an ethical distaste for the way commercial galleries operated induced a desire to find a third way, represented most overtly by Implosions, Inc.

Watts’s account of his visit with Lichtenstein in Easthampton circa 1975 sheds further light on this matter. As the two friends reflected on their artistic careers up until that point, Watts admitted that he envied Lichtenstein because he was a millionaire, selling paintings at the time for twenty or thirty thousand dollars apiece, but Lichtenstein revealed that he envied Watts because he was still a free man. It was a moment of candor, with “free” connoting the opposite of being “owned” or having “sold out.”⁹⁴ For both of them this was the trade-off, and each chose a different path. Taking the business of art (and the art of business) into their own hands via Fluxus, and even more directly through Implosions, Inc., was a third way for Watts and Maciunas. Yet it was not the end of it; enterprises continued to emerge from their corporate imaginations.

(AD)VENTURES IN REAL ESTATE: THREE PROJECTS

At the same time that they launched Implosions, Inc., Watts and Maciunas undertook their most ambitious acts of incorporation, in the field of real estate development. To fully comprehend this aspect of their professional relationship would require a much longer discussion than is my intention to present here. The following account of their real estate “(ad)ventures” is based on close readings of the archival material. This material is copious and often intricate in its legalese, and I make no claim to provide an all-encompassing history. Rather, I will give an overview of their entrance into the real estate market, including three specific projects, namely the Fluxhouse Cooperative, Inc., the Greene Street Precinct, Inc., and the Good Deal Realty Corporation. My aim is to introduce their objectives and methods in these projects and show how they were also part of “corporate

imaginations." Moving beyond the realm of product distribution into a completely new industry of real estate, one much less historically familiar to artists, they continued to develop the role of the artist as businessman and to work the system from within.

FLUXHOUSE COOPERATIVE, INC.

Maciunas was the instigator of these enterprises, in keeping with my general argument for his role as organizer. However, Watts's partnership in the real estate business was essential. Without it the real estate projects would not have been possible, and this has gone largely unremarked upon in Fluxus literature. They announced their plans in the third week of August 1966 in the *Loft Building Co-Operative Newsletter No. 1*. From this document we learn that they planned to establish artists' cooperatives, and were laying the groundwork toward this end. As the newsletter explained, the Federal Experimental Housing Bill required all artists' cooperatives to be incorporated. At this stage, they had selected five corporate officers—George Maciunas, Jonas Mekas, Robert Watts, Joan Mathews, and Martin Greenberg (legal counsel)—and were in the process of incorporating under the name Fluxhouse, Inc. They had also applied for a loan from the Federal Housing Authority and were waiting to hear if it had been approved.

The newsletter doubled as a recruitment flyer, detailing the requirements for joining the cooperative, and naming the neighborhood and buildings they eyed for purchase. After conducting what Maciunas claimed was an extensive survey, they designated the area of Manhattan between Houston and Canal Streets from north to south and Crosby Street and Sixth Avenue from east to west, known as SoHo (or the "South Houston" Industrial Area), as the most economically viable for investment. 109 Spring Street and 18 Greene Street were available and affordable addresses. Any individuals interested in co-op membership were invited to attend a meeting on August 24 at which the following would happen: "[a] walk to both buildings will be made, choice between the two will be made, initial deposits collected, rules and regulations drawn up, etc. etc."⁹⁵ The meeting agenda shows that they were ready to move in the market and needed real financial commitments from members.

In her book on Gordon Matta-Clark, Pam Lee discusses the artist's activities in SoHo within the context of the neighborhood's wider transformation from cast-iron mecca of light industry to artist enclave. As much as I recommend her valuable account, and will not rehearse the contextual evidence she provides, it is a significant oversight that she does not at least mention Maciunas and Watts, or Fluxus generally. Their activities preceded Matta-Clark by three or four years. This matters in terms of both the biographies of the individual artists as well as the historical timeline of the neighborhood's transformation. Matta-Clark did not even move to Manhattan until 1970. During that year and the next, he began his involvement at 112 Greene Street art space, which had its opening exhibition from October to December 1970, and where he also lived in the basement. He also cofounded and co-ran, with the dancer and choreographer Caroline Goodden, and

artists Tina Girouard, Suzanne Harris, and Rachel Lew (all of whom were also active at 112 Greene Street), the artists' restaurant and cooperative Food located at 127 Prince Street at the corner of Wooster Street.⁹⁶ This was one block away from the first Fluxhouse Cooperative that already existed at 80 Wooster.

Joshua Shannon also offers an excellent account of the history of art and SoHo in his 2009 book *The Disappearance of Objects: New York Art and the Rise of the Postmodern City*. His focus is on Donald Judd, and the relationship of the emergence of Minimalism to the changing economic and architectural landscape of Manhattan at the time. Like Lee, he emphasizes the impact of the loss of manufacturing jobs and spaces—"the need for larger continuous floor spaces to accommodate higher scales of automation, together with the incentive of easy access to highways and ports, was driving manufacturers to the suburbs"—on artists' ability to occupy spaces in SoHo as well as their aesthetic sensibilities.⁹⁷

Of all the writers on the changes taking place in SoHo in the 1960s and 1970s, Richard Kostelanetz offers the most detailed account of Fluxus artists' involvement. His book *SoHo: The Rise and Fall of an Artists' Colony* includes a section specifically on Maciunas. Kostelanetz knew Maciunas, and even bought a unit in one of the co-ops in 1974.⁹⁸ This plus the level of detail he goes into makes it all the more remarkable that he does not mention Watts. If Maciunas and Fluxus remain underappreciated in this pivotal history of New York, Watts is the forgotten man. But the legal and financial records exist to tell us of his role.

About one week after the initial co-op meeting took place, Maciunas sent out a second Co-operative Newsletter. The interceding days had seen several important developments: they had two solid cooperative groups, a confirmation that they would buy the building at 18 Greene Street for the first group, and a decision to make regarding whether to buy the aforementioned 109 Spring Street or a new contender, 80 Wooster Street, for the second group. Maciunas, Watts, and Jonas Mekas were all slated for loft spaces at 18 Greene Street. The newsletter also stated that check deposits could be made out to Fluxhouse, Inc., although official incorporation was still pending.⁹⁹

The third important document in the early stages of the project was the *Fluxus Newsletter* dated March 8, 1967, the same newsletter where Implosions, Inc. was first announced. Indeed, Maciunas placed the section titled "Fluxhouse Cooperative Building Projects" right below his description of Implosions, Inc. Fluxhouse, Inc. was by this time officially incorporated. In contrast to the undetermined relationship between Implosions, Inc. and Fluxus, the budding real estate moguls used the newsletter to clearly articulate the relationship of Fluxhouse, Inc. to Fluxus: "The only connection with fluxus [*sic*] of this project is that Fluxshop will be located in one of these buildings, we will have a permanent hall for performances, most Fluxus people from New York will be housed in these buildings, Implosions will be housed there and we will have much better workshop facilities there."¹⁰⁰ There is an important point to make here, one overlooked in Fluxus literature. Due to the name "Fluxhouse," it is taken for granted that the cooperatives were intended to be an integral part of the group. From the start, however, although there was overlap—the cooperatives were obviously intended to assist some members of

Fluxus with living and working space—the two entities were not legally or financially linked. In this instance, Maciunas's penchant for compound nouns with the prefix "Flux" did not signify the same degree of embeddedness as did, for example, FluxShop, Fluxus product, or FluxKit. Crucially, what had to be kept separate was the real business itself.

The FHA mandate of incorporation structured the relative self-containment of Fluxhouse, Inc., but beyond this the newsletter suggests the officers' own awareness of working at an entirely different financial level than Fluxus, Implosions, Inc., or anything they had done before. First, when it came to real estate, the degree of precision and accuracy required for maintaining records and individual accountability was much greater, not least because the sums of money involved were much larger. Second, Maciunas stated that the Fluxhouse project commenced when they found out certain things about housing laws, indicating the fundamental implication of the project in the legal system. Not only did they apply for an FHA loan under sec.221(d)(3), they also were depending on it to cover 100 percent of the cost of the building and renovation (at 3 percent interest on a twenty-year mortgage).¹⁰¹ Moreover, it was sec.276 of the Multiple Dwelling Law, passed in 1966, that permitted artists to occupy entire loft buildings in manufacturing zones, provided the entire building was utilized. This provision, together with the mandate to incorporate, was designed to encourage officially organized occupation and discourage "illegal" squatting. Unlawful occupation was one option open to Maciunas and Watts, but this was never their interest or intention. They wanted to invest and own property. They wanted to do business.

Although other properties were considered, it was the building at 80 Wooster Street that became the first official Fluxhouse Cooperative when Watts and Maciunas purchased it in 1967. Watts explained that their initial reasons for getting into real estate were quite basic. They agreed that if they owned a building, they would save on rent, avoid dealing with landlords, and share certain things such as freezer space and laundry facilities. These factors, combined with the very good price at which they could get 80 Wooster Street, just seemed like sensible business. Watts's belief in the deal was shored up by the cost of individual units within the building; he paid \$3,500 for five thousand square feet on the entire fifth floor, which was cheap even then. He became the first resident in 1968 when, as he described it, the only other occupants of the raw space were mice and rats. The living conditions may have been grim, but the transaction marked a seemingly auspicious beginning for Watts and Maciunas's joint venture in property development.

As Watts explained, no one, including him, had very much money, but he was better positioned than most artists to enter into the partnership: "In addition to the money I put in to buy my own floor . . . I could borrow some money, and I would borrow a thousand here and there and give it to George to tide something over until some of the other people had paid their money."¹⁰² Watts's good credit was essential to their ability to purchase buildings, the general operation of the business, and his personal investment in

co-op units. After 80 Wooster Street, they moved deeper into the market relatively quickly, purchasing a set of three buildings farther down Wooster Street all at once from a single company. The large acquisition meant that the sums of money they were dealing with and their financial imbrication in the real estate business increased in tandem with their intention to build a network of artists' cooperatives. The affordable artists' enclave depended on their further incorporation in the system.

The most conspicuous sign of Watts's relative solvency was the spectacular Citroën SM he bought sometime between 1972 and 1974. The car is significant not only for this reason, but also for its direct connection to the buildings and the way Watts became identified with its European design and speed. The SM was Citroën's attempt to break into the grand touring (GT) market for the affluent buyer. It was created during the period when the French company acquired Maserati as a subsidiary (SM stood for Sport Maserati) and asked the Italian engineers to develop a new V6 engine especially for it. The result was a touring car that could travel at the unprecedented speed of 140 miles per hour, making it the fastest front-wheel-drive car in the world. On top of this, the SM's unusually streamlined body and the fact that it was equipped with the most advanced technologies accounted for the awards and celebrity owners it attracted.

Watts joined this exclusive group once Citroën exported to the United States 2,037 of the total 12,920 SMs built during the model's 1970–75 run (most during the 1972–73 model years). With US prices starting at \$11,800, it was at the time a luxurious purchase, which made Watts stand out that much more among his struggling artist peers. By comparison, he could at the time have bought a well-equipped Cadillac Eldorado for \$2,000 less.¹⁰³ But this was not the kind of commodity status Watts sought; he was investing in the foreign engineering, design, and speed of the Citroën SM. Whether commentators loved it or hated it, everyone agreed that the car had panache. Those who knew Watts say he definitely made an impression when he sped by.¹⁰⁴

When Watts was in Manhattan, he stored his flashy sports car at 33 Wooster Street among the Fluxhouse Cooperative buildings, and the premises became known as "the garage" for this reason. The tag belied the building's more interesting history as a metal stamping and flatware factory, traces of which could be seen in its distinctive features, including "a machine room for one machine—a big stamping press that was like 20 feet high. And there was this huge pit that ran the full length of the machine that collected the coolant, to cool the machine work."¹⁰⁵ The gritty, awkward former factory floor became in the eyes of the artists as businessmen an interesting stage for live performance, and they actually opened a kind of rock 'n' roll venue there.

They used cooperative money to transform the space into a theater, including a \$20,000 sound system. Like the Greene Street Precinct, Inc. plan discussed in the following section, they planned to mix popular and experimental performance, only in this case they would have rock 'n' roll bands on the weekends in order to fund free experimental theater during the week. A high point of this project was the New Year's Eve party they threw at which two or three bands played, including one on the main floor and one

in the pit at the same time. Watts said they could only see only the heads of the musicians in the pit, making for a unique playing and viewing experience.

The plug was pulled on their rock 'n' roll / experimental theater enterprise when the building's co-op board, the Grand Street Artists Cooperative, kicked them out for excessive noise. This reminds us that although the buildings were all affiliated with Fluxhouse Cooperative, Inc., they each had an independent board that determined what happened inside the walls. Despite the venue's short life, all was not lost for performance in the space. In 1968 an experimental theater company called the Performance Group (founded in 1967) bought the space, owning and running it as shareholders in the Grand Street Artists Cooperative. It was reopened as the Performance Garage, a fitting tribute to its days sheltering Watts's Citroën. Watts and Maciunas's desire to become New York entertainment moguls may have gone unfulfilled, but experimental theater did get a permanent new home.

Another dimension of their real estate business was renovation. All of the buildings they purchased had to be upgraded to be suitable for habitation. This meant carpentry, plumbing, and electrical work. Maciunas oversaw the operations more than Watts, but it is clear that the latter's background in engineering came in handy. In response to an interviewer's question about an incident of faulty wiring, Watts explained, "Well, see that was the first building, and we trained people we picked off the street—hippies. And that electrical is probably done by Kevin, probably his first job. So it might not be very good. I taught him how to do electrical on my floor, so I could supervise him. . . . There was nothing wrong with my electrical. But I supervised it."¹⁰⁶ Beckoning hippies off the street, including the inexperienced "Kevin," was indicative of their unconventional methods, cutting corners to save money on labor while providing jobs to often less-than-skilled people who needed them. Occasionally the cooperative residents suffered for the lack of expertise, proving a source of frustration.

Sometimes they hired professionals, but even this got them into trouble once or twice, including the infamous dispute between Maciunas and an electrician he contracted to work at 141 Wooster Street. As Watts told the story, there was a disagreement of \$2,000 on the payment of a contract originally worth \$12,000, the electrician believing he was owed this additional money and Maciunas refusing to pay it. The electrician grew impatient and came looking for Maciunas at Wooster Street for a series of days. During this time Maciunas was ambushed, beaten, and severely injured, resulting in the loss of one eye. Whether this was instigated by the electrician remains unclear; neither the police nor anyone else ever proved it. However, Watts claimed that everyone assumed it was the electrician who "set up his buddies to beat George up."¹⁰⁷

GREENE STREET PRECINCT, INC.

I shall return to Fluxhouse Cooperative, Inc., but first I want to introduce a separate but related project that Watts and Maciunas developed at the same time called the Greene Street Precinct, Inc. It is connected to Fluxus in that they intended to house it in the

cooperative building at Greene Street, and announced it contemporaneously to Implosions, Inc. and Fluxhouse, Inc., though in a separate proposal. It is another underexamined project, and fascinating for the ways it further complicated the artists' relationship to the system.

The opening line of the proposal for Greene Street Precinct, Inc. states that it would be a company, and the document as a whole represents the most thorough and convincing of all their business plans. It stands out for its absolute emphasis on entertainment. As I discussed in previous chapters, Maciunas claimed that Fluxus was related to jokes, gags and vaudeville, and his 1965 "Fluxmanifesto on Fluxamusement" sought "to establish artists' nonprofessional, nonparasitic, nonelite status in society. . . . Art-amusement must be simple, amusing, concerned with insignificances, have no commodity or institutional value."¹⁰⁸ An element of entertainment ran through Fluxus. But Greene Street Precinct, Inc. transforms the manifesto on art amusement into a clear-cut business plan. Maciunas and Watts proclaimed themselves president and vice president, respectively, and announced the two-pronged business approach of the company: 1) a unique entertainment and game environment, and 2) the development, distribution, and sale of a new product line.¹⁰⁹ In contrast to Fluxamusement, the Greene Street Precinct, Inc. was intended to generate value explicitly through commodity exchange.

All of this was expressed succinctly in the proposed budget. As co-managers of the venue, Watts and Maciunas were to be retained on a yearly salary of \$5,000 each. The bulk of their expenses would go toward paying the musical acts and advertising. To generate income, they planned on charging two dollars per person admission, remaining open from ten to four o'clock daily, and estimated a clientele of three hundred persons per day. Income from shops was estimated at an average of one dollar per person per visit. They calculated income at twice that of money spent, for a yearly profit of \$90,000.

If the budget seems straightforward, the rest of the proposal is not. I believe the complexity revolves around their positive embrace of the term "entertainment" in contrast to the more critically discerning "amusement." The difference is important. Entertainment is recognized as a major organized industry; amusement is not, unless one is referring to the specialized sector of amusement parks. This extends to the role of the individual as well. Many professionals identify as "entertainers," but how often do you hear someone say they earn their living as an "amuser"? Entertainment is the for-profit sector of mass culture—the sector in which they wished Greene Street Precinct, Inc. to operate.

The word also raises questions about their target audience. Maciunas and Watts were smart in this regard. Rather than abandoning their base in the underground arts scene in an attempt to go completely mainstream and commercial, they saw that base as a valuable marketing tool, and asserted their credentials accordingly: "The management has proven experience and reputation in providing the best for underground and avant-garde audiences over the past ten years. Both the President and Vice-President are internationally renowned artists who have been leaders in the field of happenings, avant-garde theatre, and environmental works since their inception in 1958."¹¹⁰ Yet they also

stressed that “each have had business experience with the preferred audience and potential market.”¹¹¹ Initially they would target the “underground and avant-garde” audience they knew best, which other entertainment entrepreneurs might not have access to, and grow their clientele outward from there. They wished to be seen as equally experienced and adept at both art and business to convince potential investors that they brought a unique plan to the negotiating table: usher a peripheral, bohemian arts audience into the realm of commercial entertainment consumption, build on this to reach a wider demographic, and generally compete with the major nightlife establishments in the city.

Location also mattered. Based on their research of the contemporary nightlife scene, they believed that their geographic proximity to underground culture could help them capitalize on the dearth of venues in the area between Houston and Canal. Their ability to provide entertainment in this underrepresented part of the city would pose a clear alternative to the concentration of venues in uptown Manhattan. The closest venue to where and what they proposed was the Café au Go Go, located in the basement at 152 Bleecker Street in the Village. Jazz musicians, comedians, and many Fluxus and Happenings artists performed there, including Brecht and Watts, who made it the home of their short-lived performance series. Café Wha? was another Village landmark where folk singers, rock musicians, comedians, artists, poets, beatniks, and anarchists performed and gathered, and tourists flocked to see these “exotic breeds.”¹¹² But the owner closed its doors in the late 1960s (it reopened under new ownership in the 1970s and 1980s). Beyond this there were some bars and clubs on the East Side, like the 82 Club, the Electric Circus, and the Dom, and the Fillmore East, which catered to rock music and the alternative social scene of artists and musicians. By comparison, the area between Houston and Canal, with its dimly or unlit streets and abandoned warehouses, was a ghost town at night. Part of Maciunas and Watts’s pitch was the assertion that their pioneering move into the area could open up the market for future investments by themselves or others. They demonstrated a strong awareness of the need to not only make their specific enterprise look attractive, but also suggest how it might generate further opportunities within the industry at large.

Audience and location were central points in their proposal, but ultimately they would have to deliver on the character of the venue and product. What exactly would any potential investor be supporting? By their account, the existing market was saturated with a uniform type of stale entertainment, making the timing right for what they called their “total entertainment environment.”¹¹³ The venue would house a discotheque on the ground floor; shops, booths, and concessions on the second floor; and anything from artistic experimentation to more shopping on a flexible mezzanine level. Musically, the most popular genres would take center stage, with the discotheque featuring live rock ‘n’ roll and blues groups, with only the occasional jazz or new music performance (still seen as for more niche audiences). The disco would be the first space that guests entered when they arrived, and presumably the most familiar to a wider audience in terms of nightlife experience. It would serve as the friendly face of the venue. If club-goers wanted

a break from the music or dancing they could skip up to the second floor and engage in another familiar activity, albeit in an unconventional context. Shopping was possible at booths and concession stands, and at automated dispensing machines—the biggest selling point as far as the artists as businessmen were concerned. The machines featured in plans for a “specially designed automated food, drink and game lounge,” and also in their notion of the “total entertainment environment” where “new items will be dispensed from machines . . . together with play-game machines. . . . Roughly half this floor will contain another machine environment—the latest in food and drink dispensing.”¹¹⁴ The proposal states that the use of machines manifested “a new concept in audience-environment participation.”¹¹⁵

This idea comes to life when we consider the array of machines they proposed: not just food and drink machines, but a jukebox, machines related to cigarettes, cigars, and toiletries in the washroom, where drugs and “funny objects” would also be available, game machines, photo machines, a plastic sealer, a Xerox machine, machines to dispense stamps and postcards, a movie viewing machine, and a weighing scale with fortune-telling cards. Taken together they suggest some kind of bizarre shop-lounge-amusement park-office. Once could variously take drugs, finish up some last-minute photocopying for work, or both at once—a new kind of “audience-environment participation,” indeed.

Two deeper points emerge. First, the machines were seen as vehicles not simply for dispensing new products but also for actively promoting shopping as a leisure-time activity. “Shopping will become an entertainment,” they asserted.¹¹⁶ Second, the machines were meant to merge the act of consumption in the commercial realm with audience participation in the artistic realm. As a new hybrid consumer space emerged, so too would a new hybrid consumer subject in the form of a patron-shopper-audience member: one who pays to enter the club, listens to live music, and buys stuff for sale on site. This hybrid subject would be activated first via consumerist choice, and secondarily through the specific content of the purchase.

Watts and Maciunas’s attitude toward advertising and branding was integral to this. We have seen how the two of them designed and produced objects for Fluxus and Implosions, Inc., and with Greene Street Precinct, Inc. they proposed yet another new brand. The Greene Street line, they claimed, would benefit from their prior experience combined with a skillfully directed advertising campaign.

The symbolism of the mezzanine as an “in between” level is not lost here: the space in the building where high and low, popular and avant-garde, would coexist. Possible experiments might include unconventional artist and audience arrangements and changing environmental factors (lighting, sound) to present live entertainment in new ways. The fact that the mezzanine is not usually considered in the overall floor count of a building would have imbued the proposed activities with a surreptitious quality; they would be available to curious patrons without detracting from the disco or shopping on the surrounding floors.

Even the two main floors would be constructed for maximum flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing tastes in popular music and entertainment in ways that uptown night-spots could not, hampered as they were by space limitations, inflated real estate values, and high operating costs, not to mention the presumed conservative expectations of their patrons. With the flexibility afforded by a multi-floor converted loft space, Greene Street Precinct, Inc. could more easily align with both popular culture (entertainment) and avant-garde new media (environment) and thereby speak to their intended mixed demographic. Their foothold in underground culture enabled them to distinguish themselves, to offer something fresh within a stale marketplace. Yet the proposal lacks any avant-garde rhetoric that could potentially alienate them from a wider audience. Their unconventional approach to entertainment comes across as user friendly: a de-radicalized avant-garde in the service of commercial enterprise.

The point I wish to underscore is that this project did not represent a radical break with Fluxus, as if between commercial (Greene Street Precinct) and noncommercial (Fluxus) behaviors. Rather, the projects from Fluxus to Implosions, Inc. to Greene Street Precinct, Inc. existed in a continuum of ideas and strategies for being a consciously critical artist in the capitalist system at that time. The official companies started by Watts and Maciunas shifted their "corporate imaginations" from the general Fluxus strategy of ambivalent simulation to overt engagement. Ostensibly music and shopping could be the initial draw, but an experimental performance or object dispensed from a machine might interrupt a more passive viewing experience to alter one's perspective on art, entertainment, or life—these were all seen as possibilities inside the new hybrid space for a new hybrid consumer subject. When Maciunas and Watts said they could provide "the best value in real entertainment," they meant that they could use commercial channels to induce a consciousness-raising experience.

GOOD DEAL REALTY CORPORATION

Fluxhouse Cooperative, Inc. was the first corporation they, or anyone else, founded for property investment inside the Houston-to-Canal corridor, but it was not the last. In 1973 Watts and Maciunas incorporated Good Deal Realty in order to purchase the building at 141 Wooster Street and add it to their cooperative network. A trail of financial papers reveals the intricacies of this deal. Even before they closed on the building purchase, an agreement was in place to transform it into a cooperative, a necessary step in the process. A legal document dated August 27, 1973, states that individuals organized as the entity Joint Venturers agreed to make contributions to a common fund for the purpose of purchasing the property 141 Wooster Street from George Maciunas and Robert Watts as agents of Good Deal Realty Corp. It was made clear that although Good Deal Realty Corp. did not yet own the building, they would shortly, and the transaction would proceed as follows: "Contract of sale between Good Deal Realty Corp and Joint Venturers as the

purchasers will be entered on August 29, 1973 after which the escrow moneys provided by the Joint Venturers will be used by Good Deal Realty Corp. as part of purchase money to obtain title on August 31, 1973.¹¹⁷ The closing and transfer to the Joint Venturers was not scheduled until March 1974. The money involved included a total cost of \$690,000, to be paid by Joint Venturers to Good Deal Realty Corp, of which \$50,000 was to come at the time of the contract and \$190,000 at closing. The document also lists the members of Joint Venturers who agreed to contribute and in what amount by August 29, including: Taubin Realty Corp. (Amy Taubin), \$24,000 for the front halves of floors six and seven; Shirley Smith, \$7,000 for the rear of floor seven; and Robert M. Watts, \$24,000 for the entire third floor. Watts's signature next to this sum suggests that whether it was through his earnings from previous real estate deals, a line of credit, or a combination of both, he had access to considerable sums.

This agreement that effectively set up the cooperative ownership of the building became binding on August 31 with the final sale and conveyance of the property to Good Deal Realty Corp., which was announced to the tenants of the premises in a letter from the previous owners, M.L.C. Management Co. Watts was not only a co-owner of the building via Good Deal Realty, he also became a cooperative member and tenant when he signed his lease the following day. The document granted him rental of the entire fourth floor (rather than the previously cited third floor), ownership of 28.55 shares out of a total authorized capital stock of 200 shares in the building, and a lengthy lease running until May 1, 1984. For a brief period he was effectively the lessor and a lessee (owner and renter) at the same time.¹¹⁸

Since the closing and transference of the building from Good Deal Realty Corp. to Joint Venturers was not scheduled to take place until March 1974, there exist statements of accounts for Good Deal Realty from 141 Wooster Street for the interim period. For example, the statement for October 1, 1973, to December 31, 1974, prepared by Maciunas, who is listed as the company president, records the money received and expenditures. The corporation's income was based on rents from cooperative members while the largest outlays were for mortgage payments and taxes. At the end of the period, the total amount received was \$83,878.43 and expenditures came to \$80,754.58. While it was a positive sign that they came out ahead, the difference in their favor—\$3,123.85—indicates that this was not, in this management phase, a source of significant profit.¹¹⁹

In this artists-as-real-estate-developers iteration of their artists-as-businessmen role, Maciunas and Watts relied on investment assistance—most often in the form of cooperative deposits—for the acquisition of properties. Their go-to sources included Maciunas's sister Nijole and her husband, Jurgis Valaitis. A depositor's agreement dated July 12, 1968, shows that Nijole invested \$7,000 in Fluxhouse Cooperative, Inc. with the understanding that the corporation would use the deposit to purchase the property at 465 West Broadway. This deposit, and others like it, were immediately put into the acquisition of the building, and as such cannot be considered a direct source of profit for the

corporation. Where it seems that money *could* be made was in the final sale and conveyance of individual units in cooperatives once they were up and running. This was a viable option for Maciunas, Watts, or the Valaitises at 141 Wooster Street. Nijole also invested in this address, and on March 22, 1975, she sold her third-floor unit for a sum of \$14,000. Maciunas and Watts approved and consented to the transaction as “the lessees owning record the majority of the capital stock in the Corporation.”¹²⁰

In general, however, the combined lack of capital and need to renovate the buildings caused problems in their deposit-to-investment system. Watts provided important insight in this regard: “The reason George got into trouble was that he would switch monies from one building to another in order to keep all of them going. And people in one building would be therefore concerned that he was taking money out of that co-op and putting it into another one. George just saw it as available cash and, you know, it would be repaid—just pushing the money around among these various buildings.”¹²¹ There are issues, including litigation, associated with Maciunas’s way of operating that I do not have space to address here. They deserve a separate study. As far as Watts was concerned, his real estate partnership with Maciunas ended in disarray.

Maciunas’s untimely death certainly contributed to this, as not all their financial affairs were put in order prior to that event. But the problems existed previously, as demonstrated by the lawsuits brought against Maciunas alone or the two men together by specific cooperatives in the network. For example, on June 23, 1969, the Greene Street Precinct cooperative issued a statement of debt owed by Maciunas to the cooperative for \$24,748 (possibly minus \$6,898).¹²² A few details aside, Maciunas did not dispute this claim. Yet he did not have the money to pay it, resulting in the cooperative making a legal claim against him. Moreover, a September 29, 1969, letter from the law firm of Finkelshtein, Benton & Soll on behalf of Maciunas to Deputy Attorney General George Croce averred that a \$25,000 claim had been satisfied by the cooperative’s seizure of Maciunas’s assets comprising five lofts at 16–18 Greene Street. Maciunas’s liabilities were thus reduced to \$20,000 (from the original \$45,000, including other claims pending), but his assets were completely wiped out. To make matters worse, the lawyers stated that Maciunas was unemployed at the time.¹²³ The letter is a stark indication of the degree to which Maciunas, and in other instances Watts, were financially and legally implicated in the system, often to their extreme disadvantage.

Watts blamed the real estate business in part for his apparent loss of interest in doing so many performances; 141 Wooster Street had proven to be particularly onerous: “[I got] so screwed up in all of the real estate adventure, which has taken a lot of time. . . . It still is a drag. Like 141 Wooster Street’s been under litigation for over two years. Shows no sign of ending yet—have to call my attorney tonight and find out what’s going on.”¹²⁴ In this case, Watts, Maciunas (recently deceased) and Nijole were accused of fraud and corruption, among other charges. Unbelievable it was that “thick” to get through, Watts said. The case prevented Watts from selling or renting his units, which had amassed to include

three floors. Watts expressed no sympathy for his fellow co-op members-turned-plaintiffs, claiming they were all sort of rich, not poor, artists, and that their wrangling stemmed from a personality conflict between Maciunas and one of the co-op investors. Setting aside the question of alleged wrongdoing, which I do not intend to scrutinize here, the sheer fact that the cooperative members felt compelled to take legal action signals at the very least that their real estate operations did not run smoothly.

It is telling that Watts called them “adventures” rather than “ventures.” While the term was likely uttered with tongue in cheek or even a sense of frustration, it also aptly evokes several dimensions of their business. Going into real estate was an adventure in the sense that they had no prior experience. They had to learn as they went and thus were susceptible to not only the obvious financial risks of property development but also unforeseen managerial challenges that more seasoned entrepreneurs might have avoided. It was also an adventure in that it was a real attempt to “work the system” to the advantage of artists who needed affordable living and working spaces. While it is true that the law made certain provisions for this, meaning that in their initial bids they were acting within the limits of the law, they attempted to work the system on their own terms through the cooperative form of organization and the renovation of buildings in legally specious ways. I have noted some of the charges against them; there was also the case of 80 Wooster Street (where both Maciunas and Watts resided) when Maciunas tapped into underground wires to electrify the premises, effectively stealing from the mighty Con Edison power company. This “working the system” may have backfired in cases where the tenants, rather than corporate or state representatives of the dominant system, paid the price for their shortcuts, but it was nonetheless part of the “adventure.”

In spite of the problems, their operations were distinguished from other real estate enterprises by their cooperative orientation—business and the livelihood of artists went hand in hand. Although they were serious about their investments, on which they might reasonably expect to make a return at some point, it was not wholly or even primarily a for-profit enterprise. The overarching ideal and project was much bigger than this. They appropriated incorporation as a tool in order to establish a network of artists’ cooperatives that occupied space within the dominant system by artists who needed affordable living, working, and performing spaces. Although the real estate industry of Manhattan was not yet implicated in the astronomical sums of global finance that it is today, it was still an ambitious plan to buy up property in the middle of the island and devote it to cooperatives, particularly given their lack of financial muscle.

In hindsight we can see this as a crucial stage in a long process of gentrification, a now familiar one in the city, after the decline of light industry in SoHo—from artists’ colony to Manhattan gallery central to the shopping district of today. We can identify these stages, yet they are not clearly divisible in terms of money moving into the area and development upgrades. For example, recall Watts’s claim that in the 1970s, the tenants of 141 Wooster Street were not only poor artists but also “sort of rich” people. Today we can see the manner in which the artists’ efforts ushered in the greater financial capital

that followed. Indeed, we understand that with the new housing laws enacted at the time, this was the city's hope all along. In this sense, the artists were working the system at the same time that the system was working them. It is these very complexities and complications of their relationship to the system that make it historically important. We should avoid romanticism and not lose sight of this reality. It too was part of their questioning of the role and function of the artist at that time: for these artists-as-real-estate-developers it was another (ad)venture in their critical yet complicit corporate imaginations.

6

NAM JUNE PAIK

Art for Cybernated Life

Nam June Paik was first known to us in the early sixties as a cultural terrorist.

ALLAN KAPROW, 1968¹

A "CULTURAL TERRORIST"

On June 16, 1962, Nam June Paik entered the stage of the Düsseldorf Kammermusik. He stood behind a table facing the audience, with his eyes closed and body taut, one foot in front of the other in a slight lunge, as if channeling all his energy. He held a violin by its scroll, extending it out in front of him parallel to and just inches above the table (fig. 72). Ever so slowly, with an almost imperceptible movement and a highly concentrated manner, he raised the violin until it was above his head in line with his body, testing the viewers' patience and building anticipation as five minutes ticked by.² Suddenly, in a single lightning-fast motion he thrust the violin downward, smashing it on the table. Wood splinters flew in all directions just as the lights went up in the auditorium. With that, the performance was over.

Even before Paik's culminating act, some viewers could not contain their anxiety. As Paik lifted the violin higher and higher, one audience member—the conductor of the Düsseldorf City Orchestra—burst out, "Don't destroy the violin!" From another row came an immediate rebuke, "Don't interrupt the concert!"³ The second voice was that of Joseph Beuys, the German artist and recently appointed professor of sculpture at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie. In response to Beuys's interdiction, the conductor and other guests might have asked themselves, skeptically, "Concert? What concert? How can raising a violin, dooming it to destruction, amount to a concert?" The performance by Paik, bizarre in its methodical violence, was far from the genteel percussion, strings, and winds of the



FIGURE 72

Nam June Paik, *One for Violin Solo*, performed by the artist at *Neo-Dada in der Musik*, Düsseldorf Kammerspiele, Germany, June 16, 1962. Photo by George Maciunas. Gelatin silver print, 5 3/8 × 8 11/16 in. (13.7 × 22 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

Düsseldorf City Orchestra, and not what “concertgoers” were accustomed to witnessing. That said, Beuys’s response suggests that the field of performance was also already altered for some. Paik’s speech act was in a language that some artists and musicians understood while continuing to test performative limits.

This world premiere of *One for Violin Solo* was staged as part of the larger “proto-Fluxus” event *Neo-Dada in der Musik*, which Paik organized and invited George Maciunas to join. As the artist and art historian Owen Smith has noted, the performances included “numerous pieces collected by Maciunas and/or Paik for possible inclusion in some of the Fluxus publications and in the upcoming Fluxus festival series.”⁴ Maciunas publicly revealed his admiration for Paik by contributing works entitled *Piano Pieces for Nam June Paik, No. 8* and *No. 12*. The nature of the scores—reading “place piano upside down and put a vase with flowers over the sound box” and “let piano movers carry piano out of the stage,” respectively—also indicate the alignment of Paik in Maciunas’s mind with the kind of short, simple, open-ended events he considered apropos of Fluxus.

Paik’s *One for Violin Solo* helped change the approach to the playing of classical instruments for the international body of artists then comprising the Rhineland experimental art scene. It signified a confrontation between old and new, between the Düsseldorf conductor on one side and Paik and his supporter Beuys on the other, between a

tradition of Western classical music and an entirely different notion of what music and performance might be. Above all, in the early 1960s, it signaled the destruction of European orchestral harmonics and the rejection of artisanal labor for conceptual labor. Recalling Dada artist Tristan Tzara's 1918 charge—"MUSICIANS SMASH YOUR INSTRUMENTS"—the sheer nihilism of it all earned Paik a reputation, on both sides of the Atlantic, for being a "cultural terrorist," as the American Happenings artist Allan Kaprow described him.⁵

This chapter examines Paik's involvement in Fluxus across three distinct yet overlapping stages in his career from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s: his action music, his experimental televisions, and his "art for cybernated life" in collaboration with Charlotte Moorman. Analyzing the intersections of these three stages reveals an evolution in Paik's work from a remnant of the early twentieth-century avant-garde aesthetic mode of "shock" to the specific postwar strategy of "performing the system" demonstrated by Fluxus artists at large. In other words, like other Fluxus artists, he too was "working the system" from within. However, Paik developed his own aesthetic of communication that variously fit and did not fit the corporate imaginations of Fluxus under Chairman Maciunas.

In the work of both Paik and Maciunas, the historical analogy between the human body and the social body—that could be "fluxed"—is highly relevant. Their strategies were conceived to simultaneously disrupt and rearrange the individual's system and the system at large. While Maciunas's work ultimately represented a process of becoming a conscious subject of organization in the organizational society, the evolution in Paik's work through new media reveals a parallel yet discrete process of becoming what I am calling a conscious cybernetic subject in what Paik himself described as the "cybernated life" of the 1960s.

As I will show, the nature of Paik's strategy changed in accordance with his media. Allan Kaprow coined the term "cultural terrorist" for Paik, but he also recognized transitions in his practice: "He has put aside, for the time being, dramatic performance for a medium that seems cool and detached. Yet his electronic 'invasion' of standard video transmission is merely a sophisticated analog to his former activities as terrorist of aesthetic expectations."⁶ Of particular relevance here are the claims that Paik's move into video seemed "cool" and "detached" and at the same time constituted a more "sophisticated" version of his earlier strategy of shock. Indeed, as Paik developed his practice from "action music" through "experimental televisions" to a union of embodied performance and electronics in his "art for cybernated life" there was a parallel shift in the position and role of the artist. His earliest works that shocked his audiences also represented a notion of the avant-garde artist as somehow in front of or outside the system. When he started experimenting with electronics, he began to evolve his aesthetic strategy from shock to "negative feedback" as a historically specific understanding of the artist's own systemic implication. The strategy had to be one of working the system from within, and it directly informed his participation in Fluxus.

Paik was situated variously at the core, on the periphery, or outside of the group, either through his own choices or Maciunas's decrees. As Paik's strategy developed he was sometimes closer to and other times further away from Maciunas's ideal of the egoless, self-regimented Fluxus worker—his artist as organizer—whom he might in turn “incorporate” into the Fluxus system. In 1991 Paik looked back on his artistic relationship with Maciunas, offering an important insight that guides my study: “George Maciunas has never liked *my expressive side*, so he said one day that he preferred my videos to my performances, because the videos are so dry and *non-expressive*. But I have always found it difficult to divorce myself from my ego. I have always felt that my artistic goal should be higher than my personal ego, but sometimes you need the ego to be able to control the artistic ideas.”⁷ Expressive and non-expressive, ego and egoless, cultural-terrorist-turned-cyber-pirate and organization man: these dichotomies fueled the debates between Paik and Maciunas. How could Paik fit or not fit into corporate imaginations? How might Maciunas's models of the artist as organizer and an incorporated art collective accommodate or not accommodate an aesthetic of communication and performing bodies marked by an otherness of race, ethnicity, gender, techno-augmentation, and eroticism (including both Paik and Moorman) within the dominant culture?

Historicizing the evolution of Paik's work within a particular set of discourses, I argue that Paik's unique idiom—as widely recognized by his peers at the time—was based on a conscious performing of his subject position and an exploration of cybernetic subjectivity in a burgeoning electronic age. It constituted a complex negotiation of radical shifts in colonial, national, ethnic, technological, gendered, and cultural power taking place at the time.

ACTION MUSIC

Although conceived just prior to the official founding of Fluxus, Paik's early performances in Germany were what led him into the collective. They spawned his transatlantic notoriety as a cultural terrorist and compelled Maciunas to write to him. In fact, Maciunas sent just three letters prior to his departure for Germany in 1961: to the German poet Hans G. Helms, the Italian composer Sylvano Bussotti, and Paik, the Korean composer (as he was known at the time). Dick Higgins, La Monte Young, and others told Maciunas that these three individuals did exciting work, and he hoped to expand his fledgling artists' network by contacting them.⁸ Of the three, only Paik responded. Thus began one of the most important relationships for the creation of Fluxus as a transnational organization.

Once settled in Wiesbaden, not far from Cologne, Maciunas courted Paik for participation in the publications and performances he was planning. Recall that in 1961 Maciunas was already using the name Fluxus for his proposed activities. In a letter sent to La Monte Young in New York, circa October 1962, Maciunas reported on the inclusion of Paik in the first official Fluxus Festival that September (fourteen concerts in Wiesbaden):



FIGURE 73
 Nam June Paik, *Zen for Head*,
 1962, performed at Fluxus
 Festival, Wiesbaden, Germany, 1962.
 Photo: picture alliance / Goettert.

That TV evening included Pattersons [*sic*] contrabass piece, Emmetts [*sic*] 4-directional song, Jacksons [*sic*]—*Thanks II*, your line piece, which Nam June Paik performed in his usual improvisational manner: dipped his head in a night pot full of ink and drew line with his head over a long roll of paper stretched over the floor. Then we did my Olivetti piece, (which called for one to lift a bowler hat, another to sit down or up, another to point to audience . . . following Olivetti adding machine ribbon) a sort of rhythmical machine like piece.⁹

Only Paik—not Ben Patterson, Emmett Williams, or Jackson Mac Low—is singled out by Maciunas as having a distinctly improvisational performance style. In this instance, Paik’s uniqueness manifested in the way he interpreted La Monte Young’s *Composition 1960 #10* (1960), the “line piece” to which Maciunas refers. In contrast to Young’s minimal, matter-of-fact title, including no more than a production date and a series number,

Paik renamed his version *Zen for Head* (1962) with an explicit yet perplexing Asian reference. And while Young's score read simply, "draw a straight line and follow it," Paik performed these instructions by dressing neatly in a suit and tie, dipping his head in a chamber pot full of ink, and, using his head like a paint or calligraphy brush, making a line down a long scroll of paper lying on the floor (fig. 73).

The fact that Paik's *Zen for Head* was followed by Maciunas's *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* (1962) in the festival lineup afforded an early glimpse of the potential disparity between Paik's artistic identity and visual language—an Asian "cultural terrorist" who paints with his head from a piss pot—and those of Maciunas—an Eastern European "organization man" who directs dancing automatons in metronomic time. On the surface, the two works could not be more different. Yet things were never this clear-cut between the two artists. Maciunas was correct to a degree that Paik improvised, adding to his unpredictability and ability to shock, but on the whole his choices, from the title *Zen for Head* to using a piss pot as an inkpot to his participation in *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* wearing an aviator's hat as he followed the numbers on his used adding machine tape score, were conscious. I am interested in how the two aesthetics coexisted (or did not) within Fluxus.

In March 1963, Paik received a flattering letter from Maciunas:

So I will bring all these ideas and samples to Wuppertal and we can discuss in GREAT DETAIL the review project. Photographs of all your objects should go in a separate Paik box like Brecht Fluxus box. (Just a box of photographs.) I will decide who is to give concerts in New York Fluxus, not Dick [Higgins]. If I say you give whole concert everyone will agree—Brecht, La Monte, Patterson and Emmett think you are one of the best and I think so too, therefore you should have a proportional representation.¹⁰

The passage reveals how Maciunas exacted his amalgam of white-collar roles on Paik. Maciunas was "the designer" who already produced a box compendium of the work of George Brecht, entitled *Water Yam*, and wanted to produce a similar Fluxus product for Paik. He was also "the executive" who insisted that he was in charge of decisions in New York and held considerable sway over others there. And, finally, he was "the salesman" who was eager to convince Paik of the benefits of being in Fluxus. His pitch included praise as well as the carrot of "proportional representation," a place of importance for Paik among the other artists. Above all, Maciunas was the organizer who wanted to "incorporate" Paik.

One for Violin Solo became a staple performance within the Fluxus repertoire. Other Fluxus artists performed it, as was typical within the group, but no one could ever replicate Paik's distinct inflections. Eyewitness accounts of early performances by Paik attest that the overwhelming response to them was shock, an awful sense of not knowing what to make of the works or the man performing them. To measure these contentions, let us consider other action music performances. From October 26 through November 6,

1961, Karlheinz Stockhausen staged his ensemble piece *Originale* (1961) in Cologne's Theater am Dom. Stockhausen invited Paik to contribute a segment, and his account of what Paik delivered is worth quoting at length:

Paik came onto the stage in silence and shocked most of the audience by his actions as quick as lightning. For example, he threw beans against the ceiling which was above the audience and into the audience. He then hid his face behind a roll of paper, which he unrolled infinitely slowly in breathless silence. Then, sobbing softly, he pressed the paper every now and then against his eyes so it became wet with tears. He screamed as he suddenly threw the roll of paper into the audience, and at the same moment he switched on two tape recorders with what was a sound montage typical of him, consisting of women's screams, radio news, children's noise, fragments of classical music and electronic sounds. Sometimes he also switched on an old gramophone with a record of Haydn's string quartet version of the *Deutschlandlied*. Immediately back at the stage ramp he emptied a tube of shaving cream into his hair and smeared its contents over his face, over his dark suit and down to his feet. Then he slowly shook a bag of flour or rice over his head. Finally he jumped into a bathtub filled with water and dived completely under water, jumped soaking wet to the piano and began a sentimental salon piece. He then fell forward and hit the piano keyboard several times with his head.¹¹

The German composer was no stranger to controversy surrounding his own work, yet even he was taken aback by Paik's aberrant music. The sense of turbulence in the range of emotions performed by Paik is stunning. Like rapid jump cuts in a film, he jolted himself (and his audience) through "shots" of sobbing, screaming, sentimentality, and a penitent banging of his head, all in the course of seven minutes. It is also impossible to ignore Paik's symbolic play with color. He smeared himself from the face downward with white shaving cream, exaggerating this further with a top coating of white flour or rice.

Here is John Cage's memory (from 1982) of a Paik performance held at Mary Bauermeister's studio in Cologne in 1960:

I had been practicing the discipline of chance operations for ten years before I met Paik. One or two years later, I found myself in Cologne attending a performance by him of his *Etude for Pianoforte*. Behind Paik as he performed was an open window, floor to ceiling. His actions were such that we wouldn't have been surprised had he thrown himself five floors down to the street. When at the end he left the room through the packed audience, everybody, all of us, sat paralyzed with fear, utterly silent, for what seemed an eternity. No one budged. We were stunned. Finally, the telephone rang. It was Paik, Mary Bauermeister said, calling to say the performance is over. I determined to think twice before attending another performance by Paik.¹²

Cage himself reminds us that he was an advocate of experimentation, having "been practicing the discipline of chance operations" for more than a decade. Yet he experienced

even greater apprehension than Stockhausen. To say one was “paralyzed with fear” gives Paik’s performance an incredible affective power. The violence and utter confusion made Cage concerned for both the performer’s and the viewers’ safety.

Interestingly, in this particular account, Cage does not mention the fact that the entire evening was entitled *Homage à John Cage* and that the most notorious act was directed at the man of honor himself. The piece *Etude for Pianoforte* began with Paik playing Frédéric Chopin on the piano. This was pleasant and unthreatening enough, but the tone quickly changed. Cage captures the tone, but not the events. An unhappy expression appeared on Paik’s face as he broke off his piano playing and threw himself down on another piano lying open on the floor. Like a crazed man he then grabbed a large pair of scissors and rushed at the first row of the audience, where Cage, the pianist David Tudor, and Stockhausen all sat. In what can be construed at once as a bizarre homage and Oedipal killing of the father, Paik cut off Cage’s tie. He then poured a bottle of shampoo on the heads of Cage and Tudor. After this scandalous sequence, he strode through the packed space to a rear exit, leaving behind his shocked and speechless guests, until the terminating phone call remembered by Cage.

Paik’s cultural terrorist persona was symbolic but powerful. Rather than diminishing its importance, the very fact that a symbolic role could instill such extreme responses is all the more reason to pay close attention. There are obviously crucial distinctions to be made between types of terrorism, but this leads us precisely to the site where art historical investigation should occur in Fluxus—the complex interrelation between the metaphorical and the real in that particular moment. Why did Paik adopt this threatening persona? And why did it prove so disturbing?

While some of the trepidation was likely based on an underlying desire to protect the tradition of classical Western music, the extremity of the responses suggests deeper anxieties. I suggest that his action music performed conflicts and contradictions of cultural identity that triggered audience members’ own uneasy relationship to it at the time. It was not only the isolated actions Paik made on stage, but also how they were done and who did them that proved so distressing. It was Paik, but it was also the subject position that Paik elected to dramatize. With a strong sense of the importance and strategic value of performing identity, he destabilized what viewers thought they could be sure of about themselves, “their” culture, and the culture of the other he ostensibly represented in Germany. To fully answer the questions we must examine the ways Paik’s early performances were manifestations of his own complicated relationship to Eastern and Western cultural traditions, his sense (or the absence) of belonging and otherness, and a broader set of cultural conditions at play in pre- and postwar geopolitics.

GROUNDS FOR DISCONTENT

Nam June Paik was born into a wealthy textile merchant family in Seoul in 1932. Fluxus artist Alison Knowles recalls her good friend Paik showing her an old photograph of his

family in Korea, in which the individuals wore formal attire and official-looking hats, signifying their high social status.¹³ Paik, however, is credited with rebelling against his family's affluence and rank from a remarkably young age. He claimed:

I was born alienated, and in 1945, I became a Marxist—a thirteen-year-old Communist. . . . My leftist tendencies were fortified by the plight of my aunt's family. My maternal uncle, Mr. Ko, was an important publisher when he was young, but he was a playboy and a revolutionary. He lost all his money in Shanghai and by supporting the Korean Independence Movement. My father had to take care of the seven members in their family, and my aunt worked as a kind of head maid in our home. My father treated them all so badly that my Oedipus complex started there, as well as my sympathy for the underdog—I always had my big lunch of beef—boiled, barbecued, all different ways—and they could only afford to eat rice. It all made me a revolutionary by 1945.¹⁴

The familial situation that Paik describes contains in itself the flux of Korean culture during the years when Korea was under colonial occupation by Japan (1906–45). The Japanese instituted comprehensive and notoriously aggressive policies in all fields, as they sought to transform Korea into a puppet society, the *Ilchinhoe*. Especially in the last fifteen years of their rule, when Paik was growing up, Japan deliberately dismantled Koreanism and replaced it with Japanism.¹⁵ The occupying power demanded a humiliating and painful denial of self-identification, as the historian Robert T. Oliver explains: "The guiding principle was to insure a little education (enough to produce a low-skilled, low-paid work force) but to discourage and restrict the development of a well-educated intelligentsia that might breed rebellion."¹⁶ From 1938 to 1945, schools were forbidden to speak Korean or teach Korean literature, so that at liberation, youths were uneducated in their own cultural traditions.

Paik's narrative suggests that he was spared most of these oppressive educational policies. The prosperity of his family reflected elite Koreans' capacity to navigate Japanese control. They likely spoke Japanese already and had business contacts from decades earlier. That Paik was well prepared to enter Kyunggi High School in Seoul right after independence and could advance from there to the most prestigious university in Japan signified the benefits of wealth and status under occupation.¹⁷ But the preferential treatment accorded to affluent Koreans also branded its recipients "pro-Japanese," constituting a barrier between them and the majority of Korean people. The father's relative success was likely related to his animus toward the revolutionary uncle. Mentioning the plight of his poor uncle, with whom he identified more than his own father, Paik reminds us that from the beginning there was organized resistance to Japanese rule and the pressures of Japanism. In hindsight, Paik registered the divisions wrought by colonialism, which alienated Koreans from themselves, one another, and their own culture.

Paik's claim that he was born alienated, and his reiteration of 1945—the year of Korean independence—as the same year that he became a Communist revolutionary

further suggests the cultural flux of his own identity, something he shared with Maciunas. As an adolescent, Marxism was one path through which Paik could define himself. It would seem that he emerged from the colonial period as precisely the kind of rebellious member of the intelligentsia that the Japanese had hoped to abort. However, questions of whom or what precisely he was rebelling against, and the form his rebellion would take, were more complex.

Along with Marx, Arnold Schönberg proved the greatest early influence on Paik. For the fifteen-year-old in Seoul, the Austrian composer was a revelation. His embrace of Schönberg could seem like a reaction against his own Eastern culture and a sign of a desire to move outside it via the adoption of a Western mentor, only if we do not know that Japanese and Korean music had been oriented almost entirely toward the Western canon since the late nineteenth century.¹⁸ Western music had already been internalized by Asian culture.

Paik claimed that he concentrated on the Austrian out of all Western composers because “[Schönberg] was the most radical one. . . . I guess this qualification alone let me choose him, even before I had a chance to listen to him. This reflects the social atmosphere of Seoul, which was like a tinderbox before an explosion.”¹⁹ Schönberg’s reputation as a radical preceded him because the only score Paik actually knew at that point was the small piano piece *Opus 31*. He had to “extrapolate the whole universe of [his] ‘guru’ from a single work.”²⁰ It is possible that Schönberg represented for Paik, in that information-starved Korea of 1947, a cultural figure beyond the pale of either Eastern or Western culture. Perhaps Schönberg signified the artist who had managed to introduce composition so unconventional it could disturb both traditions, an inspiration for a teenager looking to break out of familial, aesthetic, and political confines and make sense of his own conflicted cultural identity.

At the time of his Schönberg discovery, the governance of Korea was shifting once again, making for the extremely tense and volatile circumstances that Paik remembered. The year 1948 saw the establishment of two separate nations run by two opposing systems. This led almost immediately to guerilla warfare, border skirmishes, and naval battles across the Thirty-Eighth Parallel. Korea’s fate as a nation and Koreans’ fates as individuals hung in the balance: “In some respects the years 1942–1948 were, for Koreans, similar to the years 1894–1905. . . . The status of Korea was subject to decisions by outside powers. . . . Koreans [did not] have significant influence over their own destiny.”²¹ Within this new Cold War arena, Koreans found themselves, as had so many generations of Koreans before them, embroiled in a bitter struggle for national identity and self-determination. The moment that Marx and Schönberg “spoke” to Paik was one in which many Koreans, including Paik, not only suffered a great shock but also perceived identity as overtly and inextricably political.

Even Paik’s newfound faith in Marxism was dramatically shaken: “In 1949 when Marxism was illegal in Korea, I hid all my Marxist books on the back of the shelves and put American classics in front of the Marxist books. I hoped that invading North Korean

soldiers would discover them. But what they did was kill my dog and eat it."²² This personal experience, amid the general cataclysm of the North Korean army's invasion of Seoul in 1950, was a bombshell for Paik. He understood firsthand how the Communists, with whom he had sided previously, could be as brutal and authoritarian as the imperialists: "White Terrorism was so rampant that we refused to see Red Terrorism happening in North Korea, although we all knew about it."²³ His memories of the late 1940s and early 1950s of his childhood as a time of multicolored terrorism gives us a sense of the cultural upheaval out of which his own persona of a cultural terrorist cast in "yellow" would emerge.

The Paik family fled Korea in 1950, assuming they would lose everything should the Communists take over the south. They stopped briefly in Hong Kong before relocating to Tokyo. In the land of Korea's former ruler, Paik entered the University of Tokyo, studying music history, art history, and philosophy. Although he refused to be groomed for the family business, his commitment to advanced studies was nonetheless a sanctioned bourgeois professional path. Knowles believes that Paik used the study of classical music history and composition in part as "a cover."²⁴ It was a means to appease his family, while his real interest resided in more radical forms of expression. Paik's dedication to Schönberg's work, on which he wrote his university dissertation, seemingly bears out Knowles's assessment that he had found what he perceived to be an alternative way to work through the established system.

Also in line with the rites of passage of young, well-to-do Koreans, Paik traveled west once he finished university. The United States was the most popular destination at the time, but Paik elected to go to West Germany in 1956 because he yearned to experience the newest cultural developments and heard that America had no modern art. The move is also interesting for the fact that Germany and Japan's allied status meant that German *Kultur* had flowed into prewar and wartime Korea. Schönberg, however, would have been an exception to this rule. The Nazis viciously targeted Schönberg with their racialized aesthetic theory of *entartete Kunst* (degenerate art). This intolerable, if not literally life-threatening, situation forced Schönberg to seek haven in Los Angeles in 1933, placing him to some extent outside of both Axis and Allied centers of activity.²⁵ The tragic circumstances of exile contributed to his maverick status.

Contrary to his hopeful expectations, Paik claimed not to have been impressed by what he found in Germany: "a superficially serious culture of postwar, middle-class art and music was stifling."²⁶ It made a difference that he settled first in Munich, where Bavarian conservatism reigned. His statement could also signal a retrospective historical posturing in order to emphasize the degree of shock produced when his own action music emerged. Or it could reveal his own initial lack of awareness of wider cultural events in Germany, such as the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik (International Summer Courses for New Music) in Darmstadt, which I discuss in another section. Whatever the case, there is a sense that Paik perceived himself to be facing the same problem in the West that he had hoped to leave behind in the East—how to escape

convention. He had Schönberg's music to guide him, but struggled to develop his own lexicon within the academy, where he stayed for his first two years, pursuing Western music history under Thrasybulos Georgiades at the University of Munich.

As much as Paik attempted to acclimate himself in Germany on grounds of a "shared" Western culture—demonstrating to Westerners that he was just as much a product of Western thought as they—his foreign manners, accent, facial features, and skin color marked him as Asian and other. His experiences as a child in occupied Korea, as a young adult in Japan, and then as a newcomer to Germany were all ingredients in a hybridized subject position that would be deployed explosively. Paik developed a strategy to play, and effectively beat, Westerners at their own identity games. He would become more "Eastern" than their nightmares. He would not be just any cultural terrorist; he would stage the quintessential Western image of what it was to be Asian. He would perform the yellow peril.

PERFORMING THE YELLOW PERIL

The shock of witnessing an action music performance by Paik was compounded for anyone who also saw or heard of his contemporaneous pronouncement, "Yellow Peril! C'est moi" (I Am the Yellow Peril!, 1964, fig. 74). It appeared in a pamphlet he produced during this early stage of his career. Several aspects are striking. Although distributed in Germany, the pamphlet was written in English and French, languages of the wartime enemies turned occupiers, neither of which Paik spoke fluently at the time. As the critic Jean-Paul Fargier noted, this generates multiple puns with *père* (father), *péril* (danger), and *pair* (equal).²⁷ The use of these two languages, the puns in French, and the fact that Paik signed the work twice—once in Chinese (not Korean or Japanese) characters and once in Roman letters—on top of the historical images conjured from the declaration itself indicate Paik's strategy to convey identity as something engendered through a complicated interplay of the cultures of nations. Who was the yellow peril Paik performed?

The precise origins of the term "yellow peril" remain obscure, but it is certain that it was first popularized in Germany by Kaiser Wilhelm II, virulently anti-Japanese and anti-Chinese as he was, in the mid-1890s following Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War (the original German is *gelbe Gefahr*). The longer history of Western antipathy toward Asian others threatening the security and well-being of Europe dates back to the Mongols, who swept over vast expanses of territory in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This developed into visions of China as a sleeping giant that, if awakened, could wreak havoc on Europe. It was thought that only a developmental lag in the science and technology fueling Western industrialization kept China in repose. Should China acquire the forces of modernization, there was no certainty as to the future security of the West.

Japan's crushing victory over China in 1895 complicated the target of yellow-peril rhetoric. Unexpectedly, the rapidly industrializing Japan—rather than the much larger and more populous China—emerged as the dominant power in Asia, and, manifesting



FIGURE 74
 Nam June Paik, "Yellow Peril! C'est moi,"
 1964. Pen on paper. Inv. AS 2012/1162.
 Photo: bpk, Berlin / Staatsgalerie Stuttgart /
 Art Resource, NY.

Western fears, it achieved this by becoming "Western" and "modern." Paik's performance as the yellow peril can be seen as ironic in the sense that Korea was the first victim of a technologically advanced, militarized Japan. Moreover, his action music incorporated technologies such as tape recorders playing both classical music and electronic sounds. He was performing his own "Westernization" and "modernization" as an artist for his new Western audience. For many in the West, however, color, or the fiction of race, mattered as much or more than nationality, resulting in the "yellow peril's" pan-Asian application.

This stereotype's perpetuation in popular culture was directly relevant to Paik's performance. The mystery writer Sax Rohmer immortalized the yellow peril in the character of Dr. Fu Manchu in 1913, as his famous lines describe: "Imagine a person, tall, lean and feline, high-shouldered, with a brow like Shakespeare and a face like Satan. . . . Invest him with all the cruel cunning of an entire Eastern race . . . and you will have a mental picture of Dr. Fu Manchu, the yellow peril incarnate in one man."²⁸ One of the most notorious villains of Western print (and later film), Fu Manchu was monstrously Asian. What made him so frightening was his incarnation of a potent mix of "Western" and "Eastern" traits: "Asian Mastery of Western knowledge and technique (denoted by his degrees from three European universities in chemistry, medicine, and physics); . . . access to mysterious Oriental 'occult' powers (his eyes can hypnotize victims); . . . and [an] ability to mobilize the yellow hordes," according to the scholar Jun Xing.²⁹ As a

propagandistic stereotype easily digested by Western readers, Fu Manchu contributed persistently to an oversimplification of the complex and shifting relations between East and West throughout the twentieth century. Rohmer recognized the appeal of (and financial gain to be made from) this fictional character, and enjoyed immense popularity in both Europe and North America with his fourteen novels and short story collections about Fu Manchu, published concurrently in Britain and the United States between 1913 and 1959. Among the many translations, the stories appeared in Japanese (though not Korean or Chinese) as early as 1932, and in German from the 1920s, meaning that Paik could easily have encountered the story as a child in colonized Korea, as a university student in Japan, or as an emerging artist in Germany, and might possibly have taken it as his "script."

Paik was keenly aware of the exoticness of his Asian body in Germany. He traded on the long-standing stereotype, but by performatively embodying it himself. On stage he was at once violent and docile, erotic and cerebral, rational and irrational, virile and effeminate, animalistic and sophisticated, aggressive and weepy, devious and forthright, Eastern and Western. The performative—at once exaggerated and ironic—destabilized the type. Familiar yet ultimately unknowable, Paik staged what the postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha described as "the chain of stereotypical signification [that] is curiously mixed and split, polymorphous and perverse, an articulation of multiple beliefs."³⁰ His appropriation of yellow-peril imagery in the context of his unpredictable, montage-style action music challenged the stereotype not through a straightforward reversal of apparently negative versus positive images, but rather by exposing the stereotype as "a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place,' already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated" in order to retain its currency across historical circumstances.³¹

Paik demonstrated a desire and an ability to exploit identity's malleability for strategic purpose and asserted a subject representing a more complex notion of difference. In contrast to Rohmer's racist constructions of identity, which could be avidly consumed in untroubled, solitary readings of pulp novels, Paik's action music within the realm of public high culture was shocking. His was an Asian body that manifestly could not be contained—it screamed, it jumped from the stage, it burst through the fourth wall, it cut things. Confronted by the nearness of this particular body in the company of other audience members, individuals could not escape their own complicated relationship to issues of otherness.

PAIK'S "EXPRESSIONISTIC" BODY

Paik's ability to perform the ambivalence of the stereotype was one power source of his action music, and our retrospective awareness of this creates a solid foundation for answering the question of why the performances proved so disturbing. However, it does not fully account for Paik's unique idiom. The way he performed a complex interplay

between East and West also made viewers uneasy. As Paik stated, "My early performance pieces in Germany were Expressionistic—'suffering' art."³² This is an important clue as to why his performances seemed threatening, how they generated shock, and in which discourses they intervened. With the name "action music" Paik staked his claim within a growing field of experimental composition, but an expressionistic language meant very particular things in the aftermath of World War II.

When Expressionism emerged contemporaneously in European music, visual arts, poetry, and theater in the first decades of the twentieth century, Paik's guru Schönberg was among the first and foremost composers to be identified with it. The scholar Quirino Principe notes: "Just as Oskar Kokoschka, from the beginnings of his creative work as a painter and writer, showed the efficacy of his aggressive language in paintings and drawings, but also in his provocative and scandalous plays, so Arnold Schönberg implicitly proclaimed the consanguinity of the new method of composing music by means of sequences of twelve notes with the disturbing stylemes of Kokoschka himself, Emil Nolde, Egon Schiele, or Paul Klee."³³ In what many argue is Schönberg's greatest Expressionist work, *Erwartung* (Expectation) Op. 17 (1909), "the hysteria of a woman's terror-stricken search for her lover is evoked by a fragmented, stream-of-consciousness text faithfully mirrored by turbulent, athematic, atonal music in free, prose-like rhythm."³⁴ Paik's action music bore traces of this style.

It was not until the 1930s that a prominent discourse on Expressionism emerged in art and music history and criticism. This proved to be vilifying within a highly intolerant cultural environment governed by theories of *entartete Kunst* and *entartete Musik*. Only in the years after World War II was a first serious attempt made at objective historical analysis of musical Expressionism in the former Axis sphere, but it could not escape the burden of a Fascist legacy and the pressures of a new Cold War. The Germany that Paik arrived in was not so dissimilar from the divided Korea that he had fled. Split and controlled by two ideologically hostile foreign powers, East and West Germany struggled to define their own cultures to themselves and to the world.

Many West German cultural critics aimed to develop a theoretical basis for the inferiority and inauthenticity of cultural styles they attributed to the East. The goal was to link only the Eastern half of the country to certain things deemed specifically German that had become shameful under National Socialism, thereby absolving the West. Significantly, Romanticism, as linked to Expressionism, was characterized as the worst manifestation of the falseness of Eastern production. In her study of the postwar reconstruction of the artistic subject in Germany, Yule Heibel regards *Geschichte und Politik im deutschen Denken* (The Search for Normality, 1946) by the German historian Johann Albrecht von Rantzau as typical of this discursive collapsing of geography and ideology: "Not only is the connection between pro-Western attitudes and rationality established, but also between 'Eastern' thought and the opposition to reason. . . . In a scheme such as Rantzau's, it is perfectly 'natural' that Expressionism should have 'originated' in Dresden—i.e. the East. That even Expressionism is, however, heavily indebted to 'West-

ern' Fauvism can presumably be ignored."³⁵ In Rantzau's hands, Expressionism fared little better than it had under National Socialism, if for different reasons. He believed that the historical eastward migration of Germans had produced a tension between East and West fundamental to Germany's character. The most worrying consequence of this was the usurpation by the East of the "real" Germany originating in the West. Expressionism was purportedly an entirely Eastern development—anti-East attitudes easily allying with anti-irrationalism and anticommunism.³⁶

These distinctions reverberated at the level of individual as well as national identity reconstruction. It seemed imperative to force the "Eastern expressionistic" characterization of the German, with its apparent unpredictability, untranslatability, and aggression, into remission, if not expulsion, in deference to a reconfigured image of the Western citizen as lucid and reticent. Consider the potential ramifications of Paik launching his "expressionistic" and "suffering" art in West Germany amid the high stakes of anti-Expressionism at the border of the great East-West divide.

Germany's postwar cultural recovery was also a search for new beginnings, a search that Paik benefited from and participated in. For music this began in 1946, when the reputed music scholar and critic Wolfgang Steinecke founded the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik at the Hessian hunting lodge Kranichstein in Darmstadt. It was the first, and for many years the most progressive, gathering of musicians after the war. Underlying the initial goal of enabling German composers to reengage with their international colleagues and learn the modern techniques and pieces forbidden during Hitler's *Kulturpolitik* was a utopian imperative to develop a type of music in Germany that was free of political influence and immune to propagandistic corruption. Gesa Kordes explains, "This 'neutrality' had a strong appeal for musicians who wanted to avoid any *romantic notion of expression* that had proven to be so easily misused by political powers."³⁷ From the start, however, experimental music in West Germany, including Darmstadt, received substantial financial support and ideological endorsement from the West German government as advised by US officials looking to expand postwar investment in abstract art forms as indicative of Western freedom and democracy.³⁸ Neutrality was a hope and an illusion.

The controversies in postwar Neue Musik centered on Schönberg precisely because he spanned the pre-World War I to post-World War II periods, with his Expressionist compositions (1909–13) and his twelve-tone works (from 1924 onward).³⁹ At first, the music of Paul Hindemith, Béla Bartók, and Igor Stravinsky seemed overly personal in style, too exemplary of that "romantic notion of expression." Only Schönberg's twelve-tone technique entailed a decisive turn from tonal formulations while leaving enough room for individual treatment of material.⁴⁰ Young composers and critics, most notably Theodor Adorno, wrote the way for serialism to become the cutting edge of West German musical developments.⁴¹ Music was to be analyzed in terms of its structure as a predetermined serialization of different parameters, devoid of the expressive properties of melodic themes.

Soon, however, Schönberg was dethroned at Darmstadt in favor of his fellow Austrian Anton Webern, who was celebrated for pushing the twelve-tone process further, in what some critics felt was a stringent anti-subjective interpretation: "What in Webern's music was a compression of a discharging *espressivo* gesture . . . became in the hands of the post-Webern [Darmstadt composers] a dry, constricting scheme of row functions and number manipulations."⁴² By the early 1950s, serial, totally determined music—not just the pitch, as with Schönberg, but also the rhythm, register, and dynamics, were subjected to strict serial ordering—was the model at the experimental studio. Detractors called it automated music. Even Adorno deemed it a "fetishizing of the material."⁴³ When some young composers challenged it as well, they did so not through a return to Expressionism, but rather by loosening form and introducing aleatory elements. Within this contested legacy of Schönberg, Paik's action music offered a different answer to the vital question of self versus form. His unique way of incorporating Expressionism while keeping apace of trends toward nonlinear and improvised composition also made his work shocking.

The obvious riff of Paik's term "action music" on "action painters" or "action painting" from the United States ensured that the politics of Expressionism in transatlantic painting discourse also factored in the reception of his work. This too informed his relationship to Maciunas and Fluxus. When artists, including Emmett Williams and Ben Patterson first, then Maciunas, and later Alison Knowles and Dick Higgins, traveled from the United States to Germany, eventually organizing and participating in the first European Fluxus Festivals, they brought with them a very different perspective on Expressionism. Theirs was based on the direct experience of a decade-long hegemony of Abstract Expressionism in the form of the so-called New York School. Many younger artists who trained in painting were trying desperately to move out from the imposing shadows of Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning by finding new artistic languages. This was even harder for women painters, and Knowles confirms that part of what drew Fluxus artists together was a shared desire to "get away from Abstract Expressionism."⁴⁴

Maciunas's text "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art," read first by Arthur C. Caspari in German at the 1962 proto-Fluxus concert *Kleines Sommerfest: Après John Cage* in Wuppertal, reminds us of how he hoped to steer his promising Fluxus artists away from an "expressionist" aesthetic mode. The "event score" was to be "a kind of framework, an 'automatic machine'" that, like a mathematical solution, contained "beauty in the method alone."⁴⁵ His words resonated perfectly with the adding-machine music of *In Memoriam to Adrian Olivetti*, which debuted at this very same concert. Significantly, then, although Paik and the Fluxus artists coming from New York all appropriated the format of the score, neither their aims nor their underlying needs were entirely one and the same.

Arriving in West Germany, Paik had a greater urgency for and saw strategic purpose in staging an expressionistic language—something the Americans did not share and could not entirely fathom. In 1991 Paik explained what he perceived to be a fundamental distinction between the East and West:

The dialectic of self-innovation is the Western heritage. . . . [It] is the incarnation of the myth of Prometheus, who steals fire from the gods. China and Asians, who live the Confucian edict of complete obedience to one's elders, have little space for individual freedom. Vertical obeisance only—China has fifty thousand nouns, and not one of them means *freedom*. At the end of the nineteenth century, Japanese scholars had to translate many European concepts and nouns into Japanese ones. It was very easy to translate the concept of *duty*, obligation. But they had a hard time trying to find a Japanese word for *right*—individual right, the right to do something or to own something.⁴⁶

Although Paik was particularly and precariously marked by racial and ethnic otherness in Germany in the late 1950s and early 1960s, he also felt for the first time a real sense of possibility for a very public kind of self-expression. His “outmoded” Expressionism in music was reinvented to converge with contemporary painting discourse, where an abstract form of Expressionism was faring much better. The export of heroic Abstract Expressionism by the United States seemed to validate, or refresh, Germany's own tradition of Expressionist painting. For Paik, an expressionistic action music was a means to partake of “self-innovation” in a new foreign environment.

Flash forward momentarily in my historical narrative: it is pertinent to note that in 1964, a time when Maciunas was dismayed by the state of his Fluxus organization, he contemplated moving to the East for the very same reasons that Paik came to the West. In a letter to Emmett Williams, he wrote:

I have to work 8 hours (as free-lance designer), then 8 hours Fluxus (newspaper, other publications, festival preparations, fixing loft for FLUXSHOP & FLUXHALL). . . . They are all very involved with their own individual compositions & have no time (or desire) for “THE COLLECTIVE.” . . .

All New York Fluxus Crowd [is promoting only] themselves.

(Japan is still holding out, but there this European tradition of egoism & promoting of one's ego never took deep roots. So I have been very disappointed with Fluxus people and am contemplating phasing out by this summer & maybe going to Japan.)⁴⁷

His logic aligns with Paik's interpretation of Eastern and Western cultural differences. In contrast to Paik, however, Maciunas was already acclimated to the Western “right” to self-expression and was desperate to regulate this in the collective. With his plan faltering, he considered going to the Far East, where the egoism he perceived to be afflicting Western Fluxus artists presumably had no cultural outlet. Japan seemed an ideal place to find easily incorporated subjects.

More than many of his Fluxus peers, Paik wanted to *become visible*.⁴⁸ He shared the ambition for acclaim common among young artists, but beyond this, his persona as a cultural terrorist manifested a desire to overcome the *invisibility* (the flip side of being visually marked as other) induced by racialism, nationalism, and legacies of empire. His friend, the artist Kate Millett, shed light on Paik's circumstances:

At Tokyo University . . . , like his Asian classmates, Nam June Paik, between 1953–1956, diligently absorbed Western music and culture. Yet even here he was an outsider; the little picture in his passport is a Korean face; *Cho-sen-jin* was a word said through the teeth even in 1961 when I lived in Japan. . . . His life as a student at “*Todai*,” formerly the Imperial University, the greatest university in Japan, still elite and exclusive, must have been full of that prejudice and withering scorn one heard always directed toward Koreans. . . . If Tokyo was hard, what was it like in Germany? Maybe he had already perfected that manner of being a foreigner, a refugee artist: thick-skinned, a little strange, a little funny, a bit of a clown, harmless, diffident, ineffably an outsider.⁴⁹

In fact, once in Germany, performing on a stage, Paik consciously chose *not* to perfect this particular manner of being “a foreigner” or a “refugee artist.” He undoubtedly had a “funny” side, certainly humor could also be a tool, but he would be violent rather than harmless, self-imposing rather than diffident, visible rather than invisible. The double invisibility he experienced as an artist and as an Asian were contingent upon and would be strategically played off one another—part of the mix that produced the highly conspicuous “yellow peril.”

Korean cultural tradition gave him further reason to produce such shockingly expressionistic performances. Particularly during the years of Japanese occupation, Korean culture was defined by a deep sense of sorrow and suffering. The typical Korean poet of that time had “a profound sense of futility that gnaws at his heart and makes him turn to a futile mill of sorrowful brooding.”⁵⁰ Even those poets who retained a sense of hope were not dynamic. This is where Paik differed from his predecessors. Taking up the charge of a younger generation of Koreans within the realm of Western “high culture,” Paik seized the opportunity to be dynamic, to perform a construct of Asian-ness that would not simply represent his own internal conflict of sorrow, anger, and confusion, but also the pent-up suffering of Koreans for ages, and the psychological effects of cultural division and denial of self-identification at large. Paik’s work was not individualistic in the sense of being strictly about himself as much as it was a performative expression of a general cultural predicament. As a non-German, he could more easily afford to act out a desire for individual expression that he himself had felt barred from in the East, maybe or maybe not realizing how it would play out in a postwar German culture that was bereft of a public discourse on recent history, attempting to evacuate Expressionism, and, arguably, not yet ready for suffering in art.

Vital to my argument that an evolution in Paik’s practice affected both his relationship to the Fluxus collective and the general Fluxus strategy of performing the system is an understanding of the fact that although his artistic identity as the yellow peril was the product of a specific historical context—a post-World War II, Cold War, decolonizing world—the operational capability of his action music to shock relied implicitly on a theory of epic theater that had already culminated in the ideas of Bertolt Brecht in the 1930s. His action music hinged on Brecht’s notion of *Verfremdungseffekt* or *V-effekt*

(distancing effect or defamiliarization effect) whereby the spectator is induced into a critical frame of mind through a disavowal of his or her empathetic involvement with an illusionary space on stage. Writing in 1939, the philosopher and good friend of Brecht Walter Benjamin offered a useful explanation of how this worked: "Epic theater moves in spurts. Its basic form is that of *the shock* with which the single, well-defined situations of the play collide. . . . This brings about intervals which, if anything, impair the illusion of the audience and paralyze its readiness for empathy."⁵¹ Action music by Paik was full of such illusion-impairing intervals. Recall *Etude for Pianoforte*, where he literally burst through the fourth wall, attacking John Cage and David Tudor in the audience.

During this stage in his career, Paik articulated subjective difference through violent, expressionistic, embodied performance based on an understanding of shock that was most conversant with early twentieth-century avant-garde theater discourse. Although he brought a historically specific consciousness of racial, ethnic, and national difference to the stage, his strategy was informed by a traditional avant-garde notion of the artist as being somehow outside and in front of the larger social formation from where he could launch an aesthetic attack, like Brecht (or Dada artists) before him. But this orientation—the basic aesthetic mode of his work and his understanding of the position and role of the artist—would soon change. And it was Paik's victim, Cage, who prompted him to question whether a strategy of shock, via a barrage of sights and sounds, was in fact the most relevant or indeed effective means of critical aesthetic engagement in an ever more technologized, mediatized, and commercialized society. Could an art based on shock ultimately compete for viewers' attention with the unprecedented degree of stimuli in the cultural field at large? Even so, was shocking art something to which individuals were easily inured (even eager to consume) without being transformed?

THE CHANCE (AND CONTROL) OF JOHN CAGE AND THE PROBLEM OF RECEPTION

While struggling with academic life in Munich, Paik had the good fortune to meet the composer Wolfgang Fortner at the nearby Freiburg Musikhochschule. Fortner had been a guiding light at the Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, winning over many gifted young students by introducing them to the twelve-tone process while inspiring them with his unique approach to serialism, which preserved elements of continuity derived from Baroque and folk melody practices. His work offered its own counterpoint to those at Darmstadt who would push serialism to an anti-subjective extreme.

It was on Fortner's advice that Paik traveled north to Cologne in 1958 to visit the Studio für elektronische Musik, an experimental workshop run through the German radio and television station WDR in that city. He recognized Paik's growing dissatisfaction with traditional musical forms, and must have regarded his young charge quite highly, for he wrote him a grant-procuring letter of recommendation in which he praised Paik's

“solid study of the craft of music” and “flawless technique in traditional composition,” but also bravely noted his fascination with “noise and sound production problems as demonstrated by Pierre Schaeffer in Paris and the American composer Cage.”⁵² His comments reveal that the German tradition of Schönberg seemed increasingly conventional to Paik as he opened himself to the international discourse on the distinction between music and noise.

Once in Cologne, Paik developed a stronger sense of the kind of sound he wanted to produce, but could not get it from the piano he had at the time nor from any existing instrument. He purchased another old piano, and had it tuned in quarter tones, which created sounds he began to recognize as “his.” He later described this as a period of transition: “Until then I had myself been composing very dry and serious works a la Schoenberg, Bartok and the likes—*weltangst*, you know. I was not very good, but I was working on an *expressionist idiom* of a sort. But then I heard John Cage and there was one piece in particular which captured my imagination. It was *Variation No. 1*, a sound collage. I knew a little bit about visual collages, but for me a sound collage was a fresh and surprising new concept.”⁵³ *Variation No. 1* is dated January 20, 1958, and Paik’s assertion of the importance of hearing it marks a clear desire to align a new stage in his work with Cage.

The American composer traveled to Darmstadt in September 1958 as part of the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, offering a three-part lecture series entitled “Composition as Process,” and Paik went to hear him speak. Much has been made of the importance of Cage to Paik, but I want to emphasize a less-acknowledged aspect of their relationship that had great bearing on Paik’s affiliation with Fluxus while distinguishing his ability to fit into the group. Along with the ideas of indeterminacy, randomness, and chance normally associated with Cage, issues of organization, systems, and control were also central to his practice and subsequently to Paik’s.

Cage introduced the Darmstadt audiences to his theories of chance operations, telling them about his use of the traditional Chinese book of divination, *I Ching*, as a means to relinquish authorial control in the compositional process. The *I Ching*, however, is itself highly systematic, full of grids and precise ways of throwing dice or coins, all with specific interpretations. Chance plays out only *through the system* in the myriad possible variations that might result. Here it is useful to recall a lecture given by Cage almost twenty years earlier, in 1937, entitled “The Future of Music,” where he offered these relevant insights: “What we hear is mostly noise. When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating. . . . We want to *capture and control these sounds*, to use them, not as sound effects, but as musical instruments. . . . The composer (organizer of sound) will not only be faced with the entire field of sound but also with the entire field of time. . . . Organization of sound for musical and extramusical purposes (theater, dance, film).”⁵⁴

Cage transposed the composer into an “organizer.” Although the acts of composing and organizing share an affinity, they differ in vital ways. Composing places emphasis on the act of creation, of producing something original that emanates from the individ-

ual; organizing places emphasis on the ordering and systematization of something already there—the same general distinction informing Maciunas's construction of the artist as organizer. And, significantly for Cage's importance to Paik and Paik's future involvement with Fluxus, the term "organization" applies more readily to the work of corporations, governments, and other institutions in which things and people must be bureaucratized for optimum working efficiency. Rather than allow noise to be a negative distraction, Cage wanted to "capture" and "control" it in the environment so that listeners could derive the positive pleasure that comes with "fascination." At the same time, "noise" would be the negation of Western tonal music, as with Paik's smashing of the violin.

Cage's lecture was not published until 1958, when it drew intriguing parallels to the contemporary preoccupation with corporate organization: pervasive mandates for rationality, regimentation, and efficiency, not toward fascination but toward personnel control and profit maximization. Such was the irony that in the same year "The Future of Music" appeared in print, Cage was in Darmstadt talking about chance and indeterminacy. Even as he distanced himself from his 1937 stance, his practice remained inseparable from issues of organization and systematization. The crucial point is that control and a lack thereof are two sides of the same coin, meaningless in isolation. There is no either-or—either order or indeterminacy, either authorship or chance—but rather always a complicated play between the two that enables the productive tension of the work.

Even a score such as his now infamous *4'33"*, first performed by David Tudor in Woodstock, New York, in 1952, which at one level might be construed as completely indeterminate and open-ended, is based on this tension. Without Cage's framework, loose as it may be—the staging of the piece, the precise time limit, the opening of the lid and raising and lowering of hands above the keys as if going to play—there would be nothing against which to set silence in relief so that those present could experience nonintentional sound as music. Moreover, the structure implies how the composer's practice and the audience's experience are embedded within a larger system of mediated power relations in which the dialectic of order and disorder plays out with real implications for how we experience the world.

Paik had a skeptical interest in Western media culture even before his arrival in Germany. This was fostered by Cage's insistence on the relevance of new media and communication theory to art, which he himself learned through his personal contacts with László Moholy-Nagy, Buckminster Fuller, and Marshall McLuhan, as well as his early knowledge of Luigi Russolo's 1913 Futurist manifesto "The Art of Noise." For example, in 1947 Moholy-Nagy envisioned a marriage of art and technology brokered by artists uniquely capable of ameliorating the machine's dehumanizing effects. He even argued that "the technology of the machine as multiplication of muscle power" would be supplemented by "the technological substitute of the human senses through electronics."⁵⁵ Buckminster Fuller expressed a similar ideal of progressive technological engagement in the face of "inevitable" automation (and augmentation) when he wrote of men

“swelling the ranks” of research and development departments to launch the “next wave of evolutionary transformations” through “greater anticipatory design.”⁵⁶ Although Fuller did not call them by name, these were precisely the “organization men” of the postwar workforce, of which his model specimen was the designer or architect—the same type that Maciunas performed in his construction of the artist.

Cage was one of many artists and philosophers who in the late 1950s and early 1960s predicted a not-so-distant future of a totally mediatised and automated world. Fuller’s belief that what had to be effected was less a change of the environment than a change in human beings’ reception of and responses to their environment resonated widely. How could the negative effects of the inevitable changes be staved off and the positive ones harnessed? Cage and Paik asked how the artist could facilitate a process of critical adaptation to the surge of stimuli coming from technology’s encroachment into daily life.

“Your receiver is your mind,” Cage once told Paik.⁵⁷ It impressed Paik deeply. With the greatest concision, Cage encapsulated a new historical understanding of human reception derived in large part from cybernetics. The rise of this interdisciplinary field of research, spearheaded by Norbert Wiener in the 1940s and conveyed to a wide audience in his books *Cybernetics, or, Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (1948) and *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (1950), incited individuals across fields to reconsider machines, humans, and the relation between them in terms of systems. In other words, to see them as organized interactions of parts and variables, and, more significantly, as looped processes of inputs, outputs, and feedback.⁵⁸ The main objectives of cybernetics were to observe overarching systemic order, understand mechanisms of control, and learn how feedback could guide a system—whether human, mechanical, or, increasingly, cybernetic—to be progressively self-correcting.

Once the brain came to be thought of as a device that receives electrical signals, electronic waves, or the like, and renders them perceptible to the senses, as the part of a telephone held to the ear, a radio receiving set, or a television receiving set, flows of neural information could be likened to flows of electronic information. Both the biological and the mechanical were represented in terms of nonlinear feedback systems, and within this context the rudimentary representation of a cybernetic identity emerged. What may seem an overly simplistic representation of identity today was for many thinkers at the time a generative new way of considering intentionality and self-regulation. Although this field of meaning established by cybernetics was grounded explicitly in the mechanized battlefields of World War II, after the war, from the mid-1950s to mid-1960s, cybernetics reached non-scientists and non-engineers like Cage and Paik, who explored how lessons learned instinctively by soldiers in the line of fire could consciously inform their own artistic maneuvering of new media, especially television and its relay of images.

The “Urban Form” seminar held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on December 10, 1954, is an important example of Cage’s participation in interdisciplinary discussions that he later shared with Paik. Organized by György Kepes and Kevin Lynch

as part of their mid-1950s research project "Perceptual Forms in the City," the seminar focused on the relationship of individuals to their urban environment.⁵⁹ Cage opened with his ideas on how to introduce people to their environment through sound, but Kepes was quick to include the spectrum of media in keeping with the cybernetic premise that the same ideas apply equally to magnetic tape, photography, telephone, or television. This led Cage to speak of "sound patterns," "pattern" being a key term in cybernetics to describe the standard line of operation the system follows to stay in balance.

Kepes made the following suggestion: "With purposeful organization of city sounds, we could enrich the experience of the city. . . . Ordered pattern, such as the 12 o'clock bell, in contrast to the chaotic flow of random sounds, could help to structure our response."⁶⁰ Cage disagreed. He argued that attempts at control—including the noon bells, which themselves never completely coincide—were futile because randomness and overlay always persist. "It would be better to give up the idea of control and merely enjoy the absence of control," he said. "What would be the intention of imposed order?"⁶¹ To which Kepes replied: "Because the average sound environment is a random situation, small islands of ordered pattern within the randomness could help to catalyse an overall ordered pattern, e.g. a theme, such as Christmas, would provide a symbolic focus by means of which random patterns would be related. It is possible to conceive of such sound focuses of cityscapes to enrich the whole environment."⁶²

What was at stake in this disagreement over imposed order is the cybernetic principle of increasing entropy transposed as cultural degeneration. Kepes's use of the example of Christmas—an implicitly religious order of time and sound—implies a fear of a loss of collective meaning. Cage had different fears. He was wary of the cybernetic machine's imposition on the urban environment—the card punching of patterned ones and zeros destroying the existing urban sonic field and the potentiality that depends upon its characteristic rhythms being held together in continuity. All of the symposium participants accepted that questions of control were increasingly relevant to debates on how to prevent individual dehumanization through technology and cultural degeneration through mass-media consumption. But whereas Kepes and Lynch advocated imposed controls to generate a more active subject, Cage saw the same controls rendering the subject more passive. It was from the heart of this debate that a second stage in Paik's work emerged.

EXPERIMENTAL ELECTRONICS AND NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

It began with an intense period of study, as Paik later recalled: "I started a new life from November 1961. By starting a new life I mean that I stocked my whole library except those on TV technique into storage and locked it up. I read and practiced only electronics. In other words, I went back to the Spartan life of pre-college days . . . only physics and electronics."⁶³ He was fond of making retrospective claims to revelatory, life-changing moments in his career, and while the breaks were not as clean as he would have us think, this was undoubtedly a new direction for him. Knowles visited Paik during this time and



FIGURE 75

Exposition of Music—Electronic Television, Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal, March 11–20, 1963, with *Klavier Integral* (1958–63) in the foreground. Photo: bpk, Berlin / Staatsgalerie Stuttgart / Manfred Montwé / Art Resource, NY.

remembers that he was totally absorbed in the idea of learning everything about electronics and communication.⁶⁴ His autodidacticism soon paid off in the form of an impressive first solo exhibition entitled *Exposition of Music—Electronic Television* in March 1963 at Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal. The title alone suggests a transition, while a bull's head hanging over the entryway signaled a lingering compulsion to shock. Inside the event, two aesthetic modes coexisted for the first time in his work: embodied performance, and, from the new second stage, the glimmerings of his electronic televisions.

In *Klavier Integral* (1958–63), for instance, Paik drew from Cage's "prepared pianos," covering an old piano with an array of found objects: lamp, telephone, clock, bra, cracked eggshells, lightbulbs, old photographs, buzzers, doll parts. These things were incorporated into a "piano performance" that included violent scratching and splashing of paint across the instrument's surface. Within the familiar action music, however, there were signs of an aesthetic evolution in the form of long, draping, tangled wires extending from the piano itself (fig. 75). Paik was in fact becoming renowned for his wires. It seems he loved to have his early electronic works *look* electronic as much he wanted them to actually operate electronically. So, as Knowles asserts, he was always running around with



FIGURE 76

Nam June Paik in his exhibition *Exposition of Music—Electronic Television*, Galerie Parnass, Wuppertal, March 11–20, 1963. Photo by George Maciunas. Gelatin silver print, 18 7/8 × 18 7/8 in. (48 × 47.9 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY.

wires in his hands, and making a great fuss when components did not work. This too was part of his performance; he became the engineer of the show.

The role was confirmed by his manipulation of the thirteen televisions that filled the majority of the exhibition space. They sat on their sides, backs, and fronts, some on perches, some directly on the floor (fig. 76). Beyond their unruly display, the sets were bizarre in that none of them showed a clear picture. *Zen for TV* (1963, fig. 77)—a title that notably reactivated the East–West dialectic of his action music in a new electronic form—reduced the picture on the monitor to a single horizontal line. Comparing this to his 1962 action music performance *Zen for Head* (in which he dipped his head in ink to draw a line calligraphically on a scroll of paper lying on the floor) brings his evolution from old to new media into sharp relief.

There was also *Kuba TV* (1963), where a tape recorder playing music, plugged into a television set, enabled the parameters of the music to determine the parameters of the picture. In *Rembrandt Automatic* (1963) the television was placed face down, so that flickering light seeped out from beneath its edges onto the surrounding floor. The title suggests a clash of traditional and new media culture, but unlike Paik's destruction of the violin and the piano, the outcome of *Rembrandt Automatic* is more ambiguous. Rembrandt's kind of picture may have become obsolete in the face of an electronic



FIGURE 77

Nam June Paik, *Zen for TV*, 1963 (authorized version from 1990). Video installation, 26 1/2 × 18 3/4 × 15 1/8 in. (67.5 × 47.5 × 38.5 cm). Inv. NG 1/93. Photo: bpk, Berlin / Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin / Jens Ziehe / Art Resource, NY.

transmission that brings the viewer thousands of images per minute automatically, but Paik disrupted the television picture, too, altering the viewer's relationship to the electronic device.

Most importantly, several television works required direct viewer involvement. In *Point of Light* (1963) a radio pulse generator was hooked up to a television so that as the viewer turned the volume dial on the radio, the point of light in the center of the screen became larger or smaller. *Participation TV* (1963) included a microphone connected to a television by a foot-operated switch. When viewers pressed the switch and spoke into the microphone, they could see how their own voices transformed the broadcast image into an explosive pattern of light on the screen. At the same time that Paik himself was learning how to wield the new technology, he encouraged his viewers to get to know it in a different way, to see how they could effect change.

Recall that Maciunas was eager to visit this Wuppertal exhibition: "Instead of seeing you at your studio, which I wanted to very much since I came to Europe, I will have to go to Wuppertal to see your exhibition. So I will arrive on March 9th, Saturday, about 1 p.m. and will stay till Sunday, March 10th, till 12 p.m., when I must drive back."⁶⁵

As usual, Maciunas's schedule was tightly organized, yet he made a point of getting to Wuppertal to continue his recruitment of Paik. The Korean artist had already performed in the first official Fluxus concerts, and Maciunas was hoping to organize him more firmly into Fluxus's ranks with offers to sell his objects and stage his concerts in New York.

Maciunas's interest in Paik surged in this second stage. He even made sure that Paik and his experimental televisions became breaking Fluxus news. Sprawling across the front page of the June 1964 issue of the Fluxus newspaper, *fLuxus cc five ThReE*, was Paik's text "Afterlude to the Exposition of Experimental Television," written as a supplement to the Wuppertal show. Did Maciunas see a new side of Paik emerging—different from the weeping and leaping yellow peril—that would be more amenable to his own ideals of organization, systematization, and the production of economic works? An engineer or cybernetician, perhaps, with the same sense of irony and humor that Maciunas had as an "organizer"? Did Maciunas prefer it when Paik's expressionistic, suffering body was behind the screen?

The essay's retrospectively altered title for the exposition suggests that the transition was obvious to Paik himself: "music" is pushed out altogether in order to accommodate a new stand-alone centrality of "television." Moreover, television is no longer described in amateurishly redundant terms as "electronic" and has become instead consciously "experimental." Paik was taking command of his medium, as he explained: "13 sets suffered 13 sorts of variation in their VIDEO-HORIZONTAL-VERTICAL units. I am proud to be able to say that all 13 sets actually changed their inner circuits. No two sets had the same kind of technical operation. Not one is the simple blur, which occurs, when you turn the vertical and horizontal control-button at home."⁶⁶ It was imperative for Paik to distinguish his practice from the basic corrective measures taken by TV viewers with their living-room sets. Whereas they got up from sofas, piqued by a disruption of their regularly scheduled programming, in order to "fix" the picture, make it clearer, see better what the major networks were selling them, Paik intentionally distorted the images on the screen. Rather than twist the manufacturer's knobs on the outside of the box, Paik went inside the box and turned circuits and cathode ray tubes into artist's tools within the system.

As if to drive this point home, Paik published details of his techniques in another 1964 essay called "Electronic TV & Color TV Experiment." He revealed how cutting out the vertical output tube created the single straight line as seen in *Zen for TV*, and how "the waves from the taperecorder [*sic*] are fed to the horizontal output tube's grid, so that horizontal lines are warped according to the taperecorder's frequency and amplitude."⁶⁷ Using the cathode ray tube and other devices such as radios, tape recorders, amplifiers, and rectifiers, he could strategically disrupt any broadcast image and thereby the viewer's ability to receive it. Paik's action music inherently questioned viewer reception through a "shocking" alteration of musical performance, but it was not until this second stage of his experimental televisions that his work began to fundamentally question the nature

of the viewing subject and to convey a historically specific understanding of this subject through an evolved aesthetic mode.

His hands-on manipulation of televisions enabled him to understand the artwork itself as a system of circuits that was in turn part of a larger system of communication and control. In the process, it made sense that the "viewer" should be reconceived as a "receiver." Yet in spite of the dramatic changes in the appearance and conceptualization of his work, a fundamental message about subjective difference persisted. If his action music refused the fixity of the stereotype by performing identity's chain of multiple signifiers, the participatory TVs conditioned a receiving subject to refuse the fixity of technological determinism. In Paik's electronic world, control of the subject was not established a priori to the television being switched on.

The fact that Paik had previously described his action music as "expressionistic" and "suffering" art made it all the more meaningful when he, on more than one occasion, distinguished his experimental televisions as "not the expression of my personality."⁶⁸ This apparent desire to evacuate subjectivity from the artwork—evident in other artistic practices from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s—stands out in the case of Paik because it was cybernetically driven. Paik was not alone in this, especially from the late 1960s on, as the influence of information and systems theory on artistic practices was seen more broadly and overtly. But he was one of the first, most articulate, and most outspoken proponents of applying cybernetic thinking to art: "In the experimental TV . . . usually I don't, or cannot have any pre-imaged VISION before working. First I . . . study the circuit, to try various 'FEED BACKS,' to cut some places and feed the different waves there, to change the phase of the waves etc."⁶⁹ Not only was the viewer reconceptualized as a receiver, but the historical model of authorship based on personal vision was displaced by a decidedly unromantic study of circuitry.

His efforts to present the production process as depersonalized were just as evident in his characterization of the final artwork: "My experimental TV is the first ART (?), in which the 'perfect crime' is possible. . . . I had put just a diode into [the] opposite direction, and got a 'waving' negative Television. / I utilized intensely the live-transmission of normal program, which is the most variable and semantical event, in Nineteen-sixties."⁷⁰ Distorting, destabilizing, and rearranging systems from within constituted the "perfect crime" for Paik because the altered televisions could not be traced back to him (or any other active viewer-receiver). So apparently distanced from a "self" were they that one, theoretically, could never be identified as the culprit.

Most importantly, "feedback" superseded shock as his vital new artistic strategy. At base, the feedback system tends to make the performance of a particular pattern relatively independent of any new input. When the feedback opposes what the system is already doing, it is considered negative. The system must respond to negative feedback to regain stabilization in a process of self-correction. In the physiological system, this self-correcting process is both conscious and unconscious. A negative feedback that is

too brusque, too powerful, however, can disrupt the pattern to the point of sending the system into wild oscillation, overload, or even complete breakdown.

It is important to distinguish this cybernetic notion of negative feedback that I am using to describe Paik's aesthetic strategy from a second form of feedback that emerged in twentieth-century usage. Caroline A. Jones makes this crucial point in her review of David Joselit's insightful book *Feedback: Television against Democracy* (2007) where, as Jones describes it, he only wants to consider "that other kind of feedback pioneered by Jimi Hendrix—the screeching and disabling noise that happens when the system's own technologies of communication are recursively trained on themselves."⁷¹ Jones reminds us of Joselit's claim that Paik sent images "swirling down an electronic toilet." As evocative, and to a degree apt, a description as this is, it largely describes the surface effects of Paik's approach while ignoring the deeper, more comprehensive manner in which Paik aimed to disrupt systems.

In his commitment to a sexier Hendrixian form of negative feedback, Joselit disregards Paik's own dedication to the more sober Wienerian form, and therefore the critical point of how, precisely, Paik worked within the system. Even Jones does not acknowledge the capacity for the cybernetic kind of negative feedback to quickly transition from "a channel feeding constructive information back to the control mechanism, allowing a self-regulating system to correct itself," to a feed so powerful it can debilitate the system.⁷² While I do not disagree entirely with Joselit's analysis, and even think there is room to apply both understandings of negative feedback to Paik's work, I argue that it is the cybernetic notion of negative feedback that is at once more historically apt to his practice and theoretically productive when it comes to explaining how he evolved an aesthetic of communication to operate at a systemic level. In this regard, it was in the second stage of his experimental televisions that Paik's work aligned with that of his Fluxus colleagues by performing the system.

His art stood out for its focus on how the underlying force of mediatization helps keep the entire system up and running—through the propagation of dominant ideologies and the (re)generation of a passive population. Feedback was a subtler, and indeed more ambivalent, strategy than shock—exploring the material interface between humans, machines, and the system at large—yet its historical apposition in an era of television consumption made it a potentially more far-reaching and effective means to articulate subjective difference and activate the new viewer-receivers.

To do this Paik needed to become a communicator himself, and he appealed for understanding of this new electronic stage in his work: "Don't expect from my TV shock, expressionism, Romanticism, Climax, Surprise, etc . . . for which my previous compositions had the honour to be praised. . . . May-be one needs 10 years to be able to perceive a delicate difference of 13 different 'distortions' (?), as it was so in perceiving the delicate difference of many kinds of 'noises' (?) in the field of electronic music."⁷³ He positioned this second stage as an extension of the work of Cage, Kepes, and others on the reception

of noise stimuli to the visual realm and television in particular. Art could help the viewer-receiver learn to use this mass image transmission machine in an active rather than a passive manner—potentially also disrupting the system and its messages via their own feedback—as Cage, Kepes, and Lynch had hoped, in their own ways, individuals would actively navigate the noise of their urban environments.

Reflecting on this period, Paik said: “I work[ed] within the given conditions of RCA-NTSC TV encoding system. There is not complete freedom. Both technically and financially, I had to work under great restraint.”⁷⁴ The challenge was to consistently test systemic limits to discern what was possible and what might be impossible. The first televisions Paik used were black and white, and his reference to an “RCA-NTSC” encoding system is slightly misleading. Up until 1940, RCA, like other US companies, had its own set of technical standards for black-and-white television broadcast, which it used for its NBC network.⁷⁵ A fundamental characteristic of this RCA system was a 441-scan line.⁷⁶ In 1940, the National Television System Committee (NTSC) was established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to resolve conflicts between competing companies over the introduction of a nationwide analog television system. Technical advancements of the vestigial sideband technique created an opportunity to increase the image resolution of consumer televisions. RCA wanted the standard to be set at its own 441-scan line level, while Philco argued for a higher standard, between 600 and 800. The NTSC compromised at 525.⁷⁷ Either the old RCA encoding system or the new NTSC standard would have worked for black-and-white televisions in Germany at the time of Paik’s experiments. It was only when Western Europeans developed color television that new standards had to be developed to fit the 50 Hz AC frequency of the continent’s power grids, impossible for the American NTSC system.⁷⁸

The lag in development of television broadcasting itself in Germany was another constraint of the system on Paik. After the war, it took several years for television transmission to resume at all. Newspaper and radio were the main mass media, or people went to the movies. In occupied West Germany, the United States, Britain, and France founded the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten Deutschlands* (ARD, or Cooperative Association of the Public Broadcasters in Germany), which made its first broadcast in 1952. This remained the only network in West Germany for a decade, until a second network, appropriately named *Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen* (Second German Television), appeared in 1963. So Paik had only one, possibly two, channels to disrupt. In a sense, this gave the work more power—his viewers could not change the channel as they can so easily today. Paik’s televisions participated in an entire postwar political economy of message transmission: from his interruption of the messages streaming from the Allied-controlled television network to his appropriation and retooling of consumer televisions (American Magnavox and RCA, but also Dutch Philips, and South Korean Samsung) then being exported to West Germany, a market recently opened and conditioned to receive them. Paik operated within and upon these “feedback systems” as well.

One of the most important, yet often overlooked, aspects of his experimental televisions is that the negative feedback loop itself is representative of the impossibility of dialectical overcoming. Moreover, Paik was conscious of this:

Anyway, if you see my TV, please, see it more than 30 minutes. /

"the perpetual evolution is the perpetual UNSatisfaction. it is the only merit of Hegelian dialectic." (R. Akutagawa)

"the perpetual Unsatisfaction is the perpetual evolution. it is the main merit of my experimental TV" (N.J.P.)

The frustration remains as the frustration. / There is NO catharsis.⁷⁹

His televisions require prolonged user interaction (at least thirty minutes) in order to have an effect (hardly a sudden shock), and he deliberately plays with the notion of the dialectic, reversing the neologism of the Japanese Modernist writer Ryunosuke Akutagawa so that "perpetual UNSatisfaction" becomes the means and the end, so to speak.⁸⁰ No single cathartic (or revolutionary) moment would ever determine an end to the process of consciousness raising (or the courses of history)—the frustration of this being the ever-persistent reminder of the necessity of the process itself, which in turn must be as continual as the barrage of television stimuli.

These were the first flickers of recognition in Paik's electronic work of a burgeoning epistemological shift that would develop into the more fully and clearly theorized articulations of poststructuralism that we know today. In rudimentary form this was the logic of "performing the system," which Paik came to in his own way through his interdisciplinary study and hands-on work with televisions—"Hegel to NJP."⁸¹ Paik was changing his (expressionistic) tune in a way that made him more aesthetically suitable for Maciunas's organization. Yet this transformation was neither straightforward nor final. When, roughly a year after the Wuppertal exhibition, Paik appeared on US shores, his practice at the nexus of art, technology, and subjectivity continued to evolve, ushering in a third stage in his work.

PAIK IN NEW YORK AND "OPEN CIRCUITS"

In late May or early June of 1964, Paik was due to return to Cologne from Tokyo, where he had spent several months experimenting with color television and other new electronics. Instead he opted to take up invitations from Maciunas, Cage, and La Monte Young to visit New York. His first impressions of the American city were not good. He found it loud, dirty, and home to a very self-centered art scene—notably, the same characteristic Maciunas reproached as he tussled to form a regimented collective. Paik also entered a culture that differed profoundly from his native Korea, from Japan where he attended university, and from a West Germany busy reconstructing itself after the war where he spent the previous seven years. He was once again a foreigner. That said, fellow experimental artists in New York gave him a warm reception.

Well before Paik arrived, Maciunas assumed he was aligned with Fluxus and promoted him. The February 1964 issue of the Fluxus newspaper *ccV TRE* (the same issue where Mr. Koshland, aka Maciunas, appears to “run the business” of Fluxus) includes Paik’s works already encoded in Maciunas’s inventory system among the Fluxus editions available. For example, the front page lists “Fluxus g: NAM JUNE PAIK: list of publications by special request” and “Fluxus gz: NAM JUNE PAIK: ZEN FOR FILM.”⁸² Maciunas was not only committed to selling Paik’s works via the FluxShop and Mail-Order Catalog, but also gave *One for Violin Solo* its American debut on April 11, 1964, performing it himself at the event *12 Fluxus Concerts* held in the FluxHall at the same Canal Street location as the FluxShop.

One effect of these executive decisions by Maciunas regarding how to present Paik as part of Fluxus in the United States that has gone unremarked upon was to publicize only a particular section of his work. The film *Zen for Film* shows nothing but a white screen and any bits of dust collected on the celluloid strip. It recalls Marcel Duchamp’s *Anemic Cinema* of 1920, a highly cerebral piece in which the artist’s subjectivity recedes in order to press the audience to consider the apparatus of cinema itself. Even the act of aggression in *One for Violin Solo* is done in a highly controlled and efficient manner. These are qualities in art that Maciunas the organizer appreciated. Filtered from the Fluxus inventory were examples of Paik’s expressionistic or suffering art.

Paik, for his part, kept his options open in Maciunas’s Fluxus headquarters city. In relatively quick succession he performed in both the world premiere of the Fluxus Symphony Orchestra (June 27, 1964) organized by Maciunas at the Carnegie Recital Hall, and the second annual New York Avant-Garde Festival (August–September 1964) run by the great rival of Maciunas, Charlotte Moorman, at Judson Hall, a primary venue for Happenings. At the Fluxus concert, Paik performed his *One for Violin Solo* and another piece called *Picket pour la Picket* (1964), both of which fell within the aesthetic realm of the simple Fluxus event score. At the New York Avant-Garde Festival, however, Paik performed in another rendition of Stockhausen’s *Originale*. He had done so in Cologne in 1961, but this occasion marked his US debut in the ensemble. Thus, it was at the event staged by Moorman, not Maciunas, where his expressionistic suffering art resurfaced in New York.

The involvement of Paik in the New York Avant-Garde Festival provoked Maciunas for several reasons, leading him to question Paik’s commitment to Fluxus. First, it carried Paik’s association with the German composer onto his New York turf. Maciunas organized a picket of the *Originale* performance with the support of only about five other people: Henry Flynt (with whom he had already picketed Stockhausen’s concert on April 29, 1964, at Town Hall, New York), Ay-O, Takako Saito, Marc Schleifer, and Tony Conrad. According to the flyer they handed out, “Stockhausen is a characteristic European–North American ruling class Artist. His magazine, *The Series*, has hardly condescended to mention plebian or non-European music at all. . . . But Stockhausen’s real importance is that he is the fountainhead of ‘ideas’ to shore up the doctrine of white plutocratic European Art’s supremacy.”⁸³ The fact that Paik refused to join the picket line, and did participate

in Stockhausen's work, signaled to Maciunas a betrayal of Fluxus. What Maciunas perhaps could not or refused to see is that it also potentially complicated his own politics on "high art" and race, considering the racial and ethnic consciousness of Paik's action music.

Second, there was Paik's troubling association with Moorman. Maciunas asked Fluxus artists not to participate in the Avant-Garde Festival, and even wrote to Moorman stating that none of them would be available to her because she was not in the collective. He expressed his suspicions about her in a letter to George Brecht: "Charlotte's activities here begin to look like a grotesque contest of up-manship."⁸⁴ The reality is that she did not prize Paik away from Maciunas upon first sight in New York. Like Maciunas, she had met Paik previously in Germany, attending his early performances at Mary Bauermeister's atelier and promoting him in New York before he arrived.

The upshot of all this was for Maciunas to renounce Paik and other Fluxus artists who took part in the Stockhausen event through a series of angry postcards. One addressed to Paik at 485 W. 25 N.Y., N.Y., said simply, "Traitor, you left Fluxus!" Maciunas's intentions to strengthen the collective through heightened policing misfired, because Paik, Dick Higgins, and other artists became disillusioned with his heavy-handed tactics. According to Higgins, Maciunas had antagonized "all the best people" from those "who started out to work with him," including his "very recent" Fluxus associate, Paik.⁸⁵ This led several Fluxus (or ex-Fluxus) artists to call for Maciunas's resignation as chair. Maciunas obliged and named Robert Watts as his replacement. Before long, however, Watts and the other artists demonstrated that they did not have the necessary combination of desire, ability, and energy to oversee the organization of a new performance series, the "Perpetual Fluxus Festival," that Maciunas had scheduled for September, let alone the daily operations of Fluxus as a whole. This was Maciunas's role, and deep down everyone knew it, whether they liked it or not. By the end of November 1964, Maciunas wished to restart Fluxus with a new outlook less influenced by the politics of Henry Flynt. Many remained skeptical, including Paik. In a letter to Tomas Schmit, Higgins relayed that Paik supported Fluxus but proposed a certain Japanese designer to be chair—an apparent vote of no confidence in Maciunas's leadership style.⁸⁶ Organization proved the vital difference, and as the year came to a close, organization man Maciunas resumed the chair position.

Paik originally planned to stay in New York for the six months legally afforded tourists, but he quickly perceived opportunities there that made him want to pursue a continued presence. By January 1965 he had his first one-person show in the United States at the New School for Social Research. This was a big chance for the foreign artist to make a name for himself, and he used it to make a bold shift. The exhibition title, *Nam June Paik: Cybernetics Art and Music*, and the image of a robot on the announcement card, plainly identified his work with cybernetic theory (fig. 78).

On his 1963–64 trip to Japan, Paik worked with the Japanese engineers Shuya Abe and Hideo Uchida to produce his first robot, *K-456* (fig. 79). He brought the machine with him to the United States and introduced two new models, *T-7* and *Miss Sarah*. The robots

New School presents

NAM JUNE PAIK

1965

(Cybernetics (Art)?) + (Music) dt

n=1965

I Electronic TV + Color TV Experiments

II 3 Robots

III Pop Sonata

IV 2 Zen Boxes + 1 Zen Can

CHARLOTTE MOORMAN, cellorina

Performers:

Frank Wigglesworth
Malcolm Goldstein

Carol Berge
Philip Corner
Ivoko A*J*
David Behrman
George Pappanikolaou
Chieko Shiomi
Dick Higgins
Peter Moore

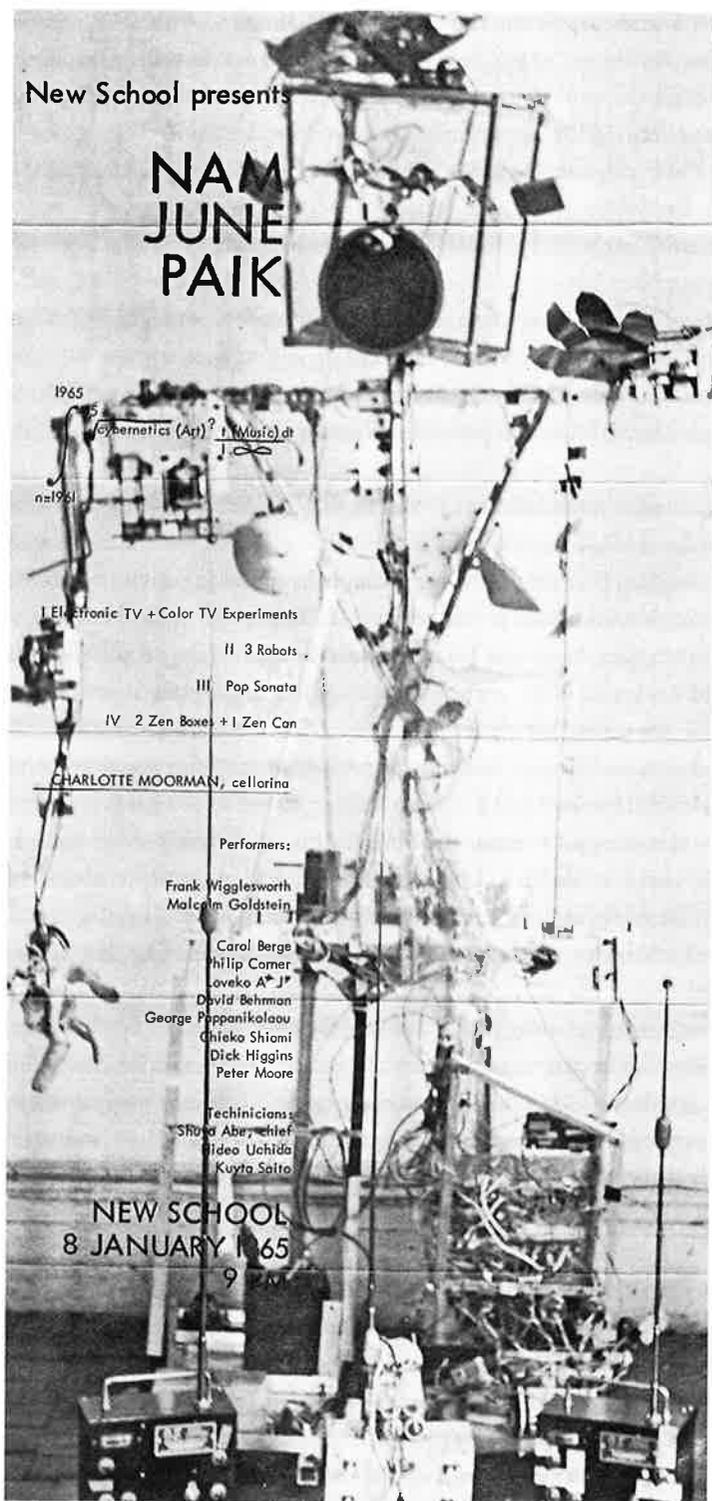
Technicians:
Shiro Abe, chief
Hideo Uchida
Kunya Saito

NEW SCHOOL
8 JANUARY 1965

9 20

FIGURE 78

New School Presents Nam June Paik leaflet, 1965. Printed paper, double-sided, 16 3/8 × 7 3/4 in. (41.6 × 19.7 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Nam June Paik Archive (NJP.1.PAPERS.5), gift of the Nam June Paik Estate.



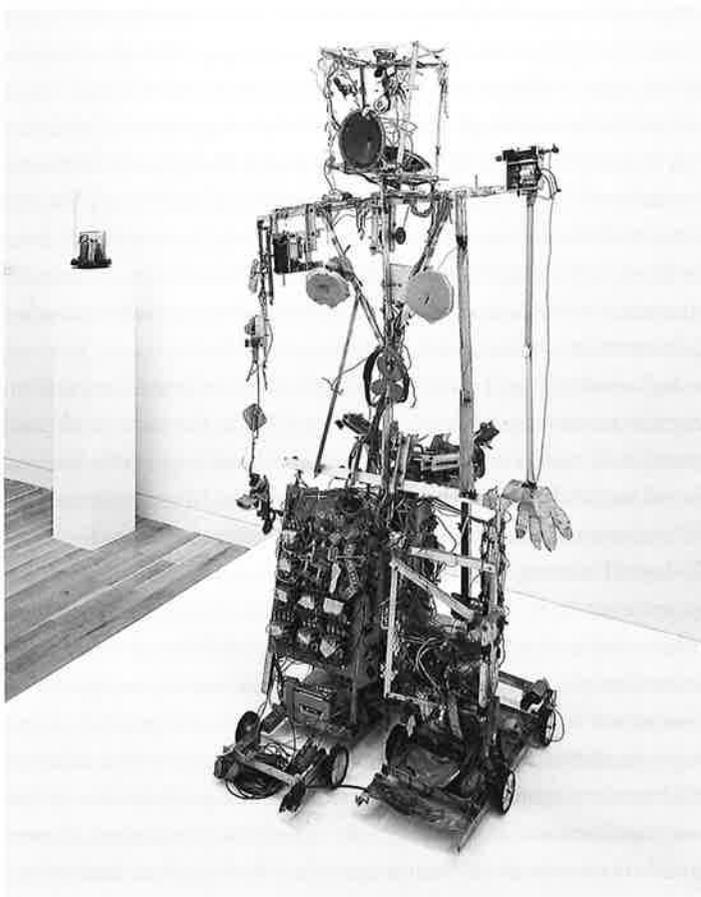


FIGURE 79

Nam June Paik, *K-456*, 1963–64. Aluminum, wire, wood, electrical parts, foam, and control devices. Height approx. 72 7/8 in. (185.1 cm). Inv. Paik 1792. Photo: bpk, Berlin / Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin / Roman März / Art Resource, NY.

were the stars of the New School show. Although *K-456* could not speak per se, it did play taped speeches by President John F. Kennedy, connecting the robot to a specific postwar American sense of optimism for technological progress (if tempered by Cold War competition) as advanced through phenomena such as the space race. Humor also played an important role in softening the machine's sharp edges. *K-456* put on airs via JFK's New England blue-blood accent as it lumbered across the performance space, defecating beans out its backside, to the delight of those watching. Details such as the attachment of foam cups as breasts to *K-456* and the assignation of the name "Miss Sarah" to the other robot accentuated their inherent anthropomorphism, which for Paik was clearly gendered, and signaled the artist's growing concern with the humanization of technology.

Of all new media, Paik was most intrigued by television, due to its swift insinuation into postwar culture. Watching it had become the greatest single use of "free time" not only in the United States but in countries around the world.⁸⁷ However, unlike the situation Paik experienced in West Germany, where most households did not have a set (and

even if they did, there were only one or two channels to watch), the United States boasted a more advanced and expansive (private and public) broadcast system through which he could operate. Marshall McLuhan, the preeminent commentator on the TV age, was a huge influence on Paik, particularly through his book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964), with its analysis of media by temperature and their divergent effects. A “cool medium” was considered “low definition” because little information is given and “high in participation” because the audience must fill in the rest. A “hot medium” does not leave as much to be filled in by the audience and is therefore “low in participation.”⁸⁸ Like the telephone and speech, television was low in content and therefore demanded high levels of viewer participation—it was a cool medium.

On the surface, the logical outcome of participation would be an active viewership. But McLuhan’s assessment was more equivocal: “The effect of TV, as the most recent and spectacular electric extension of our central nervous system, is hard to grasp for various reasons. . . . It has affected the totality of our lives, personal and social and political. . . . As a cool medium, TV has, some feel, introduced a kind of rigor mortis into the body politic.”⁸⁹ In those early days of television’s ubiquity, McLuhan believed that the medium involved the viewer in processes rather than presenting him or her with a packaged product (as the older “hot medium” of film did). The paradox of the cool medium of television was that “it involves us in moving depth, but it does not excite, agitate or arouse.”⁹⁰ McLuhan’s insistence on the ability of television to subsume psychic operations in an all-absorbing synesthetic experience and its potential to leave us in a depleted state of sensory overload meant that television required audience participation at the same time that it blunted perceptions. It was precisely out of this paradoxical convergence of participation and numbness in television described by McLuhan that a third stage evolved in Paik’s practice.⁹¹

The means of this evolution became available to him when he purchased his first Sony “portable” video camera. According to the often-told story, Paik initially heard of a recorder and player being developed by the Sony Corporation in Tokyo and kept his eye out for the product once in New York. October 4, 1965, was the fateful day that he bought the camera at the Liberty Music Shop, a specialized music business in New York with both retail and a recording label. However, according to Tom Sherman’s research, it is unlikely, if not impossible, that this was the first battery-powered, truly portable Portapak, the CV-2400, because Sony did not release this model until 1967.⁹² Paik must have purchased a Sony Model CV-2000, weighing forty-nine pounds and operating off standard 110 AC power. Nevertheless, this machine was enough to launch Paik into video production. He and Shuya Abe had attempted to make their own video camera in Tokyo, but could not match the resources of Sony. Instead, Paik would use the corporate technology for his own aesthetic of communication: from distorting images transmitted by major television networks to also transmitting his own images via their waves.

In 1966 Paik published a manifesto that opens with the following line: “Cyberneted art is very important, but art for cyberneted life is more important, and the latter need

not be cybernated."⁹³ The statement is preceded by an "Rx" symbol, indicating its prescriptive status for a society Paik believed to be suffering the "specific frustrations" of "cybernated life" caused by a too-rapid influx of technology. The close of the manifesto is equally interesting; emblazoned as it is with the words "we are in open circuits." Three important ideas can be extrapolated from this. First, the basic premise that "we are in circuits" implies an interrelation of parts and devices. Therefore, we are not only in circuits, but also in a system. Second, the system is cybernetic because we are "in it" via circuits. Third, because the circuits are "open," the system can be manipulated. Paik had arrived at what he considered an apt conceptualization of contemporary life as well as a practical means of addressing the frustrations of this life through his art.

Paik published his manifesto with Dick Higgins's Something Else Press at a time when Maciunas was convinced that Higgins and his enterprise were in direct competition with Fluxus and continued to believe that Moorman vied to undermine his performance ventures, especially when it became evident that Paik was composing all his works for her. More than some artists, Paik was caught in the crossfire. These internecine jealousies aside, his work continued in line with the general Fluxus strategy of working the system from within, as another highly evocative passage from the 1966 manifesto attests: "But if Pasteur and Robespierre are right that we can resist poison only through certain built-in poison, then some specific frustrations, caused by cybernated life, require accordingly cybernated shock and catharsis. My everyday work with video tape and the cathode ray tube convinces me of this."⁹⁴ Like Louis Pasteur's use of bacteria to immunize the biological body from disease and Maximilien Robespierre's use of the guillotine to eradicate the social body of traitors (before being put to the blade himself), Paik aimed to appropriate the toxic or frustrating aspects of the system itself in order to resist them. Through the coupling of these historical figures, Paik links processes in the physiological body and the social body.

Moreover, in between the scientific and political histories he also cleverly wove the history of electronics: "Newton's physics is the mechanics of power and the unconciliatory two-party system, in which the strong win over the weak. But in the 1920s a German genius put a tiny third-party (grid) between these two mighty poles (cathode and anode) in a vacuum tube, thus enabling the weak to win over the strong for the first time in human history."⁹⁵ A metaphor of power runs through Paik's manifesto. As the rigid two-party system was disrupted by the introduction of a third, so too was Newton's system opened up by early discoveries that led to the invention of cybernetics. It is likely that the "German genius" Paik referred to was the physicist Robert von Lieben, whose early twentieth-century experiments with cathode beams led in 1906 to his cathode-beam relay: he patented the ability of a magnetic field to deflect an electron ray. In 1910 he improved the design by adding a control grid through which the current density could be varied and amplification attained. For Paik this introduction of a control grid decades earlier became a means to theorize the relationship between his own ability to manipulate technology and control its effects and the potential to disrupt social power dynamics.

Wiener's concern for communication in the "social system" was especially important in this regard. This was a side of cybernetics then being pursued by anthropologists, sociologists, economists, and game theorists (especially those pursuing the development of a chess-playing machine). "It is certainly true that the social system is an organization like the individual, that it is bound together by a system of communication, and that it has a dynamics in which circular processes of a feedback nature play an important part," Wiener wrote.⁹⁶ He cautioned those who would undertake this approach but by no means closed the door on it.⁹⁷ Paik looked to exploit the imbalances.

If Wiener's analogies between electronics and physiology and society as nonlinear feedback systems helped Paik to understand the internal circuitry of communication and control, McLuhan's analysis of media informed his perception of the historically "specific frustrations" caused by the increased dependence of people on machines, and particularly the transition to new technologies.⁹⁸ Paik concluded that making art with electronics alone was not enough to ameliorate the specific frustrations; he had to directly reengage the human body. At the same time, developing his idea of art for cybernated life required going further into the system.

Already in 1965 he gained access to certain resources he needed. He lived in a loft on Canal Street (not far from Maciunas) said to be so full of electronic equipment that he had to wear Wellingtons as protection against high voltage (reminding us of both the spatial and the physiological demands of the work).⁹⁹ The exposure of the New School exhibition in January led to a \$6,000 grant from the John D. Rockefeller III Fund that spring. The fund had been incorporated only two years before, and Paik was one of the first to be honored by its Asian Cultural Program (1963–79) intended to promote East–West cultural understanding.¹⁰⁰ The grant was an ironically fitting outcome of his efforts up to that point—ironic because he had "terrorized" Western cultural sophisticates with his performances as the yellow peril, and fitting because even those antagonistic actions were fundamentally concerned with the same problem of East–West relations that was the fund's *raison d'être*. The money he received supported his acquisition of the Sony video camera and furthered his ability to master contemporary technologies in the West. Paik's status as Asian other was at once reproduced and rewarded by Rockefeller's liberal philanthropic agenda, giving him the legitimate visibility that he needed to stay in the country. The financial support attached to Rockefeller's agenda of strengthening the quality of broadcast television drew Paik further into the system while also giving him the means to continue experimenting with negative feedback toward systemic disruption.

CONTROL AND COMMUNICATION IN PAIK, MOORMAN, AND THE MACHINE

Paik's pioneering efforts in video art converged with another, less examined but also immensely important development in his practice: his collaboration with Charlotte Moorman. When he arrived in New York, Paik quickly grasped Moorman and Maciunas's

different geopolitical positions and what this could mean for him: "I needed a ticket uptown, and I thought Charlotte would be that ticket, which turned out to be true. . . . I knew my money and time were limited so I had to express my video idea soon."¹⁰¹ Put simply, Moorman was uptown, and Maciunas and Fluxus were downtown. Moorman had trained at Julliard and earned a reputation as a highly respected classical cellist. She had performed with the American Symphony Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski, and was on the list of approved classical performers picked by the Board of Education to tour New York's public schools.¹⁰²

Interestingly, both she and Maciunas desired to cross over the classed cultural and ethnic boundaries of Manhattan, but in opposite directions. She relished the grittier downtown bohemian lifestyle, and he wished to establish a more lucrative uptown presence for Fluxus (first with AG gallery and later in a failed attempt to get a sponsor for an Upper East Side FluxShop). However, Moorman boasted more influential contacts and was the better ticket to visibility for Paik. Despite its international network, Fluxus remained ghettoized artistically in New York. "Fluxus was really an underground," Paik noted.¹⁰³

Paik saw something else important to be gained by collaborating with Moorman. He thought she had the right physical appearance for his new aesthetic: "When I met Charlotte Moorman—a really American girl—I started performance art again, this time using her body as an instrument, and not mine."¹⁰⁴ Moorman grew up in Arkansas and was groomed to be a Southern belle, culminating in her crowning as Miss City Beautiful of Little Rock in 1952. Alison Knowles confirms that Paik was looking for an intellectual, very good looking, American woman, and Moorman fit this profile.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, Paik's work afforded Moorman something she wanted: the opportunity to transgress the proper etiquette of both her Southern upbringing and her classical music training. As we shall see, their performances aligned Paik with Maciunas's construct of the artist as an egoless organizer in some ways, but in others they were too expressive and too sexual for corporate imaginations.

The publicity poster for their notorious 1967 performance *Opera Sextronique* (fig. 80) highlights the importance of her physical presence, and perhaps her Americanness, to the evolution of Paik's work. She is depicted on a stage with a theater curtain draping behind her, yet she herself is barely draped. Her attire consists only of a dark bra and panties that emphasize the whiteness of her skin. A pile of clothing lying in front of her suggests that she recently disrobed on stage. She holds her cello by its neck, and her voluptuous curves and long hair are accentuated by a slight bend forward at the waist as she rises up from a chair, as if illustrating Paik's assessment that she was "very [Marilyn] Monroe-like in her performance."¹⁰⁶

The poster also includes a provocative statement by Paik, "After three emancipations in 20th Century music (serial, indeterministic, actional) . . . I have found that there is still one more chain to lose. . . . That is . . . *PRE-FREUDIAN HYPOCRISY*. Why is sex a predominant theme in art and literature prohibited *ONLY* in music?"¹⁰⁷ These words, juxtaposed with Moorman's image, are a clear indication of his intentions to move beyond his

Film-Maker's Cinematheque presents

CHARLOTTE MOORMAN playing
"OPERA SEXTRONIQUE"
 by NAM JUNE PAIK

with TAKEHISA KOSUGI and YAL KUT

also

MAX MATTHEWS "International Lullaby"
 JAMES TENNEY "Phases"
 TAKEHISA KOSUGI "Organic Music"
 YAL KUT - PAIK "Cinema Metaphysique"
 NAM JUNE PAIK "Variations on a Theme by Saint Saens"

masque design - ELY FAWAN
 gen. assistance - BOB DUNHAM
 photography - PETER MOORE

After three emancipations in 20th century music, (serial-indeterministic, aetional)...
 I have found that there is still one more chain to lose... that is ...

PRE-FREUDIAN HYPOCRISY

Why is sex a predominant theme in art and literature prohibited ONLY in music?
 How long can New Music afford to be sixty years behind the times and still claim to be a
 serious art?
 The purge of sex under the excuse of being "serious" exactly undermines the so-called
 "seriousness" of music as a classical art, ranking with literature and painting.

Music history needs its D.H. Lawrence its Sigmund Freud.

FEBRUARY 9, 1967 * 9 PM * 41st ST THEATER * 125 W 41st ST * NYC
 by invitation only

FIGURE 80

Opera Sextronique poster, 1967. Printed paper, double-sided, 12 3/4 x 7 7/8 in. (32.4 x 20 cm).
 Smithsonian American Art Museum, Nam June Paik Archive (NJP.2.EPH.49), gift to the Nam
 June Paik Archive from Timothy Anglin Burgard in memory of Ralph Burgard.

early action music by foregrounding an embodied sexuality. The poster both tantalized and forewarned the two hundred invited guests, as had Paik's provocation "Yellow Peril! C'est moi" for those who received his pamphlet in Germany five years earlier.¹⁰⁸

Video documentation of *Opera Sextronique* and the following written account by Moorman affirm her active role in developing Paik's third artistic stage:

Aria No. 1 (Act I) of *Opera Sextronique* begins in complete darkness—two to three minutes of silence—then a Buddhist gong recording begins. . . . In accordance with these gongs, Paik, by remote control, flashed on and off intermittently and rhythmically in the auditorium the Electric Bikini I was wearing—a three-piece "light bikini" ingeniously contrived of triangles filled with 45 six-volt bulbs—representing the eternal beauty of womanhood. I walked very slowly, as in a Japanese Noh play, to my chair and began to play Paik's variations of Massenet's "Elegie" (Takehisa Kosugi then flashed the lights, while Paik played the piano accompaniment). The beauty of romantic music and the beauty of woman are combined through the electronic bikini and only makes everything more poetic (not lewd or obscene). In this aria, Paik modernized Buddhism, beautified the electronic age, and criticized commercialized so-called Sex Revolution. . . . The next Aria No. 2 (Act II) is a typical example of Media Art. There are four basic elements in this section of the Opera: 1) computer music "International Lullaby," by Max Matthews of Bell Laboratories, in which a computer analyzes two lullabies (one Japanese and one Schubert) and changes from one to the other with the *probabilistic progressis* rule; 2) live Greek female torso sitting still at a cello, seminude in a long, formal black skirt; 3) six kinds of masks, ranging from a gas mask to Picasso-type plastic mask, four kinds of prepared bows, and propellers (attached to my breasts in the last phrase) which symbolized American "pop art"; 4) the well-known Brahms "Lullaby," arranged into variations for cello and piano by Paik. These four elements occur simultaneously—like feedback of Radio Free Europe and Radio Peking.¹⁰⁹

The Asian references of Paik's action music returned in the form of, among other things, the Buddhist gong recordings that set the rhythm of the piece and the electric bikini itself—its name and dramatic flashes of light in the dark theater evoking the portentous H-bomb detonations at Bikini Atoll. Western culture was represented by Paik's variations on Jules Massenet's *Elegie* (ca. 1972) and Johannes Brahms's *Lullaby* (1868), and so on. Eastern and Western signifiers also appeared in a single work, *International Lullaby* (1966) by Max Matthews of Bell Laboratories, which computerized two lullabies (the most soothing form of music, used to lull a baby to sleep)—one Japanese and one European. Moreover, Moorman's description of the performance as "like feedback of Radio Free Europe and Radio Peking" reveals the degree to which Paik's "Rx" of art for cybernated life informed their creative process.

What stood out the most, however, was the manner in which Paik accentuated the sexualized areas of Moorman's body. He did this first via his (or Takehisa Kosugi's) control of the electric bikini, flashing directive signals for viewers' eyes, and, secondly, when he had Moorman tape two little motorized propellers to her bare breasts. They whirled

as she played her cello. Moorman spoke of the performance in terms of its natural and unnatural elements, but her terms really refer to the artwork's capacity to negotiate the relationship between subjectivity and technology—the expression of her “womanhood” made possible by the electric bikini and mechanical propellers.

On the evening in question, they were unable to perform *Opera Sextronique* in its entirety. Midway through *Aria No. 2 (Act II)*, at about 10:15 p.m., the police raided the show. It is uncertain how the authorities knew about a topless female cellist performing at a theater on Forty-First Street—a phone call from an outraged audience member? an anonymous tip? the scandalous poster itself? Whatever the case, Moorman was arrested and taken to jail for the so-called lewd act of playing the cello on stage naked from the waist up. The official charge against her was indecent exposure. Four months later, on May 9, Judge Milton Shalleck handed down a guilty verdict in the case of “People, & C., v. Charlotte Moorman.” Her sentence was suspended due only to the judge's patronizing conclusion that Moorman was “weak and immature.”¹¹⁰

Even more remarkable regarding this case is that the judge felt compelled to write a whopping twenty-nine-page opinion. Committing so many words to the relatively petty crime of indecent exposure indicates a particular aggravation, as he expressed: “In no poem, in no prose respected by the test of time have I read, in no valued oil, in no statue or bust have I seen, either visually described or portrayed, a picture of a nude or ‘topless’ cellist in the act of playing the instrument. . . . Perhaps, then, the breast in these latter milieus is not artful.”¹¹¹ As in other court cases, precedent played a role in his decision, only this time it was framed in terms of art history as well as legal history. The judge seemed to confirm Paik's claim that sex in music was still forbidden, justifying the artists' own rationale for their apparent transgression. According to Paik, “The character of the pieces changed from agony to libido because of Charlotte's body, aesthetics, and character.”¹¹² He saw his own body as a vehicle for the expression of suffering, but required the body of a woman, Moorman's in particular because of what she brought to the role, for the expression of sexual desire, raising further questions as to the gender implications of the performance (beyond the judge's conservative opinion).

With all the fuss surrounding Moorman's nudity, Paik's own presence on stage often goes unremarked upon. Yet he was by no means an un-implicated bystander in the embodied politics on display. The fact of Moorman's scantily clad white female body as the focal point of the performance was exacerbated by its relation to Paik's Asian male body, particularly as he shifted his role toward managing the performance in a gray suit. Their bodies marked racially, by gender, and by degree of (un)dress, came to signify Paik as “East” and Moorman as “West” in provocative, sexual, and humorous ways (propeller breasts)—never easy, never fixed. Even on the poster, where Paik's obviously Asian name is set in black text against Moorman's white skin, difference is at once sharp and complicated. The two of them performing their respective roles together could not escape becoming part of the cultural personifications Paik had initiated in Germany by performing the yellow peril.

With the renewal of embodied performance in Paik's work came a return of the term "shocking" to describe its impact on the viewer. The judge himself pointed to its "*shocking innovations*, so intended, normally cause revulsion and *not the revolution sought* by the purposeful application of sudden knockout blows."¹¹³ Ironically, Paik was already developing in his own way the judge's point that shock was not the most effective strategy for change. *Opera Sextronique* represented a clear transition toward the marriage of Paik's first two stages—his action music and his experimental electronics—in a third stage: art for cybernated life.

As Moorman's sexuality was communicated, exaggerated, and "controlled" through Paik's apparatus as an extension of her body, the emergence of a different historical relationship between the subject and technology was conveyed. Paik's dangerous underclothes functioned as a mediating device in a larger enactment of the social body's historical movement from the electric to the electronic age, made subjective via Moorman's specific body. His partnership with Moorman encouraged him to visualize issues of communication and control in humans and machines beyond anything he had done before.

This became abundantly clear in the duo's contribution to the pioneering group exhibition *TV as a Creative Medium* at Howard Wise Gallery in New York in 1969. Contrary to McLuhan, who was either naive or indifferent to the political and economic implications of television's growing commercialization in the 1960s, the artists in this first US exhibition devoted to video as an art form were aware of having a limited critical time-space in which to act if television's for-profit consolidation and regulation were to be challenged. They saw cable television and videotapes, along with manipulative techniques of delay and repetition, as means of shaping the electronic image world, viewers' reception of it, and, ultimately, the production of meaning and value through television at large.

The announcement for *TV as a Creative Medium* (fig. 81) contrasted starkly with the poster for *Opera Sextronique*, yet it too suited Paik and Moorman's new work. Whereas the artists relied on an image of Moorman's scantily clad body to publicize their performance, the gallery used an image of a television set displaying a vaguely perceptible person looking through a video camera. One exalts sensuous physicality; the other diminishes the human figure behind both lens and screen. These distinct representations hinted at the profound shift in the location of the body and the nature of embodied experience that occurred in Paik's third aesthetic stage.

For five hours during the exhibition opening and two hours every day thereafter, viewers could see Paik and Moorman's *TV Bra for Living Sculpture* (1969, see fig. 15). Moorman performed sitting with her cello on a small platform. What made the scenario unusual is that on her bare breasts she wore two miniature cathode ray tubes encased in Plexiglas and wired to her cello. "The sound of the cello she plays will change, modulate, regenerate the picture on her TV-BRA," Paik is quoted on the exhibition announcement.¹¹⁴ The electric-light bikini of *Opera Sextronique* had evolved into another, more complex, more cybernetic item of women's intimate apparel.

TV as a Creative Medium



FIGURE 81

TV as a Creative Medium announcement, 1969. Printed paper, double-sided, 14 11/16 × 17 3/8 in. (37.3 × 44.1 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Nam June Paik Archive (NJP.P.PAPERS.17), gift of the Nam June Paik Estate.

Paik's remarks were an attempt to ameliorate the strangeness of the *TV Bra for Living Sculpture* through an explanation of his larger goals:

The real issue in "Art and Technology" is not to make another scientific toy, but how to humanize the technology and the electronic medium, which is progressing rapidly—too rapidly. . . . By using TV as bra . . . the most intimate belonging of human being [*sic*], we will demonstrate the human use of technology, and also stimulate viewers NOT for something mean but stimulate their phantasy to look for the new, imaginative and humanistic ways of using our technology.¹¹⁵

Without knowledge of his previous work, the most striking aspect of this statement might slip under one's radar. The idea that he would not stimulate viewers for "something

mean” reads like a subtle *mea culpa*. Why mention this? Was it indicative of a greater sensitivity following the *Opera Sextronique* legal case? Most likely, Paik was reflecting on his practice generally as he transitioned to something new. Realizing an evolution in his own work, he distanced himself from his earlier violent, expressive assaults on the audience by qualifying the *TV Bra* as something other than a mere attempt to shock his viewers.

Rather than simply agitating thoughts and emotions, Paik wanted to channel them. With a new ambition to humanize technology, his art needed to (re)produce viewers who could assist in this endeavor. A politics of the imagination was at stake, and his new work encouraged viewers to see themselves as actors functioning beyond the living room, where they merely got up to turn a knob and clear the picture on their TV screen.

CYBERNATED SUBJECTS

For all the discussion of the relationship between human beings and technology in Paik’s writing, there is a vital term missing in his equation of art for cybernated life—the cybernated body. In other words, the cyborg. Meanwhile, the presence of this in his art is impossible to ignore. Images of Moorman wearing the *TV Bra* compel recognition of her body as a fleshy yet wired site of convergence, where human being and technology meet and interface. As we endeavor to understand the art historical significance of Paik’s work, we need to distance ourselves from the idea of a synthetic cyborg as we know it today and return instead to its roots in the 1960s as literally a cybernetic organism—implying a cyborg in its *unamalgamated* state. This is precisely where Paik’s video sculptures with Moorman operate, materially and discursively, in a historical process of producing not only art but also subjects for cybernated life.

The engineer and musician Manfred Clynes and the pharmacologist Nathan Kline coined the term “cyborg” in 1960 to refer to a laboratory mouse attached to an insulin pump that osmotically regulated its blood sugar level. Thinking of its potential contributions to space-age exploration, Clynes and Kline defined the cyborg (cybernetic organism) as “a homeostatic system functioning unconsciously.”¹¹⁶ However, their use of the term “unconsciously” is misleading, as Joseph Dumit noted more recently: “The mouse was certainly aware of and distracted by its new tail, so the authors’ reference to an ‘unconscious’ system was an attempt to describe a function that did not require constant active attention, or intention, on the part of the mouse pump. . . . The interface between the body and the technology would be ‘unconscious,’ automatic, and taken for granted.”¹¹⁷

Paik’s systems required the “active attention” of an individual—the “conscious” aspect being precisely what he did not want to deny when he wired Moorman’s body to his electronic devices, even as she became dependent on them for the operational capability of the artwork. It visualized a critical role for art in helping subjects adapt to an escalating technological mediation of contemporary experience located increasingly in the body

FIGURE 82
Charlotte Moorman performing Nam
June Paik's *Concerto for TV Cello*
and *Videotapes*, Galeria Bonino, New
York, 1971. Photo by Peter Moore.
© Barbara Moore / Licensed by
VAGA, New York, NY. Courtesy
Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.



itself. His humanization of technology was important not only because it contributed an artistic perspective to interdisciplinary debates about how consciously and critically subjects would be able to adapt, but also because it imagined and tested productive possibilities. In this light, Moorman was at once a collaborator and a case study in a series of pseudo-experiments.

TV Bra for Living Sculpture wired Moorman directly into the special apparel (as the “living sculpture”) so that the techno-human relationship became progressively amalgamated. It highlighted the embodied nature of her position as a subject in and of a cybernetic feedback loop. It also marked an evolution beyond Paik’s gendered control over the flashing of her electric bikini by giving Moorman herself the capability to disrupt the images on the monitors strapped to her breasts. Importantly, she did so via the thing that she self-identified with the most, her classical cello. She performed the very process of a cybernetic subject coming into being—moving from old to new media—a process in which the individual plays an intentional role. Even if this cybernetic subject was not in control of the entire system, she could manipulate it from within.

Paik and Moorman staged several more performances of cybernetic subjectivity, notably *Concerto for TV Cello and Videotapes* (fig. 82), performed at Galeria Bonino, New York, in 1971. The piece achieved an unprecedented synthesis of the three stages in Paik's work in his most complex cybernetic feedback system. Here her trademark wooden cello is gone, replaced by Paik's electronic version. In the dimly lit gallery space the luminous instrument—made of three cathode ray tubes of different sizes encased in Plexiglas cabinets—looks like some strange sci-fi gizmo, the clear material exposing its naked circuitry. The cabinets are stacked with the smallest in the middle to replicate a cello's cinched waist, while a Plexiglas spine and two wires running down the front complete the instrument. The first impression one gets from examining video and photographs of the performance is of this imposing display of glowing television screens eclipsing Moorman's body.

She holds the TV cello as she would her traditional instrument and plays the wires across the televisions with her classical bow. Yet she herself is also "wired." She wears a headset, including large dark lenses that block any flicker of humanness from her eyes. What luminescence there is emanates from two tiny cathode ray tubes attached to either side of the lenses—screens like ocular organs. Wires extending from the headset to various electronic devices scattered on the floor around her further mediate her embodied presence. Is she even running on her own juices? This was Paik's most unsettling cyborg to date, as it performed an increasingly less precise delimitation between human and machine.

The second impression is made by the images on the *TV Cello* itself. Paik's system allowed for different types of pictures to appear on the screens: a closed-circuit direct feed of the performance space, a prerecorded video collage, and an intercepted broadcast television feed in which performance footage of Janis Joplin in concert gave way to local news reports of a purse snatcher. But it was arguably the images generated by the direct closed-circuit feed that were the most curious and of the greatest consequence. Moorman's technologically appended body was recorded on video and "fed back" into the system for instantaneous replay as an image on the screen. She appeared at once in the flesh and as a piece of electronic information that could be transmitted like any other item of news, like a report of a purse snatcher or imagery of Joplin (with her different connotations of womanhood and creativity). Other times the video camera was trained on Paik. He no longer ran around with a tangle of wires in his hands, making things "look electronic"; now, things really *were* electronic. As he interacted with the devices around Moorman, he performed his own role as show manager and engineer.

The work clearly juxtaposed Moorman's presence in the now of the gallery space-time and the elusive duration and displacement of the television transmission—emphasized by the intercepted live broadcast referencing a wider sphere of activity in the United States or the world. It hinted at what the philosopher Samuel Weber has since referred to as the "unsettling tendency" of television. According to Weber, the TV transmission does not simply overcome distance and separation, as in McLuhan's notion of a global village. Rather, it "renders them invisible, paradoxically, by transposing them *into* the vision it transmits."¹¹⁸ Television's key trait is therefore its ability to combine separation

(the transmission) with presentness (the viewer's perception) in a luminous display of its fundamentally ambiguous and ambivalent power.

As much as the work presents Moorman as another bit of screened information in an endless stream, it also enables her (and viewers) to see herself outside herself as an actor with a role to play in the artwork and on a larger social stage. The intersubjective exchange of performance was transformed and expanded by technology's increasingly intrusive role in the process of reception and self-(re)production. Hence, her intentionality and self-regulation as the performative subject within operations of communication and control were rendered more ambivalent through her progressive amalgamation with machines. The effect of the performance was a seemingly contradictory experience of objectification and activation. Within the system of wires leading from her headset to the various machines on the floor and the flickering screens in front of her, how much did she actually need to be in control (while remaining aware) for the creative process to transpire? This was cybernated art by and for the cybernated subject of cybernated life.

"Difference" articulated herein was distinct from Paik's action music and experimental televisions, but no less important for understanding subjectivity in that moment. Repetition was essential. The subject emerged within and through the repetition of the feedback loop. Recall here Paik's claim that "we are in open circuits." This was at once a metaphor for the broad critical potential for agency and change within "the system" and a literal description of his effort to bring these things about through a manipulation of real open circuits within which Moorman also negotiated her own role. Ultimately, they were adapting to the mediatization of everyday life through an aesthetic of communication, yet refusing to become automatic receivers through a continually repeated process of generating negative feedback.

CONCLUSION: TYPEWRITER AND VIDEO

After the 1964 fallout over his participation in the New York Avant-Garde Festival, Paik remained affiliated with Fluxus, but his experiments with new technology and his continued collaboration with Moorman took him in different directions from Maciunas. In 1974 Paik produced two works, which although not originally intended as a pair and bearing no obvious similarities, in hindsight seem to articulate a great irony about the relationship between Paik and Maciunas. One work is the now-famous *TV Buddha* (fig. 83); the other is the lesser-known *Ego Machine* (fig. 84).

TV Buddha includes an antique Buddha statue that Paik purchased as an investment, placed in front of a television monitor. A closed-circuit video camera is directed at the Buddha from a position just beyond the television. The Buddha silently observes himself on the screen in an infinitely repetitive loop in which the camera and monitor are constitutive of his self-(re)production and reception. *Ego Machine* involves the simpler setup of an Olivetti Lettera 22 typewriter (the company's most popular model) with a single

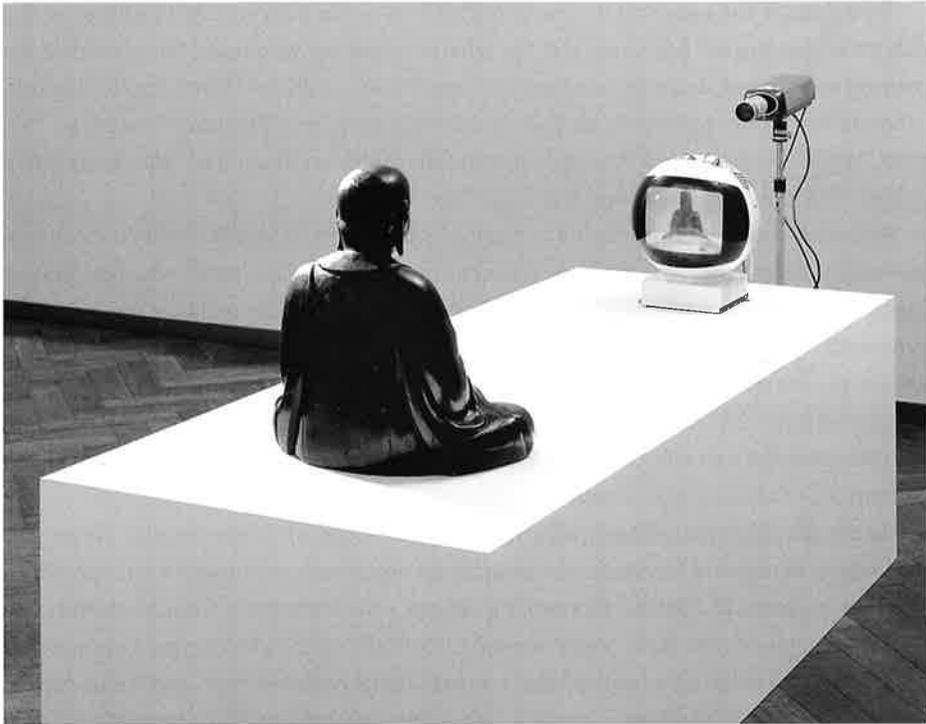


FIGURE 83

Nam June Paik, *TV Buddha*, 1974. Closed-circuit video installation and eighteenth-century Buddha statue. Collection of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Photo courtesy the Stedelijk Museum.



FIGURE 84

Nam June Paik, *Ego Machine*, 1974. Portable typewriter that only writes the word "Paik."

sheet of paper in its carriage, on which "Paik" appears in type repeatedly across and down the page; in fact, this is the only word that the manipulated typewriter is capable of typing. As in *TV Buddha*, the *subject* of this work is (re)produced through the machine.

The vital distinction between the two pieces is the choice of medium. One is video; the other is print. One is electronic; the other is manual-mechanical. Taken together they represent the historical transition to new technologies that Paik performed across the three stages of his work. In McLuhan's scheme, it was a transition from the "hot" technology of print to the "cool" technology of television and video. Taken together, the works also represent an alternative thematic of hot and cool authorship: Paik's transition from the apparently "hot," ego-driven action music to the "cool," egoless video.

Even though the name on the paper is Paik's own, the inference of Maciunas as the subject is inescapable. Maciunas was the artist as organizer who made the typewriter his primary artistic tool, and who composed *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* in critical admiration of the Italian typewriter king. It could easily have been Maciunas's name on that page. Might this have been Paik slyly turning the tables on Maciunas? Was he having a laugh? Was Paik now "cool" and Maciunas "hot"?

Indeed, it seems highly possible to think of Paik as the *TV Buddha*—the Eastern subject who reinvents himself through Western media, the "yellow peril" who has "cooled his ego," the "cultural terrorist" whose shock is converted to the negative feedback of a cybernetic system. While Maciunas, even though he loved Paik's video work, is the typewriter, the one who risks remaining too long as an anachronistic mechanical subject (in his bowler hat) as a booming TV age converges upon a heady if disquieting new era of the computer, the executive who continues to rely on the "hot," less participatory medium of print.

Paik is the cybernetic subject who reproduces his consciousness through the perpetual looping of negative feedback. Maciunas is the organizational subject who reproduces his consciousness by continually cranking out executive statements through the rotating carriage of a typewriter. Both artists devised historically specific strategies of performing the system and working it from within, yet oscillations between "hot" and "cool" media, between "hot" and "cool" egos, made it impossible for them to find a systemic balance within the corporate imaginations of Fluxus.

ALISON KNOWLES

Ritual and Routine

Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience.
A rustling in the leaves drives him away.

WALTER BENJAMIN, 1936¹

Boredom is counter-revolutionary.

SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL, 1962²

MAKING SALAD

Simple. Mundane. Positively boring. These are words that might be used to describe the performance *Proposition #2: Make a Salad* by Alison Knowles (see fig. 16). The title is also the score, and when she performs it, Knowles takes up her own proposition: preparing a salad and serving it to her audience. *Proposition #2: Make a Salad* was first performed at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London in 1962 (fig. 85)—she made a basic green salad from fresh local vegetables—and subsequently repeated at numerous Fluxus concerts. As Knowles describes it, “Audience members are watching almost nothing going on. . . . People often feel awkward with this quality.”³ Rather than write off their unease as merely an inability to appreciate radical art, or dismissing the real possibility that watching a woman make a salad might not be edifying in traditional aesthetic terms, Knowles suggests that such experiences are vital to the piece. Boredom is not a criticism per se.

Taking Knowles’s cue, this chapter focuses on how her performances, particularly *Proposition #2: Make a Salad* and a second entitled *The Identical Lunch* (1968) are at once misconstrued for and dependent on their mundane, repetitive, and boring qualities.⁴ I explain how she too was performing the system through her own aesthetic of routinization. She, like her Fluxus colleagues, raised important questions about the role of the artist and the nature of artistic labor in that historical moment, but her aesthetic mode and the potentialities it surfaced were unique within the group.



FIGURE 85
Alison Knowles, *Proposition #2: Make a Salad*, 1962, at its original October 1962 performance at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. Knowles is pictured second from the right. Photo courtesy Alison Knowles.

Knowles also played with and against George Maciunas's model of the artist as organizer. Her work suggests an interest in the ways we become regimented and efficient through routine. However, while Maciunas emphasized the levels of organization and systematicity that structure day-to-day existence, Knowles observed the changing temporal and spatial experiences of labor and leisure and the relationship between the two. In comparison to Maciunas's *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* (1962), performances by Knowles read like investigations into the lived daily practices of those individuals who would, or had already, become his dancing automatons. How might those same dominant forces of bureaucratization represented by Maciunas through generalized types play out in relation to specific and gendered bodies, behaviors, and contexts? And was it possible for the subject to alter her experience of these forces?

Knowles's performances, as early as 1962, offered the possibility to think about gendered identity in terms that were distinct from her Fluxus associates and female artists more broadly. A few words on the artistic context in which she participated are necessary here. Her performing body was not the universal organizer of Maciunas; nor was it the expressive, violent, and racially charged body of Nam June Paik; nor, finally, was it the naked, eroticized body displayed by either Charlotte Moorman or Carolee Schneemann, two of her most important peers, who both had conflicts with Maciunas. Nonetheless, embodiment in her work was crucial to understanding how subjects are produced.

As was the case with Paik, Moorman, and Schneemann, Knowles's body was marked in a way that prevented her from fitting into the dominant model of artistic identity at the time, which was based on an ideal of white, masculine self-assertion, free enterprise, and rugged individualism as represented most emphatically by the New York Abstract Expressionists. As we have seen, Maciunas proposed his artist as organizer in part to challenge the Abstract Expressionist model, his primary concern being to eradicate egoistic expression from art. He contested individual ego by asserting an organizational and systems aesthetic together with collective practice. The artist need not "feel" as much as "think," and especially "do," and should organize him- or herself with other artists to get things done efficiently in the service of a new art reality.

The ramifications of Maciunas's model within Fluxus were twofold. On the one hand, in attempting to dissociate ego from artistic practice, other subject positions became possible. To Maciunas's great credit, his commitment to international expansion resulted in the assembly of a more diverse group of artists than at any time in avant-garde history. On the one hand, as long as an artist could adapt to his model by becoming a loyal and committed "Fluxus worker," performing in the "Fluxus way," or submitting works for sale as Flux-Products, Maciunas was inclusive. On the other hand, despite developing a new, pseudo-egoless, anonymous, bureaucratic approach to critical art, Maciunas's political allegiances still tended to rely on the historical Marxist model of the white, male, proletarian subject, even if recasting him as the "proletarianized" corporate, white-collar worker. The orderly presentation of discrete bodies defined his performance standard for the collective.

He had little tolerance for artworks, often those produced by women, that fell outside his aesthetic and political program. This was less about simple sexism, and more about the works. In this context, Schneemann was a prime outlaw to his Fluxus marshalcy. Her 1964 "Statement on Fluxus" condemned the situation in no uncertain terms. She called the group, and the New York contingent specifically, a "boys' boat"—"fun when the boys let you on board." Maciunas got his very own dishonorable mention: "when i came home george wrote a bad letter about my crimes operatic political sexual metaphoric motors caressing mess and showing my pussy."⁵ That same year her performance *Meat Joy*, with its apparently frivolous use of food (dead chicken and fish) and its highly choreographed and staged quality (including dramatic lighting and sound, the trappings of bourgeois theater), epitomized why Maciunas hated Happenings. Beyond this, however, *Meat Joy* and other performances by Schneemann were troubling for Maciunas because they deployed scantily clad or naked, erotic, desiring bodies, including overtly desiring (and desirous) female bodies—bodies with "pussies." Such bold assertions of gender and sexuality were too messy for Maciunas, both literally and figuratively, in terms of the complicated, taboo issues they raised vis-à-vis his belief in (and need for) orderly, efficient, economic works. Schneemann's interest in the renegade Freudian psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich—best known for his stated discovery of a form of sexual energy called the "orgone" and his theory of "orgiastic potency" as the basis for psycho-physical health—

FIGURE 86
Shigeko Kubota, *Vagina Painting*,
1965, performed at the "Perpetual Fluxus
Festival," Cinematheque,
New York, July 4, 1965. Gelatin silver
print, 14 × 14 in. (35.6 × 35.5 cm).
Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Digital image © Museum of Modern Art/
Licensed by SCALA /
Art Resource, NY. With permission
of the Estate of Shigeko Kubota.



is well documented.⁶ Her work did not fit Maciunas's model, and because of this she was largely excluded from Fluxus events in New York.

Without wishing to get into a psychoanalytic reading of Maciunas, we cannot ignore the possibility that his position was complicated by the fact that in his private life he blurred gender and sexual categories through a practice of cross-dressing. In a series of photographic self-portraits taken in his New York apartment circa 1966, he wears a dress, bra, panties, negligee, stockings, garters, and high heels, or displays his bare buttocks. Only late in his life, after being diagnosed with cancer, did he bring this personal practice into public performance with his *Fluxus Wedding* to Billie Hutching, where he dressed as the bride and she as the groom. Hutching has also described the sadomasochistic sexual relations she had with Maciunas in his final months.⁷

For the most part, the Japanese artist Shigeko Kubota fit Fluxus much better than Schneemann. Yet when her work strayed from the sanctioned Fluxus event score into less succinct, gendered, and feminist terrain, her male colleagues were less than supportive. Her iconic *Vagina Painting* (1965, fig. 86), in which she adhered a paintbrush to her panties and squatted over a canvas on the floor to give the appearance of action painting or drip painting with her vagina, first performed at the 1965 "Perpetual Fluxus Festival" in New York, was particularly displeasing to the men of Fluxus.⁸ There was undoubtedly "gender trouble" within the group, yet Knowles seems to have evaded the

Fluxus gender patrol. She has never spoken of feeling at odds with her male colleagues in this regard, even though, as I am arguing, her performances also engaged the trouble-provoking issue of gendered identity. Through close, contextualized readings, I will suggest how and why they did not trigger the same policing.

FIRST WOMAN IN FLUXUS

The piece *Proposition #2: Make a Salad* was originally scored and performed during the inaugural European Fluxus Festivals. In 1962, Knowles and her husband, fellow Fluxus artist Dick Higgins, left New York for Wiesbaden, arriving around September 7, in time to take part in the second weekend of the *Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Neuester Musik* (September 1–23) at the Municipal Museum of Wiesbaden. Knowles has the distinction of being the only woman to perform in the first European Fluxus concerts. At Wiesbaden the core performers were Maciunas, Paik, Higgins, Emmett Williams, Benjamin Patterson, Bengt af Klintberg, Wolf Vostell, and Knowles. This gender imbalance, if not always quite so extreme, was the norm for Fluxus events. Although Yoko Ono already had close ties with Maciunas in New York, and other women became involved in Fluxus at various later dates, Knowles was the first woman to participate in official Fluxus events.

Knowles speaks emphatically about the situation for women at the time: “As to the lack of women in the Fluxus group (I was solo until Takako [Saito] joined occasionally later) or in the art world in general the answer is simple. Women in the avant-garde didn’t exist.”⁹ Whether or not there is a degree of retrospective self-positioning going on in Knowles’s remarks is a valid question. She does not mention Ono, Schneemann, Kubota, Simone Forti, Yvonne Rainer, or Trisha Brown, to name only a few of the women in New York’s experimental art scene in the early 1960s. The fact remains, however, that women were outnumbered, as they had been in the historical avant-gardes of the early twentieth century. But what was Knowles’s position within Fluxus specifically?

Many of the compositions staged during the second and third weeks at Wiesbaden became classic examples of the events that would come to characterize the group’s performance style as a whole. Audience members saw George Brecht’s *Drip Music* (1959–62), in which “a source of dripping water and an empty vessel are arranged so that the water falls into the vessel.” There was also La Monte Young’s *Poem for Chairs, Tables, and Benches, Etc., or Other Sound Sources* (1960), calling for the performers to push, pull, drag, or scrape those items across the floor, with timing and spacing determined by the numbers in any random table or the telephone book. Dick Higgins offered two versions of his *Danger Music* (1961–62), one of which was performed with Knowles: she shaved his head and he threw political pamphlets and newspapers into the audience—she performed maintenance labor while he asserted himself through the written word. For Philip Corner’s *Piano Activities* (1962) Knowles joined her male colleagues in the demolition of a piano as a means of “playing” it.¹⁰ Knowles was very active in this first festival,

but initially she fulfilled the traditional role accorded to women in music—that of interpreter. She performed scores composed by men.

Another example of this is particularly telling. As discussed in chapter 6, Charlotte Moorman had a huge influence on the development of the third stage in Paik's practice. Knowles understood this better than most, for she, rather than Moorman, was his first choice to play the role of muse. Paik composed three scores for Knowles while they were on the European Fluxus tour. One in particular, called *Serenade for Alison* (1962, fig. 87), stands out among them. During its debut at the Kunsthandel Monet in Amsterdam on October 5, 1962, Knowles wore a striped silk Korean kimono chosen for her by Paik. Her long hair swept up in a cascading topknot accentuated an ideal of feminine beauty. Photographs show Paik looking up at her with an expression of pleasure from the side of the platform on which she stood. This is the score by Paik that Knowles was supposed to follow:

Take off a pair of yellow panties, and put them on the wall. / Take off a pair of white-lace panties, and look at the audience through them. / Take off a pair of red panties, and put them in the vest pocket of a gentleman. / Take off a pair of light-blue panties, and wipe the sweat off the forehead of an old gentleman. / Take off a pair of violet panties, and pull them over the head of a snob. / Take off a pair of nylon panties, and stuff them in the mouth of a music critic. / Take off a pair of black-lace panties, and stuff them in the mouth of the second music critic. / Take off a pair of blood-stained panties, and stuff them in the mouth of the worst music critic. / Take off a pair of green panties, and make an omelette-surprise with them. (continue) / If possible, show them that you have no more panties on.¹¹

The performance of gendered power relations in this striptease is unmistakable. According to Paik's instructions, Knowles repeatedly acted out the taking off of the most intimate item of apparel (the last to come off before sex), with which she both titillated and punished various male members of the audience: peeking at them, wiping a brow, stuffing a mouth. She performed a body to be desired—the one who wears black lace panties—and the monstrous body to be feared and despised—the one whose panties are bloodstained. In the final act, when Knowles was supposed to strip and cook simultaneously, the presentation of femininity as conflated with time-honored stereotyped roles was complete.

In the context of Paik's action music, it is striking that although Knowles's body displaced his on stage, it was nonetheless folded into his performative dialectic of East and West and racialized bodies. Rather than the violent Asian man dressed in a Western suit attacking the audience, a white female dressed in Asian garb lashed out at the unwitting spectators. In the kimono, Knowles acted with an apparent freedom, self-assurance, and promiscuity not afforded many Asian women in their homelands. This perception—Paik's own idealization of the Western, white, female "exotic other"—was almost certainly a major reason why he wanted to work with an American woman. She would



FIGURE 87

Alison Knowles performing Nam June Paik's *Serenade for Alison*, 1962, Kunsthandel Monet, Amsterdam, October 5, 1962. Photo courtesy Alison Knowles.

conceivably be more open to, and socialized to, perform the type of sexual music he wanted to stage.

As it turned out, Knowles did not match Paik's ideal of the "really American girl."¹² She was not keen to perform the striptease, as her own improvisation during the performance indicates. Looking closely at the photographs, we can see several transistor radios dangling from her kimono. These are not listed in Paik's score, and were in fact Knowles's idea. In between taking off her panties, she turned the radio dials, orchestrating a cacophony of static noise and random programs. After the first rendition in Amsterdam, Knowles performed *Serenade for Alison* only once more, at the Café a Go Go in New York, before putting the composition to rest. But this lesser-known performance, with her key contribution, was a prototype for Paik's later work. It was Knowles who provided the activation of the technological devices as extensions of her own body. The performance as a whole represented a rudimentary form of the themes and methods that Paik developed more fully with Moorman, who embraced the sexualized role he engineered, as I discussed in the last chapter.

Only as the European tour progressed did Knowles begin to compose her own scores.¹³ With back-to-back concerts, she and the others did not want to repeat the same works over and over again, so they wrote new scores late in the evenings to be performed the very next day. There was a spirit of all hands on deck, and Knowles's male colleagues encouraged her to contribute. Thus, it was the specific demands of the first festival tour that posed the opportunity for Knowles to become a composer in her own right and for her male colleagues to rely on her compositional labor and interpret her works.

As we know, those first performances had roots in John Cage's classes on experimental composition at the New School for Social Research in New York, through which George Brecht developed the Fluxus template of the event score. Knowles did not attend the classes. To hear her speak about it today, she never seriously entertained the idea at the time: "As far as I know, the only woman in the class was an actress, Florence Tarlow, who later became active, as I did, in Dick Higgins's theater pieces."¹⁴ It is as if the class was simply not an option she considered, a boys' club she was not invited to join, not even by her husband, Higgins.

From the recollections of the artist Al Hansen in his book *A Primer of Happenings & Time / Space Art*, published in 1965, we know that there was at least one other female student in the class besides Tarlow: "a wonderful, sexy girl named Carol who was very interested in getting better at composing Tchaikovsky and little piano pieces and who was not a bad pianist in this area. . . . Carol would get carried away during experimental pieces. Once during my 'Alice Denham in 48 Seconds' she began beating the drum and ignoring the notation card. So I stopped performing from my card and began to hit her over the head with a mallet."¹⁵ The woman Hansen refers to is Carol Galente. As was not unusual at the time, it is only the female, Galente, whom Hansen addresses by first name in the book—the male students are called by either their first and last names or last name only—and Galente is the only individual whose sex appeal is commented upon. Beyond

these more obvious chauvinist tendencies, which further inform our understanding of Knowles's comment about there being no women in the avant-garde, Hansen suggests that a harsh rebuke will come when a woman artist fails to be a proper interpreter of a male composer's score.

There was no official policy at the New School restricting the enrollment of women that could explain the lack of them in Cage's class. The unsurprising answer lies in the long-standing institutional bias in favor of males in the field of composition, even more so than in the other arts.¹⁶ Around the same time as Cage's class, the composer Aaron Copland published remarks exemplifying the doubt that accompanied the notion of "women composers" as opposed to "women interpreters": "Everyone knows that the high achievement of women musicians as vocalists and instrumentalists has no counterpart in the field of musical composition. . . . Is it possible that there is a mysterious element in the nature of musical creativity that runs counter to the nature of the feminine mind?"¹⁷ Copland was willing to explain the disparity of success between men and women in biologically essentialist terms, but research proved otherwise.

A 1975 survey of select universities and music schools revealed that only 5.8 percent of composition teachers were women.¹⁸ These were prestigious courses, and since most composers taught for a living, the lack of access for women to the profession deprived them of a major source of income.¹⁹ Another hurdle for women composers was the lack of opportunities to stage their work. For example, up until 1975, in its entire history since 1842, the New York Philharmonic Orchestra had played only three works by women.²⁰ Cage's experimental music class (and later Fluxus) certainly did not represent the mainstream of composition, and yet within the institutional setting of the New School, it seems to have replicated the same historical gender biases that defined composition as a profession. When Galente boldly went outside the given parameters of Hansen's score to produce her own vital drumbeats, Hansen dismissed this as her getting "carried away," as if she was incapable of (a preferred) rational self-containment. Rather than asking Galente about her improvisation, Hansen quickly and aggressively let it be known that such blatant self-assertion was not welcome, attempting to control her through an act of violence (whether physical or symbolic). Thus, I am interested in the complications introduced by Knowles when she began composing her own scores based on the same Cage-Brechtian model.

Higgins did familiarize Knowles with the proceedings of Cage's class during nightly discussions once he returned home. Through him she became acquainted with the other students, including her future Fluxus associates Jackson Mac Low, Al Hansen, La Monte Young, and George Brecht. The opportunity for her to meet Cage personally presented itself on the casual occasion of a Sunday walk. "Dick Higgins and I joined the mycological society of New York led by John Cage and Guy Nearing. I met John looking for mushrooms in the Hudson Valley," Knowles remembers.²¹ Cage was a cofounder of the society, and Higgins learned of the group in class, once again having greater access to people and information than Knowles. She readily admits that her inclusion in the group of

artists who would form the New York contingent of Fluxus was based on being the wife of Higgins. This, of course, was not unusual in the history of the avant-garde. In the early twentieth century, women artists often became involved initially or had their position made less tenuous due to their relationships with male artists. Full acceptance, based on merit, would come only later, if at all.

Two famous examples are worth mentioning in reference to Knowles. Hannah Höch was not fully accepted as Dada by certain male peers who saw in her a lingering investment in traditional art academy aesthetics—something they linked prejudicially to femininity—yet they condescended to her inclusion in the group because of her long-term affair with *der über Dada* Raoul Hausmann. Meret Oppenheim was first involved in Surrealism as a model for Man Ray, appearing in his series of photographs for the Surrealist publication *Minotaur* in 1934. She was one of several women working simultaneously as an artist and model onto which the fantasy life of Surrealism was projected—“woman” construed variously as an object of and sign for desire, madness, and the unconscious itself. Despite the fact that Oppenheim produced some of the most iconic of all Surrealist objects, her position within the cadre was always predicated on her constrained relationship to her male colleagues. She famously remarked that she did not feel free to breathe as an artist until after she left the group.²²

We might assume that Knowles felt the same. But she debunks this notion, stating that as the only core female member of Fluxus, she was treated like a “princess.”²³ What this means in terms of how her male colleagues perceived her and the ramifications of it for her art remain to be seen. While claiming a veritable absence of women in the avant-garde at the time, she nonetheless found her own entry into the group entirely liberating. She claims, “As Dick’s wife I could do whatever I liked creatively. It was in fact the chance of a lifetime, and permanently engaged me with the performance form, separating my mind from painting.”²⁴ Knowles looks upon the fact that she was greatly outnumbered by men in Fluxus as an advantage, and indeed she never seems to have been excluded by Maciunas or others based on the character of her work. When she did experience some friction with Maciunas, especially in 1964, it was due primarily to her association (as wife and worker) with Higgins and Something Else Press, which he saw as a rival publishing enterprise to Fluxus. In this case, business competition more than gender politics sparked Maciunas’s ire.

Given Maciunas’s dealings with other women artists, it seems that Knowles’s princess status had something to do with the fact that she adopted the standard event performance format already sanctioned by the men in the group. The extreme laconism of most event scores was thought ample notation to posit the idea of taking action. Informed by an extreme sense of economy, the Brecht event score was a huge hit with organizer Maciunas.²⁵ It became an ideal means to produce egoless Fluxus workers. However, although the objectives, method, and aesthetic of the event score were radically different from those of the Abstract Expressionists, the issue of specific egos and specific bodies was often still ignored, meaning that an implicit dominant, white male model of author-

ship could persist. The ostensible transition to egoless artistic production could not elide the real complications of artistic identity. Within this sanctioned form, Knowles was able to raise certain issues relevant to gendered identity in specific ways that her male Fluxus colleagues did not (or could not). In this regard, Fluxus itself became a standardized system to work through, appropriating it while registering a difference.

As Knowles was slowly "separating her mind" from painting, Cage's ideas on composition opened a door for her: his methods espousing chance and indeterminacy allowed for the possibility of a less determined author-subject position. The cool intelligence, sense of playfulness, and appreciation of open-endedness that were characteristic of Cage, as well as of Marcel Duchamp, who was then residing in New York, were a refreshing alternative for young artists, both men and women, who felt alienated from the prevailing machismo of the Abstract Expressionist painters, many of whom were their art teachers.²⁶

Knowles studied painting with Adolph Gottlieb at the Pratt Institute of Art, graduating in 1954, but felt a strong need to emerge from his influence to develop her own visual language. In the arena of painting she felt stifled. For a while she stuck it out with the medium, attempting to invigorate her practice through the use of Cage's ideas. The results were abstract canvases with areas of color and size determined by chance operations.²⁷ It was a step in the right direction for Knowles, but she remained unsatisfied. Once she left for Wiesbaden to embark on the Fluxus Festival tour, she rarely painted again.²⁸

SCORE AND RECIPE

Proposition #2: Make a Salad tossed something distinct into the Fluxus mix. Knowles called this piece a "recipe."²⁹ Taking the form of the event score, which implied a normative masculine author, Knowles composed for an activity predominantly gendered feminine. "Exiting" is not socially coded male or female, as per Brecht's *Exit* (1961), nor is turning on and off a lamp, as in his *Lamp Event* (1961). Food preparation is.

As is commonly understood, and a vast body of research supports, food preparation has traditionally been considered "women's work," and women do the vast majority of domestic cooking.³⁰ This stems from social and cultural conditions and ideologies, rather than any manifestation of a purported female essence. In 1962, *Make a Salad* entered into a historically specific discourse on gender and cooking played out in the myriad advertisements, cookery articles, and cookbooks of a thriving cooking industry.

Make a Salad brought together two ideas: the musical score and the food recipe. It suggests the score as recipe, and the recipe as score. While other Fluxus scores called upon performers to interact with food, Knowles distinguished her work by proposing that the performer actually take the necessary steps to prepare food. Whether literally or intuitively, Knowles had to have a recipe for salad. In contrast, the score for Higgins's *Danger Music No. 15* (1962) reads, "Work with butter and eggs for a time." Specific food

items are listed, but no matter what you do with butter and eggs, on their own they do not appeal to most palates. Moreover, there is no indication that the “work” done should result in a coherent dish. In fact, what transpired during the performance was anything but a cooking procedure, as this newspaper account attested:

Higgins sprang from his . . . seat and seized two pounds of butter and a container of a dozen eggs. . . . He smashed some of the eggs on his now completely shaven head. He tossed eggs into the air, onto the floor, and gently into the audience. . . . One egg dripped sadly from the wall. Higgins mixes butter and eggs and advanced towards the audience. An elegantly dressed lady fled through an exit expecting the mess to be hurled into the air. Instead, Higgins placed it tenderly in the hands of several members of the audience.³¹

The artist explained that another viewer was not so lucky: “A very smart Alec sculptor named Viebig reached out his hand to dare me to throw an egg—I did (splat) up his arm up to his face.”³² He was proud of the fact that he made “an inedible waste *instead of an omelet*.”³³ His work was not only wasteful but also completely antithetical to the purpose of a recipe—a plan that helps the cook methodically avoid making a mess of food preparation. Higgins’s “work with eggs and butter” was very different from Knowles’s representation of labor in making a salad. From Knowles we get no literal or symbolic mess. The food and the labor are not metaphors for something else, a position they seem to want to occupy in Higgins’s bombastic piece. She admits that her own aesthetic was in line with Maciunas’s minimalist sensibility, including no waste.³⁴

For all his economic measures, Maciunas did not have a boring relationship to food. Consider his love of organizing Fluxus feasts. On one occasion he asked each guest to contribute food of only one color. He chose no color at all, arriving with a meal of transparent molded gelatins and other anemic delicacies: beef-flavored clear gelatin, onion-flavored clear gelatin, and a clear liquid that tasted like coffee, among others.³⁵ Yet even if he followed a gelatin recipe, his efforts were also clearly different from Knowles’s salad making. His use of food was not part of performing a score in front of an audience. Rather, he imbued social gatherings with an air of performance as friends shared imaginative and humorous concoctions to feed and entertain one another—part potluck, part show and tell. But the actual labor of cooking was done beforehand and behind the scenes, and was not part of the show.

While Higgins purposefully, theatrically, and even violently refused to make an omelet, making a mess instead, and Maciunas enjoyed “concept food” meant to be edible but not always tasty, Knowles simply made a salad. Moreover, it does matter that Knowles is a woman, that she consciously chose the title she did, and that she performed the act of food preparation for an audience in an art context. All of these factors inflect her work ideologically in ways that are absent in the performances of her Fluxus colleagues and allow her performances to resonate discursively with and beyond her authorial intentions.

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE COOKBOOK

Of course *Proposition #2: Make a Salad* does not read exactly like a recipe. Ingredients and equipment are not listed, and there are no step-by-step instructions. But it is not exactly a recipe in the same way that a Fluxus event score is not exactly a musical score. In both cases, it is the acts of appropriation and alteration that are vital. The artist operates through the established idea of a recipe or a score in order to register a difference, thereby calling into question the dominant ideological apparatuses instantiated and reproduced through the conventional forms.

Among the three kinds of cooking-related texts mentioned above—advertisements, cookery articles, and cookbooks—the cookbook seems the most innocuous and least likely to play a part in the doing, undoing, and redoing of gender norms around food preparation. By definition a cookbook is just a collection of recipes, and a recipe in turn is just a list of ingredients and a set of instructions on what to do with them. The functional nature of the task of cooking, plus exact measurements, lists, and the impersonal authoritative voice of the recipe text—that is to say, the “scientific” quality that became the hallmark of the modern cookbook—have done much to perpetuate this perception.³⁶ Even cookbooks by recognized personalities, while more obviously personal in tone, are perceived as generally benevolent. But as Jane and Michael Stern point out, “Recipes are not arbitrary formulas for appetizers, entrees and dessert; they are affirmations of values and cultural priorities.”³⁷ Cookbooks and recipes are important sites of investigation precisely because their “complex and changing discursive processes by which identities are ascribed, resisted, or embraced” often go unnoticed and unremarked upon by readers and historians alike.³⁸

In the 1950s and 1960s, the values and cultural priorities codified in the major cookbooks in the United States were largely white, middle class, and gender specific.³⁹ Peruse cookbooks of this era and it becomes plain that they are detailed articulations of the correct way for women to go about cooking.⁴⁰ *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* (first edition 1950) was the most popular one at the time Knowles scored her recipe, winning over adherents with its recipes for cookies called “Beau-Catchers” and “Husband Keepers.” These were among the more obvious reminders to women that cooking and their desirability to men went hand in hand. A typical illustration in the 1961 edition (all illustrations attributed to Joseph Pearson) depicts a man in the foreground, lifting the lid off a pot and beaming with pleasure at the aroma, and a woman in the background who, after having done the cooking, is busy transforming herself from kitchen maid to glamour girl, complete with evening gown and swept-up hairdo that she checks in the mirror. Delicious cooking and an equally sumptuous appearance are requisite—both should be a real “dish”—to keep the husband satisfied. Cookbooks clearly participated in the social construction of what it means to be a good wife and mother, and by extension a good woman.⁴¹ This was also the dominant construction of womanhood—skills, etiquette, and beauty cultivated to please men—that southern belle Charlotte Moorman was implicated

in and challenged in her collaborations with Nam June Paik. What matters here is that her bold assertions of embodied sexuality differed greatly from Knowles's subtler operations.

Yet times were also changing, and the modern woman of the 1950s and early 1960s needed to be instilled with a belief that her kitchen "workplace" offered her as much satisfaction as her husband's office in the city did him. Ironically, as we saw in chapter 1, the white-collar worker in the corporation was seen by many at the time to be undergoing a process of proletarianization through forces of standardization and routinization, and these same forces had an impact in the home. Increased application of the lessons of scientific management and mechanization through everything from new kitchen appliances to kitchen (re)design to the measurement of human movement dramatically altered the labor of cooking in the mid-twentieth century.⁴² Of special significance to Knowles's work is the fact that cookbooks of the period encouraged women to pour their creative and intellectual faculties into the mixing bowl while presenting them with limited possibilities and meaning for their identities. These messages often seemed contradictory. For example, encouragement for women to be creative collided with the need for women to facilitate a massive influx of processed food and appliances into the household, the irony being that these new products would by and large have the effect of deskilling and homogenizing kitchen labor. In an effort to merge the two, literature argued that anyone could open a can, but an imaginative woman could be truly creative by adding a bay leaf to Campbell's cream of mushroom canned soup to make a dish with that special from-scratch taste.⁴³

This thinking applied equally to making salad. Jell-O brand gelatin was a midcentury kitchen staple in the United States.⁴⁴ The 1961 *Betty Crocker's New Picture Cook Book* offered an array of salad recipes, but suggested that the pinnacle of salad, their so-called "Perfection Salad," was molded gelatin. Making it entailed only a few simple steps.⁴⁵ As new appliances and new processed foodstuffs were meant to streamline the experience of cooking, making it seem modern and exciting, recipes served the important function of reassuring women that despite these developments they remained indispensable as wives and mothers, and that their place remained in the kitchen.⁴⁶

In contrast to Betty Crocker's "Perfection Salad," Knowles always made a salad of the basic green variety, relying on none of the modern appliance or food conveniences. From the London debut forward, she made a point of visiting the local market in each city on the day of the performance to select whatever vegetables were freshest. Whereas "Perfection Salad" went from a box of processed powder to six or eight neatly contained, congealed molds, Knowles mixed her first salad in a pickle barrel. This surprising cooking instrument was her solution to the dilemma of how to mix enough salad to feed her audience, as she interpreted her own score. A local institution came to the rescue. After visiting the market, she tried her luck at a shop of the famous English food company Crosse & Blackwell, which loaned her a pickle barrel to use as her mixing bowl. In what must have been a funny sight, Knowles rolled the large wooden cask from the shop

through the streets of London back to the ICA—hardly the image of a model modern housewife, and hardly the stuff of cookbooks. It represented the kind of ingenuity and improvisation required of performing a score as recipe, or recipe as score, on the road.

The apparent lack of artistry in her salad mixed in a pickle barrel that was nonetheless staged inside an art institute made for a less-than-straightforward riposte to another dimension of the cooking literature that tried to motivate women to stay in the kitchen: likening domestic cooking to high art. In this scenario, cooking had lofty purpose beyond supplying family members with something yummy and nutritious. It could be a complete aesthetic experience, as challenging as sculpting or painting.⁴⁷ As *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* claimed, a melon became more “interesting” when cut with a decorative edge, and a handful of purple grapes was the perfect accent of color to complement a roast chicken.⁴⁸ On the surface, this represented a significant ideological turn in the industry, since the “art” of cooking was the traditional preserve of the chef—a profession, like that of the music composer, dominated historically by men. Men who prepared “artful” food did so outside the home and were paid handsomely for it. The whole purpose of the discourse on women’s cooking was to keep them amateur, unpaid, and in the kitchen.⁴⁹

In contrast, Knowles brought her “cooking” out of the domestic sphere and literally into the professional realm of art. She gave this form of labor—a daily experience (and often drudgery) for millions of women—another stage. Returning to the point with which I began this chapter—that *Proposition #2: Make a Salad* might have been received as simple, mundane, and boring—I want to try to answer the question that follows logically. Why *would* people want to spend their leisure time watching Knowles? What might the performance have offered or created a space of possibility for?

Knowles had to undertake all of the basic steps found in any recipe (even though they are not listed in the score). She had to decide upon and buy the ingredients, gather her equipment, prepare the dish, serve it, and clean up afterward. However, in the context of the piece, these steps were consciously *performed*. I employ the term “doing-cooking,” coined by Luce Giard, to emphasize this performative aspect within the frame of the work.⁵⁰ The theory that she was not simply cooking but doing-cooking conveys the dynamic by which her role was at once critically distanced from the act of food preparation and mediated by it. In this time-space of performance, particular characteristics of the labor and the cook herself, which go unacknowledged daily in the domestic sphere, bubbled to the surface of awareness.

When asked about the structure of the piece, Knowles replied, “I think that if you try to make things intentionally mysterious and don’t reveal their structure, then the audience misses the pleasure of the process of having it happen *with* them. I feel very close to my audience, and I feel that if they know what I’m trying to do that they also are, in a sense doing it with me. I state in the recipe exactly what is going to happen.”⁵¹ This passage accentuates another important difference between her work and that of her husband, Higgins, in that his obtuse mess of eggs and butter (that was not an omelet) relied

more on shock value (remember the elegantly dressed lady who fled to the exit). Knowles never deployed shock as a critical strategy. She also never liked the violence in certain Fluxus performances, such as the destruction of the violin in Paik's *One for Violin Solo* (1962). Having the audience with her in the experience, rather than in antagonistic opposition, was essential to a work's efficacy. Knowles began from a place of familiarity. Her work connected with viewers in terms they understood through their own lives. Tied as it is to our most basic needs, cooking has a particularly prominent place in the rhythm of our days. Less poetically, it is integral to routine. Yet Knowles's presentation of an everyday act of cooking in a situation outside of routine produced an estranging effect as well. This making strange (albeit without shock) of something recognizable opened up a space of potential for an altered relationship to the activity being staged. It opened up a space in which experiences, memories, and knowledge might be recalled and re-associated in order to see the labor of cooking differently.

In fact, seeing Knowles doing-cooking was crucial. Women's cooking is a socially invisible form of labor. This is supported by a set of facts: that housework is not public, is generally unpaid (unless it enters the service economy through a hired domestic), and is not factored into the Gross National Product.⁵² The popular saying that cooking is a woman's "labor of love" only perpetuates labor discrimination and obfuscates the relationship of domestic cooking to the general economy. Not only is domestic cooking invisible labor, it is also debased labor, like other forms of manual work, but in gender-specific terms. This view holds that the repetitive and monotonous actions of cooking require only elementary, conventional, and pedestrian mental skills to execute. In other words, this feminine *savoir faire* is perceived to be a bit stupid. How did Knowles trade on these facts and perceptions about cooking, without simplistically countering "negative" representations with a "positive" one?

Imagine being handed the score by Knowles and asked to perform it, keeping in mind that all one has to go on is the title. First of all, one has a choice to make. It is a proposition, not an order, instruction, nor even an invitation. While many of her Happenings colleagues relied on instruction-based work to orchestrate (and often control) audience participation, as in Allan Kaprow's pioneering *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (1959), for instance, Knowles offers very little guidance. Her score as recipe or recipe as score, like Brecht's model event score that Maciunas preferred, posits an idea for potential action.

If one decides to take up the proposition, one has to chart one's own course forward. The "emptiness" (or open-endedness, in Brechtian terms) of the score makes it possible for experiences, memories, emotions, and understandings of cooking to rush in (or not) and inform how the individual will (or will not) execute the act. The emptiness of the score prompts consideration of the nature of the proposition. What does one think and feel about making a salad? And by extension, about food preparation in general? Have they made a salad before? If so, on what occasions? Where? For whom? Do they feel at home in the kitchen? The very absence of lists and instructions emphasizes the real knowledge and real skill required for this women's labor.

Knowles states, "My mother and grandmother had recipe books, but how curious therefore that I never use them. I never follow a recipe."⁵³ But I propose that this is not curious at all. Like many women of her generation, Knowles, born in 1931, was brought up in a female domestic culture where women bought and collected cookbooks that became grease-stained and worn with use. They traded and passed down their best recipes. The fact that Knowles herself does not use them seems less a refusal of this tradition than an indication of the very process by which so many women learn to cook—by internalizing the traditional relationship of women to cooking by watching, listening to, and reading the recipes of the older women around them. Knowles became comfortable enough with her faculty for food preparation that she could later do without recipes.⁵⁴ Generally speaking, boys, especially of that generation but still to this day, are not raised or expected to relate to cooking in the same way, and, subsequently, for many men cooking is less intuitive.

That said, Daniel Spoerri, a Romanian-born Swiss artist, was, like Knowles, a pioneer of "food art."⁵⁵ Although better known for writing the founding manifesto of the Nouveau Réalistes (1960), he associated with Fluxus for a short period in the early days of the group. Under the umbrella moniker Eat Art, Spoerri undertook diverse food-related activities.⁵⁶ His most famous works are his "snare pictures"—actual mealtime leftovers of various friends glued to a surface and displayed as wall-mounted high reliefs—but his short-lived art-restaurant projects bear the strongest comparison to Knowles's *Make a Salad*. At Restaurant de la Galerie J, opened in 1963 in Paris, Spoerri turned cooking and serving into a performance. He employed notable art-world figures, such as critic and fellow Nouveau Réaliste Pierre Restany and the poet and critic John Ashbery, as waiters, and created meals as perishable, edible art for a dining-room clientele. Artists and critics variously became restaurateur, chef, and table server, confusing distinctions of high versus low, artistic versus artisan, and mental versus manual labor in the process.

But Knowles's and Spoerri's work with food was also very different, based partially on, yet irreducible to, their respective subject positions and contexts. Spoerri's making and serving food in an art gallery-restaurant emphasized the reliance of fine dining on male chefs and waiters (as opposed to waitresses), while Knowles's *Make a Salad* posed questions particular to food preparation as women's work without any pretense of haute cuisine. It mattered that her body was seen orchestrating the simple, unglamorous, unvalorized, everyday actions. She focused the attention of viewers solely on food preparation, calling up the invisible space of domesticity where women were so often told they belonged.

Fluxus events largely maintained the distinction between performers and audience, and yet were informed by a sensibility that anyone could do them. This idea was integral to Maciunas's ethos of "Fluxus Art-Amusement": "To establish the artist's nonprofessional status in society . . . he must demonstrate that anything can be art and anyone can do it."⁵⁷ Yoko Ono exemplified this explicitly in her *Do It Yourself Fluxfest Presents Yoko Ono & Dance Co.* (1966, see fig. 40), where she makes suggestions for anyone to produce

a multiday festival on their own. However, when confronted with a proposition unaccompanied by explicit instructions, a person becomes more conscious of his or her real ability and desire to pursue it. Whatever comes to mind for the viewer in this moment situates him or her as a potential performer in particular ways vis-à-vis established gender codes.

What were the messages and practical lessons received in the process of socialization that influenced how one thinks and behaves in relation to this so-called women's work? The details of the labor, often elided by an immaculate roast on the dinner table, which itself is gone in minutes, appear as an amalgam of individual histories and collective understandings of food preparation. It could be argued that making salad is so easy, anyone should be able to do it anyway—not much of a challenge, barely “cooking.” But this is precisely the point. Her selection of a stripped-down dish enables the work to serve as a framing device for the turning on of viewers' awareness to behaviors within routine, much like Cage's *4'33"* (1952) framed everyday sound as music. How many people make haute cuisine every day (or ever)? It lacks universal resonance and would be a distraction from the main points.

At the London ICA in 1962, Knowles used lettuce, cucumbers, carrots, and blue cheese—the freshest of the day from the market. She had assistants, including her male Fluxus colleagues, but the tables were turned, as she played the roles of composer and conductor while they interpreted. With six people performing, “you could just hear every crack of the knife,” she said.⁵⁸ It was sonorous, but also visual and olfactory, and in the end, when the salad was shared, gustatory. This is how we learn to cook: by listening, smelling, tasting, and watching others prepare meals. It is how we practice cooking—tasting for the right spiciness—and how we take pleasure in cooking—smelling if something is done in the oven. Lastly, it is also through multisensory perception that we *remember* cooking. Much of this comes to us subconsciously. It was vital that Knowles made food preparation smell, sound, touch, and taste for her audience members. The performance had the capacity to tap into knowledge produced through the sensorium and to make meaning about cooking in unpredictable ways.

Knowles admits she asks something of her audience in her performance: “It's nice when people can relax and be attentive, watchful . . . empty; not so much eager but more a stance of waiting and noticing. Those early pieces . . . ask . . . that the audience be unencumbered and quiet. . . . Oh yes, and patient as well.”⁵⁹ What she asks of audience members is to give in to the boredom with the prospect that it will become something more. According to Giard, something happens from the moment one takes an interest in the processes of this “women's work”:

One notices that it requires multiple memory: a memory of apprenticeship, of witnessed gestures, and of consistencies. . . . It also calls for a programming mind: one must astutely calculate both preparation and cooking time, insert the various sequences of actions among one another, and set up the order of dishes in order to attain the desired temperature at

the right moment. . . . Creative ingenuity . . . also finds its place. . . . How can one make the most out of leftovers in a way that makes everyone believe that it is a completely new dish? Each meal demands the invention of an alternative ministrategy when one ingredient or the appropriate utensil is lacking.⁶⁰

And what if a friend shows up unexpectedly around mealtime? One must improvise on the spot, exercising one's combinatory capacities. Knowles's doing-cooking is somewhat akin to this experience of the unexpected guest in that it creates a space-time scenario in which one may notice that cooking is at once about tradition and innovation, memory and ingenuity, functionality and pleasure, economy and flourish. It requires a subtle intelligence that may not be perceived without *exhibiting* itself. No one questions the mental acuity of the great chefs of the world, an intelligence that is publicly on display and highly remunerated. Knowles's piece granted exhibition to the ordinary intelligence of everyday (women's) cooking. Her doing-cooking became the *medium* for a basic, humble, and persistent practice, which when repeated in time and space—as bound to childhood memory, rooted in the fabric of relationships to others and to one's self, and marked by the entangling of personal and collective histories—maintains and is maintained by the routine of everyday life.

The "artful" exhibition by Knowles created the potentiality for one to hear a symphony of chopping and slicing, to notice a ritualization of bodily gestures, and to consider the kinetic sculpting of vegetables by knives. At the same time, it did not deny the repetitive, mechanical, functional, and boring aspects of the task of making a salad, suggesting in real time the hours of a day a woman actually spends preparing food for others, which was then exaggerated by the large quantity of salad necessary to produce to feed the audience. Knowles reconnected the wonder of cooking with daily routine. Food preparation can be boring, but its processes also hold profound knowledge, and aesthetic and bodily pleasure. It is never either-or. This is the ambiguity of the aesthetic of everyday life that Knowles performed. And this was where Knowles's work in particular had the greatest potential. As she has remarked:

If you're making a piece of theater you're not just going to say, "make a salad," you're going to say, "let's have a green drape, let's have the hostess in a red robe to contrast with the green." "Let's have a banquet table and I'd like to have six spoons left on the left." . . . What happens is that kind of revelation, no an emptiness, opens up. Members of the audience are watching almost nothing going on. The action must be done exactly, precisely and modestly to allow the emptiness to appear. . . . A quality inhabits the room.⁶¹

Knowles contrasts her *Proposition #2: Make a Salad* to theater in the same way Maciunas differentiated Fluxus events from Happenings. No extraneous props or actions were used to render salad preparation more spectacular or entertaining—the only "dressing" went on the salad itself. The score served as a necessary framing device, but her actions came

straight from the kitchen without affectation. The emptiness created by Knowles's score, and the minimal nature of the performance itself, opened up a space of possibility for a reconsideration and expansion of the limited meanings of the labor of food preparation and women's identities.

Audience members who gave Knowles's work the patience she asked for might feel encouraged, even if subtly, to see, hear, touch, and taste the labor of cooking and the routine of everyday life in general with a greater sense of its aesthetics and indeterminacy. They might feel the strange power of the "gift" of salad Knowles gave to them, which completely undermined the notion of art as a portable, sellable object and/or buying food at a restaurant. They might find in themselves a stronger willingness to revalue fleeting and unpretentious ways of operating in the world.

While these ways of operating may represent precarious inventions without anything to consolidate them, as they are ultimately subject to economic and social constraints, Knowles's work seems to affirm that within the culture of advanced capitalism in which labor is fragmented and its products are not our own (or there may seem to be no product at all, as "organizers" push papers across desks), making a salad, despite the wear and tear felt at the end of the day, is one of the few moments available to the subject that furnishes the rare joy of inventiveness and producing something oneself, a chance to decrease one's sense of alienation. Operating at the level of the individual, it was necessary for Knowles's performance to return to triviality in order for audience members to become conscious of how our ideological (self-)entrapment is embedded even in the mundane details of life. In this sense, the real "proposition" is to alter one's way of being in the world.

Implicit in the strange pleasure audience members experienced as they watched Knowles and her assistants was the broader irony that they were spending their leisure time watching someone else work. Generally speaking, there is nothing remarkable about this; whenever entertainers sing, dance, or act before an audience, they are working for a living to provide leisure experiences for others. Knowles's performance, however, did something distinct. When she performed her salad-making score she was not just laboring. Her artistic labor became the very act of representing labor. Why was it important at that historical juncture for audience members to think about labor during their leisure time? Moreover, what happens when a performance engaging these issues folds itself discreetly into one of the most ordinary practices of everyday life—eating lunch?

THE IDENTICAL LUNCH

In 1968 Knowles began a practice of eating the same lunch, at the same place, at about the same time, most days of the week. She was living with her husband, Dick Higgins, and their twin daughters at 238 West Twenty-Second Street in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan.⁶² Higgins had inherited some family money that enabled them to buy a



FIGURE 88

Riss Restaurant, 242 Eighth Avenue, New York, ca. 1968–71. Photo by Alison Knowles, from her book *Journal of the Identical Lunch*, 1971. Photo courtesy Alison Knowles.

nice brownstone. They used the ground floor for their living quarters, the second floor for Something Else Press (started by Higgins and staffed largely by Higgins and Knowles), the third floor for Knowles's studio, and the top floor was occupied by their fellow Fluxus associate, the composer and musician Philip Corner. The twins went to a nursery school a few blocks away. During school hours, about five hours per day, Knowles had time for her own artwork and the press.⁶³ As she balanced her various roles—artist, publisher, mother, wife—she consistently took a standard midday lunch break. Most often this meant stepping out of her home office and walking to Riss Restaurant, a diner located at 242 Eighth Avenue (fig. 88). When asked, “Why Riss?” Knowles responded, “Because it was only one block away.”⁶⁴ Riss was convenient, fitting neatly into her daily routine.

Although Knowles easily determined her lunch destination based on its proximity, it took her several visits to conclude that she preferred one item above all on the menu: “I tried other things briefly and settled on the [tuna] sandwich as always good.”⁶⁵ Like many

people, she went for familiarity and consistency. The tuna fish sandwich became a source of noontime satisfaction, and she stuck with it. Soon, Philip Corner, her frequent lunchtime companion, noticed that Knowles's practice had taken on a character beyond mere habit. The regularity and sameness of her experience seemed to him ritualistic: walking to Riss, entering the restaurant, finding her seat, exchanging greetings with the staff, placing the order (always identical), eating (always a tuna fish sandwich), and paying before leaving, day in and day out. Corner thought this could be the basis for a performance, and he encouraged Knowles to conceive of it as such. It was his insight that inspired Knowles to compose her score *The Identical Lunch* (1968):

The Identical Lunch: a tunafish sandwich on wheat toast with lettuce and butter, no mayo and a large glass of buttermilk or a cup of soup was and is eaten many days of each week at the same place and at about the same time.⁶⁶

While *Proposition #2: Make a Salad* decreases authorial intention through the use of a proposition, *The Identical Lunch* dispenses with a directive voice altogether. The score is no more than a statement, a description of a lunch eaten. In this respect, it has something in common with the conceptual practice of Lawrence Wiener articulated in his 1968 book *Statements*. Wiener, like many conceptual artists, turned language itself into an art material, but left open what one might do with the information he provided: "(1) The artist may construct the piece. (2) The piece may be fabricated. (3) The piece may not be built. (Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist, the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership.)"⁶⁷ Despite Knowles's similar use of a statement to convey an idea, the fact that it was conceived as an event score means that *The Identical Lunch* emphasizes the occurrence of a meal. Her use of both past and present tenses, "was and is," emphasizes this. Performance is Knowles's medium, and the score is meant to initiate an actual practice (as well as a thought process). The lack of referent as to who enacts the identical lunch—no mention of the artist or use of personal pronouns—leaves it open. It could be Knowles but it could also be someone else. Her real lunches provide an example and a context for others to do their own.

The chances of this happening increased in 1969, roughly a year after Knowles first became a Riss habitué and started recording her experiences during most every lunch. Now she began encouraging others to do this, too: perform the score, write their response to it, and send her the result (whether they ate at Riss or elsewhere). This led to the production of *Journal of the Identical Lunch* (1971, fig. 89), a slim paperback booklet of all the collected accounts of the lunchtime experience. She published it with Nova Broadcast Press, run by Jan Herman, who was making a start in independent publishing in San Francisco. Previously she had taken the most obvious route of publishing her scores with Something Else Press, but when it came to publishing *Journal of the Identical Lunch*, it felt too narcissistic to rely on her husband's enterprise.⁶⁸ The journal presents no singular authorial viewpoint. Instead, it presents the performance as if it were an experiment

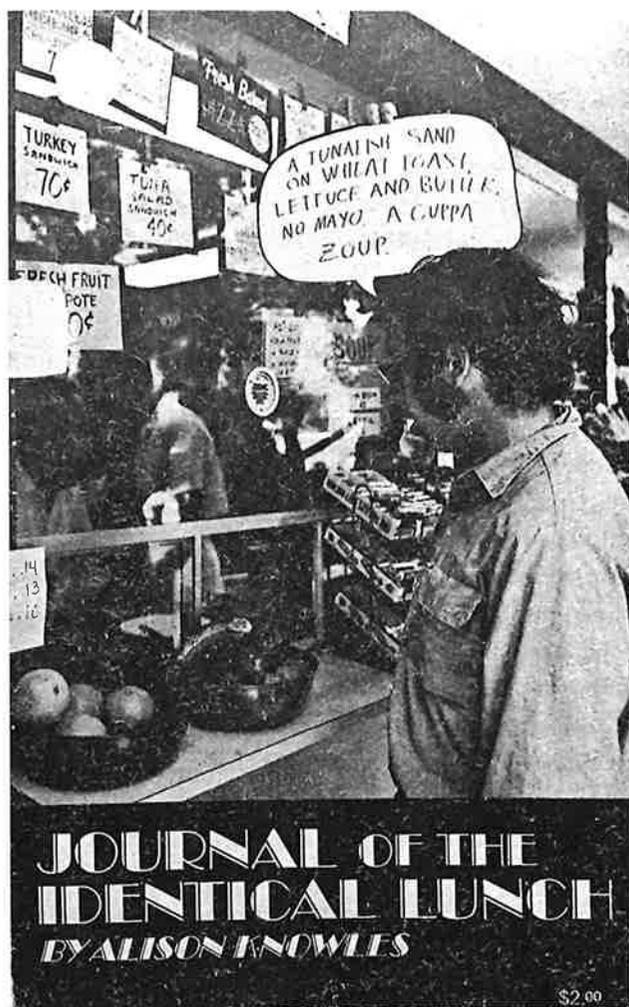


FIGURE 89

Alison Knowles, *Journal of the Identical Lunch* front cover, 1971. Photo by Alison Knowles, Photo courtesy Alison Knowles.

or research project, with all of the various lunch eaters as the field agents in Knowles's service—her very own Fluxus workers.

Knowles did consider the work her “research,” reinforcing this quality in *Journal of the Identical Lunch* by invoking the letter code that she used in all her own entries to identify the characters in the performance: “P” for the lead waitress at Riss, Pauline; “C” for the counterman in the back section; “L” for the Greek cashier and part-time cook; “S” for the alternate counterman; “B” for the regular cashier and bouncer; “M” for the alternate counter girl.⁶⁹ Knowles referred to herself as “N,” Emmett Williams as “H,” Philip Corner as “G,” and the individual she calls the “Dog-woman” gets the letter “F.”⁷⁰ Some letters make obvious sense, like “P” for Pauline and “C” for the counterman, but this logic breaks down in the more arbitrary designations. The coding system helps Knowles

appear on the surface as if she is an objective observer—the researcher who views her human subjects as experimental variables or case studies. She takes a methodical and efficient approach to describing and assessing what she sees. Her use of a letter code also recalls Maciunas's own for organizing Fluxus artists neatly into his inventory and marketing system. Despite the pseudo-social scientific objectivity of the code, her presence was vital—without her or her surrogate, there was no “identical lunch”—meaning that an element of subjectivity always inflected the proceedings. The exaggerated dynamic between these two states created by the frame of the performance helped visualize the constant shifting of her subject position vis-à-vis the ground she encountered.

FIGURE, GROUND, FRAME

On any average weekday, at around noon Knowles put down her tools, exited her workplace, walked the remainder of the block on Twenty-Second Street, and turned right at Eighth Avenue to arrive at Riss Restaurant. Like millions of workers, she participated in the standard lunch break. On the surface there was nothing at all extraordinary about what she did; she simply followed a routine. It was the *way* she had lunch that made the difference. Unlike *Proposition #2: Make a Salad*, *The Identical Lunch* was unannounced in a non-art context. No one at Riss knew that when Knowles entered, a performance was beginning, or that she might be thinking about the art of eating lunch. She never spoke to any of the staff or other customers about what she was doing.⁷¹ The particulars of her lunch simply became part of the Riss workers' routine as she subtly inserted her performance into the established rhythms of the restaurant.

The lead waitress, Pauline, as well as the second waitress, Lee, and the unnamed Greek cashier and part-time cook came to recognize her, greet her, and remember her order. Pauline would sometimes pop the wheat bread in the toaster when she saw Knowles walk through the door. Lee was reminded that she had forgotten her duty to stock the buttermilk each time Knowles placed her order and there was none. And the Greek cashier once heaved the cash register aside to make a special place at the counter so Knowles would not tire waiting for an open seat.⁷² Establishing oneself as a regular gives any patron a special presence, but even so, Knowles's regularity had a distinct flavor. What began as a daily routine was transformed into a strategy of repetition that had direct and indirect impacts on others and on her own power to compel service. Although more recently she remarked that she finds it strange that she never told the workers at Riss about her performance, her journal entries indicate that they sensed she was up to something out of the ordinary. Of her visit to Riss on April 19, 1969, Knowles wrote: “M delivers a cold sandwich. N feels M is bored by this lunch research project, whereas P seems relieved and interested to deliver N's identical lunch each day.”⁷³ Through the performative—exaggeration played out through a strategy of repetition—*The Identical Lunch* acted as a framing device for the ground in which these waitresses as well as the other customers all played roles.

Within her frame, the worlds of labor and leisure converged fluidly and questions of identical and non-identical lunch eaters arose. How was the relationship between labor time and leisure time changing? How were individuals experiencing them? If Knowles was making art at Riss, so to speak, was she not, as an artist, also “working”? And how did the act of ordering a tuna fish sandwich, plus a cup of soup “or” a glass of buttermilk, register a desire and a possibility to alter the experience? As Knowles’s performance infiltrated the time-space of Riss—appropriating systematic routines—it framed not only the people but also the things, events, and relationships there. Conversations, minor incidents, exchanges, transactions, the presence and circulation of objects, pace, and tempo at Riss all permuted Knowles’s simple act of eating lunch, and Knowles (and her surrogates) reciprocally offered a possible figure through which to rethink the experience.

Although the premise of the score was that it could be performed by anyone anywhere, when Knowles performed at Riss Restaurant it was a site-specific work in dialogue with not only that time-space but also the larger neighborhood in which Riss was firmly established as a popular, inexpensive, efficient eatery—this too became part of the ground framed by her performance. Her very menu selection was informed by this, as she explained: “There is a social concern evident too—if a bit heavy handed in the choice of the lunch—the simplest and most accessible known in these parts.”⁷⁴ The cost of the lunch—sixty or eighty cents—made the performance more economically inclusive of the various bodies entering and exiting Riss, representing the broader changes in the neighborhood, and as such moving in and out of the frame created by Knowles.

Riss’s address, Eighth Avenue at Twenty-Third Street, situated it in the heart of the Chelsea district on Manhattan’s West Side. When Knowles lived there and conceived of *The Identical Lunch*, Chelsea was showing early signs of gentrification. In hindsight, she and Higgins can be seen as unintentional participants in this process. Chelsea’s cheap property prices were the main reason they could buy an entire house.⁷⁵ When newspapers reported that Chelsea was “enjoying a resurgence” and “reviving an elegant past,” these were upbeat terms that eclipsed a much bigger, more complicated, and for some less promising urban renewal project that was sweeping Chelsea, Manhattan, and cities across the United States in the 1960s.⁷⁶ The art historian Pamela Lee has documented this project as it affected art and artists in SoHo, noting in particular how new zoning laws and the efforts of city planner Robert Moses dramatically altered the urban fabric.⁷⁷ High rents and property values in Greenwich Village, Manhattan’s traditional bohemian enclave, precipitated an influx of less-established artists into SoHo and Chelsea.⁷⁸

Whereas the abandoned industrial warehouses in SoHo were perfect for artists who needed lots of cheap space and believed that the gritty, industrial character of the neighborhood affirmed their anti-bourgeois and outsider status, the dominant building archetype in Chelsea was the nineteenth-century brownstone, more symbolic of middle-class stability. But the neighborhood’s gilded past had long since tarnished and the majority of these dwellings were run-down tenements and single-room occupancies by the time Knowles moved in. Chelsea was simultaneously slated for Moses’s “slum clearance” and

a magnet for artists with enough starter money to have a full-floor studio in their own home—such as Knowles and Corner each had.⁷⁹ Artists had to act quickly, though, as speculators were increasingly buying up and converting old houses into high-end real estate. Property ventures like those of Lurie Mortgage Corporation, located one block away from Knowles's home-studio-office and Riss, accelerated the rate of Chelsea's transformation. One journalist writing in 1964 used a flower show on West Twenty-Fourth Street to exemplify the "creative excitement" gripping Chelsea before asking, "What happens to the slum dwellers as Chelsea is rejuvenated?"⁸⁰

The neighborhood's population was hardly homogenous, but it was growing in affluence. Vernon Hinkle noted the "jackets and ties, and one fat bowtie" eating at Riss, and Higgins made a point of ignoring "two business men sitting in the tenth and eleventh chairs of the front section" as he proceeded to the cash register.⁸¹ Both Hinkle and Higgins were keen to distinguish themselves from these fellow diners, whom they perceived to be part of the middle-class establishment, a status signified not only by their attire but also by their food orders. While the two artists asked for the modest sandwich and cup of soup, the men in jackets and ties ordered roast beef and pork chops, lunchtime luxuries by the artists' standards. The artists, it seems, were in a fluctuating middle ground between affluence and poverty, making conscious choices as to how they wanted to identify.

Knowles's entry for January 11, 1969, provides one possible answer to the question of what happens to slum dwellers: "N has another thought on B. He is a good bouncer and tough on those who don't pay, a common occurrence since many of the clients are on welfare and old."⁸² And on January 27 Knowles noted, "She has at last encountered F at Riss. F is middle-aged and one of the many welfare cases in the neighborhood. If the weather is at all chilly F wears her hat, which she has made herself, it appears to N, out of a rejected bathroom rug. Her, F's, spirits seem fairly good as N nods her way."⁸³ The details of the makeshift life of this woman in Chelsea come to the fore in Knowles's account of eating lunch. The diner remained hospitable to those less fortunate, yet like any profit-oriented business endeavored to make itself attractive to the upwardly mobile residents and workers of Chelsea. The presence of a bouncer (unusual for a diner) confirms that Riss did not make a practice of handing out free lunches.

TOWARD A LEISURE ECONOMY

The Deutsches Seemanns Haus, located on Knowles's block around the corner from Riss Restaurant, was another physical sign of the changing neighborhood in terms of people, property, and industry. Run by the Reverend and Mrs. Otto Winter at 348 Twenty-Second Street, the Haus advertised that visiting seamen could stay overnight for two dollars if they had it, or less if they did not.⁸⁴ The demand for a special seaman's residence resulted from Chelsea's western boundary along the Hudson River and the shipping industry that had long been integral to its life. But by the time Knowles was a patron of Riss, the Chelsea piers only a few blocks away were in crisis. A litany of events exemplified this, beginning

in 1960 with the city's announcement of an eighteen-month comprehensive planning study of the six miles of Hudson River ports. The study included a proposal for a \$20 million modernization of the United States Line's four Chelsea piers, but this proved to be a false dawn. In 1968, US Lines moved cargo operations for its six large new container ships from Chelsea to Elizabeth, New Jersey's expansive shoreline, leaving the small, outmoded, inefficient Manhattan piers behind.⁸⁵

Labor statistics showed that this was not a one-off move but part of a major economic shift evidenced also by the fewer work hours available to Chelsea dockhands: "Man-hours worked in 1961 amounted to 12.4 million. By the end of 1967, they had dropped to 9.8 million a year."⁸⁶ A thirty-three-day-long dock workers' strike in 1965 left extreme traffic jams in its wake, running from Fifteenth to Twenty-Third Street, as truckers waited in line up to three days to deliver long-overdue goods to the piers. Longshoremen's strikes in September 1967 and March 1968 made the front page of the *New York Times*. On May 1, 1969, international Labor Day, the same newspaper announced that US Lines had quit all operations in Chelsea, affecting 1,400 men.⁸⁷ With this, the Chelsea piers lost their last major shipping tenant. The concrete reality of economic transformation and one's own plight within it was palpable in Chelsea life.⁸⁸ But as one industry died in the neighborhood, another was born.

By 1966 government decisions were securing a future for Chelsea in the leisure industry. A proposal from the city planning commission that year slated the entire southwest waterfront for parks and plazas.⁸⁹ This seemed to fulfill what the secretary treasurer of Local 791 of the ILA had pessimistically envisioned already in 1964—that the area would be transformed into a "millionaire's playground" with luxury housing, pleasure boating, esplanades, walkways, and gardens.⁹⁰ As the density of jobs shifted from heavy production to information and service industries, uses of urban space changed accordingly. The slating of obsolescent industrial sites for recreational activity epitomized the emergence of a new era of leisure. *The Identical Lunch* was uniquely positioned and structured to pick up on subtle modulations in how labor and leisure were experienced as they intervened in daily routine during the traditional noontime break from work at a local diner.

NO SUCH THING AS A FREE LUNCH

By the late 1950s, numerous social commentators confirmed that more people had more leisure time than ever before.⁹¹ Although in a lengthier discussion this statement would need to be qualified in terms of labor conditions in any given location in the world, it was generally believed that "for the first time in history, leisure belongs to the masses and not only to the few," especially in the United States.⁹² The new so-called leisure age was in fact the logical correlate of the organizational society. Higher levels of systemic mechanization and organization meant firms could produce more in less time, creating the possibility that workers might leave earlier in the day, not work on weekends, take vacations.

Some saw fantastic potential in the aggregate of leisure time. A 1959 *Life* magazine editorial even projected that “American civilization ought to be freer and bolder than the Greek, more just and powerful than the Roman, wiser than the Confucian, richer in invention and talent than the Florentine or Elizabethan, more resplendent than the Mongol, prouder than the Spanish, saner than the French, more responsible than the Victorian, and happier than all of them together.”⁹³ According to this stunning logic, individuals should place their newly begotten leisure time in the service of building a greater civilization.

Such visions of grandeur were tempered by an apprehension about how individuals would actually adapt to the historical shift in emphasis from labor to leisure as the realm that gives meaning to life. The sociologist of work and leisure Nels Anderson stated in 1961: “Now this unplanned-for gift [leisure] comes to the many who, as some believe, lack the background for making use of it.”⁹⁴ The pioneering French sociologist of leisure Joffre Dumazedier raised the question of how mass leisure in postindustrial society “might be made more emancipating and fruitful, while its evils would be anticipated and warded off.”⁹⁵ Mass leisure was “a giant test with uncertain results,” he claimed. The implication was that some people (mainly of the lower classes) were not prepared to deal with leisure in socially responsible ways.⁹⁶ This stemmed from a perception on the part of the sociologists that the “masses” undertook leisure activities without any “sign of necessity or duty,” and rather experienced them “freely for the purpose of obtaining some satisfaction . . . [as] ends in themselves.”⁹⁷ The “masses” needed better education to instill more productive behavior. Very much in line with the thinking of the day, Dumazedier called for greater organization—only through organization would leisure develop its own morality, philosophy, and regulations (presumably distinct from those of labor).

Underlying both viewpoints—that increased leisure leads either to civic glory or to decline—was a common belief in leisure time as “free time” that individuals may “spend” at their discretion. On the surface, Knowles’s lunchtime appeared to fit this logic: doing as she pleased. But this presumption of free time also made leisure ambiguous. The experience of two Chelsea hairdressers, who opened a salon on Twenty-Third Street around the corner from Riss shortly before Knowles composed *The Identical Lunch*, sheds light on this predicament. In 1968 the *New York Times* reported that Rudel Briscoe and Walter Fontaine did something “earthshaking” for African American beauticians when they opened Coif Camp salon in 1965: “they decided to go downtown” to Chelsea because it was “groovy” and the “rent was cheap.”⁹⁸ They referred to their shop as an “interracial beauty salon” and boasted more than four hundred clients, from famous entertainers to secretaries of the wives of United Nations diplomats to African American women living and working in Harlem who “come down on their lunch hour, so we get their business anyway,” Fontaine explained.⁹⁹ This gives us a glimpse of the various kinds of people who possibly lunched at Riss. Fontaine’s statement also indicated that the noontime break gave women the “freedom” to get their hair done while signaling the busy pace of life kept by most people in the organizational society, which demanded that

they make more choices. Going to the salon might mean eating lunch at the diner very quickly or even on the subway during the return to work.

Like *The Identical Lunch*, Frank O'Hara's *Lunch Poems*, written between 1953 and 1964, are exemplary of this conflicted lunch economy where time is both "free" and used to complete other tasks. O'Hara wrote the poems while he worked nine to five as a curator at the Museum of Modern Art. Come lunchtime, he exited the building to stroll "through the noisy splintered glare of a Manhattan noon" and jot poems about the things he did and saw.¹⁰⁰ The poem "Music" is especially evocative of how he spent his time: "If I rest for a moment near The Equestrian pausing for a liver sausage sandwich in the Mayflower / Shoppe, / that angel seems to be leading the horse into / Bergdorf's / . . . I have in my hand only 25 cents, it's so meaningless to eat!"¹⁰¹

O'Hara composed some of his *Lunch Poems* on the famous Olivetti sidewalk typewriter on Fifth Avenue. Was this a realization of Adriano Olivetti's ideal marriage of art and industry? Did the beautiful design of the typewriter inspire the poetic imagination? Possibly, but O'Hara's poems also return us to the ambiguity of leisure, prompting a reconsideration of the happy belief in lunchtime as "free time." Here is an excerpt from "Personal Poem": "I wonder if one person out of the 8,000,000 is thinking of me as I shake hands with LeRoi and buy a strap for my wristwatch and go back to work."¹⁰² His careful choice of words transforms the neutral "band" of a wristwatch into the "strap" of the overseer, the lash of capital, which in O'Hara's case might have been that of the poetry business as much as the museum business. Both the wristwatch and the inevitable return to work point to the way that time presses in on the "freedom" and "poetry" of lunch (in which it is "so meaningless to eat!") in the organizational society.

Knowles's *The Identical Lunch* complicated the understanding of the relationship between labor and leisure within the system of advanced capitalism in even more direct and fundamental ways. The *Journal of the Identical Lunch* entries actually record the shifts in temporal and spatial consciousness then taking place. Dick Higgins, among other participants, was totally preoccupied by the timing of events, recounting them in forensic detail:

On March 14, 1969 at 12:40 PM suspect left 238 West 22nd Street in New York City . . . and went left and right around the corner to Riss Foods at 244 Eighth Avenue. Arriving 12:44. . . . At 12:45 waitress took order for tuna fish sandwich on whole wheat toast. At 12:46 waitress . . . asked suspect, "Yours on whole wheat?" . . . Sandwich arrived at 12:49. At 12:50 suspect ordered a regular cup of coffee, which arrived at 12:51. . . . At 12:52 1/2 suspect completed the consumption of the sandwich . . . leaving the restaurant at 12:58.¹⁰³

He keeps track of the pace of his lunch down to the half minute. Undergirding the image of an objective researcher, referring to himself as "the suspect" whose fieldwork demands precision, is a subject whose consciousness is structured precisely by clock time and surveillance. The same was true of Vernon Hinkle and Tony Anderson, who also

performed Knowles's score. "2:03. Arrive at Riss' and order as directed. . . Chowder served at 2:04. Riss is efficient," concluded Hinkle, while Anderson noted "P's bright manner and efficiency."¹⁰⁴ The focus on efficiency is recurrent. And as Knowles wrote in her entry for February 7, 1969, "N enters, all seats occupied and people waiting. It is just one o'clock. As N turns to leave she hears P shout out, 'cup a chowder.' So N must stay. True, seat (1) (see diagram) is empty. . . P is extremely rushed. . . With Riss in high gear, N's lunch is at its best—fast, hot, crisp and crunchy."¹⁰⁵ Knowles's swift Sam Spade-noir style of delivery also conveys the speed of service. Time and pace (as a measure of movement through space) matter to both those at work and those on break. Pauline is said to be particularly quick and efficient, keeping the clientele on schedule while generating rapid turnover within the lunchtime economy of Riss.

An implicit theme of *The Identical Lunch* is how work "intrudes" upon the ability of the performers to experience the "free time" of leisure. Hinkle, for example, was initially reluctant to leave work at all to perform the score, as the play he was writing taunted him to stay at this desk. He convinced himself that the guilt that would inevitably mount within him as he dined at Riss would spur his productivity once back at work.¹⁰⁶ Knowles, too, pressured herself to stick to routine. She only allowed herself to "indulge" in a walk around the block on April 29, 1969, because it was her birthday—a few extra minutes away from work treated as a precious gift.¹⁰⁷ Thus, even those participants in *The Identical Lunch* who seem to be self-employed or work from home—as opposed to punching a clock—had internalized the time consciousness of the organizational society.

Reading through the *Journal of the Identical Lunch*, one is impressed by the fact that the lunch break is *not* experienced as "free time." While the tick, tick, ticking of the metronome, implying the clickety, clickety, clicking of the calculator in Maciunas's *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti*, was not audible, the minute hand ticked on relentlessly through the identical lunch, and most certainly represented the union of temporal regulation and enumeration that made the organizational society work. Increasingly, every second counted.

PLAYING WITH TIME

The cultural and economic importance of the clock was obviously not new. In modern times, the history of the Industrial Revolution and the clock go hand in hand, and Frederick Taylor's scientific management would have been unthinkable without it.¹⁰⁸ But Knowles's performance registered the ways the individual's relationship to time and to space—and, hence, to labor and leisure—had changed by the 1960s. Widening work and social circles forced individuals to conceptualize ever-expanding spatial and temporal dimensions. People had to adjust to a milieu of accelerated movement in time and space by being not only precisely time conscious but also continuously so.¹⁰⁹ More than ever before, and contrary to the idea of leisure as free time, a continuum of time consciousness spanned all realms of existence. There really was no such thing as a free lunch.

The fact that Riss was a service-based business allowed for fluid exchanges between those on break and those at work. While the rhythm may change, the break is situated within the routinization of daily life. We are able to maintain the illusion of being in control because we can decide to go to the hair salon or write a poem. *The Identical Lunch* did not so much shatter the illusion in a single blow as perform a more complex set of operations in real time whereby leisure is seen to be structured into the very logic and maintenance of the capitalist system. Time off from work for the reproduction of the working subject, even for moments of pleasure, is always already factored in and sanctioned.

Yet anxiety around increased leisure time persisted, and the exponential growth of leisure organizations in the 1950s and 1960s (as Dumazedier had called for in 1962) was both a sign of and the dominant remedy for this. Building on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century models such as the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, also known as the Shriners (founded in 1870), the YMCA and the YWCA (founded in 1844 and 1855, respectively), and the Boy and Girl Scouts of America (1910 and 1912, respectively), new men's lodges, ladies' clubs, and church and youth groups sprang into action. Corporations played an important role, creating in-house groups with the dual purpose of providing readymade leisure activities (sports teams and picnics) and fostering a sense of company loyalty.

Firm-based leisure kept workers tightly and "happily" knit within the fabric of the system; country and golf clubs functioned in parallel ways. The systemic demand for order and control meant that leisure time could not go unfettered, and the bureaucratic measures taken had the desired effect: "one is pacing himself from breakfast to bedtime by the ticking of the clock."¹¹⁰ Keeping up in the organizational society while increasingly looking for meaning in leisure time required greater self-guidance. *The Identical Lunch* reenacted the biggest challenge—to relearn "the art of living"—and potentially offered a way to do so.¹¹¹

NO SUCH THING AS AN IDENTICAL LUNCH

The irony of the title is the most commented-on aspect of the performance. If one does not get it from the score itself—where the potential for variation is inherent in the choice between a large glass of buttermilk or a cup of soup—the journal entries of the repeated lunches leave no doubt: it is impossible for any two lunches to be exactly alike. In contrast to art historians who end their analysis there, as if this was the ultimate conclusion to be drawn from the performance, I see the fact that there is no such thing as an identical lunch as an important stepping stone leading to further implications.

Knowles has since reconsidered the title of the performance, saying, "Actually *constant* is a better word, since it was never identical."¹¹² Juxtaposing these two plausible titles—"Identical Lunch" and "Constant Lunch"—helps us refine our sense of the quantitative and qualitative dimensions through which the work operates. This performance,

arguably more than any other Fluxus performance, is not an abstraction or generalization of everyday life but rather takes on its very structure, pace, and character, which for the majority of individuals in the world amounts to routine. As was true in *Proposition #2: Make a Salad*, Knowles took something simple, mundane, boring, and seemingly inconsequential, but in *The Identical Lunch* she repeated it over and over again within a concentrated period of time. She identified, appropriated, and exaggerated routine as *the* defining rhythm—a calendrical “clock” of constancy—and logic of daily life. The performance addressed how routine is quantified (through regularity and repetition) and how it is qualified (as dull and bereft of imagination). By framing routine and bringing it into the realm of the performative, Knowles also demonstrated the kind of self-guidance necessary to relearn “the art of living.”

Experts claimed that the biggest barrier to this was the passive approach of most individuals to leisure activities, especially those involving mass media. Sebastian de Grazia addressed the issue in his study *Of Time, Work, and Leisure* (1962): “An uncritical audience develops because the media transmit rather than communicate. They offer no real chance of response. . . . In sum, . . . the word ‘uncritical’ or ‘unthinking’ fits better than ‘passive.’”¹¹³ Moreover, it was not only leisure defined by mass media that could become “unthinking,” but also leisure administered by all the new organizations where one must conform to the codes of the lodge, youth group, or country club. In several journal entries Knowles raised the possibility that others were actually having their own identical lunch at the same time that she was, but were simply unaware that they were doing it. She herself needed Philip Corner to point it out to her. *The Identical Lunch* enacted a transition from routine to ritual. By scoring routine—via Cage, the score is put in place to see what happens to experience—Knowles offered a means for others to also perform and transform it.

Journal of the Identical Lunch is sprinkled with little revelations. Vernon Hinkle wrote, “2 o’clock in afternoon. Begin journey. In looking for Riss I notice other places not noticed before.”¹¹⁴ Jim Maya cut to the core of what I am describing:

An identical lunch is very different / Than the other kind which is different / From the rest / The identical food demands little or no thought: / The surrounding activities take all your thought: / The waitress, her hair, her lips, the napkins, / Their embossments or lack of embossments. / The stool, the chairs, the heat. / When you’ve finished— / You hardly know you’ve eaten.¹¹⁵

Shades of O’Hara’s “It’s so meaningless to eat!” The lunch itself, already known, always there, do not matter so much after a while. It fades into the background, pushing the minutiae of the lived world to the foreground. Waitress, hair, lips, napkin, temperature, people, things, activities, and conditions of the environment command the performer’s attention in a way they might not otherwise. Even those who wrote about the sandwich as a “thing”—its thickness, the consistency of the tuna, how it drips out the sides—did

so as if it was an actor in a larger play of circumstances, for instance its timely delivery to the table, the fact that the end-of-the-batch watery tuna appears on Thursdays, strange comments made by another customer while at the restaurant. Knowles provided an instigating protocol for others to construct or become aware of their own meaningful experiences within the imposed limitations of routine.

Importantly, *The Identical Lunch* dismisses the possibility of doing away with routine altogether. Knowles does not begrudge the system in which she questions whether she can allow herself to take a birthday walk. She acknowledges that at the time, given her various roles, she merely got on to the next thing that had to be done. *The Identical Lunch* was not a Lafarguean manifesto on “the right to be lazy,” a refusal to participate in the regimen.¹¹⁶ She persisted within routine, making it the form and content of her critical engagement. As we saw with Maciunas’s practice, and in the Fluxus strategy of “performing the system” in general, the closer *The Identical Lunch* approximated the system, the more confounding it became (and for some the more toothless).

Yet this proximity also made it potentially more accessible, useful, and thought provoking to specific subjects in ways that the subtle distinction between tempo and pace in musical composition can help us to discern. As opposed to pace, tempo is not only about the speed of the music but also about *how* the music sounds and feels; it has a qualitative dimension that is not captured when merely asking a musician to play faster or slower. Most musicians agree, tempo is not something that can be captured entirely by the precision of the metronome. Tempo eludes such mechanical accounting; there are no beats per minute (BPM) equivalents for the nuances of *prestissimo*, *vivacissimamente*, *vivacissimo*, *presto*, *adantino*, *andante*, *grave*, *larghetto*, *lento*, and *larghissimo*. *The Identical Lunch* wants to salvage the personal subjective agency possible within routine.¹¹⁷

If the distinction between tempo and pace is a useful analogy, the ideas of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze are a more effective tool for really understanding the underlying operations of how this might come about. In his 1968 book *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze theorized repetition as more than a string of equivalences or resemblances, as something that cannot be subordinated to either identity or similarity or to the oppositional or analogous: “In its essence, repetition refers to a singular power which differs in kind from generality, even when, in order to appear, it takes advantage of the artificial passage from one order of generality to another.” The crucial point here is that repetition differs in kind from generality, which belongs to the order of laws. Law functions by determining the resemblance of the subjects ruled by it. Repetition, by contrast, is possible only against the law: “In every respect, repetition is a transgression. It puts laws into question, it denounces its nominal or general character in favour of a more profound and more artistic reality.”¹¹⁸

Knowles iterated this very point of the difference to be found within the repetition of *The Identical Lunch* in response to her husband Higgins’s assessment of the piece. In a letter addressed to “AKH” (Alison Knowles Higgins), he compared *The Identical Lunch* to the film *The Endless Summer* (1966). *The Identical Lunch*, he concluded, was also about

the pursuit of perfection. Like the surfers in the film chasing the perfect wave, Knowles's diners sought the perfect tuna fish sandwich. The irony of the title was clearly lost on him. According to Knowles, he could not have gotten it more wrong: "*The Identical Lunch* has nothing to do with the pursuit of perfection—I find *The Endless Summer* a very poor parallel. Steve Reich's piece that dealt with all middles no extremes and varieties arising therefrom is more like it. . . . *I am interested in what various people do with the problem. . . . I pursue no perfect wave. So, Dick, do it again, eat the lunch again I mean.*"¹¹⁹ As an assertion of her independence as an artist and a woman, and an indication of the subtle ways identities are malleable, she left off the initial H of her husband's surname, signing it simply "AK."

The Identical Lunch reveals a repetition of the unrepeatable. The "law" of routine that if allowed to exact its full power would produce fully "automatic" subjects is instead thrown into question. One does not need to follow Deleuze to his utopian conclusion of the transgressive nature of "pure difference"—which he claims exists outside the mediation of representation—to take advantage of his theories. It is enough to understand repetition as Knowles's strategy through which difference can be seen and, most importantly, experienced. *The Identical Lunch*, in its historical specificity, reveals to us the impossibility of unmediated life, while demonstrating the possibility for a difference in kind that remains nonetheless. Taking advantage of "the artificial passage from one order of generality to another," *The Identical Lunch* enables the singular ritual of a lunchtime experience to come into being.

CONSUMING SUBJECTS

Besides the journal entries that she and the others kept as evidence of "what various people do with the problem," Knowles also documented the performance with a series of silkscreen prints known collectively as *Portraits of the Identical Lunch* (1970, figs. 90, 91). They consist primarily of images of her Fluxus friends—Maciunas, Kubota, and Ay-O, for example—and individuals who worked for Something Else Press. She took many of the photographs used in the silkscreen process during a special staging of *The Identical Lunch* at the 1969 *New Year's Eve Flux-Feast* organized by Maciunas. His invitation stated, "You may participate by contributing either a food or drink of your own invention, or make something up from the list below (except what is marked with a *, since these will already be made up)."¹²⁰ Some of the unusual items on the menu included: "FLUX EGGS emptied egg shells filled with one of the following: plaster, urethane foam, shaving cream, liquid white glue, white paint, ink, water, white jellatin [*sic*], coffee . . . (G. Maciunas) . . . [and] SANDWICHES crunched ice hamburger (frozen beef nouillon [*sic*] (Bici Hendricks, Novocain sandwich (Joe Cammerata), sleeping pill sandwich (G. Maciunas) etc."¹²¹ Given the inedibility, if not actual toxicity, of much of the proposed fare, guests likely welcomed Knowles's very eatable tuna fish sandwich and soup or buttermilk.



TUNA FISH
COMPLIMENTS OF
StarKist Foods, Inc.
SHIGEKO KUBOTA PERFORMS
THE IDENTICAL LUNCH

FIGURE 90

Alison Knowles, *Shigeko Kubota Performs the Identical Lunch*, 1969, realized 1973. Screenprint with hand additions, 17 × 17 × 3/4 in. (43.2 × 43.2 × 1.9 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. Photo courtesy Alison Knowles.



TUNA FISH
COMPLIMENTS OF
StarKist Foods, Inc.
GEORGE MACIUNAS PERFORMS
THE IDENTICAL LUNCH

FIGURE 91

Alison Knowles, *George Maciunas Performs the Identical Lunch*, 1969, realized 1973. Screenprint with hand additions, 17 × 17 × 3/4 in. (43.2 × 43.2 × 1.9 cm). The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art/ Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. Photo courtesy Alison Knowles.

The site of the party at Jonas Mekas's Cinematheque in the Fluxhouse Cooperative at 80 Wooster Street made for a more staged version of the performance than usual, but Knowles used the opportunity to introduce important new elements to the piece. She hung a shower curtain to demarcate a small, enclosed, private area apart from the rest of the festivities and waited inside for guests to arrive. When individuals entered, one at a

time, she served them *The Identical Lunch*. She sat across the table and talked with them about any topic that came up and also snapped their picture. From its incipience *The Identical Lunch* was about social interaction and exchange, making it an important precursor to those artistic practices that since the 1990s have been labeled as relational aesthetics. But at the *Flux-Feast* she framed an intimate space-time of experience that emphasized the value of one-on-one exchange. What interests me the most is how the portraits convey a historically specific representation of subjectivity.

Except for the variation in the individuals depicted, Knowles's black-and-white prints look almost "identical." The scenario in each is roughly the same. Individuals either take a bite of the tuna fish sandwich or hold the sandwich as if ready to chomp. The title *The Identical Lunch* and the name of the individual performer run below his or her image. But the most striking text appears in the bottom-left corner. The words "Tuna fish compliments of" printed in a small, nondescript font are followed by the logo-like "Star-Kist Foods, Inc." in a larger font resembling that seen on cans at the time and using the then-accurate spelling of the company name with a hyphen between "Star" and "Kist." Brand recognition is immediate, but this was not a Duchampian pun on branding. Rather, *Portraits of the Identical Lunch* is arguably the first instance of "corporate sponsorship" included in an artwork itself.

In 1970, when Knowles pulled the silkscreens, she and Higgins were visiting instructors at California Institute of the Arts in Los Angeles. Their marriage was on shaky ground, and Knowles lived separately from her husband and children—an unusual move at the time, since social norms dictate that kids stay with the mother when parents separate. Other New York-based artists were in Los Angeles, including Simone Forti and Nam June Paik, and together with a few West Coast peers they all lived in a commune in an old orange grove, using the former pickers' cottages as their dwellings. Among those living at the commune was the filmmaker Joseph Bogdonovich, whose father, a Yugoslavian immigrant, happened to be the president of StarKist Foods Inc., and whose uncle was the manager of StarKist in California.¹²²

The connection between Knowles and the StarKist Corporation came about not because she sought sponsorship, but because she asked the uncle-manager if she could film inside the company. She wished to increase the social dimension of *The Identical Lunch* and also extend it into other media.¹²³ Only later did she find out that the company looked into her background and for some unknown reason came to the outlandish conclusion that she was a spy for Bumblebee, StarKist's main rival. Like Maciunas's suspicion that Higgins was stealing away Fluxus artists to Something Else Press, StarKist's actions represented a typical corporate fear that competition is everywhere.

StarKist did not let Knowles inside its gates and refused to cooperate on her film project, apparently fearful that she, a covert agent, would expose company secrets to blunt their edge. As consolation—perhaps an uncle's gesture to appease his nephew—StarKist sent Knowles two crates of canned tuna to use in her art. Thus the corporation did support, without officially sponsoring, her work. There was never any agreement that she

could use the brand name, and it was without permission that she placed the logo in her art. A sign of less legalistic times, she “just thought it would be all right.”¹²⁴ Indeed, no legal ramifications ever resulted from the act.

As this narrative suggests, from the point of contact with StarKist to the appropriation of the logo, the work became entangled in a highly organized and secretive culture of corporate competition, marketing strategies, and branded identities.¹²⁵ More specifically, the logo’s presence in portraiture creates an easy visual slippage between the individual *subject who consumes* a tuna fish sandwich and a generalized *consumer subject*—a process central to the postwar enculturation of commodity consumption as the deciding factor in identity construction.

StarKist participated in this enculturation through its very successful Charlie the Tuna advertising campaign, launched in 1961.¹²⁶ Hip Charlie, wearing a beret and sunglasses, entered popular conscious as a likable, obtuse fish with an unlikely ambition to be caught by StarKist’s fishing boats because of the undeniable brand quality. This beatnik tuna lent StarKist an air of cool, while canning him made the edgy Beat image safe and palatable to a mainstream American audience. Corporate advertising in the 1960s engaged in its own strategy of appropriation of countercultural images to create recognizable and prestigious brands. It was a key means by which they could harness loyalty from consumers who not only had a greater variety of products to choose from, but also were developing a more sophisticated understanding of how marketing strategies worked in tandem with the latest ads.¹²⁷ In this sense, Knowles’s work was part of a fluid exchange between high and low, vanguard and mass, aesthetic and commercial culture, dating back to at least the mid-nineteenth century, while her own appropriation of StarKist as an (unofficial) subsidizer represented an aesthetic strategy specific to the corporate organizational society of the 1960s.

Prior to *The Identical Lunch*, one of the most famous artistic exploits related to canned tuna was Andy Warhol’s painting *Tuna Fish Disaster* (1963, fig. 92).¹²⁸ The death of two suburban Detroit women by canned-tuna botulism that same year was prime material for his *Death and Disaster* series. The story made headlines in major newspapers and magazines, including *Newsweek*, where Warhol sourced his photographs, and *Time*, which reported on the damaging backlash for the tuna industry.¹²⁹ Canned tuna was not a new product, but it fit in perfectly with the postwar processed, readymade-food craze. Tuna casserole, also known as tuna surprise, became nearly synonymous with the quick weeknight family meal in the 1950s.¹³⁰ Reproduced in the black-and-white gravitas of news reportage, Warhol’s *Tuna Fish Disaster* represented the dark side of Charlie the Tuna—a reminder of the potential hazards of culinary ease. Yet beyond *Death and Disaster*, Warhol’s representations of corporate logos suggest an acceptance, even a celebration, of both corporate America’s ability to “democratically” distribute the goods and art’s own commodity status. Placing his pictures of Campbell’s Soup cans on shelves and stacking his Brillo boxes on the floor, Warhol seemed to have no serious truck with the conflation of art gallery and supermarket. In contrast, Knowles’s prints register the same

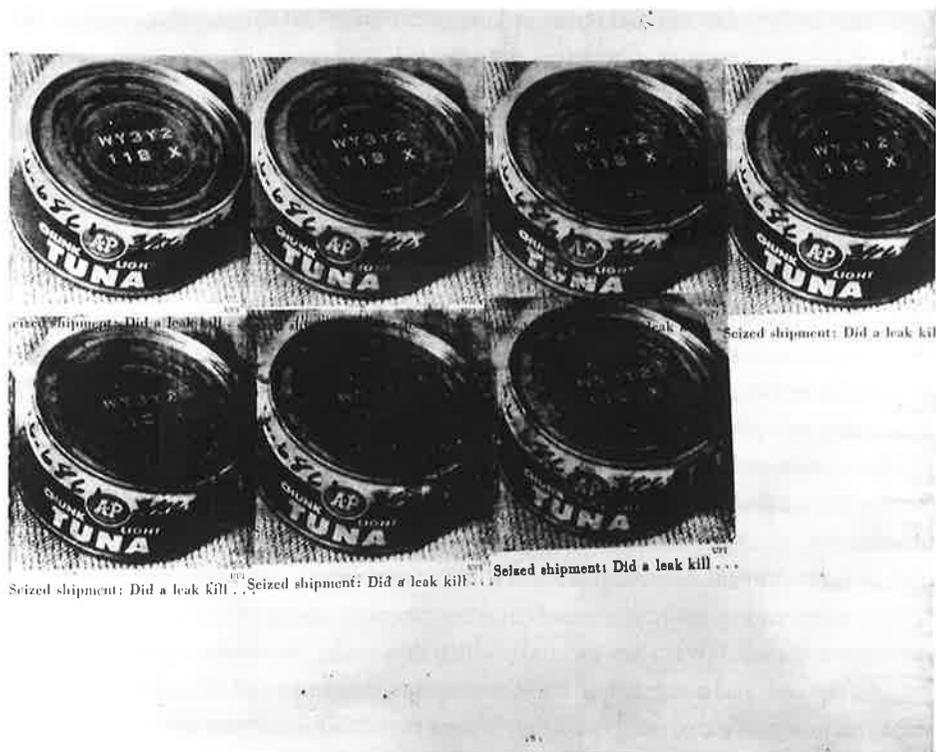


FIGURE 92

Andy Warhol, *Tuna Fish Disaster*, 1963. Silkscreen ink and silver paint on linen, 68 1/4 × 83 in. (173.4 × 210.8 cm). Collection of the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh. © 2016 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

ambivalence toward corporate culture that emerged at key points throughout Fluxus—neither transgression nor cooptation, but critical negotiation.

On the surface, the portraits of Maciunas and Kubota might be construed as print ads showing “happy StarKist consumers.” A closer look at the details—the use of black and white, the lack of glossy stylization, the candid nature of the snapshot poses, and especially the repetition in the silkscreen series mirroring the repetition of the performance itself together with the naming of the individual performers—confounds this reading. Again, there is no suggestion of a possibility of abolishing the antithesis of subject and object. Instead there is a performative repetition of the disunity, an exaggeration of it. And this can be understood as a new attempt to critically adapt to the increasing “objectification” of the subject within the materialism of an expanding multinational capitalism. This in itself was productive of a historically specific consciousness of subjectivity. The subject of *The Identical Lunch* emerges as one that is and will remain decentered in a continual process of repetition in routine—eating the sandwich—that will never be precisely the same.

Ultimately, while it may be tempting to see *The Identical Lunch* (and *Proposition #2: Make a Salad*) in traditional avant-garde terms as successful mergings of art and life, pure temporality as such, this is a simplistic and idealistic conclusion. The performance's proximity to the system through its appropriation of the logic of routine—repetition and difference—is what gives it its Deleuzian critical potentiality. However, rather than instantiating a moment of pure difference, it is the very impossibility of escaping representation that is performed. Knowles was also performing the system through her own aesthetic of routinization. Her transformation of routine into ritual registered ambivalence toward the very forces she aimed to question. Her manner of bringing issues of gendered identity into performance was subtle, neat, even economic, rather than “messy,” and embodied and multisensory without being “naked.” Like Maciunas, Knowles did not like to waste food, nor did she like to strip in public. All of these qualities helped her evade the Fluxus gender patrol. At the same time, however, her work contributed to a discourse on art and gendered identity in the 1960s that women artists of the 1970s inherited and could develop within a more self-consciously political program. As Knowles made her own way in the male-dominated Fluxus group, her salad and sandwich helped prepare the art world's palate for the next feminist course to come.

8

MIEKO SHIOMI

The Artistic Globalism of Fluxus

In 1965, in the midst of a visit to New York from her native Japan, the composer Mieko (formerly Chieko) Shiomi began a series of *Spatial Poems* (1965–75). These were invitations, complete with simple instructions, sent to artists in different parts of the world to perform a score and report back so she could record their experiences on what she called her “world map.” Each of the nine poems was subtitled as a specific kind of event. Sequentially, there was “word event,” “direction event,” “falling event,” “shadow event,” “opening event,” “orbit event,” “sound event,” “wind event,” and “disappearing event.” In all, 232 artists from five continents performed, reported, and were “mapped” by Shiomi. The result was a transnational, transcontinental interconnectivity of artists and performance in a global network, at once real and imagined.

The first two poems in the series serve as opening prompts for my discussion. *Spatial Poem No. 1, Word Event* (1965, see fig. 17) reads: “Write a word (or words) on the enclosed card and place it somewhere. Please tell me the word and the place, which will be edited on the world map.” *Spatial Poem No. 2, Direction Event* (1965, fig. 93) asked: “Around the time listed below / what kind of direction are you moving / or facing toward?—either performance or spontaneous— / please send me a report about it which will be edited on a world map.” Below this she listed nineteen cities, one US state, five countries, and one continent, each accompanied by the equivalent hour in their world time zone on a specific date, exemplifying the global scope of possible responses: “New York 5:00pm, Oct. 15, 1965,” “Amsterdam 11:00pm, Oct. 15, 1965,” “India 3:30am, Oct. 16, 1965,”

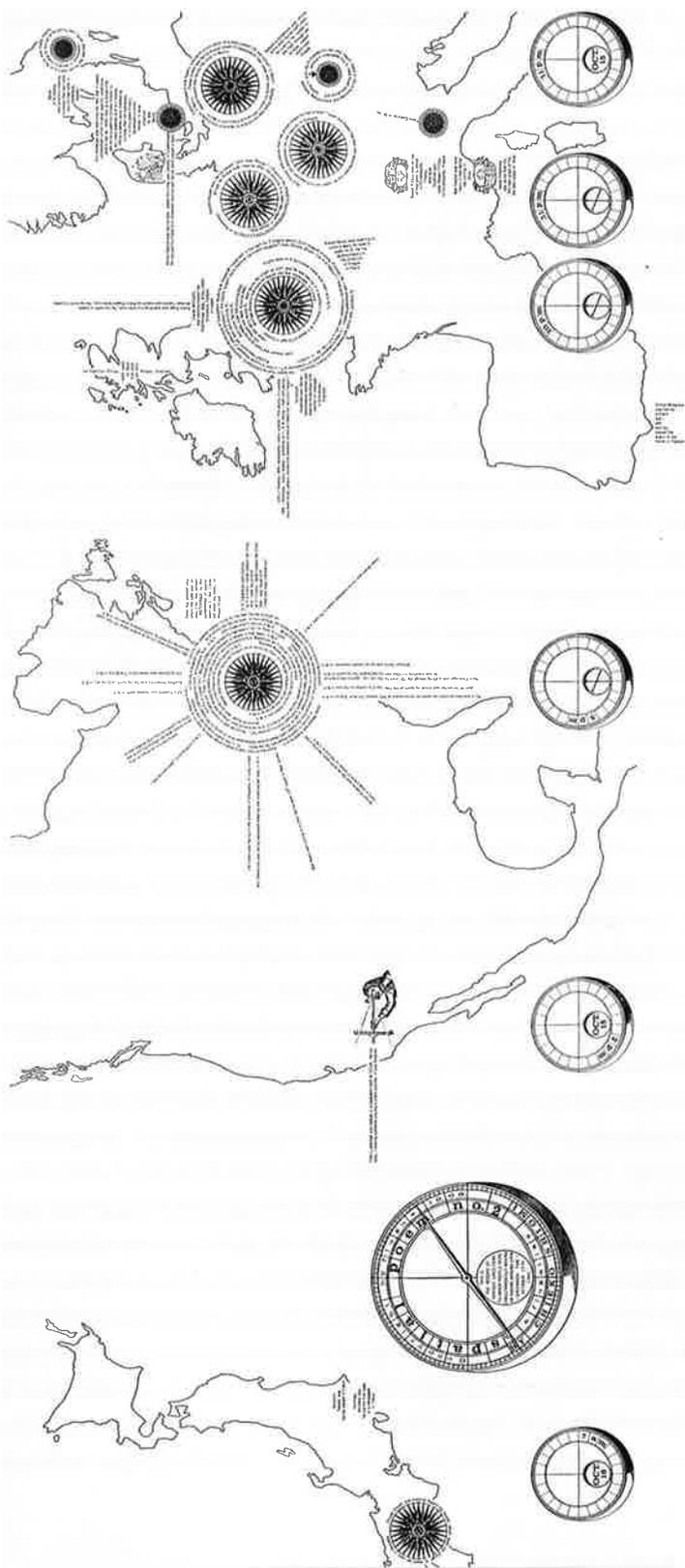


FIGURE 93

Mieko Shiomi, *Spatial Poem No. 2, Direction Event world map*, 1965. Lithograph, 14 1/2 x 32 1/2 in. (36.8 x 82.6 cm). Designed and produced by George Maciunas. Published by Fluxus. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. With permission of Mieko Shiomi.

"Hawaii 0:00pm, Oct. 15, 1965," and "Greenland 7:00pm, Oct. 15, 1965."

Art's participation in a history of the world becoming "global" and subjects becoming "globally conscious" in the 1960s and 1970s is the topic of this conclusion. My aim is to demonstrate how Shiomi's *Spatial Poems* embodied specific characteristics that, no matter how wittingly or unwittingly on her part, speak to us today of these wider phenomena. Her series serves as a case study from which to understand the same processes in Fluxus at large, enabling me to assert what I am calling an incipient artistic globalism as one of Fluxus's most important art historical contributions.

In doing this, I make a clear distinction between "globalism" as a description and explanation of a world that is characterized by transcontinental networks of connections, and "globalization," particularly as it has come to be reduced to neoliberal economic globalization. Although this general definition of globalism has been arguably less influential in discourse, I believe it still serves a valuable function for understanding a historical shift in thinking from "international," especially in vanguard artistic or political circles where to be an internationalist meant specific things in the early twentieth century, to "global," as a transgression of national boundaries, without referring solely or primarily to market forces, though these always come into play. In applying the term "artistic globalism" to Fluxus's practices in the 1960s and 1970s, I subscribe to the idea that there are distinct yet interconnected globalisms within a larger historical and ongoing globalizing process.

The *Spatial Poems* were produced precisely during the period when "global" (and "globalize") began to replace "international" as the operative term for describing emerging networks of connectivity spanning transnational and transcontinental distances and localities.¹ They are indicative of why we must understand Fluxus as a generative force from the realm of art—based on real interactions, visual imaginations, and discursive understandings—in these larger processes, which since the 1960s have so deeply influenced cultural life around the world. Fluxus may have operated on a small scale, but the historical development of globalization could only occur to such an intense and pervasive degree as we experience it today through its production and instantiation, in both micro and macro ways, and through the consciousness of individuals, across economic, political, social, and cultural realms. How did the *Spatial Poems* represent, as I propose, artistic globalism?

The very means by which Shiomi landed in New York in 1964 and began her *Spatial Poems* the following year were part and parcel of a growing global awareness and interconnectivity. In order to fully understand this we must consider the preceding years, 1960 to 1963, which were vital to Shiomi's development as an experimental composer. This is the creative role she identified with the most, even though she was also a classically trained pianist and visual artist. In 1960, while a senior musicology student at the Tokyo National University for Fine Arts and Music, Shiomi and some of her musicology peers—Takehisa Kosugi, Shukou Mizuno, Mikio Tojima, and Gen'ichi Tsuge—cofounded

a group dedicated to musical experimentation. At the suggestion of Yasunao Tone, who joined a year later, they named themselves Group Ongaku (Music Group). Shiomi recalled that they were driven by an “insatiable desire for new sound materials and definitions (redefinition) of music itself.”²

The young composers were not yet aware of the trends in New York proliferating through John Cage’s experimental music classes. However, they knew of the European history of experimental music, from the early twentieth-century Futurist Luigi Russolo to midcentury *musique concrète*. They were particularly enamored of the French *concrète* composer and theoretician Pierre Schaeffer, who used everyday objects, basic materials, and new technologies to make sounds. So although they were working within a broad avant-garde tradition, they were not at the outset connected with like-minded artists in New York. This would take a few more years.

One of the remarkable aspects of Shiomi’s scores is her use of the term “event.” When and how did this word make it into her artistic vocabulary? The influence is most certainly George Brecht’s event scores, but it is significant that her exposure to his work occurred already in Japan prior to her departure for New York through important Fluxus intermediaries, Toshi Ichianagi and Yoko Ono. The two were married at the time, and made the first contact with Shiomi when they returned to Japan in 1961 and 1962, respectively, fresh from their pioneering involvement in the experimental music and performance scene of New York—Ichianagi studied with John Cage for seven years, and Ono opened her loft on Chambers Street as a venue for new performance.³ Ichianagi knew of Group Ongaku and contacted them to see about performing together.

This happened in November of 1961 at the Sogetsu Art Center. Shiomi participated in Ichianagi’s piece *IBM—Happening and Music Concrète* (1961), where IBM punch cards served as scores that performers could interpret as they pleased (see fig. 57). For Shiomi this meant playing an electric wave instrument similar to a theremin at one point, and blowing soap bubbles another. The concert was an important catalyst for further connections between artists in Tokyo and New York, despite the fact that Group Ongaku gradually dissolved in its wake. Performing Ichianagi’s scores helped all of the participants understand, in a profoundly experiential way, how their peers on the other side of the world were thinking similarly about music, composition, performance, and art at large.

Shiomi remained in touch with Ichianagi and Ono, and it was during a visit to their Tokyo apartment in the summer of 1963 that she first saw compositions by artists associated with Fluxus, including Brecht’s event scores. Importantly, however, she was already composing her own scores using text only, eliminating musical notation altogether—this was for her a pre-Fluxus-contact development. As the art historian Midori Yoshimoto explains, her text-based scores emerged from a period in which Shiomi questioned the very essence of music.⁴ She considered this essence to be the recognition of time itself, where duration need not be realized in sound but could be a physical sensation or an action.

Her independently developed interest in time and action was in accord with Brecht's, and they both arrived at the conclusion that if music existed beyond the realm of sound, then a score need not be composed of notes. In fact, words were more expansive compositional elements. Words not only convey a sense of time and space but also actually *create* time and space, as in poetry. Shiomi exploited this—at first calling each composition an “action poem”—to present a radically open-ended understanding of what music could be. We recall that Nam June Paik was performing his action music in Germany at the same time, indicating an affinity between their respective transpositions of music into a more visual kind of performance as well as the wider currency of the term “action” itself in that historical period. Yet when she encountered Brecht's work, she found “event” to be an even more succinct evocation of her ideas, and adopted it for her own scores. The shared nomenclature signaled both her entry into and an expansion of Fluxus's fledgling global artists' network.

It is not surprising to learn that Paik was the other important intermediary when he visited Japan briefly in 1963. He and Maciunas were already corresponding during their overlapping stays in Germany. Through Ichiyangi and Ono, Paik connected with Group Ongaku, and at a concert in Tokyo that summer he met Shiomi and learned about her work. Paik, like Ichiyangi and Ono, sensed a rapport between Shiomi and the artists beginning to gather under the aegis of Fluxus. Maciunas made it clear from the start of his recruitment drive that he wanted to know about the most interesting experimental composers and musicians in every country, and Shiomi fit this bill.

She followed Paik's advice to send her work to Maciunas, and a frequent exchange of letters and works ensued. One of the most telling aspects of their early correspondence is how rapidly Maciunas directed their attention to business. Already in his second or third letter he wrote that he wanted to publish her event scores with the agreement that they share any profit from sales fifty-fifty. This impressed Shiomi: “That was the first time for my art activity to have a subtle flavor of business.” She also marveled at Maciunas's sense of urgency, stating that “whenever he asked me to send something he always added ‘as soon as possible.’”⁵ His dramatic flair gave the appearance of Fluxus as a business on the cusp of a boom—get in fast or risk missing out—and of a businessman with little time to spare in making deals. Their correspondence on this matter at once instantiated and helped produce the business of Fluxus. Like the corporate giants of the day, if on a much smaller scale, Fluxus aspired to business with a multinational-cum-global reach. Indeed, it was a Fluxus business deal that enabled her to travel to New York and make the transcontinental connection in person.

Just as Paik thought he would, Maciunas delighted in Shiomi's work. Her *Endless Boxes* (1963–64, assembled for Fluxus in 1965) in particular appealed to his love of the box format and organizational sensibility. He bought twelve copies for \$20 each. The large amount startled Shiomi. Such was the strength of US currency that \$20 equaled one year's tuition at a Japanese national university. She used his check for \$240 to pay her airfare from Tokyo to New York, performing the fundamental intersection of business and artistic globalism in Fluxus.

A flight that many take for granted today was only a recent possibility at the time due to commercial airlines' worldwide expansion and entry into the jet age. Perhaps like no other single technology, the jet engine revolutionized travel around the globe with its tremendous speed, and ability to climb faster and higher. In the United States and Britain in particular after World War II, military and civil administrators and aircraft builders found the capabilities attractive as contacts, responsibilities, and opportunities spread around the globe, making jets, increased flight routes to once far-off lands, and the big business of building and flying planes central globalizing forces. The British Overseas Aircraft Corporation (BOAC), the national British carrier and precursor to British Airways, struck first, overseeing the first transatlantic commercial jet flight in 1958, but Pan Am, the US government's chosen instrument to represent the American commercial fleet abroad, was also a pioneer in jet aviation, with the two biggest US airplane manufacturers, Boeing and Douglas, vying for its business. Furious about being upstaged by BOAC, Pan Am made the second transatlantic commercial jet flight three weeks later, quickly inaugurated its New York-to-London route with a new Boeing 747, and one year later launched its around-the-world jet service.

The new technology and operations were making the world a smaller place through the greater interconnectivity of people and information, something that Marshall McLuhan famously, if overoptimistically, wrote about with regard to communication technology that very same year in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*: "The tribe is a unit, which, extending the bounds of the family to include the whole society, becomes the only way of organizing society when it exists in a kind of Global Village pattern. It is important to understand that the Global Village pattern is caused by the instantaneous movement of information from every quarter to every point at the same time."⁶ Initially the "smallness of the world" generated through flight was experienced firsthand only by a luxury class of passengers, thereby excluding most artists, but airlines soon recognized the need for a broader clientele and instituted an economy class with considerably lower fares and a sandwiches-not-caviar cabin service, meaning that more people helped produce the "pattern" McLuhan described.

As concerns for example Shiomi's point of origin, Tokyo, Pan Am had been flying regularly to Japan since the 1940s, prior to jets. Without Ichiyanagi and Ono's own flight to Tokyo at the turn of the 1960s, events would not have transpired for Shiomi or Fluxus as they did. She may not have flown directly to New York (a stop in San Francisco is possible), but post-1964 Pan Am's use of Boeing 737s and 747SPs certainly allowed it to fly nonstop between New York and Tokyo. By 1968 Pan Am flew to eighty-six countries across every continent except Antarctica, employing a multilingual cabin staff to embody their global outlook.

Maciunas also brought a translator, in the form of Fluxus artist Kuniharu Akiyama, when he met Shiomi and Kubota at New York's John F. Kennedy airport at seven in the morning. Such was his eagerness to make a good impression and strengthen the Japanese Fluxus connection that he not only embraced the early hour but also rented a

limousine for his guests. They took the limo from the airport to Canal Street for a welcome party he had planned with the rest of the Asian Fluxus artists already in New York: Nam June Paik, Ay-O and his wife, Ikuko, and Takako Saito.⁷

This burgeoning global outlook inspiring Shiomi's trip and reception in New York formed the basis of her *Spatial Poems*. From the very first poem, the title's assertion of "spatiality" plays out as an emphasis on location—or locations, to be more precise—since it was sent to many artists around the world. Shiomi's request for every participant to put a word somewhere and report its location back to her set in motion a dynamic set of spatial operations. Each artist not only decided from their local perspective and circumstances where best to put the word, but also was aware of themselves as one of many artists performing the very same action in various parts of the world—performance in an expanded field. *Spatial Poem No. 1, Word Event* created a space of relational thinking and global imagining at large (among both people and places) that typifies the entire series.

With *Spatial Poem No. 2, Direction Event*, Shiomi introduced an overtly temporal component. The implied time of the first poem (performers obviously not only placed their words in specific places but also at specific times, even if Shiomi did not ask for this to be reported) became the explicit organizing principle of the second poem: the event was to occur on October 15, 1965, around five in the evening Eastern time and the correlate in every other world time zone. The score provided a framework for participants to perform the inextricability of space and time. But this is not all. The space-time nexus was extended by the prescription for participants to be conscious of the direction they were facing or moving during the performance. A spatial-temporal-directional dynamic was created that was specific to the individual while his or her trajectory (either implied by facing or actual if moving) pointed to the collective world beyond. One can imagine the potential vectors, beginning from distinct points of origin, intersecting, paralleling, or nearly missing each other if continued around the globe. In this way, the poem goes beyond engaging space and time to surface a deeper focus on place and positionality.

By "place" I mean geographically distinct material and lived realities, and by "positionality" I mean a particular description of how places are connected across space-time. Taking my lead from the geographer Eric Sheppard (and his from feminist theory), I understand positionality as "the situated positions from which subjects come to know the world."⁸ Sheppard emphasizes a geographic situatedness that is particularly relevant to Shiomi's poems and Fluxus's artistic globalism as a whole. As he asserts, positionality is a relational construct: "The conditions of possibility for an agent depend on her or his position with respect to others."⁹ This is the core logic of Shiomi's series. Multiple performers around the globe were tasked with undertaking the same actions, the reports of which were juxtaposed in a centralized site of documentation. The scored "direction event" was the constant, but the conditions of possibility for each actor were distinct depending on their position vis-à-vis the others. It was the means by which the global imagining happened.

This becomes clearer when we consider some of the reports submitted to Shiomi:

Behumila Grogerová was sitting at his desk facing north-east; for a while he looked to the right through the window toward south-east Prague. / Arthur Køpke was facing east, where this view was present in Copenhagen. He noticed his friend Eric Anderson moving and facing north toward a book. / Robert Filliou was on top of Marianne Staffelt in Villefranche, France. Marianne Staffelt was under Robert Filliou in Villefranche, France. / Robin Page was watching his television, facing north in Leeds. Michael Sandle was watching Robin Page's television, facing north in Leeds. / Philip Corner was traveling to The Bronx in N.Y. / Ben Patterson was sitting at a desk about 20 feet underground facing north by north-easterly direction in N.Y. / Alison Knowles was facing south-west, helping a man carry a large piece of lumber up the stairs in N.Y. / Robert Watts was sitting in a chair facing west 18° south in New Jersey / Fred Lieberman was seated in a basement room at UCLA, facing west, listening [sic] someone playing a piano outside, in Los Angeles / Takeda was facing upward in Tokyo / Kuniharu Akiyama was facing the first page of a newspaper in Tokyo.¹⁰

What is remarkable about the reports is how they forecast the importance of local-to-global relations that would only be articulated explicitly in globalization discourse years later. Moreover, they suggest the reciprocal relationship between space-time and the social and biophysical processes that create the distinct material and lived realities of places.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Shiomi's construct of the world map: her centralized site for the documentation of the full scope of artists and performances. The world map is where positionality within a global network is positively visualized. Consider *Spatial Poem No. 4, Shadow Event* (1971): "Make a shadow or shadows of the enclosed letter SHADOW on somewhere. Please describe to me in details how you performed it about the place, light source, duration, movement, deformation, etc. / Your reports will be recorded on the world map. / *Performance period Dec. 11-31, 1971 / *Reports should preferably be written in English and within about three hundred words / *Please add to your report the date and time of your performance." Shiomi went beyond her request for a general report in the preceding poems to asking for a detailed account of specific aspects of the performance—"light source, duration, movement, deformation, etc."—that would indicate not only a sense of place but also the artist's situated position in that place. Listing the date and time of the performance was crucial.

The artist Jiří Valoch gave the following account of his performance of "shadow event": "at December 26th 1971 between 11:36-11:40 I maked [sic] a shadow of SHADOW on the wall in home of my friend dusan klimes [sic] (by mean [sic] of one photolight). The shadow was greater as the original, letters undeformed."¹¹ His friend Dusan Klimes reported in turn: "the shadow projected on two pages of a book. The great letters SHADOW infiltrates into the printed text, the letter A in the middle of the book deformed. Realised [sic] December 26th 1971 at 11:55, duration cca 50 sec, by mean of one photolight, both performances by dusan klimes realised [sic] also in his home."¹² In these

SPATIAL POEM NO.6

orbit event

Let some person's portrait go on a orbit (not necessarily circulating)
by attaching it to some moving object — either automatically or
manually, also unceasingly or intermittently .

Please tell me whose portrait draws what kind of line.
These will be recorded on the world map.

- * Performance period May 3 — 23, 1973
- * Reports should preferably be written in English and within about
three hundreds words
- * Please add to your report the date and time of your performance

mieko shiomi
sakaguchi 1-24-38
sakurai, minoo
osaka,japan

FIGURE 94

Mieko Shiomi, invitation to participate in *Spatial Poem No. 6, Orbit Event*, 1973. Lithograph. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Gift, 2008. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital image © Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. With permission of Mieko Shiomi.

reports we feel the full weight of importance of documenting positionality in the series via the centralized world map. Shiomi located, recorded, and juxtaposed the situated positions of each individual performer. This kind of formalized tracking of people's whereabouts, movements, and behaviors had wider ramifications at the time and the potential to alter the tenor of the performance, as we shall see.

Spatial Poem No. 6, Orbit Event (1973, fig. 94) introduced another important concept to the series through its subtitle and a score that called on performers to “let someone's portrait go into orbit (not necessarily circulating) by attaching it to some moving object.”

Shiomi asked them to "please tell me whose portrait draws what kind of line."¹³ The results would be recorded on the world map, and as always each report was to include the date and time of the performance.

Shiomi instigated the orbit event in a period when, ever since the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1 in 1957, the notion of orbiting had profound new connotations. This first artificial low-Earth-orbit satellite marked not only the well-known beginning of the space race as the United States scrambled to catch up and surpass its Cold War adversaries, but also the less often acknowledged origins of Global Positioning System technology. The very same year that Shiomi launched *Spatial Poem No. 6, Orbit Event* from the realm of art, the US Department of Defense gave the green light to the first phase of the NAVSTAR GPS satellite constellation program.

Since the early 1960s, the armed forces had had various discrete initiatives to harness satellite technology for the development of a global, all-weather, continuously available, highly accurate positioning and navigation system. For example, the navy program, Transit, produced a system of seven low-altitude, polar-orbiting satellites, broadcasting stable radio signals originally intended to locate ballistic-missile submarines and other ships at the ocean's surface. In 1967 it was made available to civilian users and adopted by large numbers of commercial marine navigators and leisure boat owners, making Transit the first operational satellite-based navigation system in the military and civilian realms. Starting in 1964 the navy also ran Timation, launching its first satellites in 1967. The initial quartz-based clocks were later replaced by atomic clocks with greater frequency stability to improve the prediction of satellite orbits. The last two Timation satellites were used as prototypes for GPS satellites. Meanwhile, in 1963 the air force began work on similar technology in conjunction with the Aerospace Corporation, resulting in System 621B. It provided the three-dimensional navigation (latitude, longitude, and altitude) with continuous service that other systems lacked.¹⁴

By the end of the decade, the Department of Defense was concerned about the inefficiency of running multiple programs. In 1968 it set up the tri-service steering committee NAVSEG (Navigation Satellite Executive Group) to consolidate research and development, determining the best number of satellites, altitude, signal codes, modulation techniques, and cost. The air force emerged as the lead agency in a compromise, and, taking the best of each system, they came up with NAVSTAR just as performers of *Spatial Poem No. 6, Orbit Event* were putting their portraits into space.

Although the overarching sense of Shiomi's *Spatial Poems* is one of positive networking among artists around the globe, there is at the same time something unwittingly ominous about the centralized collection of artists' personal data, even with their participation and consent, that also speaks directly to the historical moment in which the work was made. The term that has not yet entered discussions about the *Spatial Poems*, but must if we are to understand their full ramifications and importance, is "surveillance." In hindsight, from the perspective of today's so-called surveillance society, which emerged simultaneously with the launching of information-gathering satellites and has

expanded and intensified ever since, Shiomi's statement that "your reports will be recorded on the world map" carries Orwellian undertones.

At a time when outer space captivated the popular consciousness like never before, Shiomi's creation of "orbiting" as an "event" stretched the spatial frontiers (whether real or imagined) of her poems to the extraterrestrial. In her own low-tech way, Shiomi produced the same logic as the military in its study of satellites: recording the positions of objects and individuals on the Earth's surface at any given time. The world map becomes a kind of abstract non-site implicated in uncertain relations of power.

International surveillance satellites were integral to the Cold War on a global scale, while domestic surveillance by governments and corporations escalated, especially through the use of television and the increased normalcy of watching and being watched.¹⁵ As Joshua Meyrowitz argues, "The rise of mass television allowed hundreds of millions of people to closely watch other people and places on a regular basis, anonymously and from afar. . . . Television as a watching machine has fostered the otherwise surprising level of tolerance for increasingly pervasive government, corporate and populace surveillance."¹⁶ The crucial aspect of this is that the surveillance society emerged in large part through the voluntary participation of individuals.

Recall the reports from *Spatial Poem No. 2, Direction Event* in which respondents willingly disclosed their locations and activities at a specific time, whether it was looking at an easterly view in Copenhagen, watching TV in a private home in Leeds, or, as Robert Filliou and Marianne Staffeldt-Filliou no doubt humorously revealed, having sex in Villefranche. Although these behaviors appear innocuous, like those of most citizens in everyday life, the fact that they were "reported" to Shiomi at once instantiated and helped produce the normalcy around public disclosures of private activities. We assume Shiomi's intentions were benign, yet in reality she provided no information to participants of what precisely the world map would be used for. In at least one instance, a participant actually acknowledged the more ominous implications of surveillance and data collection, and pushed back. Ken Friedman's response to *Spatial Poem No. 4, Shadow Event* stated, "I cast the shadow in a secret place, by a secret method, at a secret time, on a secret day. I know nothing. You cannot make me talk." He adopted the role of a subject of an interrogation (being asked to inform on himself) and opted for noncompliance, refusing to give up his secrets.

The ambiguity of the world map, and the fact that this went largely unquestioned by participants, represents the potential for an innocent practice, or one presented as for the collective good, to verge on something more suspect. The point is not to implicate the *Spatial Poems* in some sort of conspiracy. Rather, it is to demonstrate how the world map spoke to a wider blurring of lines between public and private behaviors in a burgeoning culture of surveillance and control.

Finally, within my argument for Shiomi's (and Fluxus's) artistic globalism, we cannot overlook the fact that she asked the artists to report in English (the same was true of Maciunas in his Fluxus correspondence). There was obvious reason for this. Although receiving each report in the artist's first language, and reprinting them as such on her

map, would have neatly visualized global linguistic diversity, it would have also created barriers to comprehension for many people. By prioritizing one language among the transnational, multilingual artists, she participated in another central globalizing force—language homogenization—whereby English increasingly became the dominant language of cultural and economic activities worldwide. Something as seemingly insignificant as Dusan Klimes's handwritten note at the end of his report saying, "please, make my 'English' more correct!" reveals the process whereby non-English-speaking artists (and individuals across fields) had to do their best to operate in English if they wished to participate in and receive the benefits of (recognition, exhibition opportunities, sales) the growing transnational state of exchange. The artistic globalism of the *Spatial Poems* and Fluxus was characterized at once by diversity and by homogenization. These micro-developments were (and are) crucial in the processes of the world becoming global and subjects becoming globally conscious, and are precisely where Fluxus's artistic globalism and "strategies for living" intersect.

While the revolutionary flood and tide of Fluxus never came, by staging the routines of everyday life, in negotiating with the flux of abjection within the systems of capital, the potential for Fluxus to organize art and the artist more firmly in the system was ever present. Maciunas's strategic anachronistic play with images and motifs of the late nineteenth century becomes in this regard an ironic reminder that the Victorians were quite convinced that a good purge was just the ticket for staying "regular" within the regimen demanded by empire. As that template of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century colonial capitalism developed into post-World War II multinational capitalism in a larger process of globalization—where mechanisms of control were subtler and more supple—Fluxus did not release a purgative force from which the system could not easily recover.

All the same, the rear-guard of Fluxus was not a failure. What we must accept is that its success is only available to us in hindsight. Today, Fluxus's surfacing of the contradictions of the avant-garde within the historically specific circumstances of 1960s and 1970s culture can be understood as generative. The strategies that Maciunas, Brecht, Watts, Paik, Knowles, and Shiomi devised enable us to see more precisely today the degree to which the position and contradictions of the historical avant-garde had shifted in relation to the broader epistemological rupture and reformulated terms of critical discourse described as the shift from modernism to postmodernism. Appropriating tools, occupying spaces, and performing the system itself evinced a new degree of historical consciousness of the impossibility of somehow being "outside" or "in front" of it. In Fluxus the historical avant-garde had evolved into a transnational "transguard" through mimicry and mutation rather than revolution and total reformulation. Fluxus did not seek to establish itself as a new, ethical, and singular way of being, but rather proposed strategies for living—a constant and repetitive process of questioning for the (re)production of critically conscious and creative individual subjects.

Part of my concern as an art historian is to reassert this key moment of art's globalism, and the crucial role of artistic globalism, which tends to be obscured amid the impressive amount of writing devoted to the paradigmatically determined "global art" of today. Already in the early 1960s, before there was a name for it, the dominant forces now commonly assumed as part of global art—market expansion, professionalization, commercialization, homogenization—were systematizing the adventurous or defiant probes of so-called avant-garde artists. Fluxus artists became aware of their critical-yet-complicit position within the system and attempted to find alternative ways to work the system from within. Understanding the conditions of art production, distribution, and reception in our current global moment as part of a historical process requires remembering this formative stage in which Fluxus was a small yet vital force.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. Willem de Ridder, letter to Emmett Williams, Amsterdam, 1993, as reprinted in *Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas, 1931-1978*, ed. Emmett Williams and Ann Noël (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 75, my italics.
2. The demolition of the piano was a broad interpretation of Philip Corner's score *Piano Activities* (1962).
3. Maciunas's founding Fluxus Manifesto (1963) has been reprinted in numerous publications. See for example Clive Phillpot and Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus: Selections from the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1988), frontispiece.
4. See Maciunas's final interview, conducted by Larry Miller in 1978, as reprinted in *Fluxus etc., Addenda I: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, ed. Jon Hendricks (New York: Ink &, 1983), 20.
5. The most notable text is David Granick's *The Red Executive: A Study of the Organization Man in Russian Industry* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960). The first edition of the book was also published in the USSR, where it was criticized for its analysis of the role of the Communist Party.
6. The larger endeavor is archived in George Maciunas, *Flux-Combat between George Maciunas & Attorney General of New York, 1975-76*, Archiv Sohm, Stuttgart Staatsgalerie.
7. For discussions of mimicry in the natural sciences, see Wolfgang Wickler, *Mimicry in Plants and Animals* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968); Malcolm Edmunds, *Defence in Animals: A Survey of Anti-Predator Defences* (Burnt Mill, England: Longman, 1974);

- Georges Pasteur, "A Classification Review of Mimicry Systems," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 13 (1982): 169–99; Lincoln P. Brower, ed., *Mimicry and the Evolutionary Process: A Symposium* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
8. Benjamin Buchloh has offered some of the most incisive remarks on the question of Fluxus's vanguardism, but he does not offer an extended historical analysis. See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Robert Watts: Animate Objects, Inanimate Subjects," in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 531–54.
 9. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 58.
 10. See Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 8.
 11. Jochen Schulte-Sasse, "Theory of Modernism versus Theory of the Avant-Garde," foreword to Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, xxix.
 12. Henri de Saint-Simon, *Opinions, littéraires, philosophiques et industrielles* (1825), in *Art and Its Histories: A Reader*, ed. Steve Edwards (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press; London: Open University, 1999), 190.
 13. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "The Aporias of the Avant-Garde" (1962), as reprinted in *Zig Zag: The Politics of Culture and Vice Versa* (New York: New Press, 1997), 246; published originally as "Die Aporien der Avantgarde," in *Einzelheiten II: Poesie und Politik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1962).
 14. William C. Seitz, "The Rise and Dissolution of the Avant-Garde," *Vogue*, September 1, 1963, 231.
 15. William C. Seitz interview with Marcel Duchamp, "What's Happened to Art?," *Vogue*, February 15, 1963, 130.
 16. He makes this claim that Fluxus is rear-guard in two key documents: George Maciunas, "Comments on Relationship of Fluxus to So-Called 'Avant-Garde' Festival" (1964); and George Maciunas, "Flux Manifesto on Flux Amusement" (1965), both in the archive of the Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center, Vilnius, Lithuania.
 17. The reference is to Walter Benjamin's argument in his 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," reprinted in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 252–71.
 18. Reinhold Martin, *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 3–4.
 19. See Douglas Dowd, *Capitalism and Its Economics: A Critical History* (London: Pluto, 2000), especially 141–65.
 20. See Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics, or, Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1948); Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950).
 21. See Ludwig von Bertalanffy, "General System Theory: A New Approach to the Unity of Science," *Human Biology* 23 (December 1951): 303–61.
 22. William H. Whyte Jr., *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956); Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955).
 23. Whyte's ideas play a limited theoretical role in my own analysis of organization. Indeed, I hope to complicate an understanding of the relations of power, ideology, and subjectiv-

ity as informed by more recent theories. However, Whyte is very important in terms of the historical discourse, as one of the most prominent figures to analyze widely perceived problems around the issue of organization at the time.

24. William H. Whyte Jr., *The Organization Man*, 3–4.
25. There was Fluxus activity in Eastern Europe, most notably that of the Czech artist Milan Knížák in what was then Soviet-controlled Czechoslovakia, and Maciunas was eager to expand Fluxus to the Soviet Union. Recent scholarship is beginning to take stock of the extent of Fluxus activities in Eastern Europe. The exhibition *Fluxus East—Fluxus Networks in Central Eastern Europe*, first staged at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, in 2007, is a prime example of these efforts.
26. Ken Johnson, “George Brecht, 82, Fluxus Conceptual Artist,” *New York Times*, December 15, 2008, A33.
27. See Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1961).

CHAPTER 2

1. Allan Kaprow, “The Artist as a Man of the World” (1964), in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 47.
2. Robert Watts, interview with Michel Oren, Bangor, Pennsylvania, July 20, 1978, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
3. Maciunas’s amalgamated accent was a product of his history of displacement that began in early childhood. He suffered from bronchial disorders from a very young age; at three years old he was sent to a sanatorium in Switzerland to recover from tuberculosis. There he learned French. This extended absence made it difficult for him to adapt socially upon his return to Lithuania, where language and customs became barriers that alienated him from other children. When the family fled to Germany during World War II, staying for four years, his speech and mannerisms were inflected by a foreign culture once again. Not knowing German when he arrived, his own “otherness” was made very apparent to him by xenophobic German schoolchildren and teachers. Emmett Williams used the phrase “Lithuanian-English stream-of-consciousness” to describe Maciunas’s letter-writing method. Emmett Williams, *My Life in Flux—and Vice Versa* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 164–68.
4. The general chronology of Fluxus is documented in other texts. I offer only an abbreviated account to introduce the development of Maciunas’s organizational approach in Fluxus. To date, Owen F. Smith has produced the most comprehensive chronology, and I am grateful for his pioneering work in the field. See his *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude* (San Diego, CA: San Diego State University Press, 1998).
5. This history is recounted in MATS B., “Birth of Fluxus—the Ultimate Version,” *Kalejdoskop* (Åhus, Sweden), no. 3 (1979); also cited in Clive Phillpot and Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus: Selections from the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1988), 15.
6. Leokadija Maciunas, “My Son” (1979), a nine-page unpublished typescript document in the Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart. It seems that Kuenstler and other performers’

connections with the pacifist anarchist discussion group of the magazine *Resistance* led the board of directors to conclude that the performance series was Communist.

7. George Maciunas, Brief an Vytautas Landsbergis, undated, February 1963, Sammlung Vytautas Landsbergis, Vilnius, as reprinted in *Fluxus East: Fluxus Networks in Central Eastern Europe*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Künstlerhaus Bethanien, 2007). See also Vytautas Landsbergis, excerpts from an interview with Kestutis Kuizinas that appeared in the daily newspaper *Lieutuvos Aidas* [Lithuanian Echoes], Vilnius, January 26, 1966, translated by Almus Salcius in 1996, as excerpted in *Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas, 1931–1978*, ed. Emmett Williams and Ann Noël (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 20.
8. Maciunas's mother spelled his name Yurgis in her text, but this was merely a variation on his given name, Jurgis (Lithuanian for "George").
9. George Maciunas, "Musica Antiqua et Nova" event announcement, 1961, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, reprinted in Thomas Kellein, *Fluxus* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 52.
10. Ibid.
11. By 1948, after the Berlin Blockade and the chilling of relations with the Soviet Union, the US Air Force rethought its base locations in Germany specifically along Cold War lines. Wiesbaden was one of six new bases funded by the USAF and built at least fifty miles west of the Rhine River in order to give fighter units greater air defense warning time than was possible at the majority of bases further east and south in Bavaria. When Maciunas arrived in Wiesbaden, not long after the building of the Berlin Wall, Cold War rhetoric and tension at the base would have been high. See Robert McGeehan, *The German Rearmament Question: American Diplomacy and European Defense after World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971); and William Glenn Gray, *Germany's Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949–1969* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). Debt as the primary motive for his move to Europe is the general consensus of his friends and family. See for example Tomas Schmit, excerpt from "If I Remember Rightly," *Art and Artists* 7, no. 7 (1972): 34; and Leokadija Maciunas, "My Son."
12. See Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex* (Detroit: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988), 91, 103.
13. Maciunas interview with Larry Miller (1978) as reprinted in *Fluxus etc., Addenda I: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, ed. Jon Hendricks (New York: Ink &, 1983), 15, my emphasis.
14. Richard Huelsenbeck, ed., *Dada Almanach* (Berlin: Erich Reiss Verlag, 1920), 27.
15. See George Maciunas, *Fluxus News-Policy Letter No. 1*, May 21, 1962, and *Fluxus News-Policy Letter No. 6*, April 6, 1963, as reprinted in *Fluxus etc., Addenda I*, 141, 156.
16. George Maciunas, *Fluxus News-Policy-Letter No. 1*, May 21, 1962.
17. George Maciunas, letter to Emmett Williams, June 1963, as reprinted in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 103.
18. George Maciunas, letter to Jonas Mekas, March 27, 1962, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Archive, Detroit and New York.
19. George Maciunas, letter to La Monte Young, ca. October 1962, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Archive, Detroit and New York, as reprinted in *What's Fluxus? What's Not!*

- Why*, ed. Jon Hendricks (Detroit: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, 2002), 133–35.
20. George Maciunas, *Fluxus News-Policy Letter No. 6*, April 6, 1963; *Fluxus News Letter No. 7*, May 1, 1963, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
 21. George Maciunas, letter to Robert Watts, summer 1962, as reprinted in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 535.
 22. George Maciunas, letter to La Monte Young, ca. October 1962, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Archive, Detroit and New York, as reprinted in Jon Hendricks, *What's Fluxus? What's Not! Why.*, 133–35.
 23. George Maciunas, *Fluxus News-Policy-Letter No. 1*, May 21, 1962.
 24. George Maciunas, letter to La Monte Young, ca. October 1962. Alison Knowles confirmed that the Fluxus festivals in Europe drew considerably greater numbers than the events they staged in New York (interview with author, New York, summer 2003).
 25. Allan Kaprow, "The Artist as a Man of the World," 49.
 26. Ibid.
 27. Allan Kaprow, "Maestro Maciunas" manuscript (1993), as reprinted in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 324–25.
 28. George Maciunas, "Comments on Relationship of Fluxus to So-Called 'Avant-Garde' Festival" (1964), archive of the Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center, Vilnius, Lithuania.
 29. Eugene Emerson Jennings, *The Executive: Autocrat, Bureaucrat, Democrat* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 49.
 30. Robert Vance Presthus, *The Organizational Society: An Analysis and a Theory* (New York: Knopf, 1962), 1.
 31. Ibid.
 32. George Maciunas, *George Maciunas, 3 Biographies*, ca. 1968, typewritten carbon copy on tissue, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
 33. Ambrose was the bishop of Milan in the fourth century AD. He was known for his administrative skills as well as for writing hymns that eased the fears of the population. Interestingly, from a young age Maciunas exhibited a strong desire to direct others and had a great gift for music, both of which would play out in Fluxus. The deacon to whom Maciunas likened himself, however, was Gerontius. Ambrose condemned this Latin prelate for having a dream in which the female daemon Onoscelis (a specter with ass's legs) appeared. Subsequently, Gerontius himself obtained the bishopric of Nicomedia. Through these identifications Maciunas symbolically positioned himself as at once with and against authority, in dialogue with the past but of the present. See Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); John McClintock, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper, 1891), 449.
 34. I am indebted to Thomas Kellein for his thorough biographical work on Maciunas. See Thomas Kellein, *The Dream of Fluxus: George Maciunas* (London: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 2007).
 35. Leokadija Maciunas's memories cited here are from her 1979 text "My Son."
 36. My attempts to substantiate Maciunas's employment details with each of the three companies revealed that none had any records dating back that far to either confirm or

deny that he was an employee. My contact at Knoll told me that one employee who had worked for the firm in the 1970s, whom she consulted on my behalf, even laughed at my question, saying, "Are you kidding, they handed us envelopes of cash back then," his way of saying they were slack with payroll records (author phone conversation with Linda Kasper, curator at the Knoll Museum, May 17, 2011). My contact at Olin stated that if Maciunas only worked there for three years, he would not have been eligible for a pension, a pension record being the only way they might be able to trace him today (author phone conversation with Sharon Dowdy, Benefits and Pensions Office, Olin, May 18, 2011). Likewise, my contact at SOM informed me that they had no records dating back that far (author phone conversation with Wendy Chang, in charge of "Knowledge Management," SOM New York, June 29, 2011).

37. George Maciunas, *George Maciunas, 3 Biographies*.
38. Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955).
39. Jonas Mekas, letter to Emmett Williams, July 19, 1993, as quoted in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 150.
40. Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, *Maciunas' Learning Machines: From Art History to a Chronology of Fluxus* (Detroit: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Foundation; Berlin: Vice Versa Verlag, 2003), 10.
41. *Ibid.* Although "mass man" already existed as a topic of cultural analysis, it took on a particular urgency in the decades after the war. This was in part because of the recent world history of Fascism and in part because of the sheer rise in the number of organizations. And while the postwar phenomenon of accelerated bureaucratization affected every Western country (as well as the USSR), its corporate form was most conspicuous in the United States.
42. Jean-Paul Sartre included it on his reading list as a good description of US society in 1960. See William H. Whyte Jr., *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956).
43. *Ibid.*, 72.
44. Undated typewritten text, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
45. Maciunas's approach to an overhaul of the education system is even more striking when we consider the involvement of artists such as John Cage (whom Maciunas readily acknowledged as an important influence on Fluxus) at Black Mountain College. As they attempted to create a genuinely democratic learning environment, Black Mountain faculty did not emphasize greater efficiency in their overarching pedagogical philosophy—if anything, just the opposite. Buckminster Fuller might prove a slight exception here, as his dedication to an economy of means resonated with certain of Maciunas's ideas about efficiency. Yet in terms of pedagogy specifically, Maciunas remained distinct among artists.
46. George Maciunas, "The Grand Frauds of Architecture: Mies van der Rohe Saarinen Bunshaft Frank Lloyd Wright," *Fluxus I*, 1964, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart. Maciunas was keen to be seen as a critical social theorist, and he republished the piece in an expanded form in a tract he coauthored with Henry Flynt entitled *Communists Must Give Revolutionary Leadership in Culture* (1965) and then again in *Underground 1*, no. 7 (December 28, 1966).

47. George Maciunas, "The Grand Frauds of Architecture: Mies van der Rohe Saarinen Bunshaft Frank Lloyd Wright." Maciunas might have been familiar with histories of Mies van der Rohe that showed him using customized struts that "look like" industrial I-beams. See George Maciunas, "The Grand Frauds of Architecture." See also Margaret Kentgens-Craig, *The Bauhaus and America: First Contacts 1919–1936* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999); Kathleen James Chakraborty, ed., *Bauhaus Culture: From Weimar to the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Elaine S. Hochman, *Bauhaus: Crucible of Modernism* (New York: Fromm International, 1997).
48. George Maciunas's "George Maciunas' Plastic Prefab" (1965) was first published in *Underground* 1, no. 1 (October 5, 1966). The entire project, including the "Maciunas Prefabricated Building System" and the "Comparative Analysis of Prefabricated Building Systems," is reprinted in *Fluxus etc., Addenda I*, 40–43.
49. George Maciunas's "George Maciunas' Plastic Prefab" (1965).
50. A sheet of drawings detailing the panel by Maciunas includes two handwritten, signed statements. One is signed by Maciunas, and it states: "I thought of this idea as of Feb. 1, 1960." The second is signed by Martin A. Greenberg (elsewhere identified as the president of USC), and reads: "This work was shown to me April 1, 1960, read by me and understood by me." George Maciunas, "Details of Panel" (1960), Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
51. George Maciunas, "The Structural Mechanical Panel," n.d., Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
52. George Maciunas, letterhead for USC, n.d., Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
53. George Maciunas, letter to La Monte Young, ca. October 1962, as published in Jon Hendricks, *What's Fluxus? What's Not! Why.*, 133.
54. George Maciunas, letter to Emmett Williams, 1963, as excerpted in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 99.
55. The name "fedora" comes from an 1882 play by Victorien Sardou titled *Fedora*, in which the heroine wore a soft felt hat with a crease lengthwise down the crown and pinched in the front on both sides.
56. Sloan Wilson and Nunnally Johnson collaborated on the screenplay for *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, and Johnson also directed the film.
57. The hat was named after William Bowler, the man who actually produced it in his Southwark factory, across the Thames from the city. Fred Miller Robinson has produced the most thorough and thoughtful history of the bowler hat to date. See Fred Miller Robinson, *The Man in the Bowler Hat: His History and Iconography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 17.
58. *Ibid.*, 20.
59. Bertrand Russell as quoted in Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850–1980* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 13; Robin Gilmour, *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1981), 5.
60. Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851–1875* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 252. On the arbitrary power of the notion of the gentleman, see also Marjorie Morgan, *Manners, Morals, and Class in England, 1774–1858* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994), 27;

- Philip Mason, *The English Gentleman: The Rise and Fall of an Ideal* (New York: Morrow, 1982), 16.
61. Fred Miller Robinson, *The Man in the Bowler Hat*, 21.
 62. See for example J. L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), esp. the chapter "Performative Utterances"; Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1959); Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993); Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).
 63. See Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).
 64. Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson, eds., *Performing the Body/Performing the Text* (London: Routledge, 1999), 1.
 65. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 71.
 66. Ibid.
 67. The bowler hat was Maciunas's most prevalent prop, but the possible monocle references are numerous. It was considered by several members of Dada to be *the* symbol of the group. Hence we see it as a repeated motif in the photomontages of Hannah Höch, which often chronicled the group's members, for example *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer Belly Epoch* (1919). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the monocle had become fashionable among imperial generals and nobles, and the capitalists with whom they were allied. Thus, for the Dadaists, the monocle symbolized Wilhelmian authoritarianism and hypocrisy. And since the Dadaists saw very little difference between the agents of Empire and those of the new republic, they could use the monocle to lambast both and signal the false sense of democracy they saw lulling the populace into a dangerous stupor. The director and actor Erich von Stroheim's famous role as Count Wladislaw Sergius Karamzin, a character synonymous with his military regalia and monocle, in his silent film *Foolish Wives* (1922), is a good fictive approximation (if also caricatured) of the monocle-wearing "type" the Dadaists disdained. Tristan Tzara and Raoul Hausmann especially were known for wearing monocles, making a playful association between the "all seeing/knowing eye" and the "all seeing/knowing Dadaist." In this spirit, Hausmann's Dada nickname was "Dadasoph." See Hans Richter, *Dada Art and Anti-Art*, trans. David Britt (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997); Leah Dickerman, ed., *Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hanover, Cologne, New York, Paris* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art; New York: DAP, 2005).
 68. John Walsh Jr., "Portrait of the Artist" exhibition notice, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 30, no. 4 (February–March 1972): 187–88. The Manet self-portrait is in a private collection.
 69. See Marianne W. Martin, *Futurist Art and Theory 1909–1915* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 28, 61–62.
 70. *Exhibition of Futurist Painting* was on view February 5–12, 1912, at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune. It then traveled to London (March), Berlin (April), Brussels (June), the Hague (August), Amsterdam (September), and Munich (October). See the chronology in

- Umbro Apollonio, ed., *Futurist Manifestos*, trans. Robert Brain, R. W. Flint, J. C. Higgitt, and Caroline Tisdall (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2001), 228–29.
71. Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, and Gino Severini, "The Exhibitors to the Public" (1912), in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 294.
 72. In Bonn, he was a good friend of Karl Otten, who had studied with Freud in Vienna. Charlotte Stokes, "Collage as Jokework: Freud's Theories of Wit as the Foundation for the Collages of Max Ernst," *Leonardo* 15, no. 3 (Summer 1982): 199.
 73. Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963).
 74. The phallic connotations continue in the rest of the collage's text: "Seed-covered stacked-up man, seedless waterformer ('edelformer'), well-fitting nervous system also tightly fitted nerves! (The hat makes the man, style is the tailor.)" See John Elderfield, *The Modern Drawing: 100 Works on Paper from the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1983).
 75. Duane Michals, *A Visit with Magritte* (Providence, RI: Matrix, 1981).
 76. Magritte painted bowler-hatted men at least twenty-five times in his career: four canvases between 1926 and 1929, and twenty-one between 1948 and 1966. It seems the photographs of him wearing the bourgeois uniform coincide with the first oil renditions of the type. Whether or not Maciunas knew of these earlier photographs is not certain, but given his concerted study of the historical avant-garde, it is not unlikely that he had some sense of Magritte's long-standing identification with the anonymous man in the bowler hat.
 77. Lorraine Daston, "Speechless," in *Things that Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science*, ed. Lorraine Daston (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2004), 20.
 78. *Ibid.*, 21.
 79. Fred Miller Robinson, *The Man in the Bowler Hat*, 140–41.
 80. *Ibid.*, 20.
 81. *Ibid.*, 140–41.
 82. The bowler was occasionally seen, but only on those men wishing an exaggerated exposure of their establishment aspirations. Even Hollywood was parodying this by the 1960s. For example in the 1960 film *The Apartment*, directed by Billy Wilder, Jack Lemmon plays a young executive who in one scene shows off his new bowler hat as a sign of his "having arrived" in the executive suite. The outmoded hat makes the character and his aspirations look foolish.
 83. This was during the time that he was importing replicas of medieval instruments and canned gourmet food from Europe for resale in the United States. See the reference to the letterhead in Thomas Kellein, *Fluxus*, 16.
 84. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940), in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 255.
 85. "Claes Oldenburg: Interview Conducted by Susan Hapgood" (New York, March 1, 1993), in Susan Hapgood and Maurice Berger, *Neo-Dada: Redefining Art, 1958–62*, exh. cat. (New York: American Federation of Arts and Universe Publishing, 1994), 129.
 86. For more on Constructivist workers' clothing see Christina Kiaer, *Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005);

- and Christina Lodder, *Russian Constructivism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983).
87. "Lab work" was the term used by the Constructivists to displace the word "art." It signaled a coming together of the theoretical and the material, as well as the artist's movement toward the rational world of science and engineering and away from the romantic notion of the artist's garret as site of divine inspiration.
 88. Rodchenko's transformation around the turn of the 1920s from the traditional artist to the new model is also registered in his names. The young man known as "Anti," who was testing his skill as a painter, became "Constructor Rodchenko," a heroic cultural worker.
 89. Larissa Alekseevna Zhadova, ed., *Tatlin* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 338.
 90. *Ibid.*, 339.
 91. George Maciunas, letter to Tomas Schmit, 1964, as reprinted in *Fluxus etc. / Addenda II: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, ed. Jon Hendricks (Pasadena: Baxter Art Gallery and California Institute of Technology, 1983), 167.
 92. Maciunas's *Expanded Arts Diagram* (1966) is reprinted in Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, *Maciunas' Learning Machines*, 116.
 93. Janet Sorensen, "Lef, Eisenstein, and the Politics of Form," *Film Criticism* 19 (Winter 1994-95): 55-74.
 94. An undated copy of Maciunas's letter exists in the Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
 95. Halina Stephan, "Lef and the Development of Early Soviet Prose," *Slavic and East European Journal* 24, no. 4 (Winter 1980): 369-86.
 96. See Julia Robinson, "Maciunas as Producer: Performative Design in the Art of the 1960s," *Grey Room* 33 (Fall 2008): 56-83. Robinson understands the changed circumstances and problematic of the avant-garde in the 1960s, yet offers an analytic solution in the same idealist avant-garde terms. In contrast, I believe we must be willing to trouble our own "ideologies" in order to account for what was actually happening in the art, and in this way better understand what the more complex productive contributions really were.
 97. Jon Hendricks, "Uncovering Fluxus—Recovering Fluxus," in Thomas Kellein, *Fluxus*, 122.
 98. Alison Knowles in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 57.
 99. Geoffrey Hendricks, manuscript, New York, 1994, as published in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 177-78.
 100. The theory of postindustrial society tends to be dated to the late 1960s and early 1970s due to the publication of landmark books such as Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973) and Alain Touraine, *The Post-Industrial Society* (1971). However, the idea was present in American intellectual discourse prior to the 1960s. For an extended discussion see Howard Brick, "Optimism of the Mind: Imagining Postindustrial Society in the 1960s and 1970s," *American Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (September 1992): 348-80.
 101. C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), 195.
 102. Caroline A. Jones, *The Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

103. Quoted in *ibid.*, 123.
104. *Ibid.*, 124.
105. *Ibid.*, 124–25.
106. Andy Warhol interview with Gene Swenson, “What Is Pop Art? Answers from Eight Painters” (part 1), *Art News* 62, no. 7 (November 1963): 26.
107. Maciunas and Warhol were acquainted and occasionally socialized. Maciunas’s best friend Jonas Mekas filmed both artists quite often, and his *Zefiro Torna or Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas* (1992) includes footage of Warhol at one of Maciunas’s famous dumpling parties. Significantly, both Maciunas and Warhol also had firsthand experience working in the commercial design industry.
108. Aldo Pellegrini, *New Tendencies in Art*, trans. Robin Carson (New York: Crown, 1966), 299.
109. Pellegrini represents a lucid critical voice within the postwar, internationalizing art world. He was largely responsible for the renaissance of Surrealism in Argentina in the 1950s, with such publications as *A Partir de o*, until his death in 1975.
110. Aldo Pellegrini, *New Tendencies in Art*, 299.

CHAPTER 3

1. O. G., “Olivetti, New York,” *Interiors* 114, no. 4 (November 1954): 124. The showroom (1954–82) was designed by the architecture partnership of Belgiojoso, Peressutti, and Rogers, and included a sandstone mural by Constantino Nivola.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Over the course of the showroom’s life, hundreds of Olivetti Lettera 22 portable typewriters were successively bolted atop a pedestal outside, where the pavement was made of green marble. Employees ensured that there was always a fresh supply of typing paper. See “Speaking of Pictures: Candid Photos of Sidewalk Typists Show Some Candid Writings,” *Life*, April 11, 1955, 16.
4. Olivetti wrote extensively on the relationship of good design to humanistic values. See for example Adriano Olivetti, *Society, State, Community*, trans. Milton Gendel (Milan: Edizioni di Comunità, 1954), original Italian 1952.
5. For a chronological history of when and where various Fluxus performances were staged, see Owen F. Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude* (San Diego, CA: San Diego State University Press, 1998), especially chapters 4 and 5.
6. Jack Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture: The Effects of Science and Technology on the Sculpture of This Century* (New York: G. Braziller, 1968).
7. Ludwig von Bertalanffy, “An Outline of General Systems Theory,” *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 1, no. 2 (August 1950): 134–35.
8. *Ibid.*, 135–36.
9. See Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1951).
10. Richard A. Johnson, Fremont E. Kast, and James E. Rosenzweig, “Systems Theory and Management,” *Management Science* 10, no. 2 (January 1964): 368.
11. For a discussion of society as a machine vis-à-vis Taylor’s scientific management, see Carroll Pursell, *The Machine in America: A Social History of Technology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 203–28.

12. Sandy Nairne and Caroline Tisdall, eds., *Conrad Atkinson: Picturing the System* (London: Pluto, 1981).
13. The Museum of Modern Art acquired an iconic Olivetti Lexikon 80 manual typewriter designed by Marcello Nizzoli (1948). It was on view at MoMA Exhibition #523, October 21–November 30, 1952.
14. "Thinker from Ivrea," *Time*, February 8, 1954. See also Eleanor L. Brilliant, "Theory and Reality in the Vision of Adriano Olivetti," *Voluntas* 4, no. 1 (1993): 95–114. For the Olivetti Corporation's own account of its worker services program, see *Social Services and Assistance in the Factory* (Ivrea, Italy: Ing. C. Olivetti & C. S.p.A., 1963).
15. "Thinker from Ivrea." Olivetti was known in Italy as an *ingegnere* (engineer). See C. L. Sulzberger, "Six Vignettes that Tell Italy's Story," *New York Times*, May 16, 1954, 60, 64.
16. Already in the early 1950s, Olivetti was influencing IBM's practices. In preparation to take over from his father as head of IBM, Thomas J. Watson Jr. visited the Olivetti showroom in New York, and was so impressed that he flew to Milan to tour the Olivetti headquarters, where he was further inspired by Olivetti's design and philosophy that seemed so modern. On his return to New York, he hired a former Museum of Modern Art design curator, Eliot Noyes, to be IBM's equivalent of Nizzoli. See Alice Rawsthorn, "Olivetti's Artful Breakthroughs," *New York Times*, February 10, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/11/arts/design/olivettis-artful-breakthroughs.html>.
17. See Paul Hofmann, "Olivetti Plan," *New York Times*, June 19, 1955, 28; Herbert Koshetz, "Olivetti's Program of Social Benefits Held Boon to Italy," *New York Times*, November 7, 1956, 49; Georgina Masson, "Olivetti: The Creation of a House Style," *Architectural Review* 121 (1957): 431–39; Richard Moss, "The Anatomy of an Image," *Industrial Design* 8 (November 1961): 50–66; "Olivetti Concept and Form: Portrait of an Industrial Corporation," *Graphis* 27, no. 156 (1971–72): 346–81. In addition, virtually all obituaries of Olivetti in major newspapers and journals in 1960 make some mention of his unconventional business practices.
18. The Olivetti Corporation took advantage of the Fascist politics of economic self-sufficiency in Italy. Amid the world economic crisis beginning in 1929, the devaluation of the lira meant that the prices of foreign suppliers in comparison to domestic producers were not competitive. As imports to Italy sunk to new lows, including from its major importers in the United States and Germany, Olivetti expanded its domestic market and won the dominant position in the industry. See Sibylle Kicherer, *Olivetti: A Study of the Corporate Management of Design* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990), 9–10.
19. Adriano Olivetti, *Society, State, Community*, 48.
20. Arnold Mysiur, *Society—A Very Large System: A Systems-Theoretical Approach to the Study of Society* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1977), 16, my emphasis.
21. George Maciunas, letter to Emmett Williams, 1963, in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, eds., *Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas, 1931–1978* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 99.
22. Lawrence B. Krause, "The International Economic System and the Multinational Corporation," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 403 (September 1972): 94.

23. See Kenneth E. Boulding, "General Systems Theory—The Skeleton of Science," *Management Science* 2, no. 3 (April 1956): 197–208; Richard A. Johnson, Fremont E. Kast, and James E. Rosenzweig, "Systems Theory and Management," 367–84.
24. Adolf A. Berle, *The 20th Century Capitalist Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1954), 9. Other prominent examples are James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution* (1941; repr., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960); Kenneth E. Boulding, *The Organizational Revolution: A Study in the Ethics of Economic Organization* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953); Gardiner Coit Means, *The Corporate Revolution in America: Economic Reality vs. Economic Theory* (New York: Crowell-Collier, 1962).
25. George Maciunas, letter to Emmett Williams, 1963, in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 99.
26. Aldo Pellegrini, *New Tendencies in Art*, trans. Robin Carson (New York: Crown, 1966), 308–9.
27. "George Maciunas to Ben Vautier," ca. summer 1966, in *What's Fluxus? What's Not! Why.*, ed. Jon Hendricks (Detroit: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Foundation, 2002), 168–69.
28. George Maciunas, letter to Willem de Ridder, ca. June 1964, in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex* (Detroit: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988), 113.
29. George Maciunas, letter to Willem de Ridder, January 21, 1965, in John Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 233.
30. George Maciunas, letter to Ben Vautier, ca. summer 1966, in *What's Fluxus? What's Not! Why.*, 169.
31. Hans Hofmann as quoted in Harold Rosenberg, *The Anxious Object: Art Today and Its Audience* (New York: Horizon, 1964), 211.
32. *Ibid.*, 205.
33. *Ibid.*, 211.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Ay-O, manuscript (1995), in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 127.
36. See Richard Kostelanetz, *SoHo: The Rise and Fall of an Artists' Colony* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 45–54.
37. George Maciunas, *FluxShop News* advertisement, 1964, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
38. See Jon Hendricks's account of this discussion in his *Fluxus Codex*, 411.
39. Claes Oldenburg, *Store Days* (New York: Something Else Press, 1967), 16.
40. See Claes Oldenburg, *Environments, Situations, Spaces*, exh. cat. (New York: Martha Jackson Gallery, 1961).
41. A second revised version of the installation was shown at Martha Jackson Gallery, December 1961–January 1962, and a third version was shown as part of the group show *Environments, Situations, Spaces*, also at Martha Jackson Gallery, May 25–June 23, 1962.
42. Per the Fluxus Manifesto (1963).
43. See Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), and Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

44. See Sibylle Kicherer, *Olivetti*, 10–36.
45. Mario Labò, *L'aspetto estetico dell'opera sociale di Adriano Olivetti* (Milan: La Rinascente Compasso D'oro, 1955), 13; also quoted in *Design Process Olivetti 1908–1983*, intro. by Renzo Zorzi (Ivrea, Italy: Ing. C. Olivetti & C. S.p.A., 1983), 24.
46. George Maciunas, *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti*, revised (November 8, 1962), as reprinted in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 361.
47. This is actually quite hard to do. Students I asked to perform the score for *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* reported that they felt more like “broken machines” in their awkwardness than shiny new Olivettis.
48. See Siegfried Kracauer, *The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany*, trans. Quinton Hoare (London: Verso, 1998), originally published in German in 1930.
49. Peter F. Drucker, “The Employee Society,” *American Journal of Sociology* 58, no. 4 (January 1953): 358.
50. George Maciunas, letter to Emmett Williams, Ehlhalten, 1963, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
51. Thomas C. Cochran, *American Business in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 210.
52. On the proletarianization of white-collar labor, see André Gorz, ed., *The Division of Labor* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1976).
53. George Maciunas, letter to Tomas Schmit, 1964, as reprinted in *Fluxus etc. / Addenda II: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, ed. Jon Hendricks (Pasadena: Baxter Art Gallery and California Institute of Technology, 1983), 167.
54. Richard Edwards, *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 131.
55. George Maciunas, letter to Emmett Williams, Ehlhalten, April 25, 1963, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
56. George Brecht edited the first two issues of the newspaper, but relinquished the position to Maciunas for the third and subsequent issues, becoming a contributor.
57. *Fluxus ccV TRE*, February 1964, 1, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
58. *Ibid.*
59. George Maciunas, letter to Robert Filliou, Elhalten, June 1963, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
60. R. J. Worssam, J. M. Patterson, and Maxwell McKnight, “Portrait of a Functional Office, a Presentation by Standard-Vacuum Oil Company, White Plains, New York,” in *Men, Machines and Methods in the Modern Office*, issue 6 of the 1958 AMA Management Report, 135, 138.
61. George Maciunas, letter to Tomas Schmit, ca. late December 1962 or early January 1963, as reprinted in Jon Hendricks, *What's Fluxus? What's Not! Why.*, 136.
62. George Maciunas, letter to Tomas Schmit, 1964, as reprinted in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus etc. / Addenda II*, 167.
63. The term appears in Maciunas's 1964 “Comments on Relationship of Fluxus to So-Called ‘Avant-Garde’ Festival” and his 1965 “Manifesto on Flux Art-Amusement.” The two texts are reprinted in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 120–21 and 88, respectively.

64. George Maciunas, letter to Emmett Williams, Ehlhalten, May 1963, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
65. George Maciunas, postcard-letter to La Monte Young, Wiesbaden, July 1962, as reprinted in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 247.
66. George Maciunas, "Comments on Relationship of Fluxus to So-Called 'Avant-Garde' Festival," 1964, archive of the Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center, Vilnius, Lithuania.
67. See the diagram in Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, *Maciunas' Learning Machines: From Art History to a Chronology of Fluxus* (Detroit: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Foundation; Berlin: Vice Versa Verlag, 2003), 116.
68. See Alan Sikes, *Representation and Identity from Versailles to the Present: The Performing Subject* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).
69. See Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1988); Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, ed. and trans. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
70. Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, 118.
71. Allan Kaprow, *Recent Happenings* (New York: Great Bear Pamphlet, 1966), 13.
72. "Claes Oldenburg: Interview Conducted by Susan Hapgood" (New York, March 1, 1993), in Susan Hapgood and Maurice Berger, *Neo-Dada: Redefining Art, 1958–62*, exh. cat. (New York: American Federation of Arts and Universe Publishing, 1994), 125.
73. George Maciunas, letter to Robert Watts, 1963, as quoted in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 62.
74. Angela Ndalianis, *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 8.
75. *Ibid.*
76. Maciunas's official definition of "Fluxus Art-Amusement" appears as part of a 1965 inventory list of Fluxus artists, publications, objects, festivals, and concerts. See Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 88.
77. See LeRoy Ashby, *With Amusement for All: A History of American Popular Culture since 1830* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2006).
78. Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 88.
79. Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1976), 148.
80. Quoted in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 508.
81. "kit, n.1," *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).
82. George Maciunas, letter to Ben Vautier, 1964, as reprinted in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus etc. / Addenda II*, 155.
83. George Maciunas, letter to Tomas Schmit, January 1964, as reprinted in Jon Hendricks, *What's Fluxus? What's Not! Why*, 163.
84. George Maciunas, letter to Tomas Schmit, 1963, as reprinted in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus etc. / Addenda II*, 166.
85. Anke te Heeson, *The World in a Box: The Story of an Eighteenth-Century Picture Encyclopedia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 195.

86. Ibid., 169.
87. George Maciunas, "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art," 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: Rowohlt, 1965), 192–95.
88. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1971), 140, my emphasis.
89. Ibid.
90. Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 338.
91. Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 178.
92. Larry Miller, "Fluxus Vortex" manuscript, New York, January 3, 1994, as excerpted in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 253.
93. George Maciunas, letter to Ben Vautier, ca. 1973, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection, Detroit.
94. Larry Miller, interview with George Maciunas, 1978, as reprinted in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus etc., Addenda I: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, ed. Jon Hendricks (New York: Ink &, 1983), 20.
95. "Claes Oldenburg: Interview Conducted by Susan Hapgood," 129.

CHAPTER 4

1. Michael Nyman, "An Interview with George Brecht," conducted in Cologne on July 30 and 31 and August 2, 1976, originally published in *Studio International* 192, no. 984, a special issue titled "Art and Experimental Music" (November–December 1976): 256–66. It is quoted here and subsequently as reprinted in *George Brecht: Works from 1959–1973*, exh. cat. (London: Gagosian Gallery, 2004), 54; the page numbers in subsequent notes refer to this version.
2. "George Brecht: Interview with Robin Page for Carla Liss (who fell asleep)," *Art and Artists* 7, no. 7 (October 1972): 30.
3. "Robert Watts Interviewed by Michael Oren," Bangor, Pennsylvania, 1978, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, 1.
4. Joan Marter and Joseph Jacobs, "Interview with Allan Kaprow," in *Off Limits: Rutgers University and the Avant-Garde, 1957–1963*, ed. Joan M. Marter (Newark, NJ: Newark Museum, 1999), 131–39.
5. "George Brecht: Interview with Robin Page for Carla Liss (who fell asleep)," 32.
6. Julia Robinson, "Biography," in George Brecht and Julia Robinson, *George Brecht: Events: Eine Heterospektive = A Heterospective* (Cologne: Walther König, 2005), 68.
7. See for example "Chronology of Events" in Joan M. Marter, *Off Limits*, 163; and "Critical Mass Timeline," in Geoffrey Hendricks, *Critical Mass: Happenings, Fluxus, Performance, Intermedia and Rutgers University, 1958–1972*, exh. cat., ed. Geoffrey Hendricks (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 182.
8. "George Brecht: Interview with Robin Page for Carla Liss (who fell asleep)," 30, 32.
9. Ibid., 30.
10. George Maciunas, letter to George Brecht, undated, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.

11. "George Brecht: Interview with Robin Page for Carla Liss (who fell asleep)," 32.
12. Michael Nyman, "An Interview with George Brecht," 54.
13. George Brecht, statement for the exhibition *DON BLOOM / GEORGE BRECHT*, Old Mill Gallery, Tinton Falls, New Jersey, 1956, Tate Modern Archive, London.
14. George Brecht, "Notebook entry, Oct. 1, 1958," in *George Brecht: Notebook*, ed. Hermann Braun (Cologne: Walter König, 1997), 3.
15. George Brecht, "Notebook entry, Oct. 2, 1958," in *ibid.*, 3.
16. George Brecht, "Notebook entry, Oct. 4, 1958," in *ibid.*, 9.
17. George Brecht, "Notebook entry, Oct. 10, 1958," in *ibid.*, 23.
18. George Brecht, "Notebook entry, Oct. 17, 1958," in *ibid.*, 31.
19. George Brecht, "Notebook entry, Oct. 26, 1958," in *ibid.*, 35.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. George Brecht, "Notebook entry, Nov. 4, 1958," in *ibid.*, 41.
23. George Brecht, "Notebook entry, Nov. 10, 1958," in *ibid.*, 47.
24. George Brecht, "Notebook entry, Nov. 30, 1958," in *ibid.*, 63.
25. *Ibid.*
26. George Brecht, "Events (Assembled Notes)," 1961, as reprinted in *What's Fluxus? What's Not! Why.*, ed. Jon Hendricks (Detroit: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Foundation, 2002), 84.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. Michael Nyman, "An Interview with George Brecht," 47.
30. Hans Reichenbach, "The Philosophical Significance of the Theory of Relativity," in *Albert Einstein, Philosopher-Scientist*, ed., Paul Arthur Schilpp, 3rd ed. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 306.
31. George Brecht, "Notebook entry, Dec. 3, 1958," in *George Brecht: Notebook*, 70.
32. Michael Nyman, "An Interview with George Brecht," 47-48.
33. *Ibid.*, 46.
34. *Ibid.*, 56-57.
35. *Ibid.*, 58.
36. *Ibid.*, 53.
37. *Ibid.*, 51.
38. Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, eds., *Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas, 1931-1978* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 39.
39. George Maciunas, "Tentative Programme for the Festival of Very New Music," in *Fluxus etc., Addenda I: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, ed. Jon Hendricks (New York: Ink &, 1983), 142-43.
40. George Maciunas, "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art," 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: Rowohlt, 1965), 192-95.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 105.

43. George Maciunas, letter to George Brecht, October–December 1963, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
44. Ibid.
45. See for example Julia Robinson, "From Abstraction to Model: George Brecht's Events and the Conceptual Turn in the Art of the 1960s," *October* 127 (Winter 2008–9), 77–108.
46. Michael Nyman, "An Interview with George Brecht," 61.
47. As excerpted in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 101.
48. Michael Nyman, "An Interview with George Brecht," 49.
49. George Maciunas, letter to George Brecht, undated, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
50. See for example Moira Roth, "The Aesthetic of Indifference," in *Difference—Indifference: Musings on Postmodernism, Marcel Duchamp and John Cage*, ed. Moira Roth and Jonathan Katz (Amsterdam: OPA, 1998), 33–48; Caroline A. Jones, "Finishing School: John Cage and the Abstract Expressionist Ego," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Summer 1993): 628–65.
51. Quoted in Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, *Trust Us, We're Experts! How Industry Manipulates Science and Gambles with Your Future* (New York: Tarcher/Penguin, 2001), 206.
52. See George Brecht, New Brunswick, NJ, inventor; Personal Products Corporation, New Brunswick, NJ, assignee. Absorbent product. United States patent 3,011,495. December 5, 1961 (filed February 11, 1958).
53. See Arnold F. Stancell, New Brunswick, NJ, George Brecht, Metuchen, NJ, and Andrew J. Foglia, Brooklyn, NY, inventors; Mobil Oil Corporation, assignee. Method of surface activation of non-polar hydrocarbon resin and printing. United States patent 3,347,695. October 17, 1967 (filed March 27, 1964).
54. See Andrew J. Foglia, Brooklyn, NY, Arnold F. Stancell, New Brunswick, NJ, and George Brecht, Metuchen, NJ, inventors; Mobil Oil Corporation, assignee. Bonding thermoplastic resin films by means of radiation from a laser source. United States patent 3,560,291. February 2, 1971 (filed March 27, 1964).
55. William J. Rankin, "The Epistemology of the Suburbs: Knowledge, Production and Corporate Laboratory Design," *Critical Inquiry* 36 (Summer 2010): 771–72.
56. Henry Martin, "An Interview with George Brecht," *Art International* 11, no. 9 (November 20, 1967): 24.
57. William J. Rankin, "The Epistemology of the Suburbs," 774.
58. See Reinhold Martin, *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), and William J. Rankin, "The Epistemology of the Suburbs," especially 778–92.
59. William J. Rankin, "The Epistemology of the Suburbs," 771–72.
60. Henry Martin, "An Interview with George Brecht," 22.
61. For a history of the punch card see Steven Lubar, "'Do Not Fold, Spindle or Mutilate': A Cultural History of the Punch Card," *Journal of American Culture* 15, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 43–55.
62. Herman Hollerith invented the recording of data on a medium that could then be read by a machine, and in 1896 founded the Tabulating Machine Company in order to produce and distribute it. This was one of four companies that merged to form the Computing Tabulating Recording Corporation (CTR), later renamed IBM.

63. The warning appeared from the moment they emerged as publicly visible objects in the 1930s, especially via Social Security checks.
64. Steven Lubar, "Do Not Fold, Spindle or Mutilate," 43–55.
65. Quoted in Reinhold Martin, *The Organizational Complex*, 159.
66. Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October* 59 (Winter 1992): 3–7.
67. The Japanese composer Toshi Ichianagi referenced IBM punch cards directly in his 1961 composition *IBM—Happening and Music Concrète*, in which performers used IBM punch cards as their score. Ichianagi's implicit commentary on the social ubiquity and impact of the punch cards was less ambiguous in that each performer could interpret the punch card score as he or she wished—a positive assertion of individual creative expression in the face of bureaucratic conformity and control. I also discuss this score in the concluding chapter.
68. George Maciunas, *Fluxus Newsletter No. 4*, as excerpted in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex* (Detroit: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988), 216.
69. George Maciunas, letter to Tomas Schmit, end of August or early September 1963, as excerpted in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 217.
70. *Ibid.*
71. George Maciunas, letter to William de Ridder, day before returning to United States, fall 1963, as quoted in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 217.
72. See for example Julia Robinson, "Maciunas as Producer: Performative Design in the Art of the 1960s," *Grey Room*, no. 33 (Fall 2008): 56–83.
73. Jon Hendricks, "Comments," in *Fluxus Codex*, 219.
74. George Maciunas, letter to Tomas Schmit, end of August or early September 1963, as excerpted in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 217.
75. George Maciunas, letter to George Brecht, October–December 1963, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
76. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1961).
77. *Ibid.*, 8.
78. *Ibid.*, 11.
79. *Ibid.*, 3.
80. See for example Friedrich A. Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society," *American Economic Review* 35, no. 4 (1945): 519–30; Friedrich A. Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), especially chapter 2, "Economics and Knowledge."
81. Fritz Machlup, *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962). Also see Alistair S. Duff, *Information Society Studies* (London: Routledge, 2000), especially chapter 2 on Machlup and his school.
82. See Alistair S. Duff, *Information Society*, chapters 1 and 3.
83. See David Riesman, "Leisure and Work in Post-Industrial Society," in *Mass Leisure*, ed. Eric Larrabee and Rolf Meyersohn (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1958), 363–85; and Daniel Bell, "Notes on the Post-Industrial Society," *Public Interest* 6–7 (Winter–Spring 1967).

84. William J. Rankin, "The Epistemology of the Suburbs," 33-34.
85. Fluxus represents an incisive example within a broader trend of dematerialization in art, including Conceptual art, information art, Minimalism, process art, et cetera, that was famously identified by the arts writer and curator Lucy Lippard in her book *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).
86. John Cage, letter to George Brecht, December 3, 1965, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
87. Quoted in Henri Durand, "Towards a 'Villefranche of the Arts'?", *L'Espoir*, October 29, 1966, as reprinted in George Brecht and Robert Filliou, *Games at the Cedilla, or The Cedilla Takes Off*, trans. George Brecht (New York: Something Else Press, 1967), n.p.
88. Robert Filliou, letter to George Brecht, 1965, as reprinted in George Brecht and Robert Filliou, *Games at the Cedilla, or The Cedilla Takes Off*.
89. George Maciunas, letter to George Brecht, January 24, 1966, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
90. Henri Durand, "Towards a 'Villefranche of the Arts'?"
91. La Cédille qui sourit, form letter for public distribution, by Donna Jo Jones, George Brecht, Marianne Staffeldt-Filliou, and Robert Filliou, n.d., as reprinted in George Brecht and Robert Filliou, *Games at the Cedilla, or The Cedilla Takes Off*.
92. George Maciunas, letter to George Brecht, ca. 1966, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart
93. Ibid.
94. George Brecht, letter to George Maciunas, May 26, 1966, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
95. Ibid.
96. George Brecht, letter to George Maciunas, June 10, 1966, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
97. George Brecht and Robert Filliou, "Suspense-Poems by Subscription," in *Games at the Cedilla, or The Cedilla Takes Off*.
98. "Laughing Game," in *ibid*.
99. George Brecht, letter to George Maciunas, n.d., probably ca. 1966 (definitely while Brecht was in Villefranche due to the address), Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
100. Michael Nyman, "An Interview with George Brecht," 55.
101. See for example George Brecht, letter to Johannes, March 27, probably 1967, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
102. Marianne Filliou, letter to George Brecht and Donna Jo Jones, n.d., Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
103. Letter from George Brecht to Marilyn Fischbach, March 6, 1968, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
104. Letter from George Brecht to Ileana Sonnabend, October 22 (no year given, but must be 1966 based on other correspondence), Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
105. Ibid.
106. Ileana Sonnabend, letter to George Brecht, October 8, 1965, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.

107. Ileana Sonnabend, letter to George Brecht, May 24, 1966, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
108. Ileana Sonnabend, letter to George Brecht, January 9, 1968, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
109. Henri Durand, "Towards a 'Villefranche of the Arts'?"
110. Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

1. "Allan Kaprow and Robert Watts Interviewed by Sidney Simon," in *Experiments in the Everyday: Allan Kaprow and Robert Watts: Events, Objects, Documents*, ed. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh and Judith F. Rodenbeck (New York: Columbia University, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, 1999), 79.
2. Brian O'Doherty, "Machines in Revolt: Neo-Dada Works by Robert Watts Invite Viewers to Become Part of Exhibition," *New York Times*, January 11, 1962, 49.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Robert Watts, curriculum vitae, ca. 1979, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
6. "Robert Watts Interviewed by Michael Oren," Bangor, Pennsylvania, 1978, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, 1.
7. Robert Watts, record in the Graduate Faculties, Columbia University, 1951, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
8. Author interview with Geoffrey Hendricks, New York, January 29, 2013.
9. Letter from Margaret T. Corwin to Robert Watts, July 14, 1953, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
10. "Allan Kaprow and Robert Watts Interviewed by Sidney Simon," 79.
11. Larry Miller, "Robert Watts: Scientific Monk," in *Off Limits: Rutgers University and the Avant-Garde, 1957–1963*, ed. Joan M. Marter (Newark, NJ: Newark Museum, 1999), 89.
12. Ibid.
13. See for example Joan Marter and Joseph Jacobs, "Interview with Allan Kaprow," in *Off Limits*, 131–39; Geoffrey Hendricks, "Beginnings," in *Critical Mass: Happenings, Fluxus, Performance, Intermedia and Rutgers University, 1958–1972*, exh. cat., ed. Geoffrey Hendricks (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 11–19; Simon Anderson, "Living in Multiple Dimensions: George Brecht and Robert Watts, 1953–1963," in *Off Limits*, 100–111.
14. Here Watts refers to the paintings he was making up until about 1957–58: "a mixture of Kline, Pollock, a little Beckmann, and a little Gorky." "Allan Kaprow and Robert Watts Interviewed by Sidney Simon," 79.
15. Geoffrey Hendricks, "Beginnings," 11.
16. See for example "Chronology of Events," in *Off Limits*, 163; "Critical Mass Timeline," in *Critical Mass*, 182.
17. Geoffrey Hendricks, "Beginnings," 11.
18. "Robert Watts Interviewed by Michael Oren," 1.
19. Robert Watts, "Tentative Outline of an Experimental Course in Art for 1957–58—Douglass College," as reprinted in *Critical Mass*, 22.

20. Ibid.
21. Allan Kaprow, Robert Watts, and George Brecht, "Project in Multiple Dimensions, in *Off Limits*, 153.
22. Ibid., 154.
23. "Interviews with Artists: Allan Kaprow," in *Off Limits*, 132.
24. "Allan Kaprow and Robert Watts Interviewed by Sidney Simon," 80.
25. "Interviews with Artists: Allan Kaprow," in *Off Limits*, 133.
26. The photograph is now at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
27. Sara Seagull, e-mail to author, June 17, 2013.
28. Daughters of the American Revolution website, accessed May 29, 2014, <http://www.dar.org/national-society/who-we-are>.
29. Eleanor Roosevelt, letter to president general of the DAR, February 26, 1939. National Archives and Records Administration, http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/american_originals/eleanor.html. See also, for example, Sarah Maslin Nir, "For Daughters of the American Revolution, a New Chapter," *New York Times*, July 4, 2012, A1.
30. The prices of *Guadalcanal* and *Monument to D.A.R.* were listed as \$750 and \$350, respectively.
31. Sara Seagull, e-mail to author, June 7, 2013.
32. Ibid.
33. I have written extensively elsewhere on Tinguely's *Homage to New York*. See Mari Dumett, "Neo-Dada, Meta-Dada, and the Transatlantic Exchange of Arts circa 1960," in *Robert Rauschenberg, Jean Tinguely: Collaborations*, exh. cat. (Basel: Museum Tinguely, 2009), 141–57; and also my chapter "To Be an 'Exemplary' Machine: Jean Tinguely's *Homage to New York*," in *Breathless Days: 1959–1960*, ed. Serge Guilbaut and John O'Brian (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming).
34. "Allan Kaprow and Robert Watts Interviewed by Sidney Simon," 82.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., 83.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, eds., *Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas, 1931–1978* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 62.
40. Ibid., 63.
41. George Maciunas, letter to Robert Watts, ca. before March 11, 1963, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
42. George Maciunas, letter to Robert Watts, ca. May 1, 1963, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
43. George Maciunas, letter to Robert Watts, n.d., Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
44. George Maciunas, letter to Robert Watts, n.d., Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
45. Ibid.
46. Robert Watts, manuscript (1980), in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 63.
47. "George Brecht: Interview with Robin Page for Carla Liss (who fell asleep)," *Art and Artists* 7, no. 7 (October 1972): 32.
48. Newspaper clipping taped to paper, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

49. Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex* (Detroit: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988), 560.
50. George Brecht and Robert Watts, announcement card for Yam *Delivery Event*, Yam Festival Part 5, 1962, Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives.
51. Ibid.
52. George Maciunas, letter to Robert Watts, ca. June 1962, reprinted in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 534.
53. George Maciunas, letter to Robert Watts, ca. summer 1962, reprinted in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 534–35.
54. Jon Hendricks, "Comments," in *Fluxus Codex*, 535.
55. George Maciunas, letter to Robert Watts, ca. summer 1962, reprinted in Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 534–35.
56. Jon Hendricks, "Comments: Dollar Bill," in *Fluxus Codex*, 535.
57. Jon Hendricks, "Comments: Chromed Goods," in *Fluxus Codex*, 529.
58. See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Robert Watts: Animate Objects, Inanimate Subjects," in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 531–54.
59. *cc Valise e TRIangle*, March 1964 edition of Fluxus *cc V TRE* newspaper, ed. George Brecht and Fluxus Editorial Council, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
60. Ibid.
61. "Robert Watts Interviewed by Michael Oren," 9.
62. Ibid., 10.
63. Larry Miller, "Robert Watts: Scientific Monk," including transcripts of conversations with Watts, 92.
64. *Pee Kit* was a separate but related work that Watts proposed as a Fluxus edition and for which he created a prototype in 1969. It included four clear capsules full of colored substances in a clear plastic snap-top box. Each pill was intended to be a drug capable of turning the urine of the individual who ingested it a vibrant red, blue, green, orange, and so on. See Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 560.
65. Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 569.
66. Robert Watts, *Sitting Kit*, planned as a Fluxus edition 1967, produced by Watts 1980–83, slide of prototype with handwritten notes on the edges, 1983, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
67. The presence of earlier issues in the Robert Watts papers located at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, combined with the fact that we know they were corresponding, suggests the possibility that Maciunas sent them to Watts unofficially.
68. George Maciunas, "Conditions for Performing Fluxus Published Compositions, Films & Tapes," undated (ca. 1965), Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
69. "Robert Watts Interviewed by Michael Oren," 6–7.
70. George Maciunas, *Fluxus Newsletter*, March 8, 1967, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
71. Ibid.
72. Larry Miller, "Robert Watts: Scientific Monk," 92.

73. "Robert Watts Interviewed by Michael Oren," 10.
74. Robert Watts, George Maciunas, and Herman Fine, Implosions, Inc. proposal, n.d. (ca. 1967), Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. George Maciunas, Robert Watts, and Herman Fine, Implosions, Inc. budget, 1967, Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives.
79. "Robert Watts Interviewed by Michael Oren," 13.
80. See Robert Watts, Herman Fine, and George Maciunas, "Budget," 4; and Robert Watts, "Projected Products," both at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
81. "Robert Watts Interviewed by Michael Oren," 13.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Advertisement, *East Village Other*, May 15–June 1, 1967.
85. John I. Kohler, letter to Implosions, Inc., May 29, 1967, Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives, folder I 1336.
86. Charles O'Donnell, letter to Implosions, Inc., May 28, 1967, Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives, folder I 1336.
87. Donald L. Bowers, letter to Implosions, Inc., n.d. (ca. May 1967), Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives, folder I 1336.
88. John I. Kohler, letter to Implosions, Inc., June 8, 1967, Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives, folder I 1336.
89. R. S. Goodlett, letter to Implosions, Inc., July 6, 1967, Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives, folder I 1336.
90. Robert Watts, letter from Implosions, Inc. to Allison MFG Co INC, March 1967, Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives.
91. See Jon Hendricks, "Comments: Male Undershirt," in *Fluxus Codex*, 555; George Maciunas, "Fluxorchestra Circular Letter No. 2," 1965, reprinted in *Fluxus etc., Addenda I: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection*, ed. Jon Hendricks (New York: Ink &, 1983), 160.
92. Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex*, 573.
93. "Robert Watts Interviewed by Michael Oren," 13.
94. Ibid.
95. George Maciunas, *Loft Building Co-operative Newsletter No. 1*, August 1966, Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives.
96. Pam Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 61–62, 68.
97. Joshua Shannon, *The Disappearance of Objects: New York Art and the Rise of the Postmodern City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 159.
98. Richard Kostelanetz, *SoHo: The Rise and Fall of an Artists' Colony* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 45–54.
99. George Maciunas, *Newsletter No. 2* (Loft Building Co-Operative), n.d., Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives.

100. George Maciunas, *Fluxus Newsletter*, March 8, 1967, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
101. Though they were counting on a successful loan, Maciunas noted that "seed money" might also be procured from the National Foundation for the Arts and the Kaplan Foundation.
102. George Maciunas and Robert Watts, "Proposal for the Greene Street Precinct, Inc."
103. The Citroën SM was expensive in France as well, starting at around 52,000 francs (around \$9,500 at contemporary exchange rates). Aaron Severson, "Sadomasochistic: The Pleasure and Pains of the Citroen SM," 2008, <http://ateupwithmotor.com/model-histories/citroen-sm/>.
104. Author interview with Jerry Zinser, January, 14, 2013, New York. Zinser was Watts's graduate student assistant at Rutgers. He confirmed the reputation of Watts and his car, including the thrill of seeing him speed by in it.
105. "Robert Watts Interviewed by Michael Oren," 4.
106. *Ibid.*, 6.
107. *Ibid.*, 5.
108. George Maciunas, "Fluxus Art-Amusement," 1965.
109. George Maciunas and Robert Watts, "Proposal for the Greene Street Precinct, Inc.," 1967, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
110. *Ibid.*
111. *Ibid.*
112. See Douglas Martin, "Manny Roth, 94, Impresario of Cafe Wha?, Is Dead," *New York Times*, August 1, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/03/nyregion/manny-roth-94-impresario-of-cafe-wha-is-dead.html>.
113. George Maciunas and Robert Watts, "Proposal for the Greene Street Precinct, Inc."
114. *Ibid.*
115. *Ibid.*
116. *Ibid.*
117. Joint Venturers Agreement, August 27, 1973, Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives.
118. Agreement by the Joint Venturers, August 27, 1973, Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives.
119. Statement of account, 141 Wooster St., Good Deal Realty Corp., October 1, 1973, to December 31, 1974, Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives.
120. Sale agreement between Good Deal, Nijole Valaitis, and Charles Jarms, March 22, 1975, Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives.
121. "Robert Watts Interviewed by Michael Oren," 3.
122. Carl Chanin, statement of debt of G. Maciunas to Greene Street Precinct cooperative, June 23, 1969, Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives.
123. Finkelstein, Benton & Soll, letter to New York Deputy Attorney General George Croce, September 29, 1969, Museum of Modern Art, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Archives.
124. "Robert Watts Interviewed by Michael Oren," 11.

CHAPTER 6

1. Allan Kaprow, "Nam June Paik," in *Nam June Paik: Video Time, Video Space*, exh. cat., ed. Toni Stoos and Thomas Kellein (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), 114.
2. Maciunas took pictures of Paik's Düsseldorf performance, and on the back of one photograph he wrote that Paik took about five minutes to raise the violin over his head. Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
3. Quoted in Lars Movin, "The Zen Master of Video: Nam June Paik between Minimalism and Overkill," in *Nam June Paik Video Sculptures: Electronic Undercurrents* (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 1996), 30–31.
4. Owen F. Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude* (San Diego, CA: San Diego State University Press, 1998), 64.
5. Tristan Tzara, "Seven Dada Manifestos," in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Motherwell (New York: Wittenborn Schultz, 1951), 82.
6. Allan Kaprow, "Nam June Paik," in *Electronic Art II*, exh. cat. (New York: Galeria Bonino, 1968); reprinted in *Nam June Paik: Video Time, Video Space*, 114.
7. Quoted in *Nam June Paik Video Sculptures*, 31, my emphasis.
8. Owen F. Smith, *Fluxus*, 43.
9. George Maciunas, letter to La Monte Young, ca. October 1962, as reprinted in *What's Fluxus? What's Not! Why.*, ed. Jon Hendricks (Detroit: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection Foundation, 2002), 133.
10. George Maciunas, letter to Nam June Paik, March 1963, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
11. Quoted in John G. Hanhardt, *The Worlds of Nam June Paik*, exh. cat. (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2000), 30.
12. John Cage, "On the Work of Nam June Paik," in *Nam June Paik: Video Time, Video Space*, 22. This previously unpublished text was Cage's contribution to a 1982 panel discussion on Paik at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
13. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, June 5, 2008. Kyung-Hee Lee, a Korean writer and childhood friend of Paik, provides details of the Paik family's social class and how this affected their reception in the local community. See Lee's short essay "Prince and Princess," in *Nam June Paik: Video Time, Video Space*, 109–10.
14. David Ross, "A Conversation with Nam June Paik," in *Nam June Paik: Video Time, Video Space*, 59.
15. See Geir Helgesen, *Democracy and Authority in Korea* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998), 35.
16. Robert T. Oliver, *A History of the Korean People in Modern Times: 1800 to the Present* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 146–47.
17. "Nam June Paik," in Harry Ruhé, *Fluxus: The Most Radical and Experimental Art Movement of the Sixties* (Amsterdam: A, 1979), n.p.
18. Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau, eds., *Locating East: Asia in Western Art Music* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004); Bonnie C. Wade, *Music in Japan: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
19. Nam June Paik, "'Pensées' at 59," in *Nam June Paik: Video Time, Video Space*, 17.

20. Ibid.
21. Robert T. Oliver, *A History of the Korean People in Modern Times*, 154. See also Samuel S. Kim, *The Two Koreas and the Great Powers* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Taik-young Hamm, *Arming the Two Koreas: State, Capital and Military Power* (London: Routledge, 1999); Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997).
22. David Ross, "A Conversation with Nam June Paik," 64.
23. Ibid., 59.
24. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, June 5, 2008.
25. See Reinhold Brinkmann and Christoph Wolff, eds., *Driven into Paradise: The Musical Migration from Nazi Germany to the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
26. Nam June Paik, "'Pensées' at 59," 62.
27. Jean-Paul Fargier, "The Yellow Peril and the White Wolf," in *Nam June Paik: Video Time, Video Space*, 103–4.
28. The quote comes from Denis Nayland Smith, the British secret agent and nemesis of Fu Manchu, in chapter 2 of Sax Rohmer's *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu* (1913). Sax Rohmer was the pen name of Arthur Henry Sarsfield Ward (1883–1959), born to working-class Irish parents in Birmingham, England. See *The Rohmer Review*, ed. R. E. Briney, nos. 11–14 (December 1973–July 1976). See also Can Van Ash and Elizabeth Sax Rohmer, *Master of Villainy*, ed. Robert E. Briney (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972).
29. Jun Xing, *Asian America through the Lens: History, Representations, and Identity* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1998), 55.
30. Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: the Stereotype and Colonial Discourse," in *Visual Culture: The Reader*, ed. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 2004), 377.
31. Ibid.
32. David Ross, "A Conversation with Nam June Paik," 62.
33. Quirino Principe, "Expressionism and Music," in *Expressionism: Art and Society*, ed. Stephanie Barron and Wolf-Dieter Dube (New York: Rizzoli, 1997), 79.
34. Ibid., 83.
35. Yule F. Heibel, *Reconstructing the Subject: Modernist Painting in Western Germany, 1945–50* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 72.
36. Ibid.
37. Gesa Kordes, "Darmstadt, Postwar Experimentation, and the West German Search for a New Musical Identity," in *Music and German National Identity*, ed. Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 211–12, my emphasis.
38. See Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); and Yule F. Heibel, *Reconstructing the Subject*.
39. For almost twelve years, from the start of World War I to 1924, Schönberg fell nearly silent, producing no major works.
40. For a discussion of this turn to the twelve-tone composition process by writers at the time, see for example Wolf-Eberhard von Lewinski and Donald Mintz, "The Variety of

- Trends in Modern German Music," *Music Quarterly* 51, no. 1, "Special Fiftieth Anniversary Issue: Contemporary Music in Europe: A Comprehensive Survey" (January 1965): 166–79; Walther Harth and Max Loewenthal, "Musical Life in Germany Since the War," *Tempo*, no. 16 (Summer 1950): 19–22, 25; H. H. Stuckenschmidt and Abram Loft, "Synthesis and New Experiments: Four Contemporary German Composers," *Musical Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (July 1952): 353–68.
41. Theodor W. Adorno's first essays on Schönberg and Alban Berg (Schönberg's student) appeared in 1925, and the first on Webern on 1926. The full-length study that developed from his early writings is *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1949) with which he marked his return to a devastated Europe after his exile in the United States. The book's essays "Schönberg and Progress" and "Stravinsky and Reaction" pose the musical extremes in which Adorno saw the struggle for the cultural future of Europe: between human emancipation and barbarism, between the compositional techniques of Schönberg and Stravinsky.
 42. Wolf-Eberhard von Lewinski and Donald Mintz, "The Variety of Trends in Modern German Music," 168.
 43. See Theodor Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening" (1938), in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 288–317.
 44. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, June 5, 2008.
 45. George Maciunas, "Neo-Dada in Music, Theater, Poetry, Art" (1962), as reprinted in *What's Fluxus? What's Not! Why.*, 89–90. A version in German was published in Jürgen Becker and Wolf Vostell, *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1965), 192–95.
 46. David Ross, "A Conversation with Nam June Paik," 58.
 47. George Maciunas, letter to Emmett Williams, April 1964, as quoted in *Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas, 1931–1978*, ed. Emmett Williams and Ann Noël (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 133.
 48. Beyond what the performances alone tell us, the artist Alison Knowles confirmed this interpretation of Paik's work in an interview with the author, New York, June 5, 2008.
 49. Kate Millett, "Bonyari," in *Nam June Paik: Video Time, Video Space*, 111.
 50. Robert T. Oliver, *A History of the Korean People in Modern Times*, 131.
 51. Walter Benjamin, "What Is Epic Theater?" (1939), in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968), 153, my emphasis.
 52. Quoted in Wolfgang Drechsler, "Sonatine for Goldfish," in *Nam June Paik: Video Time, Video Space*, 42.
 53. Quoted in Lars Movin, "The Zen Master of Video," 22, my emphasis.
 54. John Cage, "The Future of Music," in *John Cage*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Praeger, 1970), 54–57, my italics. Kostelanetz's editorial note preceding Cage's essay states, "Perhaps the single most influential of Cage's written texts, this was first delivered as a lecture in 1937 in Seattle, but not published until 1958 in the brochure accompanying George Avakian's recording of Cage's 25-Year Retrospective Concert held in New York" (54).
 55. L. Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1965), 48–49. For a discussion of the importance of *Vision in Motion* to Cage, see John Cage and Hans G. Helms,

- John Cage Talking to Hans G. Helms on Music and Politics*, S-Press Tapes, cassette tape; John Cage, "Reflections of a Progressive Composer on a Damaged Society," *October* 82 (Fall 1997): 78–79.
56. Buckminster Fuller, *Ideas and Integrities: A Spontaneous Autobiographical Disclosure*, ed. Robert W. Marks (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 54–55.
 57. John Cage, "Nam June Paik: A Diary," in *A Year from Monday* (London: R, 1968), 89; first published in *Nam June Paik: Electronic Art; Exhibition No. 16*, exh. cat. (New York: Galeria Bonino, 1965).
 58. See Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics, or, Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1948, second edition 1961); Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950).
 59. The architectural historian Reinhold Martin has studied the archival papers of the seminar, and I am indebted to his research. See his book *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).
 60. *Ibid.*, 217.
 61. *Ibid.*, 216–17.
 62. *Ibid.*
 63. Quoted in *Beuys Vox 1961–1968*, exh. cat. (Seoul: Won Gallery / Hyundai Gallery, 1986).
 64. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, June 5, 2008.
 65. George Maciunas, letter to Nam June Paik, March 1963, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
 66. Nam June Paik, "Afterlude to the Exposition of Experimental Television 1963, March, Galerie Parnass," in Fluxus newspaper *fluxus cc fiVe ThReE*, June 1964, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
 67. Nam June Paik, "Electronic TV & Color TV Experiment" (1964), printed in the invitation to the exhibition at the New School for Social Research, New York, January 1965.
 68. Nam June Paik, "Afterlude to the Exposition of Experimental Television."
 69. *Ibid.*
 70. *Ibid.*
 71. Caroline A. Jones, "Signal Distortion: Caroline A. Jones on David Joselit's *Feedback: Television against Democracy*," *Artforum International* 45, no. 8 (April 2007): 77–78; David Joselit, *Feedback: Television against Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).
 72. Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics*.
 73. Nam June Paik, "Afterlude to the Exposition of Experimental Television."
 74. David Ross, "A Conversation with Nam June Paik," 58.
 75. See for example Michele Hilmes, ed., *The Television History Book* (London: British Film Institute, 2003); Albert Abramson, ed., *The History of Television, 1880–1941* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1987); Albert Abramson, ed., *The History of Television, 1942–2000* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003).
 76. A scan line is one line, or row, in a raster scanning pattern, such as a video line on a cathode ray tube (CRT) display of a television or computer. On older CRT screens of the sort Paik first used, the horizontal scan lines were visually discernible, even when viewed from a distance.

77. The committee was reconstituted in January 1950 to standardize color television. In December 1953, it unanimously approved a compatible color system that is now called simply the NTSC color television standard.
78. Walter Bruch developed PAL, an analog color encoding system, at Telefunken in Germany. The format was unveiled in 1963 with the first broadcasts beginning in the UK and Germany in 1967. See Anthony Smith and Richard Paterson, eds., *Television: An International History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
79. Nam June Paik, "Afterlude to the Exposition of Experimental Television."
80. Akutagawa was a short-story writer and one of the first Japanese modernists to be translated into English. His own knowledge of Western literature was profound, and from the quote included by Paik we can assume this included Hegel. Later in his life Akutagawa became interested in the debates around Socialism and social classes.
81. Nam June Paik, "Afterlude to the Exposition of Experimental Television."
82. *Fluxus cc V TRE*, February 1964, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart.
83. Action Against Cultural Imperialism, "Picket Stockhausen Concert!" broadside, September 1964, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart. See also Jon Hendricks, *Fluxus Codex* (Detroit: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988), 250.
84. As quoted in Owen F. Smith, *Fluxus*, 159.
85. Ibid.
86. Dick Higgins, letter to Tomas Schmit, October 10, 1964, Archiv Sohm, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.
87. See Paul C. Adams, "Television as Gathering Place," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82, no. 1 (March 1992): 117–35, especially 118.
88. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964), critical edition, ed. W. Terrence Gordon (Corte Madera, CA: Ginko Press, 2003), 39; also cited in Nam June Paik, "Norbert Wiener and Marshall McLuhan," *Institute of Contemporary Arts Bulletin* (London) (1967), 8.
89. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 414.
90. Ibid., 414, 445.
91. Nam June Paik, "Norbert Wiener and Marshall McLuhan."
92. Tom Sherman, "The Premature Birth of Video Art" (Syracuse, NY: self-published, 2007).
93. Nam June Paik, "Untitled Manifesto ('We Are in Open Circuits')," in *Manifestos, a Great Bear Pamphlet* (New York: Something Else Press, 1966), 24.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid.
96. Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics*, 24.
97. Ibid., 24–25.
98. In 1967 Paik paid joint homage to the two men in a text simply titled, "Norbert Wiener and Marshall McLuhan."
99. See *Nam June Paik Video Sculptures*, 36.
100. Rockefeller had a vested political and cultural interest in Asia. He was at one time a member of the Council of Foreign Relations, the Foreign Policy Association, and the Institute of Pacific Relations. In late 1950 he accompanied then Secretary of State John

Foster Dulles on his trip to Japan to conclude a peace treaty and consulted with many Japanese leaders on every important sphere of that country's life. In 1956 he founded the Asia Society of New York, the institutional base of his efforts to foster greater cooperation between Asia and the United States, which also held his substantial collection of Asian art.

101. David Ross, "A Conversation with Nam June Paik," 62.
102. See Howard Weinberg and Nam June Paik, *Topless Cellist* video (1995), 29 min., color, sound.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, June 5, 2008.
106. Quoted in Howard Weinberg and Nam June Paik, *Topless Cellist* (1995).
107. Nam June Paik, poster for *Opera Sextronique*, February 9, 1967, New York, as reproduced in John G. Hanhardt, *The Worlds of Nam June Paik*, 60.
108. Charlotte Moorman notes the number of guests in her text "An Artist in the Courtroom," in *Nam June Paik: Video Time, Video Space*, 51. This was a previously unpublished and undated text put at the editors' disposal by the collector Francesco Conz of Verona, Italy.
109. Ibid.
110. Judge Milton Shalleck, "People, & C., v. Charlotte Moorman," *New York Law Journal* 157, no. 91 (May 11, 1967).
111. Ibid., 18, col. 4F.
112. David Ross, "A Conversation with Nam June Paik," 62.
113. Judge Milton Shalleck, "People, & C., v. Charlotte Moorman," 18, col. 4F, my emphasis.
114. Nam June Paik, *TV as a Creative Medium* announcement. The show at Howard Wise Gallery, New York, ran from May 17 through June 14, 1969.
115. Ibid.
116. Manfred Clynes and Nathan S. Kline, "Cyborgs and Space," *Astronautics* (September 1960): 26-27, 74-75; reprinted in Chris Habels Gray, Steven Mentor, and Heidi Figueroa-Sarriera, eds., *The Cyborg Handbook* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 29-34.
117. Joseph Dumit, "neuroexistentialism," in *Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology, and Contemporary Art*, ed. Caroline A. Jones (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 182-83.
118. Samuel Weber, *Mass Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media*, ed. Alan Cholodenko (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 122.

CHAPTER 7

1. Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1988), 91.
2. Guy Debord, "The Bad Days Will End," in *Situationist International Anthology*, ed. Ken Knabb (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), 86.
3. Quoted in Estera Milman, "Road Shows, Street Events, and Fluxus People: A Conversation with Alison Knowles," *Visible Language* 26, nos. 1-2 (1992): 103.

4. Julia Robinson and Kristine Stiles offer the most instructive writing on Knowles to date, pointing in the direction, or limning certain parameters, of how Knowles's practice engages issues of subjectivity and the ideological construction of gender and class, without offering close or extended readings of her work. See Julia Robinson, "The Sculpture of Indeterminacy: Alison Knowles's Beans and Variations," *Art Journal* (Winter 2004): 97–115; Kristine Stiles, "Between Water and Stone: Fluxus Performance: A Metaphysics of Acts," in *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, exh. cat., ed. Elizabeth Armstrong and Joan Rothfuss (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1993), 89–90.
5. Carolee Schneemann, "Statement on Fluxus" (1964), reprinted in *Ubi Fluxus ibi motus*, exh. cat. (Milan: Mazzotta, 1990), 89. Schneemann wrote the text in all-lowercase letters.
6. See for example Anette Kubitzka, *Fluxus, Flirt, Feminismus?: Carolee Schneemanns Körperkunst und die Avantgarde* (Berlin: Reimer, 2002).
7. See Thomas Kellein, *The Dream of Fluxus. George Maciunas: An Artist's Biography* (London: Hansjörg Mayer, 2007), 155–60.
8. See Kristine Stiles, "Anomaly, Sky, Sex, and Psi in Fluxus," in *Critical Mass: Happenings, Fluxus, Performance, Intermedia and Rutgers University, 1958–1972*, exh. cat., ed. Geoffrey Hendricks (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 60–88, especially 69.
9. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, December 2007.
10. See Owen F. Smith, *Fluxus: The History of an Attitude* (San Diego, CA: San Diego State University Press, 1998), 73–75.
11. As reprinted in Harry Ruhé, *Fluxus: The Most Radical and Experimental Art Movement of the Sixties* (Amsterdam: A, 1979), n.p.
12. Howard Weinberg and Nam June Paik, *Topless Cellist* video (1995), 29 min., color, sound.
13. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, June 2008.
14. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, December 2007. In this context, it is ironic that one of the most famous scores produced during this class was Al Hansen's "Alice Denham in 48 Seconds." As Hansen described his motivation for the piece, "Alice Denham [was] an author and model with whom I was impressed at the time." And Hansen was not alone in his admiration of Denham. She was notorious for self-consciously and confidently courting sexual relations with the literati and artists of New York's bohemian culture in the 1950s and 1960s. She was both a Playboy pinup girl and a writer. For Hansen's remarks and a description of his performances see Al Hansen, *A Primer of Happenings & Time / Space Art* (New York: Something Else Press, 1965), 96–98.
15. Al Hansen, *A Primer of Happenings & Time / Space Art*, 95–96.
16. Eugene Gates, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Composers? Psychological Theories, Past and Present," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 28, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 27.
17. Aaron Copland, *Copland on Music* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960), 45.
18. For statistics see Mary Brown Hinely, "The Uphill Climb of Women in American Music: Performers and Teachers," *Music Educators Journal* 70, no. 8 (April 1984): 35.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Mary Brown Hinely, "The Uphill Climb of Women in American Music: Conductors and Composers," *Music Educators Journal* 70, no. 9 (May 1984): 44.

21. "Alison Knowles Notes" on her participation in "Cage Nam June: A Multimedia Friendship," a panel discussion held at Zone: Chelsea Center for the Arts, New York, October 19, 2006.
22. See for example Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, ed., *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender, and Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998); Briony Fer, David Batchelor, and Paul Wood, eds., *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art between the Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); Whitney Chadwick, ed., *Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998); Gillian Perry, *Women Artists and the Parisian Avant-Garde: Modernism and Feminine Art, 1900 to the late 1920s* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1995).
23. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, December 2007.
24. Ibid.
25. See George Brecht, "Project in Multiple Dimensions" (1957–58), in *An Introduction to George Brecht's Book of the Tumbler on Fire*, ed. Henry Martin (Milan: Multhipla, 1978); George Brecht, "The Origin of Events" (1970), in *happening & fluxus*, exh. cat., ed. Hans Sohm (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1970), n.p.
26. See Moira Roth, "The Aesthetic of Indifference" (1977), in *Difference/Indifference: Musings on Postmodernism, Marcel Duchamp and John Cage* (London: Routledge, 1998); Caroline A. Jones, "Finishing School: John Cage and the Abstract Expressionist Ego," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Summer 1993): 628–65.
27. Knowles's early paintings are currently in several collections in Europe, including that of her primary European collector, Hermann Braun, who lives in Remscheid (just outside Cologne), Germany.
28. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, December 2007.
29. See Estera Milman, "Road Shows, Street Events, and Fluxus People," 105.
30. The research supporting this claim is extensive. See for example Sarah Fenstermaker Berk, *The Gender Factory: The Apportionment of Work in American Households* (New York: Plenum, 1985); Nickie Charles and Marion Kerr, *Women, Food, and Families* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1988); Marjorie L. DeVault, *Feeding the Family: The Social Organization of Caring as Gendered Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Robert B. Schafer and Elisabeth Schafer, "Relationship between Gender and Food Roles in the Family," *Journal of Nutrition Education* 21, no. 3 (1989): 119–26.
31. Quoted in Owen F. Smith, *Fluxus*, 75.
32. Ibid.
33. Dick Higgins, *Postface* (New York: Something Else Press, 1964), 69, my emphasis.
34. Estera Milman, "Road Shows, Street Events, and Fluxus People," 100.
35. For accounts of Maciunas's "Bargain Banquets" see *Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas, 1931–1978*, ed. Emmett Williams and Ann Noël (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 149–68.
36. Jessamyn Neuhaus, "The Way to a Man's Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s," *Journal of Social History* 32, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 531.
37. Jane and Michael Stern, *Square Meals: A Cookbook* (New York: Knopf, 1984), xiv.
38. Joan Wallach Scott, "Experience," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan Wallach Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), 33.

39. See Jessamyn Neuhaus, "The Way to a Man's Heart."
40. Ibid.
41. Regarding advertising, a study done by Sexton and Haberman in 1974 of a variety of specialized magazines indicated that from the early 1950s to the end of the 1960s, there was only a miniscule decline in the percentage of ads portraying women as housewives and mothers. Donald Sexton and Phyllis Haberman, "Women in Magazine Advertisements," *Journal of Advertising Research* 14 (1974): 41-46.
42. For discussions of this phenomenon, see for example Caroline A. Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), especially chapter 5; Bonnie J. Fox, "Selling the Mechanized Household: 70 Years of Ads in *Ladies' Home Journal*," *Gender and Society* 4, no. 1 (March, 1990): 25-40; June Freeman, *The Making of the Modern Kitchen: A Cultural History* (Oxford: Berg, 2004); Christine E. Bose, Philip L. Bereano, and Mary Malloy, "Household Technology and the Social Construction of Housework," *Technology and Culture* 25, no. 1 (January 1984): 53-82; Sue Bowden and Avner Offer, "Household Appliances and the Use of Time: The United States and Britain since the 1920s," *Economic History Review*, n.s., 47, no. 4 (November 1994): 725-48.
43. See for example Jessamyn Neuhaus, "The Way to a Man's Heart," 52-55.
44. The first commercially successful powdered gelatins date to the 1890s, when the Jell-O brand was also launched. By the turn of the century Jell-O was a hit, and when electric home refrigerators became common, recipes that called for chilling were easier to prepare and Jell-O's popularity surged even more.
45. The recipe reads: "Make Molded Gelatin Salad (above) using lemon-flavored gelatin, 1 cup finely shredded cabbage, 1 cup finely diced celery, 2 finely chopped pimientos, 6 chopped sweet pickles and 1 tsp. salt." *Betty Crocker's New Picture Cook Book* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1961), 378.
46. The casserole held a preeminent place in the cooking paradigm of the long decade for this very reason. It was the eternally elastic recipe within which a woman's imagination could really "soar," but often using the simplest readymade ingredients. Here again, Campbell's soup was a supremely popular product, as were canned tuna fish, potato chips, jarred cheese, and canned pre-chopped onions. A whole new set of recipes emerged oriented to the changing conditions of food production within mass consumer culture.
47. See Sherrie A. Innes, "Of Casseroles and Canned Foods," in *Dinner Roles: American Women and Culinary Culture* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001), 141-64.
48. *Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950), 37.
49. It is telling that despite the fact that women made careers for themselves in other realms of cookery outside the home, even surpassing men in terms of numbers, being a chef remained a special, prestigious, and overwhelmingly "male" occupation. Between the end of the Civil War and 1900, cooking schools that admitted women were in every major city in the United States. However, most often these institutions educated women for such things as working in or running kitchens in schools, hospitals, prisons, and asylums; opening a confectionary shop or tearoom; managing a small catering service; creating recipes and demonstrating new products for food manufacturers; and writing

- cookbooks, among others. By midcentury, conditions had not changed dramatically when it came to which gender had easier institutional access to becoming a chef. See Mary Anna DuSablón, *America's Collectible Cookbooks: The History, the Politics, the Recipes* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), 59–60.
50. See Luce Giard, "The Nourishing Arts," in *The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2: Living and Cooking*, ed. Luce Giard, trans. Timothy J. Tomasik (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 157, originally published as *L'invention du quotidien, II, habiter, cuisiner* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994).
 51. Quoted in Estera Milman, "Road Shows, Street Events, and Fluxus People," 100.
 52. See for example Linda McKie, Sophia Bowlby, and Susan Gregory, eds., *Gender, Power and the Household* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Lourdes Beneria and Catherine Stimson, eds., *Women, Households, and the Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Mary Drake Freely, *Can She Bake a Cherry Pie?* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000).
 53. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, December 2007.
 54. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, June 2008.
 55. The early 1960s "food art" practices of Knowles, Spoerri, and others would be developed and expanded in later projects, such as Food of 1971. Food was an artist-run cooperative restaurant opened by Caroline Goodden, Gordon Matta-Clark, Tina Girouard, Suzanne Harris, and Rachel Lew on Prince Street in New York. Artists congregated there to chat and eat cheaply. In this way, the project was akin to Maciunas's cooperative housing efforts in SoHo, started four years earlier in 1967, and also indicated the new wave of direct social engagement and communal spirit of artists in SoHo in the 1970s. Recalling Spoerri's art-restaurants, Food was also the site of many artistic events. Most notably, Matta-Clark organized a series called the "Sunday Night Guest Chef Dinners," during which artists donned aprons to produce outrageous, and often inedible, artistic cuisine. See Pamela M. Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 68–72.
 56. For more on Spoerri's Eat Art activities, see for example Jurgen Raap, "Liebe geht durch den Magen" [The Way to a Man's Heart Is through His Stomach], *Kunstforum International*, no. 159 (April–May 2002): 46–61; Jurgen Raap, "Essensobjekte und Geschmacksbildung" [Food Objects and the Acquisition of Taste], *Kunstforum International*, no. 159 (April–May 2002): 157–75.
 57. George Maciunas, "Fluxus Art-Amusement," as reprinted in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 88.
 58. Quoted in Estera Milman, "Road Shows, Street Events, and Fluxus People," 103.
 59. *Ibid.*
 60. Luce Giard, "The Nourishing Arts," 157.
 61. Quoted in Estera Milman, "Road Shows, Street Events, and Fluxus People," 103.
 62. She had lived at this location at least since 1965, as it is the address listed for her by Al Hansen in his book *A Primer of Happenings @ Time / Space Art* published by Higgins's and Knowles's Something Else Press in that year.
 63. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, December 2007.
 64. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, June 2008.

65. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, December 2007.
66. Alison Knowles, *Journal of the Identical Lunch* (San Francisco: Nova Broadcast Press, 1971), 1.
67. See Lawrence Weiner, *Statements* (New York: Seth Siegelau, 1968). See also *Lawrence Weiner: Posters, November 1965–April 1986*, ed. Benjamin Buchloh (Halifax: Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; Toronto: Art Metropole, 1986).
68. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, June 2008.
69. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, December 2007.
70. Alison Knowles, *Journal of the Identical Lunch*, 10.
71. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, December 2007.
72. For the accounts of these three episodes see pages 15, 12, and 14, respectively, in Alison Knowles, *Journal of the Identical Lunch*.
73. *Ibid.*, 11.
74. Alison Knowles, "Letter to Dick Higgins," in *Journal of the Identical Lunch*, n.p.
75. "Neighborhoods: Chelsea Is Seeking to Retain Its Own Character," *New York Times*, September 30, 1969, 36.
76. When journalists in the late 1960s spoke of "reviving an elegant past," they were referring to Chelsea's heyday in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when it was home to New York's theater district and full of literati and their wealthy patrons. The now-legendary Hotel Chelsea at 222 Twenty-Third Street first opened its doors in 1884 as a handsome private apartment cooperative. See for example William Borders, "Chelsea Reviving an Elegant Past (Culture Breathing New Life Into an Old Neighborhood)," *New York Times*, May 16, 1964, 27; Thomas W. Ennis, "Chelsea, Once a Maze of Decaying Rooming Houses, Enjoys Resurgence," *New York Times*, May 29, 1960, R1; Richard R. Lingeman, "Where Home Is Where It Is," *New York Times*, December 24, 1967, 153; "Neighborhoods: Chelsea Is Seeking to Retain Its Own Character," 36.
77. Pamela M. Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed*, 93.
78. For more on the conversion of industrial spaces into artists' lofts in SoHo in the 1960s, see Pamela M. Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed*. Although Lee gives an excellent account of this process and its ramifications, she commits a major oversight by not mentioning Maciunas and his Fluxhouse Cooperative, Inc. project—an essential part of the history of SoHo. Indeed, if we are looking for a "founding figure" of SoHo, it is Maciunas, more so than Matta-Clark. See Richard Kostelanetz, *SoHo: The Rise and Fall of an Artists' Colony* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Hollis Melton, "Notes on SoHo and a Reminiscence," *Visible Language* 26, nos. 1–2 (1992): 180–201.
79. As the process of gentrification became undeniable in the 1960s, and low-income individuals of a variety of ethnic backgrounds were pushed out so that new, more affluent, and predominantly white residents could "revive" the place, public debate arose as to the possibility of maintaining the district's diversity. New public housing building projects, such as the Robert Fulton and Chelsea Houses, attempted to make up for the loss of low-income residencies, but the broader trends were disadvantageous to the already disadvantaged.
80. William Borders, "Chelsea Reviving an Elegant Past."
81. For Hinkle's remarks see p. 8, and for Higgins's see p. 5.

82. Alison Knowles, *Journal of the Identical Lunch*, 18.
83. *Ibid.*, 20.
84. *Ibid.*
85. The International Longshoreman's Association had been pressuring the United States Lines for several years to reverse the trend of moving cargo shipping away from Manhattan's West Side to more spacious shores in the Port Newark-Elizabeth area. At the time, the ILA felt it had reached an agreement that would keep US Lines at Piers 59 to 72, just below Twenty-Third. But this agreement would be short-lived. See "U.S. Lines Says Shift to Jersey Was Made for Expediency Only," *New York Times*, May 26, 1968, 86.
86. Werner Bamberger, "Updating Studied for Hudson Piers," *New York Times*, October 14, 1968, 92.
87. Edward A. Morrow, "U.S. Lines to Quit Chelsea District," *New York Times*, May 1, 1969, 93.
88. For reports on the strike of 1965, see for example George Horn, "Pier Strike Blamed for Losses in Trucking Operations Here," *New York Times*, February 25, 1965, 62; George Horn, "Truckers Report Bills Mounting on City's Cargo-Clogged Piers," *New York Times*, February 27, 1965. For the 1967 strikes, see for example Werner Bamberger, "Chelsea Dock Workers Irked by Decline in Jobs," *New York Times*, June 4, 1967, 88; Werner Bamberger, "2,500 Quit Docks to Prod City on Pier Revival," *New York Times*, September 19, 1967, 72. And for 1968, see for example Edward A. Morrow, "Port Here Tied Up for a Second Day," *New York Times*, March 20, 1968, 1; Edward A. Morrow, "22,000 Pier Men Defy Court Order," *New York Times*, March 22, 1968, 93; Edward A. Morrow, "Longshoremen End 11-Day Strike Here; Some Cargo Moves," *New York Times*, March 29, 1968, 1.
89. Kevin Bone, *The New York Waterfront: Evolution and Building Culture of the Port and Harbor* (New York: Monacelli, 1997), 202.
90. George Horn, "Longshoremen Here Alarmed at Shift of Shipping to Jersey," *New York Times*, January 6, 1964, 43.
91. See for example Joffre Dumazedier, *Towards a Society of Leisure*, trans. Stewart E. McClure (New York: Free Press, 1967), originally published as *Vers une civilization du loisir?* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1962); Norman P. Miller and Duane M. Robinson, *The Leisure Age: Its Challenge to Recreation* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1963); Nels Anderson, *Work and Leisure* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961); Nels Anderson, *Man's Work and Leisure* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974); Nels Anderson, *Dimensions of Work: The Sociology of a Work Culture* (New York: David McKay, 1964).
92. Norman P. Miller and Duane M. Robinson, *The Leisure Age*, 4.
93. Editorial, *Life*, December 28, 1959, 62.
94. Nels Anderson, *Work and Leisure*, 3.
95. David Reisman, foreword to Joffre Dumazedier, *Towards a Society of Leisure*, v-x.
96. *Ibid.* See also John P. Robinson, "Massification and Democratization of the Leisure Class," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 435 (January 1978): 206-25. Emily Thompson addresses a similar anxiety in the discourse surrounding the introduction of new musical acoustics in the early twentieth century—for instance, how would the "masses" adapt "appropriately" to a new culture of listening? Emily A.

- Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900–1933* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).
97. Joffre Dumazedier, *Towards a Society of Leisure*, 34–35.
 98. Judy Klemesrud, “A Salon for ‘With-It People,’” *New York Times*, March 15, 1968, 45.
 99. *Ibid.*
 100. Frank O’Hara, *Lunch Poems* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1964), back cover.
 101. *Ibid.*, 1.
 102. *Ibid.*, 33.
 103. Alison Knowles, *Journal of the Identical Lunch*, 4–6.
 104. *Ibid.*, 8, 11.
 105. *Ibid.*, 21.
 106. *Ibid.*, 7–8.
 107. *Ibid.*, 26.
 108. See for example Peter Galison, *Einstein’s Clocks, Poincaré’s Maps: Empires of Time* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003); Gary Cross, *Time and Money: The Making of Consumer Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993); David Landes, *Revolution in Time: Clocks and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); Carlo M. Cipolla, *Clocks and Culture, 1300–1700* (New York: Norton, 1977); E. P. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism,” *Past and Present*, no. 38 (December 1967): 56–97.
 109. Nels Anderson, *Work and Leisure*, 12.
 110. *Ibid.*, 14.
 111. *Ibid.*
 112. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, December 2007.
 113. Sebastian de Grazia, *Of Time, Work, and Leisure* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books and Doubleday, 1964), 319–20. Originally published in 1962.
 114. Alison Knowles, *Journal of the Identical Lunch*, 8.
 115. *Ibid.*, n.p.
 116. The reference is to an essay written by Paul Lafargue, a French revolutionary, political writer, literary critic, and son-in-law of Karl Marx, for a workers’ paper in 1880: *The Right to Be Lazy*, trans. Charles H. Kerr (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1989).
 117. Regarding the issue of resisting the control of the system, it is interesting that on the final page of *Journal of the Identical Lunch* are ads and ordering information for two publications: the journal itself, which sold for \$2, and another by Jan Herman titled *General Municipal Election*, which is described as an “Anarchist brief against the control system.”
 118. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (original French version 1968), trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
 119. Dick Higgins, “Letter to Alison Knowles,” and Alison Knowles, “Letter to Dick Higgins,” in *Journal of the Identical Lunch*, n.p., my emphasis.
 120. George Maciunas, “Invitation to Participate in New Years Eve’s [sic] Flux-Feast” (1969), as reprinted in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 163.
 121. *Ibid.*
 122. Author interview with Alison Knowles, New York, June 5, 2008.

123. Ibid.
124. Ibid.
125. Canned tuna was also caught up in the production changes of the increasingly service- and leisure-based US economy: "The same general process is used to clean, cook, and can tuna in most parts of the world. The economics of tuna processing differs substantially from nation to nation, however, because of differences in direct wage rates, the costs of worker health and safety requirements, environmental regulations, and tax and trade concessions. During the 1960s and 1970s, U.S. tuna companies relocated most of the canning operations from the U.S. west coast to offshore U.S. sites in American Samoa and Puerto Rico to take advantage of favorable economic conditions including relatively inexpensive labor and tax advantages offered by commonwealth and territorial governments." *Dolphins and the Tuna Industry* committee report (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1992), 31.
126. Joe Holley, "Charlie the Tuna Creator Tom Rogers Dies," *Washington Post*, July 8, 2005, B06.
127. See for example Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Robin Anderson, *Consumer Culture and TV Programming* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995); Sharon Zukin, *Point of Purchase: How Shopping Changed American Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976); Lynn Spigel and Denise Mann, eds., *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).
128. For a discussion of Warhol's *Death and Disaster* series, see Thomas Crow, *Modern Art in the Common Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).
129. "Two Tuna Sandwiches," *Newsweek*, April 1, 1963, 76; "Marketing and Selling: the Tuna Scare," *Time*, April 26, 1963.
130. Sherrie A. Inness, *Dinner Roles*, 141–64.

CHAPTER 8

1. See for example Howard Brick, "Optimism of the Mind: Imagining Postindustrial Society in the 1960s and 1970s," *American Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (September 1992): 348–80; Douglas Kellner, "Theorizing Globalization," *Sociological Theory* 20, no. 3 (November 2002): 285–305.
2. Quoted in Midori Yoshimoto, *Into Performance: Japanese Women Artists in New York* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 144.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Quoted in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, eds., *Mr. Fluxus: A Collective Portrait of George Maciunas, 1931–1978* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 127.
6. See both of his major works analyzing the effects of mass media on human relations and consciousness: Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962); Marshall McLuhan,

- Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, ed. Terrance Gordon (1964; repr., Corte Madera, CA: Ginko Press, 2003). The original source of the quote is Marshall McLuhan, "Letter to Edward S. Morgan," May 16, 1959.
7. Mieko Shiomi, "Memories of George," as excerpted in Emmett Williams and Ann Noël, *Mr. Fluxus*, 128.
 8. Eric Sheppard, "The Spaces and Times of Globalization: Place, Scale, Networks, and Positionality," *Economic Geography* 78, no. 3 (July 2002): 318.
 9. Ibid.
 10. Mieko Shiomi, map for *Spatial Poem No. 2, Direction Event*, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
 11. Eric Anderson, *Fluxus East: Fluxus-Netzwerke in Mitteleuropa: Ausstellungskatalog / Fluxus Networks in Central Eastern Europe*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Künstlerhaus Bethanien, 2007), 246.
 12. Ibid.
 13. Mieko Shiomi, *Spatial Poem, No. 6, Orbit Event*, 1973, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
 14. For the history of GPS, see for example Sameer Kumar and Kevin B. Moore, "The Evolution of Global Positioning System (GPS) Technology," *Journal of Science Education and Technology* 11, no. 1 (March 2002): 59–80.
 15. See for example Johan Swahn, "International Surveillance Satellites: Open Skies for All?," *Journal of Peace Research* 25, no. 3 (September 1988): 229–44.
 16. Joshua Meyrowitz, "We Liked to Watch: Television as Progenitor of the Surveillance Society," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 625 (September 2009): 32.

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