

The

FLUXUS

Reader

EDITED BY KEN FRIEDMAN

AE ACADEMY EDITIONS

THE FLUXUS READER

Edited by KEN FRIEDMAN

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Much Fluxus research has been made possible by four individuals who have been responsible for publishing the three largest series of publications of Fluxus material: objects, scores, and multiples, books and catalogues. George Maciunas' Fluxus editions launched Fluxus publishing as an organized phenomenon. Dick Higgins' Something Else Press books brought Fluxus to the larger world. Gilbert Silverman and Jon Hendricks are responsible for the catalogues that have become the largest series of Fluxus research documents.

Several collections are central to the research on Fluxus. Three major collections are now readily accessible. Hanns Sohm's Archiv Sohm is now located at Stadtsgalerie Stuttgart and Jean Brown's collection has become The Jean Brown Archive at the Getty Center for the History of the Arts and Humanities. The collections and archives of Fluxus West and my own papers have been distributed among several museums and universities. The largest body of material is located at Alternative Traditions in Contemporary Art at University of Iowa, the Tate Gallery Archives in London and the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College. Substantial holdings that once belonged to Fluxus West are now part of the Museum of Modern Art's Franklin Furnace Archive Collection, the Museum of Modern Art's Performance Art Archives, the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art, the Ken Friedman Collection at the University of California at San Diego and the Henie Onstad Art Center in Oslo. All of these holdings are available for research, publication and exhibition under the normal conditions of research archives and museum collections. A number of important private collections are available under restricted access or by special appointment. Most notable among these are the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Foundation in New York and Detroit, Archivio Conz in Verona, and MuDiMa in Milan.

The documentation section was edited by Owen Smith. I developed the first versions of the documentation at Fluxus West in 1966 and supported improved versions over the years since. Project scholars and editors included Nancy McElroy, Kimberley Ruhe, Matthew Hogan, Judith Hoffberg, Giorgio Zanchetti, and James Lewes. Hoseon Cheon, Dick

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The Norwegian School of Management has been generous with resources, time and freedom for research and publishing. The poetic and playful dimensions of Fluxus often involve intensely practical phenomena. We wanted to work with industry. Our experiments in media and industrial production, successes and failures both, led me to doctoral work in leadership and human behavior. Our ideas on design, manufacturing and marketing took me to Finland and then to Norway. This is the place to thank Lisa Gabriellson and Esa Kolehmainen who brought Fluxus into a working industrial organization at Arabia in Helsinki, and this is the place to thank John Bjørnbye, Ole Henrik Moe and Per Hovdenakk, who brought me to Norway, together with the American Scandinavian Foundation, which funded a year of research.

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Here, I thank also Ditte Mauritzon Friedman. Canon and deacon of Lund Cathedral, psychotherapist-in-training, and wife, Ditte has enriched my perspective on Fluxus and on life. And I thank Oliver Mauritzon, walking companion, philosopher and the first taster of whatever I happen to be cooking for Ditte.

Another wise man made this book possible in many ways. He was the secret patron of Fluxus West. The Fluxus West projects in San Diego, San Francisco and around the world did more than anyone thought possible on limited resources and money. As creative and resourceful as it was possible to be, however, money often ran out. That was when our patron stepped in. He made it possible for me to follow my passion for knowledge. He helped me to organize and preserve the collections that are now housed in museums and archives around the world. He was profoundly generous, the more profound considering that he was a patron of the arts on a college professor's salary. I dedicate this book to an outstanding human being: advisor and patron, friend and father, Abraham M Friedman.

THE CONTRIBUTORS

The scholarly content of *The Fluxus Reader* has been the product of a laboratory of ideas, a virtual colloquium. It has been my pleasure here to work with a number of the leading scholars now writing on Fluxus. The authors of the history chapters wrote doctoral dissertations on various aspects of Fluxus. **Owen Smith** is associate professor of art history at the University of Maine. He wrote on George Maciunas at University of Washington. Simon Anderson is head of art history, theory and criticism at the School of the Art Institute Chicago. He wrote on Fluxshoe and British Fluxus at the Royal College of Art. **Hannah Higgins** is assistant professor of art history at University of Illinois at Chicago. She wrote on the interpretation and reception of early Fluxus at University of Chicago.

The authors of the theory chapters have specialized in different aspects of intermedia. **Ina Blom** is doctoral research fellow in art history at the University of Oslo. She has written extensively on Fluxus and intermedia. Craig Saper is assistant professor of criticism at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. He has written on intermedia, multimedia, artist publishing and visual poetry. **David Doris** is a doctoral fellow in art history at Yale University. The chapter on Fluxus and Zen was adapted from his award-winning master's thesis at City University of New York.

The chapters on critical and historical perspectives have been written by three internationally renowned scholars in art history, art theory and literary theory. **Stephen Foster** is professor of art history at University of Iowa and director of the Fine Arts Dada Archive. **Estera Milman** is associate professor of art history at the University of Iowa and founding director of Alternative Traditions in Contemporary Art. **Nicholas Zurbrugg** is professor of English and head of the department of English, Media and Culture Studies at De Montfort University.

The section titled 'Three Fluxus Voices' is the result of two unique collaborations. The first is an extensive interview between Fluxus artist **Larry Miller** and Fluxus co-founder George Maciunas. Made just before Maciunas's death in 1978, it sheds important light on Maciunas' view of Fluxus. The second is the only known interview with Maciunas' wife, Billie. This interview was recorded by **Susan Jarosi**, doctoral candidate in art history at Duke University. The section ends with Larry Miller's own thoughts on what it is to think about Fluxus. Here, I beg the reader's indulgence. There could have been, perhaps there should have been any number of other views, other chapters. Time and space limit every book. I selected these three voices because they are unique and because they form a conceptually elegant triad. If there is a clear message in the sections on history, theory, critical and historical perspectives, it is that there no way to encapsulate Fluxus in any neat paradigm. On another occasion, and for other reasons, I will present other voices: here, time, a page limit and circumstance dictate a useful choice that makes available an interview with ideas that have never before been published.

The section titled 'Two Fluxus Theories' makes available the thoughts of two Fluxus artists who have attempted to theorize Fluxus and place it in a larger intellectual and cultural framework. The first is by **Dick Higgins**, Fluxus co-founder and legendary publisher of Something Else Press. The second is my own: as editor of this book, I feel obliged to put my thoughts on the table here, too.

FLUXUS READER WEB SITE

The World Wide Web is making a vital difference to many fields of human endeavor. The arts and scholarship have been particularly well served by this medium.

One of the most important developments for research and writing on Fluxus is a consortium of five major universities and museums with a key focus on Fluxus and intermedia. These five are developing a Web-based series of virtual resources for scholarship and reflection on contemporary art. University of Iowa's Alternative Traditions in Contemporary Art, the University of California Museum of Art at Berkeley, Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth, Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and Franklin Furnace in New York maintain the site. ATCA at University of Iowa will be hosting a wide variety of scholarly and pictorial materials that dovetail with the material in this book, and a portion of the site will be dedicated to expanding and reflecting on the specific chapters presented here.

The URL is: <<http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/spec-coll/resources/atca.html>>. Please visit the site.

INFORMATION AND IDEAS

I welcome queries and idea on any of the subjects covered in this book. If you have questions or thoughts you would like to pursue, please contact me at:

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KEN FRIEDMAN: INTRODUCTION: A TRANSFORMATIVE VISION OF FLUXUS

A little more than thirty years ago, George Maciunas asked me to write a history of Fluxus. It was the autumn of 1966. I was sixteen then and living in New York after dropping out of college for a term. George had enrolled me in Fluxus that August. Perhaps he saw me as a scholar, perhaps simply as someone with enough energy to undertake and complete such a project.

Not long after, I grew tired of New York and I was ready to move back to California. That was when George appointed me director of Fluxus West. Originally intended to represent Fluxus activities in the western United States, Fluxus West became many things. It became a centre for spreading Fluxus ideas, a forum for Fluxus projects across North America – outside New York – as well as parts of Europe and the Pacific, a travelling exhibition centre, a studio in a Volkswagen bus, a publishing house and a research programme. These last two aspects of our work led George to ask me once again to take on a comprehensive, official history of Fluxus. I agreed to do it. I didn't know what I was getting into.

This history project was never completed. In part, I lacked the documentation, and despite gathering documents and material for years, I never did accumulate the material I should have done to carry out the job. Moreover, I found that it was the ideas in Fluxus that interested me most, far more than the specific deeds and doings of a specific group of artists. While I am a scholar in addition to being an artist, my interest in Fluxus does not focus on documentation or archival work.

The documents and works I did collect have not gone to waste. They found homes in museums, universities and archives, where they are available to scholars who do want to write the history of Fluxus, as well as to scholars, critics, curators and artists who want to examine Fluxus from other perspectives. The history that I never finished gave rise to several projects and publications that shed light on Fluxus in many ways. This book is one of them.

The key issue here is explaining a 'how' and 'why' of Fluxus. Emmett Williams once wrote a short poem on that how and why, writing 'Fluxus is what Fluxus does – but no one knows whodunit.' What is it that Fluxus does? Dick Higgins offered one answer when he wrote, 'Fluxus is not a moment in history, or an art movement. Fluxus is a way of doing things, a tradition, and a way of life and death.' For Dick, as for George, Fluxus is more important as an idea and a potential for social change than as a specific group of people or collection of objects.

As I see it, Fluxus has been a laboratory, a grand project summed up by George

Maciunas' notion of the 'learning machines'. The Fluxus research programme has been characterised by twelve ideas: globalism, the unity of art and life, intermedia, experimentalism, chance, playfulness, simplicity, implicativeness, exemplativism, specificity, presence in time and musicality. (These twelve ideas are elaborated in the chapter titled 'Fluxus and Company'.) These ideas are not a prescription for how to be a Fluxus artist. Rather they form a description of the qualities and issues that characterise the work of Fluxus. Each idea describes a 'way of doing things'. Taken together, these twelve ideas form a picture of what Fluxus is and does.

The implications of some ideas have been more interesting – and occasionally more startling – than they may at first have seemed. Fluxus has been a complex system of practices and relationships. The fact that the art world can sometimes be a forum for philosophical practice has made it possible for Fluxus to develop and demonstrate ideas that would later be seen in such frameworks as multimedia, telecommunications, hypertext, industrial design, urban planning, architecture, publishing, philosophy, and even management theory. That is what makes Fluxus so lively, so engaging and so difficult to describe.

We can grasp the phenomenon through the lens of several disciplines. One such discipline is history, and there is a history of Fluxus to be told. While the core issues in Fluxus are ideas, Fluxus ideas were first summarised and exemplified in the work of a specific group of people. This group pioneered these ideas at a time when their thoughts and practices were distinct and different from many of the thoughts and practices in the world around them, distinct from the art world and different from the world of other disciplines in which Fluxus would come to play a role. To understand the how and why of Fluxus, what it is and does, it is important to understand 'whodunit', to know what Fluxus was and did. History therefore offers a useful perspective.

Fluxus, however, is more than a matter of *art* history. Literature, music, dance, typography, social structure, architecture, mathematics, politics ... they all play a role. Fluxus is, indeed, the name of a way of doing things. It is an active philosophy of experience that only sometimes takes the form of art. It stretches across the arts and even across the areas between them. Fluxus is a way of viewing society and life, a way of creating social action and life activity. In this book, historians and critics offer critical and historical perspectives. Other writers frame the central issues in other ways.

The ideal book would be three times as long as this one is and impossible to publish. I therefore chose to focus on issues to open a dialogue with the Fluxus idea. Rather than teaching the reader everything there is to know about Fluxus, this book lays out a map, a cognitive structure filled with tools, markers and links to ideas and history both.

Fluxus has now become a symbol for much more than itself. That companies in the knowledge industry and creative enterprise use the name Fluxus suggests that something is happening, both in terms of real influence and in terms of fame, the occasional shadow of true influence. Advertising agencies, record stores, performance groups, publishers and even young artists now apply the word Fluxus to what they do. It is difficult to know whether we should be pleased, annoyed, or merely puzzled.

Tim Porges once wrote that the value of writing and publishing on Fluxus rests not on what Fluxus has been but on 'what it may still do'. If one thread binds the chapters in this book, it is the idea of a transformative description that opens a new discourse. A new and

appropriately subtle understanding of Fluxus leaves open the question of what it may still do. That's good enough for me.

Owen Smith and I were discussing this book one afternoon. We reached the conclusion that it is as much a beginning as a summation. If, as George Brecht said in the 1980s, 'Fluxus has Fluxed', one can equally well say what someone – Dick? Emmett? – said a few years later: 'Fluxus has not yet begun.' There is an on-line discussion group called Fluxlist where the question of what lies between those two points has been the subject of much recent dialogue. One of the interesting aspects of the conversation has been the philosophical subtlety underlying the several positions. Those who believe there is a Fluxus of ideas and attitudes more than of objects feel that there is, indeed, a future Fluxus. This Fluxus intersects with and moves beyond the Fluxus of artefacts and objects. This vision of Fluxus distinguishes between a specific Fluxus of specific artists acting in time and space and what René Block termed 'Fluxism', an idea exemplified in the work and action of the historic Fluxus artists.

Beginning or summation, this book offers a broad view of Fluxus. It is a corrective to the hard-edged and ill-informed debates on Fluxus that diminish what we set out to do by locating us in a mythic moment of time that never really existed. Fluxus was created to transcend the boundaries of the art world, to shape a discourse of our own. A debate that ends Fluxus with the death of George Maciunas is a debate that diminishes George's idea of Fluxus as an ongoing social practice. It also diminishes the rest of us, leaving many of the original Fluxus artists disenfranchised and alienated from the body of work to which they gave birth. In the moments that people attempt to victimise us with false boundaries, I am drawn to two moments in history.

The first moment occurred in sixth-century Chinese Zen. It reflects the debates around Fluxus in an oddly apt way, and not merely because Fluxus is often compared with Zen. It involved the alleged split between the Northern and Southern schools of Zen. The real facts of the split seem not to have involved the two masters who succeeded the Sixth Patriarch, one in the North and one in the South, Shen-hsiu and Hui-neng. The long and tangled stories of schism seem rooted, rather, in the actions of Hui-neng's disciple Shen-hui and those who followed him. It has little to do with the main protagonists who respected and admired each other to the point that the supposedly jealous patriarch Shen-hsiu in fact recommended Hui-neng to the imperial court where he, himself, was already held in high renown. This is like much of the argument around Fluxus. It seems that the protagonists of one view or another, the adherents of one kind of work or another, those who need to establish a monetary value for one body of objects or another, seem to feel the need to do so by discounting, discrediting or disenfranchising everyone else. That makes no sense in a laboratory, let alone a laboratory of ideas and social practice.

The other moment I consider took place a few years ago, when Marcel Duchamp declared that the true artist of the future would go underground. To the degree that Fluxus is a body of ideas and practices, we are visible and we remain so. To the degree that Fluxus is or may be an art form, it may well have gone underground already. If this is true, who can possibly say that Fluxus is or isn't dead? We don't know 'whodunit', we don't know who does it and we certainly don't know who may do it in the future.

PART I
THREE HISTORIES

OWEN SMITH: DEVELOPING A FLUXABLE FORUM: EARLY PERFORMANCE AND PUBLISHING

THE DUSSELDORF FLUXUS FESTIVAL AND FLUXUS AS A PERFORMATIVE FORUM, 1962–1966

The first evening of Festum Fluxorum Fluxus at the Dusseldorf Art Academy began soon after 8 PM with an introduction by the art critic and gallery director Jean-Pierre Wilhelm. The stage was blocked from view by a large sheet of paper which was stretched across its front. Wilhelm, seated at a small table to the left of the stage, read from a prepared script:

Should a manifesto be launched today? It would be too beautiful, too easy. The heroic epoch of manifestos – Dada, Surrealists and others, even individuals, is well past . . . It is no longer a matter of yelling, it's a matter of mattering! But how to matter? Perhaps in any way, not at all! In a certain way then? Not that either! What then? What is to do, is to create acts, gestures absurd in appearance, but in reality full of meaning . . . The character of these acts, these gestures, are absolutely different than the intentions of Dada. The term 'neo-Dada' which is often used in rapport with this new artistic movement, appears to me to be very badly chosen, erroneous even. The movement knows a certain vogue in the U.S. It's there that the composer John Cage lives, the inventor of the 'prepared piano,' and who introduced the aleatoric, the chance to music. . . . He can be considered as a classical ancestor to this tendency, but only in a certain meaning. The young Americans George Brecht, Dick Higgins, La Monte Young, Alison Knowles, George Maciunas . . . Ben Patterson, Terry Reilly and Emmett Williams, of whose productions we will see this evening, pursue purposes already completely separate from Cage, though they have, however, a respectful affection.¹

After this introduction the concert itself began with a performance of Ben Patterson's *Paper Piece*. Two performers entered the stage from the wings carrying a large 3'x15' sheet of paper, which they then held over the heads of the front of the audience. At the same time, sounds of crumpling and tearing paper could be heard from behind the on-stage paper screen, in which a number of small holes began to appear. The piece of paper held over the audience's heads was then dropped as shreds and balls of paper were thrown over the screen and out into the audience. As the small holes grew larger, performers could be seen behind the screen. The initial two performers carried another large sheet out over the audience and from this a number of printed sheets of letter-sized paper were dumped onto the audience. On one side of these sheets was a kind of manifesto:

“PURGE the world of bourgeois sickness, 'intellectual', professional & commercialised culture, PURGE the world of dead art, imitation, artificial art, abstract art, illusionistic

art, mathematical art, PURGE THE WORLD OF 'EUROPEANISM!' ... [...] PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART. Promote living art, anti-art, promote NON-ART REALITY to be grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals ... [...] FUSE the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front & action."²

The performance of *Paper Piece* ended as the paper screen was gradually torn to shreds, leaving a paper-strewn stage.

As the evening progressed, Fluxus performers presented the audience with the latest experiments in music, in particular something called action music. Emmett Williams performed his *Alphabet Symphony* and *Counting Song*, Joseph Beuys gave his *Siberian Symphony* and Wolf Vostell, his *Decollage Kleenex*. There were works by George Brecht, Arthur Koepcke and Bob Watts, and a number of group performances of works including Dick Higgins' *Constellation No 4* and *Constellation No 7*, Daniel Spoerri's *Homage à l'Allemagne* and George Maciunas' *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti*.

The third and the fourth pieces of the concert, Higgins' *Constellation No 7* and *Constellation No 4*, were performed by Maciunas, Vostell, Schmit, Trowbridge, Klintberg, Koepcke, Spoerri and Paik, and had become a kind of set piece for these festival performances. Higgins described the performance of *Constellation No 4* as follows:

Each performer chooses a sound to be produced on any instrument available to him, including the voice. The sound is to have a clearly defined percussive attack and a delay which is no longer than a second. Words, crackling and rustling sounds, for example, are excluded, because they have multiple attacks and decays. The performers begin at any time when they agree they are ready. Each performer produces his sound as efficiently as possible, almost simultaneously with the other performers' sounds. As soon as the last decay has died away, the piece is over.³

Slightly later in the same concert Williams' *Counting Song* and Spoerri's *Homage à l'Allemagne* were simultaneously performed by the composers themselves. The masked Williams performed the first version of his *Counting Song*, in which the performer counts the audience aloud from the stage. At the same time Spoerri, seated at the same table that had been used by Wilhelm, performed his work, which was a verbal transmutation of Wilhelm's introductory speech. After these pieces Williams, Maciunas and Schmit performed the eighth work of the evening, Watts' *Two Inches*, the score for which reads 'stretch a 2 inch ribbon across the stage and cut it'. This piece was performed by Schmit and Williams starting at the left side of the stage, with Schmit holding one end of a two-inch-wide ribbon and Williams holding the rest of the rolled-up ribbon. Williams then walked to the right side of the stage, thereby stretching the ribbon across the mouth of the stage. After this action was complete, Maciunas walked centre stage and cut the ribbon in half. Watts' piece was followed by a performance of Maciunas' *In Memoriam Adriano Olivetti* – an aleatoric score based on the instruction 'Any used tape from an Olivetti adding machine ...'⁴ In this, performers are each assigned a number as well as a specific action that they are to perform. Using the adding-machine tapes as a score they execute their assigned action each time their number occurs. The Dusseldorf presentation of the Olivetti piece, performed by Klintberg, Trowbridge, Schmit, Paik, Vostell, Williams, Koepcke and Spoerri, included the following actions: opening and closing an umbrella, blowing a whistle, sitting and standing, bowing, saluting and pointing. The evening concluded with a performance of Brecht's *Word Event*, in

which the performers turned off all the lights and left, leaving the audience alone in the darkened auditorium.

The Fluxus performance festival held at the Dusseldorf Art Academy on 2–3 February 1963 was a significant historical marker in the early development of the Fluxus group. The Dusseldorf performance had been preceded in the autumn and winter of 1962 by Fluxus festivals in Wiesbaden, Copenhagen and Paris, and was subsequently followed in the spring and summer of 1963 by festivals in Amsterdam, The Hague and Nice. The Dusseldorf festival was significant in that it showed a turning-away from the initial conception of Fluxus as a forum for the performance of ‘interesting things’ towards a more focused concern with event-based performances.⁵ This change of emphasis was not a total rejection of the more diverse avenues previously explored under the rubric Fluxus, but rather a notable point in the development of a focused Fluxus attitude and related performance style. These changes are significant for they would continue directly to shape the philosophical nature and historical development of the Fluxus group over the next several decades.

The festival at Dusseldorf had been jointly organised by Joseph Beuys who was a faculty member of the Dusseldorf Art Academy, and one of the organisers of the Fluxus Group, George Maciunas. This association, as so often happened in the history of Fluxus, was not so much a collaboration of like-minded artistic innovators as a much more mundane affiliation of friends of friends who needed a performance space for their experimental work most importantly for a performance. While most Fluxus performances and events were the result of planning by Maciunas and others, they generally came about as a direct manifestation of an ever-shifting network of associations, contacts and collaborations, many of which were more the result of chance than of forethought.

Take, for example, the historically and conceptually significant class on composition taught by John Cage at the New School for Social Research. The students and occasional visitors included many artists who would become central to the development of both Fluxus and happenings – Al Hansen, Allan Kaprow, George Brecht, Dick Higgins, Jackson Mac Low among others. This class was a key early gathering in America of like-minded individuals, and both the ideas shared and the contacts made there would continue to influence the development of new and experimental art forms for years to come. So, was this meeting planned? No, for although Cage had certainly planned the class, there was certainly no plan by the students themselves. Was it fate? Possibly. The history of this period would be different if this class had not happened. Was it luck? Most probably – but it was a historical situation that was used to the full through the continued work and association of the individual involved. In Europe there were similar environments that brought together like-minded individuals who would later become significant in the development of Fluxus. Key among these were the exhibitions and performances presented at several locations in Cologne in 1960 and 1961. Mary Bauermeister’s studio was the site of performances of works by John Cage, Morton Feldman, Sylvano Bussotti and future Fluxus artists George Brecht, La Monte Young, Nam June Paik and Ben Patterson. Haro Lauhaus exhibited works by Daniel Spoerri and Wolf Vostell and presented performance works by Patterson and La Monte Young. Vostell, Patterson and Paik, all of whom lived in Cologne, were in constant contact and collaborated on performances of their work.

If one were to trace a history of this need-based ‘movement’ – which we now call Fluxus –

it very quickly becomes evident that it follows a pattern similar to that in the nursery rhyme, 'I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly':

I know an old lady who swallowed a goat
 Just opened her throat and in walked the goat
 She swallowed the goat to catch the dog
 She swallowed the dog to catch the cat
 She swallowed the cat to catch the bird
 She swallowed the bird to catch the spider that
 Wriggled and wriggled and tickled inside her
 She swallowed the spider to catch the fly
 But I don't know why she swallowed the fly.

The playful nature of such a comparison is appropriate to Fluxus and is perhaps an appropriate companion piece to Dick Higgins' 'A Child's History of Fluxus'.⁶ What is evident both in the nursery rhyme and in the development of Fluxus is the pattern of need and related response – one that follows a kind of small-scale opportunism based on immediate need and which is not the result of extensive or well-thought-out planning. In both the rhyme and in the history of Fluxus, each step, development or association has its own specific logic but, taken as a whole, is often neither logical nor planned. For example, the Fluxus manifesto distributed during Patterson's *Paper Piece* in Dusseldorf was not the product of planning by the Fluxus group – indeed, it has never been accepted by the group as a whole. It was just one of many short-term responses to an immediate need. It was written, predominantly by Maciunas, not as a grand philosophical statement, but as a response to Beuys' request that some kind of manifesto be presented at the performance. This reality – that Fluxus arose out of circumstances rather than as the product of a predetermined strategy – is part of the reason why many have rejected and continue to reject the idea that Fluxus was a movement at all.

Time and again when people associated with Fluxus have been asked what it was they have answered that it was not a movement but rather a group of friends or people who were interested in the same kinds of thing. George Brecht stated: 'Each of us had his own ideas about what Fluxus was and so much the better. That way it will take longer to bury us. For me, Fluxus was a group of people who got along with each other and who were interested in each other's work and personality'.⁷ What is at stake in these and other comments like them, is a twofold concern: first, that historical and critical investigations of Fluxus do not turn a historical event such as the coming together of Fluxus and Joseph Beuys in Dusseldorf into anything more than the fortunate, seemingly predetermined, but nonetheless chance-determined event that it was and second, that the fluid nature of Fluxus, based primarily on a constant and changing network of friends and associations, not be lost in the rush to define Fluxus as either fixed, constant or planned. This is not to say that there was no planning for the various Fluxus performances and festivals – many of them were not only planned but over-planned. As with life, however, these plans became not what actually happened, but mostly a backdrop of desired actions against which the historical realities can be viewed.

The Festum Fluxorum performance in Dusseldorf was one of seven Fluxus festivals held in Europe in 1962 and 1963: Weisbaden (September 1962), Copenhagen (November 1962), Paris (December 1962), Dusseldorf (February 1963), Amsterdam (June 1963), The Hague

(June 1963) and Nice (Summer 1963). The idea of a grand European tour of Fluxus performances, or festivals as they were called, had begun to be developed by Maciunas and others as early as the end of 1961. The primary reason for this tour, however, was not as a performance venue but was intended as a means to publicise the kinds of work that were to be published by Fluxus. When these initial plans were made, Fluxus was not conceived of as a performance approach or even as a group, but rather it was the name for a projected magazine and publishing venture of new and experimental work. Working with a group of artists whom he had met in Europe, such as Paik, Vostell and Williams, and through correspondence with artists in New York, most notably Dick Higgins, Maciunas developed a programme for a series of wide-ranging performances of 'Very New Music'.

Initially Fluxus was little more than a name and a public face for something that already existed. This situation arose because the artists and their work that would become central to defining the Fluxus group existed prior to the Fluxus name. Many of the artists in this early period saw Fluxus as just one of several channels through which their work could be presented. This circumstance of Fluxus ideas and work existing prior to Fluxus' appearance has had a continuing effect on the history of Fluxus. During Fluxus' main periods of development, there was a wide variety of Fluxus-related performances and activities. Even though Maciunas continually tried to create the impression of a single Fluxus – a Fluxus collective, even a Fluxus movement – there were many more kinds of Fluxus performances and events than those traditionally labelled as Fluxus festivals. In addition to the European Fluxus Festivals and the later performances in America, there were a variety of other performances organised and attended by core Fluxus artists, both in Europe and in America, that were certainly Fluxus in spirit if not in name: in Europe, 'NeoDada in der Musik' (Dusseldorf, 1962), 'A Festival of Misfits' (London, 1962), 'De Kleine Komodie' (Amsterdam, 1963), 'Maj Udstillingen' (Copenhagen, 1964) and in America, the 'Chambers Street' series (New York, 1961), the 'YAM Festival' (New York and New Jersey, 1962), and the 'Monday Night Letter' series at Cafe au Go Go (New York, 1964-65).

Over the period of months of 1962 in which the plans for Fluxus festival were developed, and even during the first festivals in Wiesbaden and Copenhagen, the concept and nature of Fluxus performance remained rather fluid. Rather than having a specific focus, the name Fluxus was initially a generic rubric used to present a diverse variety of work. In addition to the artists more traditionally associated with Fluxus, these plans included work from the sound and electronic explorations of composers such as Pierre Mecure, Karl Heinz Stockhausen and Edgar Varèse to piano works by Toshi Ichiyanagi, Morton Feldman, Sylvano Bussotti, Christian Wolf, and others. Some of the earliest plans listed over twenty concerts of piano compositions, compositions for instruments, compositions of concrete music, neo-Dada and happenings, and electronic music. By the time of the Wiesbaden festival this number had been reduced to fourteen concerts, by Copenhagen, to four, and by the time of the Dusseldorf festival in 1963, to two. Although these changes are certainly in part related to the practicalities of performing, such as the availability of a performance space and performers, much of this change in concert number and type reflects a developing Fluxus sensibility and core of works and performers.

The development of a specific Fluxus performative form began most directly as an outgrowth of the Fluxus Festival in Wiesbaden. Conceptualised and organised as the first of

a number of multi-concert venues for New Music, it instead became a stimulus for the shaping of a Fluxus group and sensibility. Although this was generally one of the most successful of the European festivals – in that it drew good-sized audiences, was covered by the press, was partially broadcast on television and caused quite a stir – it was not without its problems. The most significant of these were the personal and aesthetic tensions that arose between some of the artists and performers. The diversity of works that had been included under the Fluxus umbrella was too great. A number of the composers and performers of new and electronic music, notably Karl Eric Welin and Michael von Biel, were at odds with the destructiveness and seeming non-musicality of some of the action music and event-type works. Although they performed many of the piano compositions in the initial concert weekend, they left after this and did not participate in any of the other concerts. In his book *Postface/Jefferson's Birthday* Dick Higgins described this occurrence:

In line with his ideas of Fluxus being a united front, Maciunas had invited a bunch of International Stylists to perform: Von Biel, Rose and a couple of others. But they did not like some of the pieces Maciunas was doing and quarrelled with him, and they had a style of living that was too self-indulgent to be concrete with the lively aspects of Fluxus. So we kicked Von Biel's crowd out and Rose left.⁸

Although this departure only directly affected the second weekend of concerts – this was the only other concert in which these individuals were due to perform – it had a much more general and significant impact. It was the first indication that Fluxus was becoming something other – something more specific – than it had been initially conceived to be: not just a general rubric for the presentation of a variety of work, but a form of experimentation most directly concerned with a post-Cagean interest in concretism and action music.

The necessity of reorganising the second weekend of concerts at Wiesbaden in order to replace the planned presentations of piano music created a situation in which Fluxus could develop. A smaller and more like-minded group of artists worked together to create a new programme of pieces, thereby reinforcing their place as an early core of Fluxus and giving rise to an emerging group aesthetic. Working in collaboration, Ben Patterson, Nam June Paik, Emmett Williams, Alison Knowles, Wolf Vostell, Dick Higgins, Bengt af Klintberg and George Maciunas developed a new series of programmes for both the second and the third weekend presentations, which would in turn become a nucleus of works performed at the other European Fluxus festivals. In fact, many of the pieces performed over these two weekends would become part of a Fluxus repertoire of works around which many Fluxus performances both in Europe and America have since been organised. These included Williams' *Four Directional Song of Doubt*, Maciunas' *In Memoriam Adriano Olivetti*, Higgins' *Constellation No 2* and *Constellation No 4*, Patterson's *Paper Piece*, George Brecht's *Drip Music*, Jackson Mac Low's *Thanks II* and Robert Watts' *Two Inches*. These works, and these performances in general, moved away from the previously announced, more traditionally based distinctions of media and performance type to a style of work that has come to be inseparably linked to the name Fluxus: action music and event pieces. To this group of core works from the Wiesbaden Fluxus Festival other works were added at the festivals in Copenhagen and Paris; these included Arthur Koepcke's *Music While You Work*, Williams' *Counting Song*, La Monte Young's *556 for Henry Flynt*, Knowles' *Nivea Cream Piece* and Brecht's *Word Event* and his instrumental solo pieces.

All of the European Fluxus festivals, and in fact almost all Fluxus performances, were shaped around two factors: first, the development of a variable core of Fluxus works which were presented at most of the performances; and second, the particular instances of a given performance that affected which additional works were to be included. A number of performers, such as Beuys, Stephan Olzon and Frank Trowbridge, participated in a single or only a few performances and when they did their works were included in the performance. The inclusion of some works, such as Philip Corner's *Piano Activities*, were also limited by practical necessities, such as the availability of necessary equipment or performers. In other instances, certain works – such as some of the work by Paik, Williams and Vostell – were so tied to the individual composer or performer that they could only be performed when these artists participated in the performance. Thus, Fluxus became a shifting group based around a core of works that were constantly being added to and changed as artists and performers did or did not participate with the group.

It was at the Dusseldorf festival, therefore, that the developing nucleus of Fluxus works were almost all brought together for the first time. The later European festivals although indebted to this development, were somewhat different in nature and form. The festivals in Amsterdam and The Hague included many of the same works performed at Dusseldorf but were in each case confined to a single performance. Notable, too, was the absence of Higgins, Knowles, Paik and Koepcke. The Nice festival, on the other hand, while including many of the Fluxus standards such as Patterson's *Paper Piece* and Williams' *Counting Song*, was largely shaped by the force of Ben Vautier's personality and was most notable for its many street performances. The adaptation of standard Fluxus pieces for the street added an important element to the Fluxus performance lexicon that would be expanded and used regularly in future Fluxus venues in Europe, America and Japan.

Throughout the mid- and late 1960s numerous Fluxus events, performances and festivals were presented throughout Western and sometimes even in Eastern Europe. Although Higgins, Knowles and Maciunas had all returned to the US by the end of 1963, the European Fluxus artists continued an active participation in Fluxus and Fluxus-type activities. Five primary centres emerged in the mid-1960s for continued Fluxus activities in Western Europe: one in northern Europe, two in central Europe and two in France. The locations of these centres were directly connected to the continued activities of specific artists who took over Maciunas' organisational role.

In northern Europe, specifically Denmark, Fluxus continued to have an active presence as a result of the work of Arthur Koepcke and Eric Andersen, who collaborated closely throughout the mid-1960s. They sponsored numerous performances, including the series of seven concerts entitled 'Maj Udstillingen' featuring work by Anderson, Brecht, Higgins, Koepcke, Williams, Vostell and others and exhibitions such as those at the Faxe Brewery in 1964. Continued Fluxus activity in Germany was largely the responsibility of Tomas Schmit, Wolf Vostell and Joseph Beuys, and included such notable performances as the 1965 '24 Stunden' ('24 Hours') at the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal, which presented works by Paik, Beuys, Schmit and Vostell, among others. These artists also organised many Fluxus-related performances and exhibitions, such as Paik's *Robot Opera*, and Vostell's *Phänomene*, in Berlin in the mid-1960s, particularly in collaboration with the Galerie Block, run by René Block.

In the Netherlands, Fluxus continued its activities under the banner of Gallery Amstell 47

and Willem de Ridder. In December 1963 de Ridder organised a Fluxus festival at De Kleine Komedie theatre in Amsterdam, at which Schmit, Williams, de Ridder and Wim Schippers performed numerous Fluxus works; and in 1964 two other festivals of Fluxus works were organised in Rotterdam and The Hague, at which Andersen, Koepcke and Vautier also performed. Throughout this same period, de Ridder also held exhibitions of Fluxus work in his gallery, and, encouraged by Maciunas, he created the European Mail-Order Warehouse, through which Fluxus and related works could be purchased by mail.

The two centres of Fluxus activities that were to emerge in France in the mid-1960s were, as in the other centres of European Fluxus activity, established by the on-going activities of three Fluxus artists: Ben Vautier in Nice and Robert Filliou and George Brecht in Villefranche sur Mer. Throughout the 1960s Vautier was a tireless organiser, presenter and performer of Fluxus, Total Art and other forms of experimental work – through his record shop cum gallery in Nice, Laboratoire 32, renamed Galerie Ben Doue de Tout, and through the Theatre Total performance group that he founded in 1963 after the Fluxus festival in Nice. Vautier also travelled to numerous other cities in Europe to collaborate and perform with other Fluxus artists (leading Maciunas to call him ‘100% Fluxus man’); Robert and Marianne Filliou, along with George Brecht and Donna Jo Jones (who had moved from the US to Europe), founded and ran a centre for permanent creation at their shop La Cedille qui Sourit in the small French town of Villefranche sur Mer. There they exhibited and sold the work of Fluxus and other experimental artists, and envisioned their shop as part of an international centre for research, creation and the exchange of ideas which Filliou labelled ‘The Eternal Network’.

Although numerous Fluxus and Fluxus-type festivals and activities, including ‘Quelque-chose’ (Nice, 1964), ‘Flux Festival’ (Rotterdam, 1964) and ‘Koncert Fluxu’ (Prague, 1966), continued to be presented in Europe throughout the mid-1960s, the focus of Fluxus activity shifted back to New York in 1963. Several major concerts and series of concerts, such as ‘12 Fluxus Concerts’ at the Fluxhall, the ‘Perpetual Fluxus Festival’ at the Washington Square Gallery, and the two ‘Fluxorchestra Concerts’ at the Carnegie Recital Hall, were held in New York in 1964 and 1965. This shift was in part initiated by a number of the artists who had participated in European Fluxus returning to the US. Patterson had returned to the US in early 1963, and by the end of 1963 Higgins, Knowles and Maciunas had all returned to New York as well. Plans had been drawn up in the spring of 1963 by Maciunas, under the influence of Henry Flynt and working with Paik and Tomas Schmit, for a series of propaganda actions and concerts to introduce Fluxus to American audiences. These plans, distributed in the Fluxus *News-Policy-Letter No. 6*, called for a series of actions, demonstrations and even acts of sabotage against museums, galleries and theatres – which Flynt called ‘serious culture’ – as well as a series of concerts and other presentations of Fluxus work, such as exhibits and street performances.

These plans, and the ideological discussions, even arguments, that they caused, were to have a fundamental effect on the development of Fluxus over the next several years. A very strong and negative response to these proposals by Brecht (‘I am interested in neutral actions ...’), Mac Low (‘I consider them [the sabotage plans] unprincipled, unethical and immoral’), and others, forced Maciunas to qualify these plans as a ‘synthetic proposal ... to start a discussion’ – not as a course of action. Eventually these plans were abandoned because many

of the American artists associated with Fluxus were either uninterested in the social and political implications of their work, or most specifically did not like the kinds of approach that Maciunas had suggested. What this conflict demarks is the beginning of one of the periods of Fluxus' growing pains – a period in which personal and ideological differences began to come to the fore.

Having failed to create a united 'Collective Front', Maciunas decided in the mid-1960s to decentralise Fluxus by creating a number of global Fluxus centres. Based on Ken Friedman's idea of forming a Fluxus centre in California – 'Fluxus West' – Maciunas decided to create four centres related to the cardinal directions: Fluxus North, directed by Per Kirkeby; Fluxus South, led by Ben Vautier; Fluxus East, headed by Milan Knizak; and Fluxus West, with Friedman as the director. In reaction to the increasing tensions between some Fluxus artists and the group's increasing fragmentation in the mid-1960s, this move was in part another attempt by Maciunas to create an organisational structure for Fluxus. He planned to create a Fluxus Board of Directors from the directors of the four centres, which he would head from the Fluxus Headquarters in New York. Although this new quasi-bureaucratic structure never became fully functional, it did create a framework for Fluxus to continue to grow and develop under the leadership of artists other than Maciunas.

One of the most active of the Fluxus centres, through the mid- and late-1960s, was Fluxus West. Prior to the formation of Fluxus West in 1966, California had been the site of several Fluxus performances and exhibitions: in 1963 Brecht, Watts and Knowles created the collaborative 'Scissors Brothers Warehouse' event and exhibition, and in 1965 numerous Fluxus pieces were presented by the New Music Workshop in 'The International Steamed Spring Vegetable Pie Fluxus Festival'. In 1966, and particularly in 1967, Fluxus and related activities were quite numerous in California. In this period, Jeff Berner also organised several Fluxus-related activities: a Fluxfest at the Longshoreman Hall in San Francisco and the 'Aktual Art International' exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Art and the Stanford Art Gallery, which brought together a large variety of Fluxus and Fluxus-related materials. Ken Friedman set up Fluxus West centres in San Diego and in San Francisco, and in 1967 he purchased a Volkswagen bus – a 'Fluxmobile', – in which he travelled up and down the coast of California and then across the US giving lectures, performing concerts and producing flyers under the name Fluxus West.

When the term 'Fluxus' had begun to be formulated in New York in 1961, it was as a publication for a variety of work with little or no specific political or even cultural agenda. The initial affiliations and association of many of the American Fluxus artists were based on a mutual interest in each others' work and collaborations on projects and performances. Several of these individuals – Higgins, Brecht and Al Hansen – had met as students in John Cage's composition class at the New School for Social Research. They and others, such as Mac Low, Young, Knowles and Maciunas, had become involved in various projects or groups, such as the New York Audio-Visual Group, the 'Chambers Street Concert Series', the 'Bread &' performance series and publication project of *An Anthology*. In all of these activities what was shared was an excitement for the work they were doing and a growing realisation of the international scope of new performance and musical experimentation. This was then a period of expansion of both awareness and ideas which was carried along by an excitement for the new work being done by them and others. As Fluxus actually began to be

developed in Europe, though, it gained both an artistic focus and cultural agenda. Fluxus had begun to be associated with specific artists and types of action music and events, and most significantly it had gained a specific anti-institutional stance. Many of the artists involved with Fluxus in Europe, notably Paik, Higgins, Vostell, Schmit and Maciunas, were not only aware of, but specifically interested in, the political and social implications of their work. When Maciunas tried to extend this developing identity into America in 1963, however, he came face to face with conflicting views. Most of the American Fluxus artists, like Brecht and Watts, although interested in the conceptual and aesthetic implications of post-Cagean thinking, had, like Cage himself, no real interest in political activism. Thus, when Maciunas and Higgins returned to America, Fluxus was faced with a dilemma: what Fluxus had become in Europe could not be sustained in New York. For this reason, the period of Fluxus in New York, from the end of 1963 through the mid-1960s, became predominantly shaped by the playing out of some of the personal and ideological conflicts within the Fluxus group. The changing dynamics of the group began to strain its cohesiveness and several of the artists began to distance themselves from the group. By the mid-1960s it was being said that Fluxus was dead or that it was dying. There were fundamental questions posed about the nature of Fluxus and what it was to become.

FLUXUS I AND FLUXUS AS A PUBLISHING VENTURE, 1962–1968

After years of planning, development and production work, the first collective Fluxus publication, *Fluxus I*, was issued in the autumn of 1964. *Fluxus I* consisted of a number of manila envelopes interspaced with printed sheets, all of which were bound together with bolts. It contained scores by Higgins, Brecht, Mac Low, Patterson, Schmit, Watts, Williams, Giuseppe Chiari and others; photographs, objects and performance remnants by Knowles, Vautier, Joe Jones, Shigeko Kubota, Chieko Shiomi, Takehisa Kosug and others; as well as artists' monogram cards, texts, drawings and a variety of other printed materials. All these materials were contained in wooden boxes like 'little crates'. *Fluxus I* was a synthesis of Maciunas' and other Fluxus artists' work and ideas from 1961 to the date of its original publication. It was the eventual outcome of the long-standing ambition to produce a Fluxus anthology, and was, in fact, the first full manifestation of the original impetus for establishing Fluxus.

The initial potential of, and need for, a publication for new and experimental work was partially an outgrowth of a project initiated by La Monte Young – the *An Anthology* publication. In autumn 1960 the editor of the magazine *Beatitude* approached Young and Mac Low after a reading and asked them if they would guest-edit an issue of the East Coast edition of his magazine, *Beatitude East*. Given free rein to include whoever and whatever he wanted, Young collected a large body of new and experimental music, poetry, essays and performance scores from America, Europe and Japan. The magazine, however, folded after only one issue, and the materials that Young had collected were never published. In June 1961 Maciunas, who had already begun plans to publish a magazine of similar work to be called *Fluxus*, got to hear about the material and offered to publish it: 'I have lots of paper ...' he exclaimed.⁹ In the autumn of the same year Maciunas designed the book's layout and title pages, while others, including Mac Low, produced the typescript for the works themselves. Maciunas sold his

stereo for the down payment for the printing costs, and the mechanicals were sent to the printer to be produced. At this point in the production, however, Maciunas left New York to go to Europe, and Young and Mac Low were not able to pay the remaining printing costs. For this and other reasons, the final production of *An Anthology* was delayed until 1963, when it was finally completed and issued by Young and Mac Low.

Although it can be argued that *An Anthology* is not strictly a Fluxus publication, its development and production was a central event in the formation of Fluxus. It was the first collaborative publication project between people who were to become part of Fluxus: Young (editor and co-publisher), Mac Low (co-publisher) and Maciunas (designer), not to mention all the artists who contributed work, such as Higgins, Flynt, Paik, Williams, Brecht and others. It modelled a pattern of development that was repeated in many other Fluxus projects in which Maciunas helped to give form to an artist's idea through the selection of materials and packaging design. In this way Fluxus produced a true collaboration in which two or more artists came together to create a greater whole through the combination of their efforts. The other, less positive, side of the pattern of Fluxus production seen in the creation of *An Anthology* was one marked by changes in plans, delays in production and funding problems. One of the most important aspects of *An Anthology* for Fluxus, however, was that it became the impetus for the planning and development of other collective publications. Many more scores had been collected than were used in the book, and when Maciunas left for Europe at the end of 1961, he carried with him a rich collection of works and the idea of producing a series of collective Fluxus publications.

Throughout 1962, and in tandem with the plans for Fluxus festivals, Maciunas developed plans for a series of publications which he called 'Fluxus Yearbooks'. In January and February of 1962 Maciunas circulated a list of 'tentative plan[s] for contents of the first 7 issues'. These issues, primarily determined by geographical divisions, included the *US Yearbook*, *Western European Yearbooks I and II*, the *Japanese Yearbook* and the *Eastern European Yearbook*. In addition to these, there were also plans for two historical issues, *Homage to the Past* and *Homage to DaDa*. The diverse contents for these issues was based on three categories of work: the additional materials for *An Anthology*; promised contributions from artists; and materials suggested by the area editors (such as Higgins and Mac Low for the US and Paik and Wilhelm for Europe) for each of the issues. In the initial plans most of the contents were scores and essays intended to be traditionally printed and bound, but also listed were a number of additional elements – fold-outs, inserts, records and even some objects such as 'a glove' by Knowles and 'molded plastic relief composition' by Mary Bauermeister.

By the spring of 1962 – the time of the publication of *News-Policy-Letter No. 1* – Maciunas had changed his ideas considerably. In the *News-Policy-Letter*, he referred to the publication as the 'FLUXUS YEARBOOK-BOX' and put greater emphasis on non-traditional 'printed' materials. There was to be a change in form, too, from a bound publication to a boxed collection:

It was decided to utilise instead of covers a flat box to contain the contents so as to permit inclusion of many loose items: records, films, 'poor-man's films – flip books,' 'original art,' metal, plastic, wood objects, scraps of paper, clippings, junk, rags. Any composition or work that cannot be reproduced in standard sheet form or cannot be reproduced at all.¹⁰

This list of possible inclusions marks a beginning shift in the concept of Fluxus from a magazine, and from a more traditional concept of a publication as a printed and bound paper product, to Fluxus as a publisher/producer of a variety of materials, such as those found in *Fluxus I*.

The nature of the contents of *Fluxus I* is a direct expression both of the changing nature of Fluxus and its original intent to publish works, particularly scores of an international group of artists. *Fluxus I* is a summation of the aims of Fluxus and the sometimes conflicting realities that were faced in trying to edit and produce it. The developing and shifting emphasis of Fluxus as a publishing entity is mapped out in both the variety of works and in the form of their publication. The final form of *Fluxus I* – a series of brown mailing envelopes containing works and bolted together with interspaced printed pages – was more than a design choice by Maciunas, it was a necessity if any Fluxus anthology was ever to be produced. Although this form of a bolted book is not without historical precedent (it is quite similar to Fortunato Depero's book *Depero Futurista* of 1927), the key is not the binding mechanism itself, but what such a process, coupled with the use of envelopes, allowed. This format permitted both the inclusion of a variety of forms and formats of materials as well as a book that could be altered as necessity required. Contrary to most publications, which are edited in totality, then laid out and finally printed and bound at one time, the majority of materials included in *Fluxus I* were printed or produced at various times between 1963 and 1965, and continued to be altered throughout the life of the publication. These materials were also drawn from a variety of sources. Many of the works and images included in *Fluxus I* were not initially developed or produced for this specific publication, but in the context of other projects: Brecht's 'direction' (image of a pointing hand) was initially printed in 1963 for a book; the photograph of hair printed on transparent paper was taken by Maciunas as a potential image for the backs of the cards in Brecht's *Deck*; the photograph of Mac Low was originally taken in 1962 for use in publicising a performance; Kosugi's *Theatre Music* (a footprint on paper); and Knowles' print of a tooth x-ray were made as parts of performances in New York in 1964. Many other works, including examples by Williams, Patterson and Young, were originally produced not to be included in *Fluxus I* but as part of 'collected works' publications that never materialised.

Thus, *Fluxus I* is not just a metaphorical summation of Fluxus ventures between 1962 and 1965 but an actual compilation of diverse materials that had previously been produced by the individual artists and the activities of the Fluxus group. *Fluxus I* is a clear example of an aspect of Maciunas' productivist/puritan aesthetic: waste not want not. The eventual production of *Fluxus I* can be seen as the physical manifestation of years of planning and editing for collective Fluxus publications, but it can also be seen as Maciunas' way of making use of materials that had been collected and produced and which Maciunas did not want to waste.

The vicissitudes of attempting to edit and produce a Fluxus anthology were almost too great. Initially the first of the planned Fluxus Yearbooks was to be issued in February and May of 1962. These dates were pushed back due not only to a lack of time and money, but, more significantly, to the shortage and limited variety of the works so far collected. Many of the works listed in the prospectus were not in Maciunas' possession when he listed them as the contents, and so he had to delay the publication until after he had received them. They

were rescheduled to be issued in August and September, just prior to the first Fluxus Festival in Wiesbaden. At the same time as the delay was announced, a new call for material was issued in *News-Policy-Letter No. 1*, as well as a new plan for two types of anthology publications: the standard edition of printed and bound materials, and a new format – the ‘luxus-fluxus’ – which was to include materials from the standard edition grouped with additional materials of a more limited nature, such as films and flip-books and original works produced by the artists themselves.

By the time August arrived, the first Yearboxes were still not ready to print or issue. Many works had still not been received or assembled, and more importantly the time that the artists had to spend was directed at planning for the upcoming festivals. At the end of October Maciunas wrote to La Monte Young that, ‘Fluxus I is definitely coming out, in fact the whole thing is at the printers ... I figure the issue should go out in mid November ...’¹¹ At about the same time as this letter, Maciunas issued *News-Policy-Letter No. 4*, which included plans for future festivals, *Fluxus Yearbox II*, and, most importantly, plans for ‘special editions’. This new category of Fluxus publications was to include works and collections of works by individual artists, such as Brecht, Young, Mac Low, Henry Flynt, Allan Kaprow, and others. Although many of these collections never materialised, the most notable exception is Brecht’s collected works, which became *Water Yam*; this is an important first indication of the expansion of Fluxus publishing activities towards a collective that would produce individual artist’s works as well as anthology publications. *Fluxus I* did not come out in November, as Maciunas had said, but was delayed again; for although the printing work was completed, Maciunas had no money to pay the printer for the work.

As Maciunas was continuing his attempts to edit and produce the first of the planned Fluxus collective publications, one of the first collective Fluxus (in spirit and content, if not in name) publications was published by Wolf Vostell. This magazine, entitled *De-coll/age*, was certainly, as Maciunas later claimed, a clear manifestation of Vostell’s own ideas. This, however, did not make *De-coll/age* a non-Fluxus work as Maciunas also claimed. Although it was not one of the announced Fluxus publications, it was certainly a parallel attempt to those being initiated under the name Fluxus to publish the work then being done. The first issue of *De-coll/age*, published at the end of 1962, was clearly modelled on the ideas and plans that were being developed for Fluxus. It included scores, essays and other examples of the types of work presented in performance by the Fluxus group. Many of the artists who had become associated with Fluxus, such as Young, Patterson, Paik, Koepcke, Vostell, and even Maciunas, were included; and at first Maciunas felt that this publication was part of a general Fluxus initiative and invited Vostell to combine his efforts with his own in the development of more Fluxus-type publications. Vostell declined this invitation, saying that he could only edit one such publication – his own – and that it would not be as comprehensive as the planned collective Fluxus editions.¹² With the publication of issues 2 and 3 of *De-coll/age*, Maciunas increasingly saw this journal as an attempt to undermine his own Fluxus publication initiatives. This situation was brought to a head with the publication of works by Corner and Flynt in *De-coll/age* that Maciunas was intending to print in planned Fluxus publications. Maciunas accused Vostell of ‘knowingly sabotag[ing] Fluxus’.¹³

The real and perceived effect of Vostell’s publication of *De-coll/age* would eventually lead Maciunas to an attempt to form a retrenchment of Fluxus, to, as he put it, ‘strive for a

common front & CENTRALIZATION'. As a partial response to this and other situations that Maciunas felt were draining on Fluxus' 'art and anti-art activities', he proposed in Fluxus *News-Policy-Letter No. 5* (1 January 1963) that 'authors are to assign exclusive publication rights to Fluxus' and that they 'will not submit any works to any other publication without the consent of Fluxus'. The artists associated with Fluxus reacted swiftly and negatively by forcing Maciunas to drop, or at least downplay, his call for exclusive publication rights, although he would continue to demand Fluxus copyright and/or credit for performances that presented Fluxus work.

The affair demonstrated the existence of Maciunas' more dictatorial side. He believed that true collectivity could only be created through strong leadership and even through the use of purges. He wrote:

... such [a] front must constantly be purged of saboteurs & 'deviationists' just like the communist party. Communists would have long split into 1000 parts if they did not carry out the strict purges. It was the purge or FLUX that kept them united & monolithic.¹⁴

Vostell was to become the first of numerous victims of such a belief. This defensive, even antagonistic, stance was the first of a number of times through the mid-1960s that Maciunas was to react negatively to the plans and projects of artists whom, he felt, were working in opposition to his idea of a collective front for Fluxus. What was in reality happening and continued to happen throughout this period was a fundamental conflict between the aims of Fluxus and its realisation. That is, Fluxus was often unable to produce, either at all or in a timely manner, the works that it had undertaken to publish, and as a result many artists also sought other or additional means of producing their work.

Through the winter of 1962 and 1963 the emphasis of Fluxus publishing activities was increasingly shifting to the development of works and publications by individual artists. Plans were made for and work initiated on Brecht's 'Complete Works' (*Water Yam*) and *Deck*, Robert Watts' 'Dollar Bill', Young's *Compositions 1961*, Daniel Spoerri's *L'OPTIQUE MODERNE*, Paik's 'music periodical' *Monthly Review of the University of Avant-garde Hinduism*. The materials for *Fluxus I*, meanwhile, still sat at the printer. Maciunas did produce two other collective publications in this period: *Fluxus Preview Review*, a long scroll-format publication which included a limited number of scores and photos of performances, information on future performances and a listing of planned Fluxus publications and *Ekstra Bladet*, a reproduction, in collage format, of performance reviews, which was intended for performance publicity. He also began work on a second Fluxus Yearbox, the *French Fluxus Yearbox*, which although never produced did progress to the stage of typographic design and lay-out (parts of it are in the Archive Sohm); but by the end of spring 1963, there was still no *Fluxus I*. Finally, however, sometime in the late spring or summer of 1963, Maciunas was able to pay the remaining debt to the printer for the materials for *Fluxus I*. But by the time Maciunas returned to the US in the late summer or early autumn once again he had no money to do anything with the materials he had had printed, and even if he had been able to do anything he was so unhappy with the quality of the printing that he threatened to throw it all away. In the end, he kept the materials but did not do anything with them for almost another year. Instead, the emphasis of Fluxus shifted to the development and production of works by individual artists, the development of a

Fluxus newspaper, *ccV TRE*, and the attempt to develop a Fluxus distribution network, or what came to be called the Fluxus Mailorder Warehouse.

During the autumn of 1963 and the winter of 1964 the continued development of Fluxus I was put on hold while plans were made for propagandising Fluxus in the US. Although a number of plans included actions and/or performances, such as street events, one of the most important realised means of advertising Fluxus was the creation of a Fluxus newspaper, *ccV TRE*. Rather than being a completely new venture this newspaper was, as with many Fluxus works, initially developed outside of Fluxus *per se* and then integrated into the Fluxus fold. The first issue of *V TRE* was published as a broadside by George Brecht in conjunction with the Yam Festival, which he and Bob Watts were organising in May 1963. In fact, when the first Fluxus issue of the newspaper was published in January 1964 the designator 'cc' was added to the name as a way of indicating the publication's connection to Brecht (a designation that was kept only for the first four issues). Although the first two issues of *ccV TRE*, published in January and February of 1964, are predominantly made up of photos, both antique and contemporary, newspaper headlines and parts of articles, and scientific illustrations and diagrams, all taken from other sources, it was the references to Fluxus that were the key to this project and would come to dominate the content of the newspaper by the third and fourth issues.

The publication of *ccV TRE* was another example of the opportunism of Fluxus. It offered three key elements. First, the newspapers were cheap to produce, and this was important because Fluxus had little or no money to pay for more elaborate publishing projects such as the collective Yearboxes/books. Moreover, very few, if any, of the Fluxus publications ever broke even or made any profit. This being the case most of the publication costs had to be covered by other means and were largely paid for by Maciunas himself out of his own pocket. Second, the newspapers were a sign that Fluxus was 'alive and kicking'. By the beginning of 1964 most of the planned Fluxus publications had still not been realised. Increasingly a number of the artists associated with Fluxus were beginning to question whether or not Fluxus would ever even begin to fulfil its aims to distribute a variety of 'interesting things'. The *ccV TRE* newspaper was a way of responding to these concerns, for in addition to the visual cacophony of appropriated images and texts, they included essays by artists such as Paik and Brecht, photos of works by a variety of artists from Christo and Jean Tinguely to Brecht, Knowles, Watts and Lette Eisenhauer at their *Blink* show, and a wide variety of event and performance scores. It seems that it was the intention of at least Maciunas to shift away from the more costly and problematic Yearboxes to the newspaper as the principal means of disseminating the good work being done. In the first issue of *ccV TRE*, there is a list of available Fluxus editions (1963) and upcoming editions (1964). It is of importance to note that nowhere in these lists is there any specific mention of the collective Fluxus publications. Instead, after the lists there is a small note that states that most of the '... materials originally intended for Fluxus yearboxes will be included in the FLUXUS *ccV TRE* newspaper or in individual boxes'.¹⁵ The third, and possibly most important, aspect of the development of the Fluxus newspaper was that it was a way of both advertising Fluxus works and performances and developing an alternative market for Fluxus works outside the normal cultural frames.

Part of both the challenge of, and to Fluxus, was a questioning of the modes of cultural production and distribution. The aim of Fluxus throughout the mid- and later 1960s was not

only to publish the interesting things being done but to create new systems for their distribution. Most Fluxus works were not only relatively inexpensive, but were initially distributed through alternative distribution mechanisms. In the mid-1960s a number of different Fluxshops were set up in the US, France and the Netherlands. In addition to these shops, which had only limited success, several Flux Mailorder Warehouses in the US and Europe were created that were directly aimed at establishing a new means for distributing works and publications without those works themselves seeming to become profound, exclusive or valuable as a commodity. In this context, then, it was only through such publications as *ccV TRE*, that Fluxus works could gain an audience wider than friends of friends.

In 1978 Nam June Paik elaborated on the significance of Fluxus as a distribution mechanism that, he felt, went beyond Marxist parameters:

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

George Maciunas' Genius [sic] is the early detection of this post-Marxistic situation and he tried to seize not only the production's medium but also the DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM of the art world.¹⁶

Throughout the 1960s Maciunas continually tried to demonstrate that Fluxus was neither serious culture nor anti-serious culture, but something else entirely. This separation was intended to reinforce the concept that Fluxus was not part of the existing cultural system, in either its modes of production or distribution. The nature of Fluxus work was part of a process of transformation and education that was inherent in their activities. In the activities in the 1960s, and, as we shall see, most particularly in the 1970s, Fluxus works and performances were intended to transgress boundaries, decentre their own activities, and, for some, gradually to lead to the elimination of the category of fine art altogether.

When *Fluxus I* was finally issued in 1964, it was as part of a period of tremendous Fluxus publishing activity. Even though it had taken Fluxus and Maciunas more than two years to produce this one work, the next two years, between 1964 and 1966, saw more than half of the total number of Fluxus works developed and produced. Not only was the first collective publication, *Fluxus I*, published in this period, but the only other completed collective Fluxus publications, *Fluxkit* (1964) and *Fluxus Year Box 2* (1966), were published in this time as well. One of the most notable aspects of Fluxus production in these years, evident in a simple comparison between *Fluxus I* and *Fluxus Year Box 2*, was a shift from publications, in the sense of printed information or images on paper, to objects. The projected, but never completed, *Fluxus 3*, was, however, supposed to shift yet again, back to exclusively two-dimensional printed works to be presented rolled up in a tube. Whereas *Fluxus I* consists predominantly of printed images, scores and text-based pieces, *Fluxus Year Box 2* contains a diversity of materials, most of which – such as the Fluxfilms and viewer and the individual artists' boxes by Brecht, Ken Friedman and others – are not traditional printed materials.

The Fluxus works produced in the mid-1960s, even the most object-based examples – such as Watts' *Rocks Marked by Weight*, Shiomi's *Water Music* or Patterson's *Instruction No. 2* – should all be seen not as art works or even multiples, but in their intended context: as publications, albeit quite different from what is traditionally thought of as a publication. This seeming alteration in Fluxus' aims is not just a historical note, for it was remarked on by several Fluxus artists and it was one of the motivations for Higgins to found Something Else Press as an attempt to return to the original aims of Fluxus.

Although Something Else Press (SEP) does have its own unique place in the history of alternative publishing, it should also be seen as an expression of the aims of Fluxus to distribute the 'interesting' things being done. In 1964 Dick Higgins founded SEP in exasperation over Maciunas' seeming inability to get things published, as well as the seeming shift-away from what Higgins perceived as the central foci of Fluxus. In a letter to a friend Higgins remarked that he founded SEP as a way of returning to the aims of 'original Fluxus'.¹⁷ Under the Press imprint, many important books on poetry, happenings, architecture, experimental literature and fiction, music, and art theory were published. SEP also published important work by a number of the artists associated with Fluxus, including Knowles, Patterson, Corner, Schmit, Brecht, Filliou, Spoerri and Higgins himself. In some ways, Higgins was correct, for the work published by SEP throughout the 1960s and into the mid-1970s much more clearly conforms to the original Fluxus goals of education, presentation of a variety of historical and contemporary works, and creation of a distribution system for interesting materials that would not otherwise be published. In fact, although SEP would eventually fold under the strain of unresolved financial obligations, it was in its heyday very successful both in introducing a wider audience to new and experimental work and in creating a context for continued experimentation in intermedial arts. The greater immediate success of SEP, when compared to Fluxus, was that Higgins was able to balance a radical and/or new content with a more traditional form, thereby allowing the SEP publications access to existing distribution systems – particularly the book-publishing system – which Fluxus was never able to make use of. This very same success has now, in the historical frame, reversed which of the two ventures is given most attention. Fluxus with its seemingly greater originality of form and, contrary to stated aims, greater rarity of work, has now become the artistic success, whereas SEP has become an interesting publication venture, but not an artistic success. If again we return to Higgins' point that SEP was a renewal of the original aims that Fluxus had lost sight of and consider this in the current perspective of the commodification of Fluxus 'art objects', we are left with a very interesting set of issues. The reality, however, is that both represented Fluxus and SEP succeeded and failed in differing ways, and that both of these ventures form part of a larger whole of experimentation in intermedial arts which so dominated the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁸

By the end of the 1960s collective Fluxus activities had reached a low point. After the explosion of Fluxus publishing activities between 1964 and 1966, the years from 1967 to 1969 were rather unremarkable. Little new work was produced in these years. Fluxus group performances and public presentations in this period were also practically non-existent. What was happening was that even though Fluxus had always managed to survive direct conflicts, the most significant of which was the conflict and even personal animosity over the picketing of Stockhausen's *Originale* in 1964, this period was one in which many of the artists'

attentions were no longer being focused through Fluxus. In order to contextualise this situation, it is useful to understand that Fluxus' meaning has always existed in relationship to its usefulness, and thus we can look at the downturn in activities in this period as a simple reflection of a periodic downturn in its immediate, but not long-term, usefulness. Although many of the individual artists were as active as they had been in the past, many of their efforts were directed towards differing projects or individual interests rather than collective or Fluxus work. Higgins and Williams were very busy with Something Else Press; Watts was involved with a mass-production project called Implosions; Brecht and Filliou were active with *La Cedille qui Sourit* in France; Vautier with his Total Art projects and related publishing; and Maciunas was putting most of his time and energy into his project of converting old buildings into artists' lofts (Fluxhouses). Yet through all of this the core of Fluxus remained; the fact that they were friends who enjoyed what each other did. All that was needed was a reminder of this social basis of Fluxus as a community, and it came in the late 1960s, not in the form of new public performances, but as Fluxus gatherings for Fluxfriends. These events began in 1967 with a 'Flux-Christmas-meal-event', and in the subsequent two years were held on the 31 December and were thus renamed the 'New Year Eve's Flux-Feast'. Although these gatherings did not smooth over all of the tensions between different members of Fluxus, they did act to return Fluxus to part of its essence – a Fluxus based on a group of friends doing things together that they enjoyed. Activities such as these, as well as other Fluxus-related developments in such areas as California, France and Germany, also began to widen the circle of Fluxus participants to include new artists such as Geoff Hendricks, Larry Miller and Ken Friedman. This would give a new energy to Fluxus and carry it into the 1970s, and eventually into new endeavours, such as those carried out under the name 'Fluxshoe' in England.

NOTES

- 1 Jean-Pierre Wilhelm, [untitled manuscript], Sept 1962, Archive Sohn, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart. As far as can be determined, this text was not the exact text read by Wilhelm at the Dusseldorf Fluxus Festival. It is a text that he wrote as an introduction for a proto-Fluxus performance in Amsterdam, 'Parallele aufführungen newster musik': however it is probably very similar to what he did read in Dusseldorf.
- 2 George Maciunas, 'Fluxus Manifesto', nd [c1963], Archive Sohn, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart.
- 3 Dick Higgins, *Constellation No 4*, 1960; reproduced in Higgins, *Selected Early Works, 1955–1964*, Berlin, Edition ARS VIVA!, 1982, p 4.
- 4 George Maciunas, *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti*; revised version of score no. 8 1962, Archive Sohn, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart.
- 5 Dick Higgins, *Postface|Jefferson's Birthday*, New York: Something Else Press, 1964. Many aspects of the original aims and concerns of Fluxus are discussed by Higgins in the *Postface* section of this work.
- 6 Dick Higgins, *Postface|Jefferson's Birthday*, New York: Something Else Press, 1964.
- 7 George Brecht, 'George Brecht an Interview with Robin Page for Carla Liss (who Fell Asleep)', *Art and Artists*, vol 7, no. 7 (Oct 1972), p 29.
- 8 Higgins, *Postface|Jefferson's Birthday*, p 68.
- 9 George Maciunas, quoted in Jackson Mac Low, 'Wie George Maciunas die New Yorker Avantgarde kennenlernte', in René Block, ed, *1962 Wiesbaden 1982*, Wiesbaden,

- Harlekin Art, and Berlin, Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD, 1982, p 114.
- 10 George Maciunas, [Fluxus] *News-Policy-Letter No. 1*, May 21, 1962, in the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection, New York and Detroit.
 - 11 Maciunas to La Monte Young, nd, La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela Collection, Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection, New York and Detroit.
 - 12 Wolf Vostell to George Maciunas, nd, Archive Sohn, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart.
 - 13 George Maciunas to Nam June Paik, nd, Archive Sohn, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart.
 - 14 Ibid.
 - 15 George Brecht and George Maciunas, eds, *Fluxus ccV TRE*, Fluxus Newspaper no. 1 (1964), np.
 - 16 Nam June Paik, 'George Maciunas and Fluxus', *Flash Art*, no. 84-85 (Oct-Nov 1978), p 48.
 - 17 Dick Higgins to Tjeerd Deelstra, 13 March 1967, Archive Sohn, Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart.
 - 18 For more information on Something Else Press, see Higgins, 'Two Sides of a Coin: Fluxus and Something Else Press'.